

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: "German Engine Hearing." (<i>German Engineering.</i>)
			Bethany files suit against her husband Jeff. They have an old minivan that will need to be replaced soon. Bethany wants to buy her dream car, a vintage VW Bus. Jeff believes these vehicles are unsafe, and would like to purchase a more practical one. Who's right? Who's wrong? Only one can decide.
00:00:27	Sound Effect	Sound Effect	<i>[As Jesse speaks below: Door opens, chairs scrape on the floor, footsteps.]</i>
00:00:28	Jesse	Host	Please rise as Judge John Hodgman enters the courtroom and presents an obscure cultural reference.
00:00:34	Sound Effect	Sound Effect	<i>[Door shuts.]</i>
00:00:35	John Hodgman	Host	"For sale: a solid podcast, with an FAS inline four-engine, rebuilt trans with limited slip, and lots of other upgrades. Pretty much anything you'd want to do to one of these podcasts has been done! Nothing extreme. Just solid upgrades to keep the podcast as comfortable and reliable as possible. DM me with your email for a PDF with details and photos."
			Bailiff Jesse Thorn, please swear them in.
00:00:59	Sound Effect	Sound Effect	<i>[As Jesse speaks below: Chairs scrape.]</i>
00:01:00	Jesse	Host	Bethany, Jeff, 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?
00:01:10	Bethany	Guest	Yes I do.
00:01:11	Jeff	Guest	I do.
00:01:12	Jesse	Host	Do you swear to abide by Judge John Hodgman's ruling, despite the fact that <u>his</u> dream vehicle is a Japanese import Mitsubishi Delica?
00:01:20	Bethany	Guest	Yes.
00:01:21	Jeff	Guest	Yes, indeed.
00:01:22	Jesse	Host	Judge Hodgman, you may proceed.
00:01:24	John	Host	Bethany and Jeff, you may be seated.
00:01:25	Sound Effect	Sound Effect	<i>[Chairs scrape.]</i>
00:01:26	John	Host	Uh, Jesse, what's a Mitsubishi Delica? What's that one?
00:01:28	Jesse	Host	Oh, it's the best kind of van. You know, Ben Harrison—the host of <i>Greatest Generation</i> on our network—and I text each other pictures of cool vans we see, and occasionally we'll see a Delica. Which is a lifted all-wheel-drive Japanese van that usually has like, you know, a roof rack and fog lights and is weirdly square.
			<i>[Bethany chuckles.]</i>
			Looks a little bit like a transporter vehicle from <i>Star Trek</i> .
00:01:54	John	Host	You're talking about something from the eighties, though. 'Cause the new ones don't look good, as nothing new ever does.

00:01:59 Jesse Host Yeah. I think it has to be from the eighties in order to be imported. It has to be a certain age in order to be imported from Japan into the United States. So I've actually never seen a new one.

00:02:08 John Host Well, I know just what I'm getting you for the tenth anniversary of this podcast this November!

00:02:13 Jesse Host *[Whisper-shouting]* Yesss!

00:02:14 John Host Probably some snacks.

[He and Jesse laugh.]

Probably—probably a tin of popcorn.

00:02:19 Jesse Host Ooh, I hope it's Fiddle Faddle!

00:02:21 John Host *[Laughs.]*

Welcome to *Cool Van Kids*, the new podcast about vans! 'Cause that's what we're talking about today. But Bethany and Jeff, before we can get into your van discussion—it's *Van Talk!* Right? This is *Van Talk?* Is that what this has become?

[Bethany and Jesse laugh.]

For an immediate summary judgment in one of yours' favors, can either you, Bethany, or you, Jeff, name the piece of culture I referenced when I entered the courtroom? And I'll give you a hint. *[Laughs quietly.]* The term "podcast" is standing in for something else in the actual quote. Bethany, let's start with you. What's your guess?

00:02:51 Bethany Guest Oh, gosh. Okay, well, it sounds like an eBay ad for a VW Bus.

00:02:56 John Host Sounds like an eBay ad for a VW Bus! Interesting. Alright. Any particular model of VW Bus?

00:03:03 Bethany Guest *[Laughs.]* I'm totally blanking on what you were saying.

00:03:07 John Host If I told you the model year was 1985, would you able—be able to tell me what iteration of the VW Bus I was talking about?

00:03:15 Bethany Guest Well, that's after Generation 2... and I am so not interested in the VW Buses from the eighties that I don't even have their different names memorized, so, sorry. No.

00:03:28 John Host If you had a little bit more information about this bus you wanted to get as part of this case, you might be going home with one right now!

00:03:34 Bethany Guest *[Laughing]* Oh, my!

00:03:36 John Host But instead I'm gonna put your vague guess into the guessbook—

[She laughs.]

—to see if Jeff can do any better. Jeff, what is your guess?

00:03:41 Jeff Guest Well, if it's a 1980s Volkswagen Bus, it's a Vanagon.

00:03:44 John Host Mm-hm.

00:03:45 Jeff Guest I... do not have a good guess, so I'm gonna guess *Unsafe at Any Speed* by Ralph Nader.

[Beat.]

[John and Jesse laugh.]

00:03:54	Jesse	Host	Very <u>pointed</u> guess!
00:03:55	John	Host	Why don't you guess the other thing? <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:03:59	Jesse	Host	<i>[Laughing]</i> Jeff is about to argue that instead of the—a Volkswagen van, they should get a Chevy Corvair.
<i>[Bethany laughs.]</i>			
00:04:05	John	Host	You could have taken it away, Jeff, if you followed your instincts! You <u>know</u> that it's not Ralph Nader's <u>book</u> !
<i>[Bethany and Jeff laugh.]</i>			
This just reveals to me that you want this to be heard, 'cause maybe subconsciously you want Bethany to get this van!			
00:04:18	Bethany	Guest	He wants to make a point.
00:04:19	John	Host	What's the point he wants to make? I love it when Jeff wants to make a point.
00:04:22	Bethany	Guest	<i>[Laughing]</i> So—oh, so do I!
00:04:25	Jeff	Guest	Oh, well, there—there are a number of points.
<i>[Bethany laughs.]</i>			
There's—there are safety points, and there are environmental points, and there are practicality points.			
00:04:33	John	Host	You want the case to be heard so that you can go through all of your talking points.
00:04:36	Jeff	Guest	<i>[Laughs.]</i> I've heard the show before, and when people get the answers right, it doesn't make for a very good show.
<i>[Bethany laughs.]</i>			
00:04:43	John	Host	Well... as it happens, you got it wrong.
<i>[He and the litigants laugh.]</i>			
Sorry.			
00:04:47	Bethany	Guest	We're off to a good start, then.
00:04:48	John	Host	It is a 1985 VW Vanagon, but specifically the Westfalia model.
00:04:55	Bethany	Guest	Oh, right.
00:04:56	John	Host	And the piece of culture that I was quoting from is the Instagram account of Bill Thomas—you know Bill Thomas, don't you?
00:05:02	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	Jeff: Hmm, no.
Bethany: Mmm, I—I will after today!			
00:05:05	John	Host	Bill is a woodworker and a boatbuilder in New England—uh, which is a region of the Northeast United States. I don't know Bill very well, but I do know his wife Jane. Jane Allfelt is my wife's sailing teacher and personal hero. And together they roam around New England,

building things and teaching things and living in this 1985 Westfalia camping van that Bill himself tricked out with all kinds of incredible radios and seats and little, like, compartments, and a portable shower.

It's an incredible feat of human imagination and engineering, and he is selling it! So if you wanna check it out, go to his [Instagram account](https://www.instagram.com/billthomasmaker). Instagram.com/@B-I-L-L-T-H-O-M-A-S-M-A-K-E-R—billthomasmaker. So *Judge John Hodgman* van fans, go check it out.

[Jesse and Bethany laugh.]

00:06:00 Jesse Host
00:06:02 Jeff Guest

And here's the car!
So it's a car, and it's not a boat? They didn't make it into a boat?

[Bethany laughs.]

00:06:05 John Host

That would be pretty cool if they made it, you know, into like a duck boat. It's just a land van! You know, they tricked it out and you can live in it and everything else. And after many, many years, they're selling it. 'Cause he's gonna go rebuild a Delica or something, I think is next—

[Bethany laughs.]

—so they're selling this Westfalia. So I'm plugging it. Maybe you can buy it!

00:06:23 Bethany Guest
00:06:24 John Host
00:06:27 Jeff Guest

Maybe!
You don't want an '85 Westfalia camper van.
Bethany's eyes are lighting up—

[Bethany laughs.]

—but she's pretty hardcore about the sixties versions of the Bus.

00:06:34 John Host

Right. So Bethany, your minivan is dying, or becoming outmoded in your life.

00:06:37 Bethany Guest

Yes.

00:06:38 John Host

You'd like to get a sixties Volkswagen Minibus, AKA hippie bus, AKA bully.

00:06:46 Bethany Guest

AKA camper van, AKA Samba, AKA compy.

00:06:51 John Host

Psheww! You're killing it with the AKAs, Bethany! You know your stuff!

[Bethany and Jesse laugh.]

00:06:57 Jesse Host

You thinking about joining the Wu-Tang Clan?

[Bethany and John laugh.]

00:07:01 Bethany Guest

Maybe!

So sixties or seventies, yeah.

00:07:04 John Host

Yeah, and Jeff, you don't want anything to do with this. We'll get into your reasons in a moment, Jeff, 'cause I know you are loaded for

bear.

[The litigants laugh.]

But first we'll talk to Bethany. Right now you have a minivan. What is it, a Honda Odyssey? Is that correct?

00:07:15 Bethany Guest Right. Eleven years old. It's fine! It's a fine car. The doors don't exactly open anymore. Or lock... well.

00:07:22 John Host Oh.

00:07:23 Bethany Guest Yeah.

00:07:24 Jeff Guest Well, they do now. They've been fixed.

00:07:26 Bethany Guest It's showing its age.

00:07:27 John Host Okay.

00:07:28 Jesse Host Have they been fixed with some kind of interior, like, wire hanger wrapped around two handles?

[Bethany and Jeff or John laugh quietly.]

00:07:34 Jeff Guest Not this time.

[Bethany laughs.]

00:07:38 John Host So Bethany, is the Odyssey dying, or are you just emotionally done with it?

00:07:42 Bethany Guest We could probably drive it into the ground for a couple more years. But you know, it is hard when the side doors weren't opening properly, because I fill it to the brim pretty much a couple times a week with plants, and mulch, and straw, and tools, and fertilizer, and flowers.

00:08:05 John Host Are you doing this for any particular reason?

00:08:07 Bethany Guest Yeah. So—

[She and Jesse laugh.]

00:08:09 Jesse Host She's a smuggler, sir.

[Everyone laughs.]

00:08:13 Bethany Guest Yeah, I started a couple years ago. I grow flowers for my own flower design business.

00:08:18 John Host Oh, wonderful!

00:08:19 Bethany Guest Yeah! So I apprenticed at a flower farm about two years ago. And last year I started my own little gig in Takoma Park. I've taken over my yard, and my neighbor's yard, and a few other people's yards. And I rent space—I'm actually not renting. I'm being generously given space at a flower farm close by.

So you know, I travel between all these different places, and I plant and I hoe and I weed, and I come home with buckets and buckets of flowers! And buckets and buckets of flowers in a VW Bus... would be about the most adorable thing ever.

00:08:55 John Host Ohhh, okay, I see!

00:08:58 Jesse Host It's also very on-brand for Takoma Park, Maryland, I say as a former Takoma Park, Maryland resident one summer.

00:09:04 Bethany Guest No! Really?

00:09:06 Jesse Host Yeah! That's true. That's real.

00:09:07 Jeff Guest *[Stifling laughter]* What street?

00:09:09 John Host Oh. Yeah, listen to Jeff. Jeff isn't taking any of this guff.

[Jesse and Bethany laugh.]

00:09:13 Jesse Host I don't have anything to prove to you, sir! I worked at Borders in downtown Washington, DC!

[Jesse and Bethany laugh again.]

Across the street from J Press! That was the summer where I thought I had been offered an internship at National Public Radio but, as it turned out, had not!

[Jeff laughs.]

00:09:31 Bethany Guest Ohhh no.

00:09:32 John Host You went to DC and you realized you didn't have this internship so you worked at Borders and lived in Takoma Park.

00:09:36 Jesse Host Exactly.

00:09:37 Bethany Guest You could do worse.

00:09:38 John Host What street, Jesse? What street was it?

00:09:40 Jesse Host I don't remember the name of the street.

00:09:41 John Host Oh, really? Hm.

00:09:42 Jeff Guest Hmm.

00:09:43 John Host Seems like there's a hole in your story.

[Bethany laughs.]

00:09:44 Jeff Guest Yes.

00:09:45 Jesse Host I took care of a little boy who wasn't allowed to swear, so when he was angry he would call me a fire-head.

[John and Jeff laugh.]

00:09:50 John Host One time I was recording some voiceover, and the voice director who I was working with remotely was this wonderful woman, and instead of swearing she would say "Frogs." *[Stifles laughter.]* She would go "Oh, frogs!"

What's Takoma Park like, Jesse Thorn? When you say that it's the perfect place for a VW Bus full of flowers?

00:10:07 Jesse Host Takoma Park is a close neighbor of Washington, DC. It's an immediate suburb. It's accessible via metro. And for, you know, buttoned-down Washington, DC, it has a reputation as the hippie suburb.

00:10:22 John Host Oh, okay! I gotcha.

00:10:23 Bethany Guest It is the Berkeley of the East Coast.

00:10:26 John Host Ah!

00:10:27 Jesse Host As someone who has spent a lot of time in both places, I would say it's—that's a bit of a stretch—

[John and Bethany laugh.]

—but relative to other suburbs of Washington, DC...

00:10:35 Jeff Guest It's a little smaller than Berkeley.

00:10:36 Jesse Host Certainly more so than, say, Silver Spring, Maryland.

00:10:39 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Bethany:** Yeah. Right.

Jeff: Yeah.

John: Right. Gotcha. Okay!

00:10:41 Jeff Guest Silver Spring is the big city, and Takoma Park is the suburb.

00:10:43 Jesse Host It's a very sweet place. It was a very nice place to live.

00:10:46 John Host And how long have you lived there, Jeff?

00:10:48 Jeff Guest We have lived there since 1997, so 22 years.

00:10:53 John Host All in the same place?

00:10:54 Jeff Guest Yes. Yeah. Same house.

00:10:57 John Host Wait a minute. What street?

00:10:59 Jeff Guest *[Censor bleep.]*

[The litigants and John laugh.]

00:11:02 John Host Checks out, Jesse.

[John and Bethany laugh.]

00:11:03 Jesse Host Mm-hm.

00:11:04 John Host You're gonna get a bunch of *Judge John Hodgman* listeners strolling up and down your blocks, looking for you guys.

00:11:09 Jeff Guest Yeah.

[Bethany laughs.]

00:11:10 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Bethany:** It's—

Jeff: It's a pretty busy street.

00:11:12 Jeff Guest They can join the crowd.

00:11:13 Bethany Guest *[Laughs.]* It's the one with all the flowers out front.

00:11:16 John Host In what you call your yard, but is the yard that you share with Jeff...

00:11:21 Bethany Guest Oh, yeah. Our yard.

[Jeff laughs.]

00:11:22 John Host Who is your husband, correct?

00:11:24 Bethany Guest Mm-hm! Yes.

00:11:25 John Host And Jeff, what do you do all day long?

00:11:27 Jeff Guest I'm a—a journalist.

00:11:29 John Host Okay.

00:11:30 Jeff Guest I work for *Consumer Reports*—

00:11:32 John Host Oh, yeah!

00:11:33 Jeff Guest —which is a publication known for its no-nonsense approach to choosing cars or anything else that you are spending a lot of money on.

00:11:41 Jesse Host Judge Hodgman, I should explain, as someone who has formerly lived in the Washington, DC area. When someone says they are "Um, a journalist," that means they're an international hitman.

[John and the litigants laugh.]

00:11:54 John Host You could be an international super-spy and also be writing car reviews for *Consumer Reports*.

00:11:58 Jesse Host Yeah, I think that seem—that's a good cover!

[Bethany laughs.]

00:12:01 John Host That's right. But before we get on to Jeff's no-nonsense, let's get back to your nonsense, Bethany.

00:12:06 Bethany Guest Mm, yes!

00:12:07 John Host What specific kind of VW Bus do you want, and why do you want it? I mean, what you describe sounds pretty adorable, a bus full of flowers. Is there more to it than that?

00:12:16 Bethany Guest Oh, yeah, there's lots more! So the dream one, of course, is that kind of iconic sixties Bus with the, um—the little peak nose, I think they call it, and VW emblem on the front. I mean, those are just adorable. But the ones in the seventies have a couple of improvements, like... a fender, which my husband seems to think is a—a bumper. He seems to think that's important.

But you know, it has about as much room as our minivan does, that I can stow things. I would really love a camper. Like your friend that you just talked about! I'm just amazed at how ingenious the interiors are in these buses. And I have seen on eBay the way people do trick them out, and I mean, it's—I just am charmed to death by the ingenuity in there.

00:13:00 John Host They're like little tiny houses!

00:13:01 Jesse Host *[Laughs.]* And besides that, I think it's a mark of ingenuity that they can even get a large motor vehicle like that to drive with a moped engine.

[John and the litigants laugh.]

00:13:13 Bethany Guest Sometimes they come with canopies! So my one goal this year is to set up at a local farm market. And so instead of setting up a tent, I would just roll up all adorable in my VW van and then open up the side door and pull out the canopy, and set up underneath that. And I'm sorry, it's stinkin' cute.

00:13:34 Jesse Host Bethany, is this the family's only motor vehicle?

00:13:39 Bethany Guest No. We have a Honda Accord as well, and you know, our kids are grown, so we don't really need—we don't need them anymore, they don't need us anymore.

00:13:48 John Host Are they out of the house?

00:13:49 Jeff Guest Mm...

00:13:50 Bethany Guest Almost.

00:13:51 Jeff Guest Some of 'em.

00:13:52 Bethany Guest Yeah, two thirds are out of the house.

00:13:53 Jeff Guest Mm.

00:13:54 John Host And how many do you have, 30?

[The litigants laugh.]

00:13:56 Bethany Guest Three.

00:13:57 John Host One getting ready to leave the nest.

00:13:59 Bethany Guest That's right. That's right.

00:14:00 John Host And you've got this Honda Odyssey, and you also got the Honda Accord, AKA... the *Consumer Reports* special.

[Bethany laughs.]

00:14:05 Jeff Guest Yes. *[Laughs.]*

00:14:07 John Host Jeff, why don't you love this idea of your adorable wife hauling all of her adorable flowers around in her adorable van?

00:14:14 Jeff Guest First, I wanna say it is adorable. The vision is great. And I think if we could afford a vehicle that we would only drive to the farmer's market and the flower shows, I think it would be okay. But Bethany needs this as a work vehicle. And she puts a lot of miles on the minivan right now, because she drives to the flower farm that's about 20 miles away from our house. Sometimes she drives to other flower farms around Maryland. Sometimes she goes down to the Amish flower auction in Southern Maryland. Sometimes she drives on the Beltway.

And that's really the—you know, as I think about this, that's why this doesn't—this doesn't work.

00:15:01 John Host Because you're concerned for her safety in this vehicle.

00:15:04 Jeff Guest Yes. Yes. I don't want Bethany to become a, uh... a crash statistic.

00:15:11 Jesse Host You know, Jeff, I once was driving on the Beltway in an Acura Coupe. Maybe a 10-year-old, 15-year-old Acura Coupe. And it just stopped working?

[Bethany laughs.]

And...

00:15:25 Jeff Guest That sounds pretty scary.

00:15:26 Jesse Host *[Stifling laughter]* It was the most terrifying thing that's ever happened to me in my life.

[Bethany laughs.]

00:15:31 Jeff Guest

Yeah.

00:15:32 Jesse Host

I pulled off the road into what turned out to be a parkway.

[Jeff laughs.]

With no power—I had to muscle it to the side of the road, no power steering. Pulled off the road, and then luckily I had a cell phone. This was early in my cell phone life. I called my aunt Debbie, and just... explained what the trees around me looked like until she figured out what exit I had pulled off on.

[Bethany, Jeff, and Jesse laugh.]

It was pre-GPS. Luckily Aunt Debbie and Uncle Wayne came and rescued me from the side of the road, God bless them. My wife Theresa was with me as well.

00:16:06 John Host

Your consumer report would be... "Stay away from Acura Coupes"?

[Jesse and the litigants laugh.]

00:16:12 Jesse Host

My consumer report would be "Take care with what vehicle you drive on the Beltway around Washington, DC, because it is a wide, fast highway."

00:16:20 John Host

So Jeff, you sent in some evidence. We're gonna take a look at that now. Specifically you sent in a couple of videos. And we're gonna feature links to these videos on [our show page](#) at [MaximumFun.org](#), and as always you can check out all our evidence on the Instagram page [@judgejohnhodgman](#).

You make the point in your evidence that, quote, "Crash testing as it is known today didn't exist in the VW Bus era. You'd be missing out on several generations of automotive engineering and a public health revolution if you're gonna drive one of these Buses." To make the point, you sent me some videos of a bunch of VW Buses crashing and falling over.

[John and the litigants laugh.]

00:16:56 Jeff Guest

Yep.

00:16:57 John Host

The first one is a—a rather dramatic slow-motion crash test of a VW Bus Type T3, gener—third generation, the Vanagon generation, going head-on into a wall. Correct?

00:17:10 Jeff Guest

Yeah. I guess it—it is. If it's seventies, that means it should be more engineered than a sixties one. Whatever generation it was, the crash test is pretty convincing. Right—

00:17:20 Jesse Host

Oh my god!

[John and the litigants laugh.]

Holy cow!

[Jesse tries to exclaim something else but starts laughing too hard.]

00:17:25 John Host It's clearly a third generation, an eighties generation.

00:17:28 Bethany Guest Is it? It looks older to me!

00:17:29 Jeff Guest Yeah. It looked older to me, too.

00:17:31 Bethany Guest Yeah. It actually looks like a truck, as well.

00:17:33 Jeff Guest Yeah.

00:17:34 Jesse Host *[Still laughing incredulously. Gets it together.]*

It's—okay, so it is a really cool-looking truck. As you mentioned, it's a pickup version.

00:17:40 Bethany Guest Yeah.

00:17:41 Jesse Host But a four-door pickup. And as it crashes into the wall, not only does what would be the engine compartment collapse—not only does the driver's compartment collapse—but the passengers' compartment behind the driver's compartment also collapses, and in fact, part of the bed of the truck collapses! Basically two thirds of the vehicle—*[laughs]* ends up as a pancake.

But it is cute! I'm not gonna lie! *[Laughs.]*

00:18:09 Jeff Guest Yeah. And there's some controversy about this video, right? Like, if you read the comments on it. Whether the Volkswagen van that Bethany chooses would be that model or not, whatever model she chooses—I mean, I've seen these crash tests with these older sixties vehicles, and they're never good. The way modern cars are designed, in a frontal crash the engine compartment is designed to absorb most of the impact. And then the goal in engineering is that the passenger compartment kind of remains intact. And I am confident that whatever sixties model Bethany chooses, it would be a disaster in a frontal crash.

00:18:52 John Host Definitely the passenger compartment—*[laughs]* in this video, at least, is nonexistent pretty quickly. *[Laughs.]* After this head-on crash.

00:19:00 Jesse Host Let's take a quick recess. We'll be back in just a moment on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

00:19:04 Sound Effect Transition *[Three gavel bangs.]*

00:19:06 Jesse Promo The *Judge John Hodgman* podcast is brought to you of course by all of Maximum Fun's members, all the folks who've gone to MaximumFun.org/donate to join Maximum Fun and support this show and our other shows directly. This week we're also supported by our friends at Dashlane! Who make everything you do online easier.

00:19:27 John Promo Yeah! Dashlane, that's what it's called. I mean with Dashlane, everything you do online gets easier. It fills out forms for you really fast. Remembers all your passwords. Stores payment information, and keeps your online data accessible and safe, all with an all-in-one app that is super easy to use. It remembers and autofills all your log information across all your devices. You won't get slowed down by forgotten or misspelled passwords. You ever misspell your passwords, Jesse?

00:19:51 Jesse Promo Don't get me started on trying to remember which sites I have capitalized letters and—or like, exclamation marks in passwords and

which ones I don't. Oh my god.

00:20:02	John	Promo	I know! It's like, "Is it an ampersand? Or is it a percentage sign?" I can't remember! But Dashlane remembers. And you can safely <u>send</u> those passwords, <u>and</u> secure notes, to your friends and colleagues! The people you wanna have see them and share them. You don't have to write 'em down on a piece of paper. You don't have to worry about it. You just share streaming passwords with your family, or send coworkers access codes. All of your secure information stays secure with Dashlane.
			So start dashing through the Internet! And help support the show—this one, <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> —by visiting www.Dashlane.com/hodgman to start your 30-day free trial of Dashlane. No credit card required! If you like it, use code JJH at checkout and save 25% on your premium subscription. Dashlane! ...We call it that, 'cause that's what it's called!
00:20:49	Sound Effect	Transition	<i>[Three gavel bangs.]</i>
00:20:50	Jesse	Host	Court is back in session! Let's return to the courtroom for more justice.
00:20:55	John	Host	You also sent in a video of a very <u>wobbly</u> VW Microbus, showing its tendency to roll over. This is a black and white video that I'm looking at right now. This is clearly a T—a <u>first</u> -generation Microbus, 'cause I can see it's got that split windshield, which is its original design. It's got extra wheels, like, strapped down on arms to the side so that it doesn't roll over, you know, all the way. But when it makes turns, it's <u>clearly</u> going over—
			<i>[John and Jesse laugh.]</i>
			—when it makes sharp turns, it's clearly going to roll over. If it didn't have those little wheels on the side, it would be rolling all <u>over</u> that old field!
00:21:35	Jesse	Host	It's basically a catamaran.
00:21:36	John	Host	Yeah!
			<i>[John and Bethany laugh.]</i>
00:21:37	Jeff	Guest	Right.
00:21:38	John	Host	It is!
00:21:39	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	John: <i>[Laughing]</i> It's—
			Jeff: Right.
00:21:40	John	Host	It's like got two pontoons on either side!
00:21:42	Jeff	Guest	The wheels on the side are because they <u>know</u> it's gonna roll over.
00:21:44	John	Host	Right. So why don't you just let Bethany get her van and put some extra wheels on it like that?
00:21:49	Jeff	Guest	If you try to drive that on the Beltway, you would—you would get some upset drivers. So she might get killed by... the revolutionaries who are getting out of the car.
00:21:58	John	Host	Yeah, road rage will kill her before the van does in that case, I suppose.

[Bethany laughs.]

00:22:02 Jeff Guest

Yeah.

00:22:03 John Host

It sure is cute! Now Bethany, you also sent in some evidence—and again, these photos will be on the [Instagram](#) and the [Maximum Fun show page](#). You sent in some pictures. There's you in the Honda Odyssey with a bunch of flowers. It's a terrifying sight. That—

[John and Bethany laugh.]

It look—*[laughs]* I mean, the flowers look beautiful, and you are as adorable as you sound.

[Bethany laughs.]

But just this Honda Odyssey packed to the brim with flowers—it looks like a post-apocalyptic novel with an abandoned Odyssey that's been reclaimed by nature.

00:22:32 Bethany Guest

[Laughs.] I try.

00:22:34 John Host

You can't be using the Odyssey for anything but dirt and flowers at this point, right?

00:22:39 Bethany Guest

I brought home the Christmas tree! We brought home the Christmas tree.

00:22:41 Jeff Guest

Yeah.

00:22:42 Jesse Host

I'm excited to see, Bethany, that you're packing this thing full of vegetal matter without removing any of the seats in the back!

[Jesse, Bethany, and John or Jeff laugh.]

Your kids are grown. You have no reason to have seats in the back. And yet you've decided that this—these flowers would be happiest if they had their own little captain's seat to sit on.

[The litigants laugh.]

00:23:01 Bethany Guest

They can get buckled in that way.

00:23:02 John Host

These are her new children, Jesse.

[John and Jesse laugh.]

You know?

00:23:05 Jeff Guest

Yeah.

00:23:06 John Host

It's a while before you're gonna reach where Bethany and Jeff are, and where my wife and I are soon—one of our kids is about to turn 18, the other one is in high school as well, and so we're looking forward to our empty nest years where we replace our children with mannequins and wickermen. *[Stifles laughter.]*

[Bethany and someone else laughs.]

That's our plan.

00:23:23 Bethany Guest Crash test dummies!

00:23:24 John Host No, that's more Jeff's thing. He loves those crash test dummies.

[Jeff laughs.]

00:23:27 Bethany Guest He does.

00:23:28 John Host And then you sent in a picture of an old Microbus that has this canopy that you're showing.

00:23:32 Bethany Guest Mm-hm!

00:23:33 John Host You don't use this Odyssey for anything else but transporting various kinds of foliage. It's a real utility vehicle at this point. Not a sports utility vehicle.

00:23:41 Jeff Guest Yeah. I mean, we—

00:23:42 Bethany Guest It is my work vehicle, yes.

00:23:43 Jeff Guest We use it when we go to the beach. We use it if we have visitors and we're going out as a group with more than five people.

00:23:52 Bethany Guest But it's a mess.

00:23:54 John Host But that's—that's what it's for!

00:23:56 Jeff Guest Yeah. We're not—we're not trying to impress people with it anymore.

[Someone laughs quietly.]

00:24:00 John Host Right. Not like you're trying to impress people with your Honda Accord.

[Bethany laughs.]

00:24:03 Jeff Guest That's right.

00:24:04 John Host That's the fancy car.

[Jeff laughs.]

00:24:06 Bethany Guest It sure is.

00:24:07 Jeff Guest Although it also carries flowers from time to time, so it—

[Bethany and John laugh.]

—it is also covered in, uh, debris and plant matter.

00:24:15 John Host And you also sent in some photos of your intern, which is a cat. Jesse Thorn, you wanna take a look at this cat?

00:24:21 Jesse Host Yeah, I do. So there's a couple pictures of the cat. The first picture of the cat I'm seeing here, it's next to some tastefully arranged flowers. Looks like a pretty, kind of peachy-colored cat. Tan/peach kind of combination.

[Suddenly laughing] And then it's eating—it looks so dumb!

[Jesse and Bethany both laugh.]

It's trying to eat a leaf! But it's like "Mraghhh!"

[He and Bethany laugh again.]

00:24:43 Bethany Guest It really encapsulates his whole personality in that one photo.

00:24:47 Jesse Host "Mlaghhhh!" *[Laughs.]* He looks like a stuffed polar bear!

[Bethany laughs.]

00:24:50 John Host Yeah, he's trying to eat that one long frond!

[Jesse laughs.]

What kind of plant—what kind of plant is he trying to eat?

00:24:56 Bethany Guest I think it's a piece of grass.

00:24:57 John Host Yeahhh.

00:24:58 Bethany Guest Oh, he loves grass. Loves grass!

00:25:00 John Host Awww, good.

And you also sent in some links to various websites, including TheSamba.com, which is a discussion board for people who share your strange obsession.

00:25:11 Bethany Guest I sent you guys that because of course, you know, I don't know a lot about Buses. But I feel like we have resources. So there's this website where we can do some research into, you know, what does it take to fix up a van so that it's a little more roadworthy. So yeah, there's just gearheads talking on samba.com.

We also have a close in. We have our mechanic friend Marty, who is kind of my enabler in this whole thing. So we have a couple of different experts that we could turn to!

00:25:43 John Host Ohhh.

00:25:45 Jeff Guest Key word is "enabler."

[Bethany laughs quietly.]

00:25:47 Jesse Host Bethany, you're willing to consider the possibility of, among other things, putting a modern engine into a classic Volkswagen body. So that it might be more reliable.

00:26:00 Bethany Guest Right. And per Marty, and per the gearheads that—you know, what I've gleaned from The Samba—and they get pretty technical, so I get—you know, it's out of my depth pretty quickly on The Samba. But per our mechanic friend Marty, the prudent thing to do is to replace the engine, put in a Subaru water-cooled engine so that you get more power, more reliability, and better mileage, and better emissions. So that, you know, I feel like touches on—

00:26:28 John Host This is what Marty says?

00:26:29 Bethany Guest Yeah, that's what Marty says. And—

00:26:30 John Host Hang on. Hang on a second. Bethany, let me interrupt here.

00:26:33 Bethany Guest Yes?

00:26:34 John Host Jeff?

00:26:35 Jeff Guest Yes?

00:26:36 John Host Who the frog is Marty?

[Jesse and the litigants laugh.]

Marty is our friend in Takoma Park who works as a mechanic. And also shares the same obsession as Bethany, and he loves Volkswagen Buses. He used to own one. But I think it's a little different proposition if you're a mechanic and you own one of these things, because you can fix it. And then we happened to see Marty at a party over the weekend, and I cross-examined him—

[Bethany laughs.]

—about this Subaru plan. And he tells me that it would cost maybe \$40,000—

[John cackles.]

—to get a retrofitted Subaru Volkswagen Bus.

00:27:17 Jesse Host Bethany, you're willing to consider putting a contemporary engine and possibly transmission inside the vehicle to make it more reliable. Have you considered putting a contemporary vehicle inside the Volkswagen to make it safer?

[Multiple people laugh.]

00:27:33 Bethany Guest Now that's a thought! We could get some Takata airbags, too, and put that in there. So—*[laughs]*.

00:27:38 Jeff Guest Mm. Not—maybe not Takata airbags.

00:27:40 John Host There's a shortcut to making the vehicle as safe and reliable as a modern vehicle, which is getting a modern vehicle.

[Bethany laughs and makes a disappointed sound.]

Jeff, what kind of vehicle would you like to replace the minivan with? What would you suggest as a consumer reporter?

00:27:52 Jeff Guest Yeah. I—so about six months ago we had a discussion, whether we should sell the Odyssey and get like a smaller SUV. But then Bethany—when she looked at her space requirements, because flower—like, individual flowers don't take up a lot of space, but when she makes giant arrangements for a wedding or something like that, she needs a lot of space. So she needs sort of a cavernous interior. I think like a—

00:28:22 John Host Yeah! You need a lot of space for the plants and flowers, especially if one of 'em's like an Audrey II type situation.

[Jesse and the litigants laugh.]

00:28:30 Jeff Guest Yeah. So like a Toyota Highlander or something like that, I think might be a good option.

00:28:37 John Host Because of the cargo space?

00:28:38 Jeff Guest Yeah. So you need like a slightly larger SUV.

00:28:42 John Host Jeff, I'm gonna tell you something right now.

00:28:43 Jeff Guest Yeah.

00:28:44 John Host You've just made a powerful enemy.

[Jesse and the litigants laugh.]

I do not like a Toyota Highlander. Sorry, Jonathan Coulton, I do not care for it! They are not fun to ride in! They are hard to ride in. When I see a—if—you know, sometimes cabs are Highlanders. And when I get in one I'm like "Ooh, this is very uncomfortable." And the plants—and I don't like it. That's all I have to say.

[Bethany laughs.]

What do you think about that, Jesse?

00:29:03 Jesse Host Bethany, have you considered either a somewhat more contemporary Volkswagen van, like a Eurovan from the eighties or nineties? Or have you considered a contemporary commercial vehicle, like a Sprinter or a Transit Connect?

00:29:20 Bethany Guest Man—mmm, I've looked at them. And...

00:29:24 Jesse Host *[Stifling laughter]* Dismissed them out of hand?

00:29:25 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Bethany:** Ye—outta hand, really.

Jeff: Yeah. Yeah. She's frowning.

Bethany: I'm—you know, I—yeah.

00:29:27 Bethany Guest I just... I don't know why it's so hard for the automotive industry to create cars with personality. I just feel like the Volkswagen Bus is the—and Bug—are the only two so far that have any semblance of a personality or charm to 'em. And every other car out there is sort of designed for a guy personality, a... a torque-and-horsepower sort of personality.

00:29:53 John Host I would say that's true. Most cars today are designed with the same style and breo as pleated Dockers.

[Bethany and Jesse laugh.]

00:30:01 Bethany Guest Right. I agree.

00:30:02 John Host Yeah. Have you seen the new Microbus that Volkswagen concepted?

00:30:06 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** And are supposed to—

Bethany: Mm, y—

Jeff: Yeah, the—the all-electric one.

00:30:09 John Host Yeah, the ID Buzz, they call it. *[Laughs.]*

00:30:11 Bethany Guest Mm-hm.

00:30:12 Jeff Guest Yeah.

00:30:13 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Bethany:** That's not bad.

John: What do you think?

Bethany: It comes close.

Jeff: Yeah, we had a conversation about that.

00:30:15 Bethany Guest It comes close to having a little bit of... some of the charm. I think they've tried to create the front as much as possible to look like that first generation, second generation, but...

00:30:25 Jeff Guest That's not what you said when we talked about it.

00:30:27 Bethany Guest Okay...

[She and Jeff laugh.]

00:30:29 John Host What did she say when you talked about it?

00:30:31 Jeff Guest She just shook her head.

[She laughs.]

And she said "Yeah, it doesn't—it's not the same."

00:30:35 Bethany Guest Not the same.

00:30:36 Jeff Guest And then I actually—as part of my job, I go to auto shows, the big auto shows sometimes. And at Detroit a couple years ago I met with the top Volkswagen executives in America, and they had just unveiled that ID Buzz. And so I got a chance to talk to him, and I explained to him my wife's Volkswagen Bus obsession.

[Bethany laughs.]

And I asked him like, why they don't make the new electric Bus more like the sixties Bus. He nodded his head, and... he understood the question. He said they get that a lot, but they could not make a Bus look like the sixties Bus and be able to pass a modern crash test.

00:31:20 John Host This Bus is an impractical death trap that unfortunately your wife happens to have her heart set on. Jeff, you write for *Consumer Reports*. How do you feel when your own wife and partner doesn't take your advice?

[Bethany laughs.]

I mean, you're talking to the head of Volkswagen! And he's saying "Yeah, we can't make a death trap!"

00:31:40 Jeff Guest Yeah, I mean, I—I thought that this argument would have been settled a long time ago.

[Bethany laughs.]

Because it's—on the merits of the usual things that you consider when you—you know, you make a big business car decision, it fails on all these tests. The other—there is one other argument.

00:31:59 John Host Jeff—Jeff! No.

00:32:00 Jeff Guest Yes?

00:32:01 John Host Order in this court.

[The litigants laugh.]

00:32:03 Jesse Host Shut your pie-hole, sir.

[The litigants laugh again.]

00:32:04 John Host Thank you, Jesse. How does it make you feel when your wife and friend and partner in this life... doesn't take your advice about stuff that you know a lot about?

00:32:16 Jeff Guest Uh, it makes—*[stifling laughter]* it makes me feel like she doesn't understand what I do for a living.

00:32:21 John Host *[Laughs.]* Do you think that you would ever feel at peace, knowing that she's driving around in this rickety tin death box?

00:32:30 Jeff Guest Yeah, I would—I would have some concerns, given, like, how many miles she puts on her work vehicle. Yeah. I would definitely have some concerns.

00:32:39 John Host Would you ever feel a moment's peace? Yes or no.

00:32:43 Jeff Guest I wouldn't obsess about it. But it would concern me.

00:32:47 John Host Well, that's *Consumer Reports* for you.

00:32:49 Bethany Guest There are things you can do to make them safer. You can lower the body. That really funny video about the one Bus rolling over, you can lower the body to stabilize it. People have done things to make these things a little safer, a little more efficient.

00:33:09 John Host Bethany, I know that you and Marty have got a scheme... all kinds of schemes to throw tens of thousands of dollars to make this thing marginally safer and more efficient and reliable. Do you have this VW tricked out Bus money just lying around? Is this—is—how are you gonna pay for it all?

00:33:27 Bethany Guest Well, you know, what I said when I brought the case is I just wanted to start discussions and think about it. So yeah, no, we don't have this money.

00:33:37 John Host *[Laughing]* Okay.

[Jesse laughs.]

00:33:39 Bethany Guest But I'd like to know—I'd like to—I just am actually more curious than anything, what does it take? I have seen on eBay of course, there are the ones that have had everything done to them, and they are just like \$150,000, just precious and wonderfully kept up. And then there are others that are more in our price range that are rusted-out hulks. So I bet you there's a medium in there somewhere. And I just would—I'm just curious to know... is there? I just would like to discuss it, and Jeff really doesn't wanna discuss it. *[Laughs.]* He just wants to hit me over the head with facts.

[John laughs.]

And videos. *[Laughs.]*

00:34:14 John Host Yeah! Yeah, he's *Consumer Reports*! He's who you married!

00:34:16 Bethany Guest I know!

00:34:18 John Host Jeff, do you wanna respond to that?

00:34:20 Jeff Guest Well, I would respond to the point that you can make these things safer. I don't—I don't think you can. I mean, you can't re-engineer the

front end of a sixties Volkswagen Bus. You can't add airbags to it. You could make it less environmentally... catastrophic.

[He and Bethany chuckle.]

Because I mean, the other thing that we haven't talked about—and I'll make it short—is that, you know, the sixties Buses were designed before there were any kind of pollution controls. So there were no catalytic converters or anything. The amount of tailpipe smog pollution coming out of a Volkswagen Bus is about a hundred times what is coming out of a car today. And so one way to think about that is you could drive a... Toyota Whatever, not a Highlander—

00:35:08 John Host I'm about to hang up the podcast on you, sir, if you mention that again.

[Jesse and the litigants laugh.]

00:35:11 Jeff Guest But you could drive a Honda Odyssey for a hundred years and emit the same amount of pollution driving a Volkswagen Bus for one year. And—

00:35:21 Bethany Guest I object. *[Laughs.]*

00:35:23 Jeff Guest As a—as an organic, locally grown flower farmer, I would think Bethany should be concerned about something like that.

00:35:30 John Host Bethany?

00:35:31 Bethany Guest Yes.

00:35:32 John Host How far away is the farmer's market?

00:35:33 Bethany Guest Petworth? Where—that's about ten miles away. No, five?

00:35:37 Jeff Guest Five.

00:35:38 Bethany Guest Five.

00:35:39 John Host Five miles away. Walkable! Walkable.

00:35:41 Bethany Guest Sure. With buckets of flowers. I could do that, I guess.

00:35:43 John Host No, no, no, I'm not suggesting that—

[She and Jesse laugh.]

Come on, Bethany! Give me some credit.

00:35:46 Bethany Guest Okay. Okay.

00:35:47 John Host Making—I'm helping—I'm trying to help you here. It's close.

00:35:49 Bethany Guest Thank—yes!

00:35:50 Jesse Host "Carry the flowers milkmaid-style!"

[Bethany cracks up.]

00:35:52 John Host Yeah. *[Laughs.]* What kind of roads are—would you be taking between there and the farmer's market?

00:35:55 Bethany Guest Oh, back roads. You know, through—you know, DC neighborhoods. You know.

00:36:02 John Host Surface streets. Not highways!

00:36:04 Bethany Guest Exactly.

00:36:05 John Host Right. Jeff, quick question. As *Consumer Reports* knows, how much more life do you have in that Honda Odyssey?

00:36:12 Jeff Guest Three to five years.

00:36:14 John Host Three to five years. Okay. And what's your parking situation there?

00:36:19 Bethany Guest We have a driveway.

00:36:20 Jeff Guest We live on a busy street, so there's no street parking. We have a long driveway. When our two cars are in the driveway, there's room for other cars. It's pretty tough to maneuver when there's more than two cars there.

00:36:33 John Host Mm-hm. Okay. And where does Marty live?

[Bethany laughs.]

00:36:37 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Bethany:** A block or two—

Jeff: Couple blocks away.

00:36:40 Bethany Guest Yeah. Couple blocks away.

00:36:41 John Host Alright. What does—and he's got a garage?

00:36:43 Jeff Guest He fixes cars—he works at a garage. He doesn't have room to store an extra car. Also I should say Marty—Marty says that he won't work on—or his office wouldn't work on the Volkswagen Bus. That we would have to go to a Volkswagen specialist.

00:37:01 John Host Okay. Fair enough. And now Bethany, if I were to rule in your favor, you want me to just let the conversation continue?

00:37:07 Bethany Guest Yeah! Really. Maybe let's go see some. Can I just drive around in one? Please? Can I just get it out of my system? And also can I say one last bit of evidence that I forgot to send you guys? Jeff used to drive a 1965... what was it? LeSabre?

00:37:27 Jeff Guest Mm.

00:37:28 Bethany Guest He had a vintage car back in the day!

00:37:29 Jeff Guest Oldsmobile Cutlass.

00:37:30 Bethany Guest Oldsmobile Cutlass. Yeah. So he got it out of his system. He got to have the fun of a cute, fun car like that. And I just would like to get it out of my system, too.

00:37:38 John Host A 1965 Oldsmobile Cutlass, Jeff? You got to get yours, but she can't get hers?

00:37:44 Jeff Guest Yeah. When I was 16, I—[laughs] I drove one of those things.

00:37:48 John Host Oh, right, back when you were a real safe driver!

[The litigants laugh.]

00:37:51 Jeff Guest Back before we knew what we know now about automotive safety or environmental impact of cars.

00:38:00 John Host If I were to rule in your favor, Jeff, just—we just crush the dream and move on?

[Jesse and the litigants laugh.]

00:38:06 Jeff Guest I would ask that we do a cost–benefit analysis of like, how much this is gonna cost, and whether her business—since it's a business vehicle—whether her business can afford this.

00:38:21 Jesse Host *[Stifling laughter]* In other words, Jeff, you'd like to crush her dream through your dream, which is to create a cost–benefit analysis.

00:38:28 John Host *[Laughs.]* Yeah, right! A cost–benefit analysis, that's also known as a *Consumer Reports* holiday party!

[Jesse laughs.]

Are you making money in this business?

00:38:37 Bethany Guest Nooo. *[Laughs.]*

00:38:39 John Host No. This is a new thing for you.

00:38:41 Bethany Guest Right.

00:38:42 John Host Did you leave a career?

00:38:43 Bethany Guest Yeah. I used to teach English as a second language, but I had a midlife career change about ten years ago.

00:38:51 John Host Right. Alright. I think I've heard everything I need to in order to make my decision. I am going to go into my restored 1949 Mercedes Unimog, and I'll be back in a moment to render my verdict.

[Jesse laughs.]

00:39:05 Sound Effect Sound Effect *[As Jesse speaks below: Door opens, chairs scrape on the floor, footsteps.]*

00:39:06 Jesse Host Please rise as Judge John Hodgman exits the courtroom.

00:39:09 Sound Effect Sound Effect *[Door shuts.]*

00:39:10 Jesse Host Jeff, Bethany... how come you're not getting a Unimog? *[Laughs.]*

00:39:14 Bethany Guest I'm gonna look it up!

00:39:15 Jeff Guest Yeah!

00:39:16 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Jeff:** I think we'll look at it.

Jesse: *[Laughing]* Don't think I haven't texted my friend Ben a picture of a Unimog I walked past on the street!

[Bethany laughs.]

00:39:23 Jesse Host Bethany, how are you feeling about your chances?

00:39:26 Bethany Guest Oh, not very good. No. Everyone's against me. Eeeveryone hates the Bus.

00:39:32 Jesse Host Do you think everyone hates the Bus, *[stifling laughter]* or do you think everyone loves you and doesn't want you to die?

00:39:40 Bethany Guest *[Laughs.]* Okay. I guess that may have something to do with it, yeah. And I understand that.

00:39:47 Jesse Host Jeff? How are you feeling?

00:39:49 Jeff Guest I'm not feeling that great, actually.

[Bethany laughs.]

Because... yeah. I don't think the judge is gonna rule to kill Bethany's dreams.

[Bethany and Jesse laugh.]

00:40:00 Jesse Host Jeff, what's the least practical thing you've ever done of a medium or large scale, in this relationship?

[The litigants laugh.]

00:40:09 Bethany Guest Marry me!

00:40:11 Jeff Guest Yeah. Marrying Bethany. I think...

[She and Jesse laugh.]

00:40:15 Bethany Guest It's enough for one man.

00:40:17 Jeff Guest Enabling Bethany's flower farm.

00:40:18 Bethany Guest Yeah. Yes.

00:40:19 Jeff Guest That is not very practical, obviously.

00:40:21 Bethany Guest No. But he's there for me for that. So that's cool.

00:40:24 Jesse Host *[Laughs.]* Well, I'm glad the two of you still love each other.

[Bethany laughs.]

We'll see if that's still the case when Judge John Hodgman returns in just a minute with a verdict.

00:40:31 Sound Effect Transition *[Three gavel bangs.]*

00:40:33 Promo Clip **Music:** Upbeat, cheerful music with clapping in the background.

Jesse Thorn: Hey, gang! Jesse here, the founder of Maximum Fun, and with me is Stacey Molski, who is—among other things—the lady who responds to all of your Tweets.

Stacey Molski: Hi everyone! I also send you newsletters.

Jesse: Uh, so anyway. Something really awesome. You! MaxFun listeners have given us the chance to do something really cool on behalf of our entire community, and we wanted to tell you about it.

Stacey: Last summer, following the MaxFun drive, we put all of the enamel pins on sale to \$10 and up members, with proceeds going to the National CASA/GAL Association for Children.

Jesse: Your generous support and enthusiasm raised over a hundred thousand dollars. Our bookkeeper, Steph, would be quick to tell me the exact total is \$109,025, to be exact.

Stacey: Your money will go toward pairing kids who've experienced abuse or neglect with court-appointed advocates or guardian ad litem volunteers.

Jesse: In other words, kids in tough spots will have somebody in their corner. Knowledgeable grown-ups who are on their team

through court dates and life upheavals and confusing situations, whatever.

Stacey: The money we raised together is going to help a lot of kids.

Jesse: Whether you bought pins or not, you can help us build on that \$109,000 foundation. Make a donation to support National CASA/GAL, and help some of our nation's most vulnerable children, at MaximumFun.org/casa. That's MaximumFun.org/casa.

Stacey: And seriously, thank you. Our community rules.

[Music fades out.]

00:42:11 Sound Effect Transition

[Three gavel bangs.]

00:42:12 Promo Clip

Music: Upbeat, cheerful music plays in the background.

Allie Goertz: Hi, I'm Allie Goertz!

Julia Prescott: And I'm Julia Prescott. And we host—

Both: —[Round Springfield!](https://MaximumFun.org/casa)

Julia: *Round Springfield* is a new *Simpsons* podcast that is *Simpsons-adjacent*—

Allie: Mm-hm.

Julia: —um, in its topic. We talk to *Simpsons* writers, directors, voiceover actors, you name it, about non-*Simpsons* things that they've done. Because, surprise! They're all extremely talented.

Allie: Absolutely. For example, David X. Cohen worked on *The Simpsons*, but then created a little show called *Futurama*!

Julia: Mm-hm!

Allie: That's our very first episode.

Julia: Yeah!

Allie: So tune in for stuff like that with Yearly Smith, with Tim Long, with different writers and voice actors. It's gonna be so much fun, and we are every other week on MaximumFun.org or wherever you get your podcasts!

[Music fades out.]

00:42:55 Sound Effect Transition

[Three gavel bangs.]

00:42:56 Sound Effect Sound Effect

[As Jesse speaks below: Door opens, chairs scrape, footsteps.]

00:42:57 Jesse Host

Please rise as Judge John Hodgman re-enters the courtroom and presents his verdict.

00:43:01 Sound Effect Sound Effect

[Door shuts.]

00:43:02 John Host

I'm really happy that Jesse got to the crux there, in helping Jeff to acknowledge that... Bethany is not a *Consumer Reports* person.

[Laughs quietly.] Jeff is practical and pragmatic, and he's a—the living embodiment of *Consumer Reports*. I went to go look at what a 1965 Oldsmobile Cutlass looks like, the vintage cool car that Jeff had when he was 16 years old, and this is like the most anodyne old car I've ever seen in my life. It's just a two-door sedan, I guess, or would that be—I don't know what the terms are.

00:43:34 Jeff Guest

It's a coupe.

00:43:35 John Host

It's a coupe! I know that you love it, but it also looks like a pair of pleated Dockers.

[The litigants laugh.]

Like, it's the most practical and pragmatic vintage car I feel like someone could own. It's deeply ingrained in your personality, and that is a worthy thing to be, practical and pragmatic. And I appreciate the fact that you have opened your life also, Jeff, against your nature, to the sheer chaos that is Bethany.

[John and the litigants laugh.]

The dreaming, impractical, idealistic, "Let's shove a bunch of flowers into an Odyssey minivan and see what happens" kind of person that she is.

[She laughs.]

I mean obviously, Bethany... is not thinking practically at all.

[She laughs again.]

And this is what makes this case so hard. Right? Because this is a dream. The dream is to cart around flowers in a beautiful bus! And generally speaking, the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast does not like to step on dreams. Does not like to squash dreams, Jeff-style.

[The litigants laugh.]

We like to acknowledge that people have dreams for a reason. *[Stifles laughter.]* That people have impractical desires for reasons. I mean, Bethany has started a new career raising flowers, 'cause you guys are almost all done raising kids. This is a classic time to take stock of your life and realize "Oh, this is not a dress rehearsal. This is all I got. If I don't get to have this bus... you know. Then I'm gonna feel something empty in my life!" Or at least to have the chance to chase the dream a little bit and do her own internal, irrational cost-benefit analysis and come to the conclusion that makes sense for her as to whether or not it's really gonna work.

00:45:10 John Host

The fact of the matter is, though, Bethany... that though I fully intended to rule in favor of the dreamers, I don't think you should be driving this thing on the Beltway! At all!

[Bethany and Jeff and/or Jesse laugh.]

Now I'm scared!

My own wife, anticipating our empty nest days, decided that she was going to get a Vespa scooter. Because she thought it would be fun and romantic and exciting to scoot to work every morning across the Brooklyn Bridge to where she works in Lower Manhattan. And I said "That is an incredible dream. And one that I will support if you want it... On the other hand, I also like you being alive." *[Laughs.]* Because I don't—I don't think it's very safe to ride a Vespa scooter every day across the Brooklyn Bridge. I don't feel it's very safe to ev—to drive on the Brooklyn Bridge, but... I understand the power that these particular dreams have, and if she does go and get one, I will support her. But so far I'm glad to say she hasn't.

I think that what should happen here is this: you've got three—*[laughs]* three to five years left on your Homeric journey known as the Odyssey.

[The litigants laugh.]

Before you come home to find your wife being courted by many suitors. There's a whole Homeric thing here, too, I just realized!

00:46:28 Bethany Guest

Hmm!

00:46:29 John Host

Because Jeff is coming home to find you, like Odysseus's wife, being paid suit to—being courted—by other voices, like Marty! The guy who loves to fix cars and destroy marriages!

[John, Jesse, and Bethany laugh.]

I think that you should follow your dream, but I think your dream should be different. The Microbus cannot replace the Odyssey. The Odyssey is a safe... dirty workhorse full of mud. That's exactly what it needs to be. The Microbus that you want to buy is a collector's work of art! It would be terrible to fill your beautiful work of art, in your dream, full of dirt and mud and mulch, and all the gross stuff of your business. That's what a Honda Odyssey is for. To be full of garbage.

[He and the litigants laugh.]

Just like a Honda Accord is—its design is to be full of unimaginative humans.

[Bethany laughs.]

Sorry, Jeff.

[John and possibly Jeff laugh.]

Gotta respect that design! You gotta respect the work you're doing. So as a replacement for the Odyssey, that's a hard no on the Microbus. But as a farm stand... it's a hard yes! Get one that can just drive five miles, and don't worry about putting a Subaru engine in it! Five miles to the farm stand, and five miles back once a week. With a canopy? You're gonna be selling so many flowers! So many people are gonna be coming over there! That's a business investment!

I know that Jeff was trying to make the argument that it's a little hard

to maneuver with extra vehicles in your driveway. And Jeff knew why I was asking. He figured it out. He was like "Yeah, but Marty can't store a vehicle!"

[John and Bethany laugh.]

00:48:13 John Host I kinda—I was thinking that! I was thinking of stowing it over at Marty's. He should be punished with that.

[Bethany and Jeff laugh.]

I think that you and Marty should get together and find a pretty good, cheap version of your dream. Do not trick it out with a Subaru water engine. And use it as your farm stand. Only on those weekends when you're only going five miles or whatever, or wherever you're gonna set up to do your flower-selling. That way you get your dream, and I think you sell a bunch more flowers.

On the condition that you sit down with your husband Jeff and do a genuine cost–benefit analysis of what it would cost to buy a pretty good, but not perfect, vintage VW Bus that would never, ever, ever go on a highway. And what it would cost to find a place to store it if it's not practical to store it at your place or at Marty's place.

This is the sound of a gavel.

00:49:05 Sound Effect Sound Effect *[Large vehicle revving to life.]*

00:49:12 John Host Judge John Hodgman rules; that is all.

00:49:13 Sound Effect Sound Effect *[As Jesse speaks below: Door opens, chairs scrape on the floor, footsteps.]*

00:49:14 Jesse Host Please rise as Judge John Hodgman exits the courtroom.

00:49:17 Sound Effect Sound Effect *[Door shuts.]*

00:49:18 Jesse Host Bethany, is five miles a week each way good enough for you?

00:49:24 Bethany Guest Absolutely! I think that was sheer genius. I love that ruling.

00:49:30 Jesse Host Jeff, how do you feel?

00:49:31 Jeff Guest I feel okay. It gives us something to work on, and perhaps a way out of this Gordian Knot.

00:49:36 Sound Effect Sound Effect *[Door opens and shuts.]*

00:49:37 John Host I'm seeing stuff on this website you sent me, Bethany, like that these cars are going for like, five thousand, ten thousand—like, here's one, a 1982 all original Vanagon for 4700 bucks! I mean, it's not zero dollars, but I think it'll get your flowers to where they need to go. And it'll give you guys a project and a hobby, and something to talk about, and something to work on together, which is exactly what you need at this stage in your life.

00:50:01 Jesse Host Something to live for, and something to die in.

[Everyone laughs. Someone claps a couple times.]

00:50:06 Bethany Guest Ooh! Dang! That's solid! *[Laughs.]* I like it.

00:50:11 Jesse Host Bethany, Jeff, thanks for joining us on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

00:50:13	Sound Effect	Transition	<i>[Three gavel bangs.]</i>
00:50:15	Jesse	Promo	<p>Judge Hodgman, we're about to be at San Francisco Sketchfest. As this podcast is released, we are probably on airplanes, headed to the great city of San Francisco. Our show is the day after this episode is released, January 16th, at the Castro Theatre. As of this recording, there are tickets still available, so come out to the Castro and see us.</p> <p>We're also doing shows without each other at SFSketchfest. On the 15th—which is the day this episode is released—I'll be doing <i>Jordan, Jesse, Go!</i> at the Punchline in San Francisco with Tony Hale and Glen Washington from <i>Snap Judgment</i>. John, you're doing <i>Thrilling Adventure Hour</i>, right?</p>
00:50:53	John	Promo	<p>Yeah! Not once, but twice! The <u>huge</u> reunion show of the <u>most</u> beloved <i>Thrilling Adventure Hour</i> from Acker & Blacker. All of your friends are gonna be in attendance. Paul F Tompkins? Yes. Paget Brewster? Yes. Mark Evan Jackson? Yes. Mark Gagliardi? Yes. Hal Lublin? Yes. Busy Phillips? Yes. John Hodgman? I'm in a scene, I think. Andy Savage? Of course. They're all getting back together to perform not <u>one</u> last time, but <u>two</u> times more! And it's happening in a really special space.</p> <p>I don't know if you've been there, Jesse, during Sketchfest. But there's this incredible immersive theatre space called Speakeasy in San Francisco, where you go through a secret door, and it's this warren of incredible galleries and bars and performing areas. In the main stage area there's gonna be a classic <i>Thrilling Adventure</i>–style staged radio fun. And then in all the other side antechambers and stuff, we're gonna have like, Rhett Miller playing music behind a one-way mirror, <i>[laughs]</i> and I'm gonna be doing office hours and interviewing people—or giving advice to people if they want—in an office. Some poker playing that I'm gonna be doing.</p> <p>Jonathan Coulton and Jean Gray are gonna be wandering around. Janet Varney's gonna be there. Everyone you love is gonna be there, and it's gonna be this fully weird, 360 immersive experience of <i>Thrilling Adventure</i> like you've never experienced it before! And that's Friday night and Saturday night. Tickets are going <u>very</u>, very fast. If you are lucky and you are inclined, go to the San Francisco Sketchfest website, type in <i>Thrilling Adventure Hour</i>, and grab your spot!</p>
00:52:25	Jesse	Promo	<p>I also wanna mention, I've had some really cool guests on my NPR show <i>Bullseye</i> in the last couple weeks that folks who are listeners to this show, who might never have checked out my arts and culture interview show <i>Bullseye</i>, might enjoy checking out. I just interviewed Oscar nominee and <u>your</u> pal from the show <i>Blindspot</i>, Marianne Jean-Baptiste, who is an—real true acting genius. Folks might know her—if they don't know her from <i>Blindspot</i> or <i>Without a Trace</i> on network television, they might know her from her Oscar-nominated role in <i>Secrets & Lies</i>, and she's in an amazing movie called <i>In Fabric</i> that just came out this year.</p> <p>I also interviewed country legend Tanya Tucker, who is an <u>absolute</u> delightful spitfire, and also one of my favorite singers. I really love Tanya Tucker.</p>

Besides that, this week the very funny Rob Huebel, who I talked to about funny stuff because he's got a great new show on Netflix that's a spinoff from *Childrens Hospital*, which is also a hilarious show. But also who I talked to about some really heavy stuff. He had a very seriously premature child a couple years ago, and I talked to him a little bit about what that experience was like.

And on the subject of spitfires, the legendary choreographer and dancer Twyla Tharp, who has a new book out about—you know, like, I would say keeping active in old age, but that cliché very much minimizes what the book is about, and how, like, awe-inspiringly hilarious, brilliant, sassy, and insightful Twyla Tharp is. She's really something else.

So, four great interviews on *Bullseye*. Just search for *Bullseye* in your podcast app. In fact, you're probably using your podcast app right now! So why not do it right now and hit subscribe?

00:54:10	Sound Effect	Transition	<i>[Three gavel bangs.]</i>
00:54:12	Jesse	Host	Another <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> case in the books. Before we dispense some swift justice, we wanna thank Justin Gibson for naming this week's episode, "German Engine Hearing."
00:54:22	John	Host	Let me just say, Jesse, that this is one of my favorite ones of all time. <i>[Laughs.]</i> German Engine Hearing! <i>[Laughs.]</i> Thank you, Justin.
00:54:28	Jesse	Host	You know, Judge Hodgman, I actually technically should have recused myself from that entire case, because one could make a pretty sound argument that I funded this entire operation—all of Maximum Fun—with seed money provided when I sold my own death trap, a 1965 Dodge Dart, that not only didn't have antilock brakes... but didn't have <u>disc</u> brakes, it had <u>drum</u> brakes. <u>And</u> it only had lap belts!

[Both laugh quietly.]

It was basically just a—like an impalement vehicle.

[Both laugh.]

I sold it for I think... \$1600? To a man and his son. The man wanted to fix it up with his son. It was running and everything, it was in pretty good shape. And I used that money to buy the telephone hybrid on which I first spoke to you, John!

00:55:16	John	Host	Oh, wow! A telephone hybrid is an old kind of mobile phone?
00:55:20	Jesse	Host	It's the machine that connects a telephone line to a soundboard. Because a telephone line is always carrying both sides of a conversation.
00:55:28	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	John: I see.

Jesse: They're not separate.

John: Right, right.

Jesse: They're not two channels.

00:55:30 Jesse Host So you need a machine that filters out one of the sides of the conversation to edit and mix them separately.

Anyway, if you'd like to name a future episode, like *Judge John Hodgman on Facebook*. We regularly put out calls for submissions there. We are on Twitter at [@hodgman](#) and [@JesseThorn—J-E-S-S-E-T-H-O-R-N](#). Maximum Fun is on Twitter, by the way, [@MaxFunHQ](#). You should probably follow that! Great feed. Hashtag your *Judge John Hodgman* Tweets [#JJHo](#), and check out the Maximum Fun subreddit! That's at [MaximumFun.Reddit.com](#).

We're on Instagram at [@judgejohnhodgman](#). Make sure to follow us there for evidence and other fun stuff, and our thanks this week to Robert Frasier at Monitor Studios. The episode was edited by Jesus Ambrosio, and produced by the ever capable Ms. Hannah Smith.

Now! Swift Justice! Where we answer your small disputes with quick judgment! Ally asks:

"Silverware: handle-up or handle-down in the dishwasher?"

00:56:31 John Host You know, it really depends on your dishwasher! How well it washes the dishes. How efficiently it washes the silverware. And how cool you are with getting stabbed in the hand while reaching down to unload it.

[Both laugh.]

I respect people's different opinions about how the silverware should go in. We have, for example—we have a tray at the very top of the dishwasher... cavity, or whatever it is. And you lay the silverware in on its side! Which solves this problem. And when you lay it in on its side, the knives have to be on the left, then the large forks, then the small forks, then the small spoons, and then the large spoons, all in the same direction!

[Laughs quietly.]

But otherwise, I'm not picky. *[Laughs.]* What do you do, Jesse?

00:57:14 Jesse Host I have a portable dishwasher. Although it is a very effective cleaner, this portable dishwasher, thanks to my friends at *Consumer Reports*, I always load facing down, because that is the direction that the water is coming from, and I—the part that needs cleaning is the business end. And that I put closest to the water.

It has like a little grid overlay that you can flip down over the silverware tray, and I use that to keep my knives from bumping into each other!

00:57:41 John Host Which is good, because knives bumping into each other will dull the blade.

00:57:44 Jesse Host Exactly.

00:57:45 John Host Jonathan Coulton once got into an—it was actually on the first Jonathan Coulton Cruise, where I adjudicated a dispute between him and his wife Christine. She wanted to separate the different forks and knives into the different compartments, but Jonathan's like "You can't

put the spoons together, 'cause then they'll just spoon. They'll clump together." And—

00:58:04 Jesse Host

Yeah, they'll nest.

00:58:05 John Host

They'll nest, and they won't get clean.

I guess you should just throw that stuff in randomly. So that's my ruling.

[Both laugh.]

Whatever gets your dishes clean!

00:58:15 Jesse Host

[Laughs.] That's about it for this week's episode. Submit your cases at MaximumFun.org/jjho, or email hodgman@maximumfun.org. No case is too small! I hope we'll see you in San Francisco, and next time on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

00:58:31 Sound Effect Sound Effect

[Three gavel bangs.]

00:58:32 Music Transition

A cheerful guitar chord.

00:58:33 Speaker 1 Guest

MaximumFun.org.

00:58:35 Speaker 2 Guest

Comedy and culture.

00:58:36 Speaker 3 Guest

Artist owned—

00:58:37 Speaker 4 Guest

—audience supported.