

00:00:00	Sound Effect	Transition	<i>[Three gavel bangs.]</i>
00:00:01	Jesse Thorn	Host	Welcome to the <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> podcast. I'm Bailiff Jesse Thorn. This week: Achoo...dication (<i>adjudication</i>). Luke files suit against Stephanie. Stephanie refuses to say "bless you" when someone sneezes. Luke thinks it's a pleasant practice in which she should engage. She says it's annoying. Who's right? Who's wrong? Only one can decide!
00:00:25	Sound Effect	Sound Effect	<i>[Door opens.]</i> <i>[During Jesse's next words, chairs scrape against the floor and then footsteps approach.]</i>
00:00:26	Jesse	Host	Please rise as Judge John Hodgman enters the courtroom and joins me, Bailiff Jesse Thorn, in presenting an obscure cultural reference.
00:00:35	Sound Effect	Sound Effect	<i>[Door closes.]</i>
00:00:36	Jesse	Host	Judge Hodgman! That's a very nice hat you're wearing, and I don't mean that in an Eddie Haskell-type way.
00:00:42	John Hodgman	Host	Thanks! ...A—achoo!
00:00:46	Jesse	Host	Shut your pie hole.
00:00:47	John	Host	<i>[Dismayed]</i> Oh! Bailiff Jesse, swear them in.
00:00:49	Jesse	Host	<i>[Chairs scrape as he instructs Luke and Stephanie to stand.]</i> Luke and Stephanie, please rise and raise your right hands. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God or whatever?
00:00:58	Luke	Guest	I do.
00:00:59	Stephanie	Guest	I do.
00:01:00	Jesse	Host	Do you swear to abide by Judge John Hodgman's ruling, despite the fact that while he is both myth and legend, he is not man but merely an incorporeal form of pure justice?
00:01:11	Luke	Guest	I do.
00:01:12	Stephanie	Guest	I do.
00:01:13	Jesse	Host	Judge Hodgman, you may proceed.
00:01:15	John	Host	Luke and Stephanie, you may be seated. For an immediate summary judgment in one of yours' favors, can either of you name the piece of culture that... Jesse mostly paraphrased, and I helped out with as I entered the courtroom? Luke, you bring the case. Why don't we start with you?
00:01:29	Luke	Guest	Judge, I am going to guess an episode of <i>Happy Days</i> .
00:01:34	John	Host	An episode of <i>Happy Days</i> . A television show. Any particular

episode?

00:01:39 Luke Guest The Eddie Haskell reference made me think of television, so just any old episode of *Happy Days*.

[Stephanie laughs.]

00:01:44 John Host That was a *Leave It to Beaver* thing, but that's cool. *Happy Days*. We'll put it in there.

I wonder whether *Leave It to Beaver* existed in the *Happy Days-a-verse*? They could've watched that! I think the timing could've worked! They could've made an Eddie Haskell reference!

Interesting guess. What about you, Stephanie? Do you have a guess for the guess book? You can guess *Leave It to Beaver* or something else. I would suggest something else.

00:02:03 Stephanie Guest *[Laughs.]* Okay, I'll go with my prepared answer, which is an excerpt from the book *Quiet*, by Susan Cain.

00:02:10 John Host That's an interesting guess. I was gonna lead you down a garden path to help you guess a better guess, but that one's too interesting to pass up!

Even though it, and all of your guesses, are wrong. I apologize.

I was quoting from a mooovieee. What is your ages, if I may ask? You can ballpark it for me.

00:02:26 Luke Guest I am 39; Steph is 38, about to turn 39 in November.

00:02:30 John Host What decade would you say is most known for meta cultural references such as referencing Eddie Haskell?

00:02:37 Stephanie Guest Children of the eighties?

00:02:38 John Host Children of the eighties, yes. I'm thinking the nineties. That was the birthplace of *Mystery Science Theater 3000* after all—which is not what this reference is.

What movie made in 1992, about grunge rockers looking for love in Seattle, featured a plot line where all Bridget Fonda wants is someone who will say "bless you" after she sneezes?

00:03:01 Stephanie Guest *[Hesitating]* Single...?

[Luke laughs.]

00:03:04 Stephanie & Luke Guest *Singles*.

00:03:05 John Host *Singles!* Yes, you got it!

00:03:06 Sound Effect Sound Effect *[Three gavel bangs.]*

00:03:07 Luke Guest Well done, babe.

00:03:08 John Host Yeah, well done! So I find in your favor. Bye-bye!

[Stephanie and Luke laugh.]

Good podcast. *[Laughs.]* We did it, Jesse. *[Laughing]* Do you wanna

get a cup of coffee?

00:03:16 Jesse Host Yeah. I don't drink coffee, but yeah, I mean I'd get some herbal tea or something.

00:03:19 John Host *[Laughing]* I apologize.

00:03:20 Jesse Host Eh, you know, I'd get a cookie. You know, whatever.

00:03:22 John Host I thought we could go down to that favorite overstuffed couch nineties coffee shop called—

[Jesse laughs]

—Migraine Triggerz. *[Laughing]* With a Z for Triggerz.

But no. Let's meanwhile stay here in the present day of 2019, if you're listening from the far future. Or the past. Time travelers, we're in 2019 right now.

And Luke brings a case against Stephanie regarding something she does not like. Tell me about the case, Luke.

00:03:50 Luke Guest So Judge, I'm bringing the case against my wife Stephanie because she refuses to say "bless you" when she hears someone sneeze. And I guess I'm bringing the case for two main reasons.

First, as kinda needy and childish as it may sound, I wish that she would tell me "bless you" after I sneeze, and—and that could have something to do with the fact that—grew up in the South, and come from kind of a "bless you" family.

And then the second reason, and perhaps more importantly, I feel that Steph is kinda missing out on the good will surrounding the "bless you" experience, and by that I mean—

[Stephanie laughs]

—it just feels nice to give and receive "bless you"s, not just to friends and families but also to strangers, and it's kind of a way of creating empathy and good will to our fellow human beings in the world, which is something we could *[laughing lightly]* maybe use more of these days.

So I'd just like for Steph to get in on the enjoyment of the "bless you" experience.

00:04:44 John Host Just get into the enjoyment of religion! Regarding sneezing!

00:04:47 Luke Guest Not "God bless you"! It doesn't have to be religious. Just some kind of acknowledgment.

00:04:52 John Host Could be, uh, "The Great Void bless you."

[Laughing] "Satan bless you!"

00:04:55 Luke Guest *[Laughs.]* Yeah!

00:04:56 John Host "Cthulhu bless you."

"Odin bless you."

00:04:58 Luke Guest Yes! Absolutely.

00:05:00 John Host Alright. When Stephanie sneezes you say "bless you," and Stephanie, you go, "Ugh, stop it."

00:05:05 Stephanie Guest Yeah. Well, because I feel like at this point, it's like he's trying to tease me.

[Luke laughs.]

00:05:11 John Host Oh, he's trolling you with his blessings.

00:05:13 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Stephanie:** Yeah. He's trolling me.

John: Okay. Alright.

00:05:15 John Host 'Cause he knows you don't like it.

00:05:16 Stephanie Guest I think he does it as a reaction, but he knows that he's teasing me.

00:05:20 John Host You guys are married, it says here?

00:05:23 Stephanie & Luke Guest Yes.

00:05:24 John Host Legally wed in 2016, you've been together since 2012, is all that accurate?

00:05:28 Stephanie Guest Correct.

00:05:29 Luke Guest That is correct.

00:05:30 John Host How long has this been a—a problem in your relationship?

00:05:33 Stephanie Guest Probably not since day one, because you don't mention things like that until about month three or four—*[laughing]* I don't know—of dating.

00:05:42 John Host No, the—all the magazines say "don't sneeze in front of your man for at least two years."

00:05:47 Stephanie Guest *[Laughing]* Yeah. Yeah. So I—sneezing, day one. Talking about it, month six, say. I don't know.

00:05:54 John Host Okay. So quite a few years. And why do you dislike it so much? Or being blessed by him?

00:05:58 Stephanie Guest It's not that I mind the being blessed so much. It doesn't come naturally for me to say it. That's kind of why I don't say it. Like, I don't think to say it.

And when he does it, then—it's fine. I—it's not that I mind it, it's just that then I have to kind of *[laughing]* respond, too. And say, "Oh, thank you," you know, or, like—and if he's in the other room, and then I have to yell across the room, "Thank you!"

And—

00:06:23 John Host Oof. *[Laughs.]*

00:06:24 Stephanie Guest —the whole interaction is just kind of unnecessary, *[laughing]* it seems to me.

00:06:29 Jesse Host What's your natural reaction when someone sneezes? Contempt?

00:06:33 Stephanie Guest *[Laughs.]* Nothing! It's just another noise in the world. Just, there's lots of noises in the world and it just kinda passes me by. Just like

someone coughing, or someone dropping a cup across the room.

00:06:46 Jesse Host It's not like you're a lion looking for the most sickly wildebeest.

00:06:49 Stephanie Guest *[Laughing]* No! No, it's just like it just passes through the world, just like any other loud noise.

00:06:57 John Host I had understood this to be that you disliked him saying "bless you" to you, but also you're—begrudge being expected to say "bless you" to him.

00:07:06 Stephanie Guest Uh, yeah!

00:07:07 John Host Which is more important to you? So that I know, like, that he should—that he should lay off the expectation that you bless him?

00:07:13 Stephanie Guest Correct. Yes. That's the more important. Mm-hm.

00:07:16 John Host You don't mind being told "bless you" when you sneeze, 'cause once again, just another noise in the world. Or you mind it less.

Do you have feelings about sneezing in general? Is this a loaded topic for you?

00:07:26 Stephanie Guest No, it—uh—it doesn't weird me out or anything like that.

00:07:29 John Host Okay. Part of the reason that blessings are offered after a sneeze, historically, culturally, in the West, is that a sneeze is a weird, involuntary spasm.

You know, in Ancient Grecian times, you were considered to be touched by one of the Gods when you sneezed. It was a good omen.

Whereas what I remember from my fifth grade urban folklore was that in medieval times, sneezing was an involuntary spasm that meant you might be being possessed by a demon, and therefore—"Quick! Quick! Bless you!"

It is a powerful thing in certain cultures, but not to you. It is obviously powerful to Luke. But you're—you think he should get over himself.

[Stephanie and Luke laugh.]

00:08:10 Stephanie Guest Yeah. I mean, to me it's not any different from, like, coughing or, like, I don't know, having the hiccoughs, or burping, *[laughing]* or something. Like, it's just a—a thing that happens. You know?

00:08:22 John Host Part of our gross reality.

00:08:23 Stephanie Guest Right.

00:08:24 John Host Hey Luke, do you say things when—when Stephanie coughs or burps or farts?

[Stephanie and Luke laugh.]

00:08:31 Luke Guest No I don't, Judge.

00:08:33 John Host So you sent in some evidence, and I have these photos here, and of course these photos are available on the *Judge John Hodgman* page at MaximumFun.org as well as in our Instagram page, [Instagram.com](https://www.instagram.com/judgejohnhodgman)—famous website—[/judgejohnhodgman](https://www.instagram.com/judgejohnhodgman).

And at first glance—I'm looking at these two photos, and the first one, I was like, "Aw, brother."

These people are now just sending in pictures of animals for no reason! Has nothing to do with the case! 'Cause they just want Jesse to react to the cute animals! What a monster I've created.

Well, there are two cute cats here. Jesse, can you see these cats? Lucy and Mouse.

00:09:11 Jesse Host

Awww.

00:09:13 John Host

Yeah. It's cute! They're sleeping butt to butt, as you pointed out.

[Stephanie and Luke laugh.]

Who sent in this picture?

00:09:20 Crosstalk Crosstalk

Luke: I—I guess we did jointly.

Stephanie: Um, I think it was a joint effort.

00:09:22 John Host

Jointly? Oh, yeah, okay. Whoever it is wrote in, "Some folks are allergic to cats, and cause them to sneeze."

Like, that's a stretch, you guys. Stop it.

[Stephanie, Luke, and John laugh.]

I'm happy to look at those cute cats sleeping butt to butt. How old are they?

00:09:37 Stephanie Guest

About 3 and about 13, almost.

00:09:39 John Host

Oh, wow!

00:09:40 Stephanie Guest

Yeah.

00:09:41 John Host

How about that! And they get along okay?

00:09:42 Luke Guest

They do.

00:09:43 Stephanie Guest

Yeah.

00:09:44 John Host

Well, that's good to know!

But then you sent in another photo, which I'm very glad you sent in.

This is, quote, "a picture of the drawer where our handkerchiefs live along with our Koozies. Steph and I"—Luke, you are writing here, obviously—"are both big handkerchief users.

[John and Stephanie laugh.]

They come in handy after a good sneeze, and hopefully a 'bless you.'" Yeah, I got the message there, Luke.

[Luke and Stephanie laugh.]

This drawer is a picture of obsession. *[Laughs.]* And not just one obsession with handkerchiefs, but another, I would say even more

puzzling obsession: Koozies for beverage cans. You have a lot of both! And they're both stored together in one drawer!

00:10:23 Jesse Host John, does your home not have a Koozie and handkerchief drawer?

[Stephanie laughs.]

00:10:27 John Host Sure! No, I mean, of course I have my hanKoozie cubby. *[Laughs.]*

[Jesse and Stephanie laugh.]

00:10:33 Jesse Host I mean, every home built since the Victorian era has had one of those!

[Stephanie laughs.]

00:10:37 John Host In my hanKoozie cubby, I only keep, like, 20 to 30 of each. *[Jesse and Stephanie laugh.]*

And for those of you who—listening at—at home and don't know what a beer Koozie, or a beverage Koozie is, it's a—it's like an insulated sock that you put onto a cold beverage can to keep it cold.

[Laughing] Has nothing to do with sneezing. Has nothing to do with personal hygiene. It's nothing to do with anything, but it's—one, two, three, four, five, six, seven—at least eight in there. And then probably one and a half times as many handkerchiefs.

[Stephanie laughs.]

Uh—why do you have so many handkerchiefs, Luke?

00:11:12 Luke Guest Well, actually the Koozies are kind of more—I take responsibility for those, because along with Koozies and also T-shirts, I kinda use them as collectibles.

So when I go to a—I don't know, a neat place, or someone gives me one for free, I'll put it in the Koozie drawer, and it's the same with T-shirts. And I must admit that the, um, responsibility for the handkerchiefs belongs to Steph.

She put me kinda on track with using handkerchiefs, and it's something that I really enjoy—

[John laughs.]

—but I'll toss it over to her.

00:11:44 John Host *[Stifling laughter]* "Something I really enjoy"?! *[Laughs.]*

I mean, I have handkerchiefs, too! They're great! And of course, as anyone who visits [the Put This On shop](#) knows, a pocket square or a bandanna or a neckerchief can be a great accessory.

But Stephanie, tell me about your love of hankies.

00:12:02 Stephanie Guest Well, ours are fully utilitarian. They're not for looks. But in the winter, you gotta go through a few a day, so that's why the—the volume is there.

00:12:12 Jesse Host Are these cotton or linen?

00:12:13 Stephanie Guest Cotton.

00:12:14 Jesse Host Upgrade your lifestyle.

[Stephanie and Luke laugh.]

00:12:17 Luke Guest And—and also, Judge, if I may add another reason for the volume, is for some reason at the end of the day, I'll end up with like four handkerchiefs in *[laughs]*—in my pocket.

[Stephanie laughs.]

It's kind of like I'll just put one in my pocket and forget about it, and then get another one. I know I'm not doing myself any favor here, but *[Luke and Stephanie laugh]*—but that kinda adds to the—the need for the volume, because I have sticky hands and fingers when it comes to handkerchiefs, I guess.

00:12:38 John Host Wait a minute, do you mean literally sticky? Or you're—you're stealing them from—?

[Luke and Stephanie laugh.]

00:12:42 Luke Guest No! No—

00:12:43 John Host I'm not sure which is—which is better. *[John and Luke laugh.]*

00:12:46 Luke Guest *[Laughing]* Right—

00:12:47 John Host "I have sticky hands, and I'm a thief!"

[Luke and Stephanie laugh.]

00:12:51 Luke Guest Yeah, they just end up in my pockets. And the reason why it was a big deal to me is I was coming from a place where, when I would sneeze and I'd need to try to—not to *[laughs]* gross anyone out, but like, maybe use like a cotton—like a cotton napkin or something, and so when you go from using a cotton napkin to a nice hanky, it's really an upgrade.

00:13:09 Jesse Host You haven't used a nice hanky; we just confirmed that you're using cotton instead of linen!

00:13:14 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Luke:** That's—

Stephanie: Cotton is more flexible and pliable! It's thinner.

00:13:17 Jesse Host A linen handkerchief is gonna be softer, it's gonna be more absorbent, it's an overall better handkerchief experience.

Not that there's anything wrong, fundamentally, with a cotton handkerchief, other than it not being the superior linen handkerchief. It will still work.

00:13:33 Stephanie Guest Cotton dries faster, though.

00:13:35 Jesse Host Linen dries faster!

[Everyone laughs.]

[Laughing] Sorry! I hate to correct all of your textile assumptions, but

as a textile professional, I have to say you're wrong on all fronts.

00:13:44 John Host Luke and Stephanie, permission to privately address my bailiff for a moment, please?

00:13:48 Luke Guest *[Laughing]* Oh, sure.

00:13:49 John Host Thank you.

Jesse—I wear linen shirts from time to time, and they're scratchy to me! And my cotton shirts are soft! How is it that what you're saying can be true?

00:13:58 Jesse Host Well, you're probably not wearing particularly high quality linen shirts.

00:14:03 John Host That's probably true.

00:14:04 Jesse Host But linen certainly is more absorbent and dries faster. Those are two of the great reasons to use linen. The main reason we don't use linen in shirts as much is simply that it wrinkles much more, which is not an issue with handkerchiefs.

00:14:19 John Host And the Put This On handkerchief that I found last night in my laundry pile, would that be a linen handkerchief?

00:14:25 Jesse Host Yeah, our kind of go-to, the sort of first Put This On pocket squares, is white linen. And that is white Irish linen. It's the good stuff.

I would say, like, if people are looking for something to blow their nose on, you could go on Etsy or eBay or—or another secondhand store and look for old linen handkerchiefs that are still in their bags or boxes.

You might be surprised at how freely available they are and how affordable they are, just because they were a common gift item and the way that people blew their nose until the seventies or so.

00:15:00 John Host You don't wanna carry around a little linen sachet of snot in your pocket all day long? I understand. They're better to me than the—Kleenexes and the disposable tissues (*tiss-yoos*) just make me sneeze more!

They just give off that tissue (*tiss-yoo*) dust. I'm saying "tissue" (*tiss-yoo*) in a funny way on purpose. *[Stephanie laughs.]* That's not how I actually say "tissue" (*tish-oo*); I'm sorry.

Thank you, Luke and Stephanie, for letting me—clarifying that with my good friend and bailiff Jesse Thorn.

00:15:22 John Host I wanna get back to a second here, Luke. You *[laughs]*—your upgrade was not to linen, but in fact to a cotton handkerchief from a cotton table napkin, which leads me to believe that either you had previously been walking around with table napkins in your pockets—wrong!—

[Luke and Stephanie laugh.]

—or you had been stealing table napkins from restaurants—wrong—or you had been blowing your nose in cloth napkins at restaurants! Which is wrongest of all! Which were you, wrong, wrong, or wrongest?

[Stephanie laughs.]

00:15:48 Luke Guest I'd—I'd have to go with wrongest, Judge, but I was—and thinking of when I said that, is you know when you go to a kind of a fast food establishment and they give you napkins along with whatever you're ordering.

00:15:58 John Host Oh, you're talking about paper napkins.

00:15:59 Luke Guest Paper napkins! Not cotton, sorry Judge. That was the upgrade for me. Paper napkins to cotton handkerchiefs.

00:16:06 John Host And you, uh, both—you live in Tennessee, is that what it says here?

00:16:09 Luke Guest We live in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

00:16:11 John Host Chattanooga, Tennessee?!

A man on an airplane who was going back to Chattanooga told me Chattanooga was Broadbandville, USA. Is that true? Fiber optic stem to stern down there in Chattanooga?

00:16:25 Stephanie Guest That's correct! Yeah.

00:16:26 Luke Guest That is correct. It's one of the many wonderful things about our great city.

00:16:30 John Host Tell me one other one. Not that I'm skeptical, *[Luke laughs]* I'm—I just am curious.

00:16:35 Luke Guest *[Beat.]*

Well, it—it's just a beautiful city. It's nestled in the foothills of the Appalachian mountains along the Tennessee River. Lots of things to do outdoors. Two weekends ago we went rafting down the Ocoee River.

Uh, hiking. You know, world-class climbing. I feel like I'm a member of the Chattanooga Tourism Board, but it really is a wonderful place.

00:16:54 John Host Eastern Tennessee?

00:16:55 Luke Guest Yeah, southeastern Tennessee.

00:16:57 John Host Mountain area.

00:16:58 Luke Guest Yes.

00:16:59 John Host Right. And how about choo-choos; you have any choo-choos there?

[Luke laughs.]

00:17:01 Stephanie Guest We're—yeah, we do!

00:17:02 Luke Guest *[Laughing]* Yeah. Great city for choo-choos.

00:17:03 John Host How far are you from Knoxville?

00:17:04 Stephanie Guest About an hour and a half.

00:17:05 John Host Oh! I liked Knoxville a lot, and I haven't been there for a long time. I'll have to come see you guys.

00:17:09 Luke Guest You can borrow one of our handkerchiefs if you come visit. *[Luke, Stephanie, and John laugh.]*

00:17:12 John Host Can I use your computer? I need to download some files. *[Luke and Stephanie laugh.]*

00:17:15 Luke Guest Sounds good.

00:17:16 Stephanie Guest Yeah.

00:17:17 John Host *[Laughs.]* Alright. And what do you do there in Tennessee, Stephanie?

00:17:20 Stephanie Guest I work for the State of Tennessee, in the Division of Air Pollution Control.

00:17:25 John Host Oh, alright! And, uh, Luke, how do you spend your time? Aside from working for the Chattanooga Choo-Choo Tourist Board?

[Luke and Stephanie laugh.]

00:17:31 Luke Guest Uh—I'm an attorney.

00:17:33 John Host So the reason I asked about where you were from is like, where are you getting your paper napkins from before?

[Luke and Stephanie laugh.]

Any good chains? Any good local, uh, Mom-and-Pop burger joints that I should know about? Or, you know, if you're just going to Sonic or whatever. I don't know. Waffle House? You have a Waffle House there?

00:17:46 Luke Guest Oh, yeah!

00:17:47 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Luke:** Definitely

Stephanie: Absolutely.

00:17:48 Luke Guest We have a—have a—several Waffle Houses, and they do have a high quality of paper napkin.

00:17:53 John Host Yeah. *[Luke laughs.]* And what drawer do you keep all your stolen Waffle House napkins in?

00:17:57 Luke Guest *[Laughs.]* Uh, the one just below our Koozie and handkerchief drawer.

00:18:01 Jesse Host Let's take a quick recess. We'll be back in just a moment on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

00:18:05 Sound Effect Transition *[Three gavel bangs.]*

00:18:07 Promo Clip *[Background music.]*

Will Campos: Since the dawn of time, screenwriters have taken months to craft their stories! But now, three Hollywood professionals shall attempt the impossible: break a story in one hour!

[Music change.]

Freddie Wong: That's right! Here on Story Break, I, Freddie Wong—

Matt Arnold: —Matt Arnold—

Will: —and Will Campos—

Freddie: —the creators behind award-winning shows like Video Game High School—

Matt: —have one hour to turn a humble idea into an awesome movie.

00:18:29 Promo Clip

Will: Now, an awesome movie starts with an awesome title.

Matt: I chose The Billionaire's Marriage Valley.

Freddie: *[Stifling laughter]* Mine was Christmas Pregnant Paradise. *[Everyone laughs.]*

Matt: Okay, next we need a protagonist.

Will: So I've heard Wario best described as *[laughing]* Libertarian Mario. *[Someone laughs.]*

Freddie: And of course, every great movie needs a stellar pitch.

Will: In order to get to Heaven, sometimes you gotta raise a little hell.

Freddie: Ha-ha, that's the tagline! *[Someone laughs.]* Check out *Story Break* every week on MaximumFun.org, or wherever you get your podcasts.

00:18:55 Sound Effect Transition

[Three gavel bangs.]

00:18:57 Jesse Host

Court is back in session! Let's return to the courtroom for more justice.

00:19:02 John Host

So who does the laundry in this house?

00:19:04 Stephanie Guest

We both do.

00:19:05 John Host

So Stephanie, is there ever a case where you're throwing some laundry in or taking some laundry out of the dryer that belongs to Luke, and you discover that his pockets are stuffed with *[stifling laughter]* Koozies and handkerchiefs?

00:19:14 Stephanie Guest

Every single week, yeah. *[Someone laughs.]*

00:19:15 John Host

Really?

00:19:16 Stephanie Guest

All the time. Yeah. *[Laughs.]*

00:19:18 John Host

How did the Koozies and the handkerchiefs come to live together? We'll get back to your case in a minute, but there's a lot that I need to—

[Stephanie and Luke laugh.]

How did you decide—"Augh! You got your Koozie on my handkerchief!" "You got your handkerchief next to my Koozie!"

[Stephanie laughs.]

"Hey, you know what? This tastes great."

00:19:30 Stephanie Guest

They're accessible to everyone in the house. We actually got rid of a

lot. We Marie Kondo'd, uh, those Koozies at one point. So—

00:19:39 John Host You're talking about simplifying your life by getting rid of things you don't really need anymore?

00:19:42 Stephanie Guest *[Thinking noise]* Ehhh—*[laughs]*. Like Koozies. Excessive amounts.

00:19:45 John Host Oh, so you got rid of a lot of Koozies?

00:19:47 Stephanie Guest Mm—yes. And we still have a lot. Yeah. *[Laughs.]*

00:19:49 Luke Guest And Steph really—to be fair, doesn't really ever use the Koozies. Those are primarily mine, and like I say, it's—they're kind of more collectibles to a degree, but also, we have friends over and, you know, a lot of times people want Koozies.

So they're useful things to have around, but I guess I should kinda take more responsibility for the *[laughs]*—for the number of Koozies.

00:20:11 John Host So when you're at a party at Luke and Stephanie's, you might be going around and it's like, "Anybody, Koozie? Kerchief? Koozie? Hanky?"

[Luke laughs.]

00:20:17 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Stephanie:** Yeah!

Luke: Right.

Stephanie: Yeah.

00:20:18 Luke Guest A couple of the Koozies are from friends' weddings, so they're kind of mementos. Few are from trips that we've been on, and like I said I kind of have a Koozie and a T-shirt problem.

00:20:27 John Host As long as you've got a system, then there's no problem. I don't think you have a problem. As you know, the precedent on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast is "what separates a hoarder from a collector is a display mechanism."

00:20:37 Jesse Host I'll tell you this, John. The precedent on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast certainly isn't "as long as you've got a system, there's no problem."

[John and Stephanie laugh.]

00:20:45 John Host *[Laughing]* No, but it's—I mean to say specifically a system that—his Koozie fascination isn't out of control. They're stored neatly, and they are in use.

How many handkerchiefs do you think a person should have, Jesse Thorn?

00:20:56 Jesse Host Well, I mean, it depends on how often you're carrying a handkerchief. I don't have particularly severe seasonal allergies, so I'm really only carrying one when I have a—a full-on cold.

In which case, you know, five or six is plenty. I just do the laundry regularly. *[Laughing]* But I think given the lifestyle we've heard described on this episode so far—

[John laughs]

—which is pretty sneezing-centric, then it—it seems like the number that they have, which looks like maybe 15 or 20, is pretty appropriate.

00:21:24 John Host It would suggest that sneezing is a big part of your lives. Do you have allergies, Luke? Do you sneeze a lot? Does Stephanie sneeze a lot?

00:21:32 Luke Guest Uh, I don't have allergies, and I wouldn't say that we sneeze more than usual. Would you, babe?

00:21:38 Stephanie Guest No, I don't think we're big-time—I don't think we have major allergies. I think we have a little bit of allergies, but we live in an area that's got a lot of pollen during allergy season.

00:21:47 John Host Yeah, that's what I heard about Chattanooga! Pollentown!

00:21:50 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** Broadband, Pollentown.

Luke: Mm-hm.

[Luke and Stephanie laugh.]

00:21:53 Stephanie Guest Yeah.

00:21:54 John Host Do you ever say "bless you" to Luke?

00:21:56 Stephanie Guest I absolutely do. *[Laughing]* I have been doing it especially since he brought this case against me.

00:22:01 John Host Why have you been doing it especially since he brought the case against you?

00:22:05 Stephanie Guest Because—well, okay. So when I do it, though, it's not natural and it's not probably out of kindness. I know he's expecting it and it is kind of like there's a—anticipation in the room until it happens.

So I have to like, finish his sneeze by saying "bless you" or it's never gonna be finished.

00:22:23 John Host Luke, how do you feel if you sneeze and you hear nothing?

00:22:26 Luke Guest Well, I—to be fair, *[laughing]* this has been going on for several years, so I—I don't real—and then I feel like I've kinda poisoned the well when it comes to the "bless you"s with regard to stuff, because the first time I sneezed around Stephanie and, like, there was kinda no acknowledgment or anything, I—I literally thought it was like, "Huh, she—she just must not have heard me."

[John laughs.]

Because, I mean, that's just what *[Luke and Stephanie laugh]*—that—that's what people are—you know, that's just the thing you do!

00:22:51 Luke Guest And then after a few times, I was like, "Huh." And so I finally addressed it, and Steph does not come from a "bless you" family. So I certainly recognize that my kinda—it's—I wouldn't call it a need, but certainly it sounds needy and childish. But that's not the only reason I brought the case.

Perhaps an even more important reason is that I really do think that

it's a good way to kinda promote good will towards fellow humans, even if they're perfect strangers. And—and you can kinda identify "bless you" people.

Say you're in, like, an elevator and someone sneezes, and then you hear somebody else in the elevator say "bless you," you're like, "Oh, that—that's my people!" You know? That's, uh—

[Jesse laughs.]

That's the kind of person that—*[laughing]* that's a person that gets it.

- 00:23:29 John Host You're correct that it's a fairly common courtesy. I mean, I would say—you know, honestly, Stephanie—I mean, is the term "bless you" in particular offensive to you?
- 00:23:39 Stephanie Guest I just kind of feel like it shouldn't be another person's sort of responsibility to respond to everyone else's sneeze. Like, I think the sneeze is your sneeze, and it's your kind of—you should say "excuse me," like you would if you coughed or anything else.
- 00:23:55 Jesse Host You see a sneeze as a matter of personal responsibility? *[Jesse and Stephanie laugh.]*
- 00:23:59 Stephanie Guest Well, I mean I just don't think it should necessarily be my responsibility to kind of say something about it all the time.
- 00:24:06 Jesse Host Right! That's the American dream! To live free of the burden of other people's sneezes. *[Luke laughs.]*
- 00:24:11 Stephanie Guest *[Laughing]* Right.
- 00:24:12 Jesse Host That's why we pressed ever westward, to get further and further from sneezers. *[Luke laughs.]*
- 00:24:17 Stephanie Guest I don't mind if everyone's sneezing around me. I just don't think they should expect that I should say something to them.
- 00:24:24 Jesse Host You don't think your tax dollars should go to their sneezes. *[John laughs.]*
- 00:24:29 Stephanie Guest *[Laughing]* Correct.
- 00:24:30 John Host A sneeze on your part does not constitute an empathy emergency on my part.
- What do you think, Luke? I mean, you travel through the world obviously much more attuned to this issue than I am.
- I feel like sneezing in mean New York City is—well, it's pretty common that someone will say "bless you" or something like that.
- 00:24:47 Luke Guest In—in my experience, and I—like I said, I think maybe even more so in the South, it's kind of a common courtesy. So not hearing it maybe stands out a little bit more to me than someone who else—you know, maybe another part of the country where they're not—if there is such a part of the country, where they're not as accustomed to saying "bless you"?
- 00:25:05 John Host What parts of the country are you talking about? I feel like I'm getting into some real cultural code here.
- 00:25:10 Luke Guest *[Laughs.]* That wasn't meaning to speak in code. Only to say that,

like I said, I think perhaps the South has a reputation of being—you know, maybe more courteous?

00:25:19 Stephanie Guest Well, I think the South uses more flourish sometimes in their language. Like, you'll say "honey" and "baby" and "darling" and all that stuff.

00:25:27 Luke Guest Yeah, like "bless your heart" and that. *[Laughs.]*

00:25:29 John Host You wouldn't say "bless your heart" after a sneeze.

00:25:31 Jesse Host *[Stifling laughter]* Well, if it was a particularly foolish sneeze. *[The others laugh.]*

00:25:35 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** "Oh, bless your heart—"

Luke: Um—

John: "—sneezing again." *[Stephanie and Luke laugh.]*

00:25:38 John Host People say "bless you" all the time here in New York City! We're real America too, you know! *[Stephanie laughs.]*

00:25:44 Luke Guest I—I—uh, no—no disrespect.

00:25:47 John Host But I mean—I feel like I didn't quite drill down on what I wanted to ask you, Stephanie, which is: is there an element to the religious component of "bless you" that makes you more uncomfortable, say, than "gesundheit," which is like, "good health," or "can I get you a hanky from my drawer?" or something?

Is there an extra charge to "bless you" than anything else you might say? Or is that not an issue for you?

00:26:13 Stephanie Guest So—like, I've been told—and the reason I used my prepared answer, uh, that book *Quiet*, is that I've been told I was quiet my whole life. And so I asked my sister about this issue, and does she say "bless you," and she—well, her response was "Only if I know they can hear me."

And for me, that was really, *[laughs]* like, interesting, 'cause I'm like—it's been a problem for me, especially.

You know, and—and if I'm—and if—certainly if there's other people in the area, they'll always say "bless you," and I'll never have to say it. But if it's just me alone with someone and they're, like, across the room or in another room, then I'll have to like, yell.

[Laughing] And I really don't wanna have to do that. You know? Like, I just would rather just be in my own little, like, world, just stay where I was in my mind, thinking whatever I was doing, washing the dishes.

Rather than yell across the house when *[laughs]* someone sneezes.

00:27:03 John Host Not to be too presumptuous, but based on your voice, I would guess that you are not from one of the misanthropic coastal elite cities where people don't say "honey baby" to each other all the time.

[Stephanie laughs.]

It sounds like you might be from Tennessee or from the American

South. Is that true, or—or do I have that wrong?

00:27:23 Stephanie Guest Yeah. I grew up in Chattanooga.

00:27:24 John Host You grew up in Chattanooga! Alright. Did you grow up as well, Luke? In Chattanooga?

00:27:29 Luke Guest Yes! Yes, I did. Oddly enough had a lot of mutual friends growing up, but it wasn't until after I came back from law school that we both kinda connected.

00:27:37 John Host Lovely!

So this is not a difference in your broader cultural upbringing; you're both from the exact same hometown. There's a—it's just a—

00:27:44 Stephanie Guest Well—

00:27:45 John Host Well? Go ahead. Please.

00:27:46 Stephanie Guest My parents didn't say "bless you." They're not from the South, necessarily. My mom is from New York.

00:27:53 John Host Ohhh, okay. One of those creeps.

00:27:54 Jesse Host So she would say, *[putting on an exaggerated New York accent]* "Hey, I'm walking here!"

00:27:57 John Host "Heyyy!"

[Luke and Stephanie laugh.]

00:27:59 Stephanie Guest I don't think that's why she didn't say it, because I've surveyed other family members. Her sisters and my cousins and stuff, and they do say it. So that's not why.

But to me it's not so much a geographic issue. It's more of a... introversion, perhaps?

To me a sneeze doesn't have to be, like, transactional.

00:28:17 John Host *[Laughs.]* Has anyone outside your relationship noticed or commented on the presence or lack of "bless you"s? Has this been noted by anyone who is not Luke?

00:28:30 Stephanie Guest No, but I've asked my brother and sister if they say it, too, 'cause I told them that—*[laughing]* that he always brings it up.

My two younger, uh, siblings said that it's crazy and they never say it and—you know. Their, you know, significant others are—others or spouses don't seem to mind.

00:28:48 John Host Hm. Just Luke is hung up on it. *[Luke and Stephanie laugh.]*

00:28:51 Stephanie Guest *[Laughing]* Correct.

00:28:53 John Host Now that it's become such a thing, when he says "bless you," do you feel like he's teasing you or trolling you?

00:29:00 Stephanie Guest Yeah!

00:29:01 John Host Does he, like, go over the top in any way? Does he say it in a particularly, like—*[mocking voice]* "Bleehss youuu."

[Luke and Stephanie laugh.]

00:29:08 Stephanie Guest *[Laughing]* Yes! Yeah, he says, "Bless you," and he says, "Doesn't that feel nice, to hear that?"

00:29:13 John Host *[Gasps.]* Ohhh! *[A drawn out, groaning laugh.]*

[Someone else laughs, followed by a beat of silence.]

00:29:21 Stephanie Guest Would you say that Luke is more extroverted than you are?
Yes.

00:29:22 John Host Hm. Interesting. And Luke, there's one thing I wanted to drill down on again as well.

Let's say you were to sneeze right now, and there was total silence. Or let me put it this way: when you sneeze, and it's just you and Stephanie in the room and there's just dead silence, how do you feel?

00:29:39 Luke Guest I'll go back to how I felt, you know, right when I discovered this—I don't wanna call it an issue, that's probably too strong a word.

But it—it kinda made me feel *[laughs]* like, confused, I guess?

00:29:49 John Host Mm-hm?

00:29:50 Luke Guest And a little, you know, just kind of—not acknowledged in a way that I am used to being acknowledged, which again I realize sounds kind of needy and childish.

And it's such a simple thing to do. I mean it's literally just saying two words. So I—I guess I didn't understand why Steph knowing that it's an important thing to me, as *[laughs]*—I—I guess as silly as that may sound, like why she couldn't just kind of humor me and say it.

00:30:21 John Host Interesting.

See, what I was trying to get at was like, did you feel—'cause it's such a cultural touchstone; it was such a cultural habit in your growing up for someone to say "bless you" after you sneeze, that you might feel a little anxious to hear silence.

A little like there's something missing in this communication circuit, or maybe a little worry that you're gonna be, uh, possessed by a demon unless Stephanie speaks up.

00:30:44 Luke Guest Right, and I'll acknowledge that there's certainly a degree on my end just because I was so accustomed to it, of—maybe of almost, like, superstition, where even if I hear someone sneeze—and this might sound odd and weird, but whatever.

Like if I hear someone sneeze, I'll still kinda under my breath say "bless you" to them, *[laughing]* even if I know they can't hear me, *[someone laughs quietly]* because, uh, I think that, like, there's maybe some kind of superstition, like, neuroses that I have, so—

And I hate to make, you know, Steph kinda bear that burden of kinda itching that scratch, but yeah, like you said, if I—if I sneeze and I don't hear anything, like, it—it is kind of like, um, something's just hanging out there. It's anxious.

00:31:27 John Host Are there any other areas in life where you feel possessed by intrusive magical thoughts?

[Luke and Stephanie laugh.]

00:31:35 Luke Guest No, I don't think so, Judge.

00:31:36 John Host Any other superstitions?

00:31:38 Luke Guest I will knock on wood! If, like, you know, I say something, I'll—you know, and I—I don't know, don't wanna jinx myself, I'll knock on wood.

Nothing else really springs to mind, but—yeah, I—I guess to some degree it is kind of a—a compulsion that Steph kinda has to bear the brunt of. *[Laughs lightly.]*

00:31:54 John Host So if I were to find in your favor, Luke, you would ask me to order Stephanie to say "bless you" after you sneeze, at the very least.

00:32:03 Luke Guest The order would be just for like, a length of time. For maybe, like, a month, or three weeks, to kind of, like, give, like meaningful "bless you"s to—not just to me, but maybe even to other people, to see if, like, she actually enjoys it?

Because I've—like I said, I feel like I've poisoned the *[laughing]* "bless you" well with Stephanie, so—but just for her to give it kind of a—a good faith, college effort for a finite period of time, and then an evaluation to see if, in fact, she actually enjoys the practice.

00:32:37 John Host And Stephanie, what would you have me order if I were to rule in your favor?

00:32:40 Stephanie Guest I would just ask that I be left to kind of decide for myself when I feel comfortable to give out a "bless you."

I do say "bless you" sometimes if I feel like the situation warrants it. Like my daughter, she said that she'll say it, like, if she's trapped in an elevator with someone because she feels like they're—it would be awkward not to say anything.

00:33:01 John Host Mm-hm.

00:33:02 Stephanie Guest *[Laughing]* But—so like, in a situation like that, I will do it. Like, if no one else is around and I'm in close quarters with someone, I will say it just because I know that it's sort of a thing that people expect.

But like, at home and stuff like that, I just wanna kinda be left to be quiet if I'm being quiet, if I don't wanna talk, or if—you know, *[laughing]* holler across the room or whatever.

00:33:22 John Host But at home, where you're with your loved one, love means never having to say "bless you."

00:33:27 Stephanie Guest Yeah! Kinda! I feel. Like, you know—

00:33:30 John Host Even though he says it's important to him.

00:33:32 Stephanie Guest Yeah. I guess—yeah. He does have his thing where it feels like it's incomplete if it's not said. I get that.

00:33:38 John Host Is he needy in any other way like this, *[Luke and Stephanie laugh]* where he needs to be seen or validated?

00:33:51 Stephanie Guest Maybe a little late to open up this can of worms. *[They laugh again.]*
[Laughing] Yeah...
[John laughs.]
I mean, not in—*[breaks off, laughing]*.

He likes to be told he's doing a good job when he's doing a good job. You know, he's—he likes to be thanked for things he does. Like probably more so than, like, the house I grew up in, probably.

Much more acknowledgment went on in his childhood than in mine, probably, *[laughing]* so that's probably the difference, you know?

So like, he'll ask to be acknowledged for things that I would—it would never occur to me to like, be like, "Oh, great! You did that! That's great." You know.

00:34:24 John Host That's very interesting. I think I've heard everything I need to in order to make my decision. I am going to go into my cleanroom of a chambers and get into my hyperbaric chamber and consider this.
I'll be back in a moment with my decision.

00:34:36 Sound Effect Sound Effect *[Footsteps. Chairs scrape on the floor during Jesse's next line.]*

00:34:37 Jesse Host Please rise as Judge John Hodgman exits the courtroom.

00:34:40 Sound Effect Sound Effect *[Door closes.]*

00:34:41 Jesse Host Did the two of you know there's a whole Wikipedia article called "Response to Sneezing"? And it's just a list of what every culture in the world does?
The infrequent Vietnamese response is—and forgive me, Vietnamese speakers, for my pronunciation; I'm—I'm looking at it in English. And also couldn't read it if it was written in—in Vietnamese.
"Com muối," (*cuhm moy*), which means "rice with salt."
[Luke and Stephanie laugh.]

00:35:08 Luke Guest I like it.

00:35:09 Jesse Host My favorite is Igbo—and again, apologies to any Igbo speakers, but it's "ndo," (*nn-doh*), which just means "sorry!"
I like that one 'cause it's kinda shady. You know? Like—"Ehhh. That's on you, dude."

00:35:21 Luke Guest Strong. *[Stephanie laughs.]* And maybe—

00:35:23 Stephanie Guest I—I agree with those. I like those.

00:35:25 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Luke:** You could choose one of those from the list. That'd be good to hear those.
Stephanie: *[Laughing]* Yeah. Just choose from the list.

[Both laugh.]

00:35:29 Jesse Host But I'm a big fan of the Spanish language version, which typically the response, at least in Latin America is "salud," which means "to health," or "to your health," just as "gesundheit" does.

But in some places in Latin America, some people say "salud" the first time and then the second time they say "dinero," and the third time, "amor," meaning "health," "money," and "love."

00:35:48 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Luke:** I like it!

Stephanie: Aw.

00:35:49 Stephanie Guest It's very complicated. *[She and Luke laugh.]*

00:35:52 Jesse Host I also—I also like the people who just have—who just have nonsense words, like "prosit" is what they say in Sweden, and it just has no meaning.

[Luke and Stephanie laugh.]

How do you feel about your chances in the case, Stephanie?

00:36:06 Stephanie Guest *[Sighing]* Ugh. I don't know. Okay. Not great.

00:36:11 Jesse Host How do you feel about having been forced to make noises this whole time?

[Stephanie and Luke laugh.]

00:36:16 Stephanie Guest Very stressful.

00:36:17 Jesse Host Luke, how are you feeling about your chances?

00:36:19 Luke Guest Not so great, *[laughing]* to be honest with you, Jesse. Uh, not so great. I know that the judge, uh, typically doesn't, uh, like to force people to do things that they don't wanna do, so I think I'm kind of on shaky ground precedentially, but—yeah.

00:36:35 Jesse Host Well, we'll see what Judge Hodgman has to say about all of it when we come back in just a second on *Judge John Hodgman*.

00:36:42 Sound Effect Transition *[Three gavel bangs.]*

00:36:44 Promo Clip *[Music.]*

Janet Varney: Hi! I'm Janet Varney, and like many of you—brand new sentient robots excluded—I used to be a teenager. In fact, just about all of my friends were, too!

Including folks like comedian Danielle Radford.

[Into interview.]

Danielle Radford: And of course all of us, you—you take on that theatre accent, and our teacher would say, "No, that isn't how people talk!"

Janet: Right?!

Danielle: "Don't do the super theatre kid accent; it's the worst!"

But so when I was doing theatre in high school, of course I immediately was talking about [*pseudo-British accent*] being in the theatre.

Janet: [*Laughing*] Uh-huh?

[*Both laugh.*]

[*Out of interview.*]

Janet: So join me every week on the *JV Club* podcast, where I speak with my favorite women artists, innovators, and humans as we reminisce about the past and how it led us to becoming who we are.

Find it every Thursday on Maximum Fun.

00:37:27 Sound Effect Transition

[*Three gavel bangs.*]

00:37:29 Jesse Promo

We're taking a quick break from the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast to tell you, first and foremost, that Judge John Hodgman himself has a brand new book right around the corner!

00:37:40 John Promo

[*Laughs.*] That's true! I—I've laid one copy around every corner in the United States. [*Jesse laughs.*] So all you have to do is run around that corner and grab it, but if it's gone already, don't worry.

You can go to Bit.ly/MEDALLIONSTATUS, all one word, all capital letters, to order your book now from your favorite online retailer or indie bound or pre-order from a local independent bookshop. Whichever you like.

Medallion Status. It's the new book by me, John Hodgman. I hope you enjoy it.

Also another option if you couldn't find it around the corner—come see us on tour and get a copy there! Jesse Thorn, we're going out on the road again! Where are we going?

00:38:17 Jesse Promo

We're going to Toronto, Ontario on November 6th at Danforth Music Hall.

On the 7th we're headed to Durham, North Carolina, the Carolina Theatre.

Then the next day, the 8th, we'll be in Atlanta at the Variety Playhouse.

On the 10th we'll be in Washington, DC—that's our nation's capital—at the Lincoln Theatre.

Then on the 11th, we'll be in Portland, Maine—that's in New England, which is a region of the United States. Oh yeah, we're playing *The State* right there in Portland, Maine!

Just go to MaximumFun.org for all of our tour dates and ticket links. You can find them in the calendar on the right-hand side of the page,

and if you live in or near one of those places and you don't come... the shame is on you!

00:38:59 John Promo *[Laughs.]* Yes, that's right. You should be ashamed if you don't come to our show. *[He and Jesse laugh quietly.]*

But honestly, I'm begging you to come to our show, *[Jesse laughs]* 'cause it's better when you're there!

We're gonna have fun live cases; we're gonna be, uh, adjudicating cases live from the stage; people up—out there in the mob of the audience can yell out their anger. It's very cathartic.

Books will be for sale. Merch will be for sale. Jesse and I will be hanging around after the show to sign each and every last thing you want to bring to us, and to say hello to you 'cause we're so fond of you.

00:39:30 John Promo So check out the MaximumFun.org events page, check out JohnHodgman.com/tour, or wherever you get *[laughing]* your *Judge John Hodgman* tour details; I think those are the only two places.

Come see us on the road. *Live Justice*, this fall.

00:39:45 Jesse Promo I'm'a sing.

00:39:46 John Promo Yeah! You gonna sing this time, Jesse?

00:39:48 Jesse Promo Yeah, I know what you're thinking, audience. "Jesse, I didn't know you were a singer." Yeah, I'm not! This is something I'm doing for you!

00:39:54 John Promo Are you gonna play the ukulele again?

00:39:56 Jesse Promo Yeah, I'm gonna play a musical instrument and sing.

00:39:59 John Promo *Judge John Hodgman: Live Justice*. Guess what? Jesse's gonna sing.

00:40:03 Jesse Promo What is this, the musical I was in my junior year of high school?

00:40:07 John Promo What was the musical you were in junior year of high school?

00:40:09 Jesse Promo *Little Shop of Horrors*.

00:40:10 John Promo Oh! You gonna sing from that?

00:40:11 Jesse Promo Nope!

00:40:12 John Promo Okay.

00:40:13 Jesse Promo Different song.

00:40:14 John Promo Mm.

[Singing] Liittle shop, liittle shop of podcasts! Bop-do-wop! MaximumFun.oorg! Liittle shop! Liittle shop of podcasts! *[Beat.] My... Brooother, My Brother and Meee.*

00:40:26 Jesse Promo *[Stifling laughter]* Let's get back to the case.

00:40:27 Sound Effect Transition *[Three gavel bangs.]*

[Chairs scrape on the floor during Jesse's next line, also accompanied by footsteps.]

00:40:29 Jesse Host Please rise as Judge John Hodgman re-enters the courtroom and presents his verdict.

00:40:34 Sound Effect Sound Effect *[Door shuts.]*

00:40:35 John Host First of all, Luke, I would like to offer you validation. I see you. You did a good job.

[Luke and Stephanie laugh.]

00:40:43 Luke Guest Thank you, Judge.

00:40:44 John Host Bless you, Luke.

Stephanie, while you do not need to hear this because you are not addicted to acknowledgment in the way Luke is, I understand that this was stressful to you to some degree, as a more introverted person, and you did a great job.

It is, of course, the point of etiquette—the rituals that we have around interactions at the table and in elevators and everywhere else—it is to make everyone feel comfortable.

And I think that that's what Luke is trying to get at, which is that this is a—a polite gesture to say, "I hope you're feeling okay," essentially.

But of course, if saying "bless you" and feeling a social obligation to say "thank you" to someone else's "bless you" genuinely makes Stephanie uncomfortable, well now we've got two issues of comfort that are coming into collision.

00:41:32 John Host And one of the things that is true about this particular collision is that unlike "pardon me" and "excuse me," which you would naturally say when you farted, burped, or coughed—because you feel a *[laughing]* burden for putting your germs and smells into the world, especially if you are in an elevator—

[Luke and Stephanie laugh]

—the sneeze is a highly charged thing, as I alluded to earlier. In Western European culture, at least, this is something that has a certain charge to it. And I appreciate why it has a certain extra charge to Luke.

I have a hard time saying "bless you" to people. And it is because I try not to use any religiously inflected language. I am an agnostic. I lean towards atheism, but I think it is the height of arrogance to suggest that there may not be something outside of our perception in this reality. And therefore I simply say "I don't know."

But I do know that when someone sneezes, it's not because Apollo has touched their brow, or that Beelzebub is poking his finger—his pointy finger up your nose. And to me it feels weirdly—I almost wanna say heretical to my belief system to bless someone else. Even if it's to make them feel nicer.

00:42:46 John Host I don't even know what I would say. I guess I do say it, but I kinda flinch. It's charged! There's superstition involved here! And I'm not a

superstitious person, but I am someone who, until probably the age of 35, still believed somewhere deep in his heart that if I was still in the bathroom after the toilet finished flushing, Satan was gonna get me.

I was convinced of this.

[Luke and Stephanie laugh.]

Even if you are in a room with your loved one and you know that she's not about to be possessed by the devil, or you're not gonna be possessed by the devil, to not hear that conclusion of the culturally established communication cycle—to borrow some Scientology terminology—

00:43:24 John Host

"Achoo." "Gesundheit."

"Achoo." "Bless you."

You can feel a little cutoff from there.

I get where you're coming from on this, Luke. I feel you. Okay? I acknowledge you. I validate you. Bless you.

[Luke and Stephanie laugh.]

00:43:34 Luke Guest

Thank you, Judge. *[Laughing]* Thank you.

00:43:37 John Host

But you're right! You poisoned the well, man! Because the whole point of this, the whole argument that you're making to me coming into this courtroom is, it makes everyone feel good!

"Doesn't it feel good to say and receive 'bless you's? That makes everyone feel good and Stephanie's missing out on this!"

But when you say "bless you" to her, you're not saying it to make her feel good, you're saying it to shame her! *[Laughs.]*

You're saying, *[laughing]* "Doesn't that feel good?" She doesn't need you bless-shaming! *[Laughs.]*

If she says it to you, fine! *[Stephanie laughs.]* Good! If you say it to her, be generous!

00:44:14 John Host

I'd like to read to you a little quote from a book. It's a short thing from a book called *Medallion Status* by me, John Hodgman, the new book by John Hodgman.

Available at Bit.ly/MEDALLIONSTATUS, all capital letters, all one word. It'll take you to wherever you like to buy books, whether it's an online retailer or a local indie shop.

And this is about what I learned as an only child who was addicted to validation and acknowledgment. What I learned from the audition process when I started to—to audition for acting roles.

00:44:50 John Host

"After you say your lines into the camera, sometimes the person in the room is encouraging. Sometimes they suggest you try it again,

and that is when you know you have failed, and you will not get the job.

But mostly the other person in the room has eyes that are distant and inscrutable, and they are silent.

I eventually took this as a kindness. They don't want you to get your hopes up.

If you grew up as I did, confusing praise with oxygen, the audition room is the utter vacuum of deepest space. But you can survive there."

00:45:22 John Host This is just general life dope for you, Luke. Validation, acknowledgment? It can be addictive. But if you don't get it, you will survive and you'll be stronger if you just make like Stephanie and tolerate silence. In all aspects of your life.

You do not need praise or acknowledgment or validation. You are great. Bless you.

[Luke and Stephanie laugh.]

00:45:48 Luke Guest Thank you, Judge.

00:45:49 John Host That said *[laughs]*—Stephanie? I think you are right to say something in an elevator. *[Stephanie laughs.]*

[Laughing] Lest they figure out that you're an alien from outer space. *[Stephanie laughs again.]*

In your own home, I think you should be able to enjoy—at the v—bare minimum, freedom from teasing on this subject. Freedom from trolling. Freedom from bless-shaming.

This all needs to—to be taken down 1,000 levels of importance in your relationship in order to get to where you wanna be.

Here's what I'm going to order: for the next three months, no sneeze shall be acknowledged in the house. This is therapy for you, Luke.

00:46:35 John Host It's like a kind of, uh, anti-immersion therapy. *[Luke and Stephanie laugh.]* It's a—a deprivation therapy.

So that you can start realizing you can exist in that silence. That no devil is coming for you just because you weren't acknowledged this one time. *[Stephanie and Luke laugh.]*

And then for three months after that, when Stephanie sneezes, Luke, you can say "bless you." Don't be saying "bless you" under your breath, 'cause those "bless you"s aren't for the world. They're for you. They are an expression, I think, of superstition more than care for others.

But just say "bless you."

Let him have that. You do not need to say "thank you."

00:47:12 Stephanie Guest Mm-hm.

00:47:14 John Host But you might feel you want to! And if you do, great.

And for those three months, when Luke sneezes and he's in the room, you don't have to say "bless you." You have to channel your—your mother's inner New York—ness and just say, *[exaggerated New York accent]* "Forget about it!"

[Stephanie and Luke laugh.]

[Laughing] And after that, you can do what you want. It's your bodies. It's your noses. I think you'll come out of this better on the other side, in any case, in terms of respecting each other.

00:47:43 John Host What he wants, which is to just be seen. And what you want, Stephanie, which is to never be seen. *[Laughing]* Or at least—

[Stephanie laughs]

—not have to go through the burdens of being seen and acknowledging being seen in this highly charged moment of involuntary spasm, in which we lose control of our bodies.

It's a—it's a weird thing! Sneezing is a weird thing. It's a—a moment of vulnerability in a way that coughing and burping are—is not. You are overtaken by a strange spirit when you sneeze.

And some people wanna be seen, and some people don't wanna be seen, when that happens.

You need to respect what each other feels about their sneezes.

00:48:21 John Host But I will say this: there shall never be—for the—not for the next three months, or the following three months, or for the rest of time—any expectation in your home that anyone should have to yell "bless you" from one room to another.

[Luke chuckles, Stephanie laughs.]

This is the sound of a gavel.

00:48:33 Sound Effect Sound Effect *[Someone sneezes.]*

00:48:34 John Host Judge John Hodgman rules; that is all.

00:48:36 Jesse Host Please rise as Judge John Hodgman exits the courtroom.

00:48:40 Sound Effect Sound Effect *[Chairs scrape during Jesse's previous line. Footsteps. Door shuts.]*

00:48:41 Jesse Host Luke! It's a pretty clear rebuke. How are you feeling?

00:48:45 Luke Guest I appreciate the judge's honesty and candor, and I'm quite frankly not surprised, and I think that perhaps after this six-month period, hopefully the well will no longer be poisoned.

[Luke and Stephanie laugh.]

But it's kinda what I was—I—I was expecting, but he really, as he does, he put it in a much more eloquent way than—than I ever could,

so I'm good with it.

00:49:07 Jesse Host Stephanie, how do you feel?

00:49:09 Stephanie Guest I feel good. All I wanted is to be able to be sincere. Especially at home. And, you know, if that means not saying anything or saying something, either way.

00:49:20 Jesse Host Luke and Stephanie, thank you for joining us on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

00:49:23 Sound Effect Transition *[Three gavel bangs.]*

00:49:25 Jesse Host Another *Judge John Hodgman* case in the books. Before we dispense some Swift Justice, we wanna thank Steve Runyon for naming this week's episode: "Achoodication."

If you'd like to name a future episode, you can like *Judge John Hodgman* on Facebook!

You can follow us on Twitter, [@JesseThorn](#) and [@hodgman](#). Hashtag your *Judge John Hodgman* tweets #JJHo. I love seeing what people have to say about the show.

You can also check out the Max Fun subreddit at [MaximumFun.Reddit.com](#) to discuss this episode.

00:49:57 Jesse Host We're on Instagram, [@judgejohnhodgman](#), the perfect place for superfluous pictures of butt-to-butt cats. Make sure to follow us there.

This week's episode recorded by Rob Beckett at WUTC in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Our editor is Jesus Ambrosio.

Our producer is Jennifer Marmor.

00:50:16 Jesse Host Now, Swift Justice! Where we answer your small disputes with quick judgment.

Sue says:

"My professor thinks it's funny to irritate his law partner by using the term 'irregardless.' I don't think it's funny. Tell him he's wrong and I'm right."

00:50:34 John Host "Irregardless" is a word that gets people very angry. People use it instead of "regardless," and angry people say "That's not a word!"

Guess what? It is a word. It's in the dictionary! The Merriam-Webster dictionary! And even though they say it's non-standard, and even though they say a hotdog is a sandwich, the dictionary is the dictionary.

So you can be mad about "irregardless," but you can keep it to yourself, like most of all pedantry.

00:51:09 John Host I hate pedantry that masks itself as altruism even worse. Sounds to me like Sue, supposedly coming to the defense of the law partner by

getting mad at a professor for using the term "irregardless" 'cause she thinks "it's not a word!"

But you know what, Sue? It's none of your business. That's between the partners, Sue! That's not you.

00:51:28 Jesse Host

That's it for this week's *Judge John Hodgman* episode. You can submit cases at MaximumFun.org/jjho or email hodgman@maximumfun.org.

As you can tell, no case is too small! We'll see you next time on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

00:51:44 Sound Effect Transition

[Three gavel bangs.]

00:51:45 Music Music

[A cheerful guitar chord.]

00:51:46 Speaker 1 Guest

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00:51:48 Speaker 2 Guest

Comedy and culture.

00:51:50 Speaker 3 Guest

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00:51:51 Speaker 4 Guest

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