

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

00:00:02 Jesse Thorn Host Welcome to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. I'm Bailiff Jesse Thorn. We're in chambers this week, clearing the docket... with the clearest man in America, Judge John Hodgman.

00:00:12 John Hodgman Host Not just the clearest. Also the docketest.

[Jesse laughs.]

This might come out on or very near to February 29th, the magic day of Leap Year! What do you do on Leap Year, Jesse, to celebrate—*[stifling laughter]* an extra day of February?

00:00:29 Jesse Host What don't I do? *[Laughs.]* Is it really a magic day, John?

00:00:33 John Host It's a magic day because the hero of *Pirates of Penzance* was born on Leap Year. And what was his name?

00:00:42 Jesse Host Kevin Kline.

00:00:43 John Host No, not Kevin Kline. He was the Pirate King. That was my role. We're talking about Frederic, the young hero, played by Rex Smith in that movie. And that guy was born on February 29th, and that's why he thought that he had come of age and could leave his pirate indentures and get married and no longer be a pirate. But then it turned out he was born on Leap Year, so technically he was only 5, instead of 21. And that's how the pirates kept him! And they sang a song called "Paradox," and it was the subject of one of the most embarrassing moments of my life.

Because when I met friend of Maximum Fun Lin-Manuel Miranda one time, I mentioned to him that I had played the Pirate King in *Pirates of Penzance* in Brookline High School. I didn't play Pirate King in the regular production in the school, I played it when we went down to Florida to sing at an off-brand Epcot stage. And I took over the role of Pirate King 'cause Ben Crawford had college tours that weekend. So we only sang a few songs from it. *[Laughs quietly.]* And I was good at it! I was like—

[Singing] "For I am the pirate kiiing!"

[Speaking] And I sang that bit. And then I forgot all about it. And then later that night, in the—*[laughs]* in the closed-down dining room of the courtyard Marriott in Times Square, where the McElroy Brothers and Lin-Manuel Miranda—those four fine friends and I were hanging out late. As I was leaving, Lin-Manuel Miranda started singing—

[Singing] "A paradox, a paradox, a-buh-buh-buh-buh-bah-dah-bah!"

[Speaking] As though I'm supposed to sing with him. I had no idea what he was singing. And he said "I played the Pirate King, too. I thought we were together in this." And I was so embarrassed. I couldn't sing along with Lin-Manuel Miranda. And I had to explain to him—I don't even think I could explain to him! I was like "You don't understand. I wasn't the Pirate King in the regular one. I was the Pirate King in the touring company. I didn't—I didn't—I didn't sing that song."

[Jesse laughs.]

As you can tell, it haunts me to this day. And that's what I think of when I think of Leap Year. I'm tr—honestly? I am like—I'm breaking out into a cold sweat right now! It was so embarrassing.

00:02:46	Jesse	Host	He's a really judgmental guy, Lin. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:02:49	John	Host	When he realized that I didn't know the words to the "Paradox" song, you know what he did?
00:02:54	Jesse	Host	What did he do?
00:02:55	John	Host	He spat in both of my eyes. Puh-tooeey, puh-tooeey!
00:02:59	Jesse	Host	That's what you get when you cross LMM.
00:03:01	John	Host	No, he was fine with everything. He's a happy, happy guy. He's a happy man. How are you, Jesse? I'm a happy man! I hope you are a happy man enough today!
00:03:08	Jesse	Host	I'm pretty happy because I took my kids to soccer practice yesterday. Which is a bit of a nightmare, because my youngest kid is three, just turned three. And this class is for three and up, but really this coach doesn't have any interest in keeping a three-year-old engaged, so I have to keep him engaged.
00:03:26	John	Host	Uh-huh, of course.
00:03:27	Jesse	Host	So it's just a lot of hard work. And it was cold outside, and whatever, you know?
00:03:31	John	Host	Yeah.
00:03:32	Jesse	Host	But then my three-year-old picked up the soccer ball, and looked up at the moon, which was just rising over the horizon. And he said "I'm throwing it at the moon!" <i>[Laughing]</i> And then he threw the ball at the moon.
00:03:44	John	Host	<i>[Laughs.]</i> That reminds me of one time a young friend of my younger son, when they were both about five, asked me to push him in the swing. And it's always awkward when it's not your child. Do you know what I mean?
00:03:55	Jesse	Host	Sure!
00:03:56	John	Host	The mom was around but, you know, wasn't there. I couldn't like, hand it off to the mom. She was on a call somewhere. So I'm like "I'll push you on the swing, but... you know. Let's take it easy." And he goes "No, I want you to push me higher." I'm like "That's a little dangerous. I don't wanna push you very high." He goes "I want you to push me high so I can see the face of God." <i>[Jesse cracks up.]</i> You know what kids say? Some darned-up stuff! <i>[Both laugh.]</i>
00:04:28	Jesse	Host	Okay. Here's something from Nora about the correspondence sign-off "Hugs and Kisses" written with "X"s and "O"s. She asks:

"Which is the hug? Which is the kiss? I insist the hug is the 'O,' because you're wrapping your arms around someone in a circle. The kiss is the 'X,' because a kissy sound can sound sort of like an 'X' sound. My husband says the 'X' is the hug, because when you hug someone you cross your arms behind their back, and your lips make a circle when you kiss. The Internet is split. Our eight-year-old sides with my husband. Our sons don't care. Please settle this, dear judge."

00:05:06 John Host I'm sorry, Nora, that your husband is... incapable of Googling a thing. But I am very capable of Googling a thing, and thus I shall do it for thou.

First of all... Jesse.

00:05:20 Jesse Host

Yeah, that's me.

00:05:21 John Host

If you had to guess, without Googling, common sense guess. Would the "O"s be hugs or kisses?

00:05:28 Jesse Host

Hugs!

00:05:30 John Host

And would the "X"s be kisses or hugs?

00:05:32 Jesse Host

Kisses!!

00:05:33 John Host

Well. Here is what I found out when I did a simple Google search. I looked it up on the Urban Dictionary, and—ohhh my god, I cannot read that on the air. *[Laughs.]* Never mind. Forget you, Urban Dictionary, you're terrible. This is terrible stuff that teenagers come up with to make old people feel sad.

[Jesse laughs.]

Here's a tip for parents and kids. Don't look up things in the Urban Dictionary.

[Jesse laughs.]

Don't even look up the word "things," *[stifles laughter]* because a bunch of bad kids have gone on there and said dirty things for every phrase you can think of; it's something dirty.

But there's nothing dirty about hugs and kisses, they're sweet! And what I discovered—doing a simple Google search that your husband could have done!—was that, first of all, A, yes, obviously, the circles are hugs and the "X"s are kisses. And the "X"s come directly from medieval tradition of signing letters with an "X," or putting an "X" on a letter as a symbol of Christian faith. And you would literally kiss that "X" in order to show that what you had written was true and from the heart.

Also known as... SWAK! S-W-A-K. Sealed With A Kiss. Which was how Doughboys—not the podcasters, but the World War I soldiers—would sign their letters to their sweethearts back home. Sealed With A Kiss.

One of the earliest notations of kisses comes from an 1894 letter from one person to his mother. According to the OED—that's the

Oxford English Dictionary—the first preferred citation is from an 1894 letter by a historic figure to his mother. "Please excuse bad writing, as I am in awful hurry. Many kisses, XXX. WSC."

WSC of course standing for William S. Churchill! A man known for giving a lot of kisses.

00:07:24 Jesse Host Billy Church.
00:07:26 John Host That's right. You know what his middle name was?
00:07:28 Jesse Host *[Stifling laughter]* Just "S," like Harry S. Truman?
00:07:31 John Host "So Many Kisses." *[Laughs quietly.]* William "So Many Kisses" Churchill.

And then the "O"s came later. No one really knows how "O"s became associated with hugs. But the first citation according to this Washington Post article I found dates to 1960. A letter from Mikey and Cheryl to Santa. "Dear Santa, how are you? I am fine." Classic opening gambit of any letter. And then a list of things that Mikey and Cheryl wanted. "Please. Love and kisses, XOXOXO, Davey, Mikey, and Cheryl."

Sorry, I left out Davey there before. There was a little Davey erasure. I apologize.

But yeah! That's the stories, Nora's husband! Obviously "X"s are kisses and "O"s are hugs! Stop coming up with a new system! Especially when it's so easy to find out—and interesting to find out—the history of this stuff!

00:08:17 Sound Effect Sound Effect *[Three gavel bangs.]*
00:08:18 Jesse Host I made up a little way to remember, a little mnemonic. Just imagine a fully diagramed football play. And you can remember that offensive players like to hug, and defensive players like to smooch.
00:08:31 John Host I don't get it.
00:08:32 Jesse Host "X"s and "O"s, John. "X"s and "O"s.
00:08:35 John Host Oh, tic-tac-toe.

[Both laugh.]

Jesse, you don't buy brandy a lot. 'Cause I would imagine it's probably a migraine trigger?

00:08:43 Jesse Host Yeah—well, I just—I just don't drink. *[Laughs.]*
00:08:45 John Host Oh, right. *[Laughs.]* It's funny how I just presumed "Oh, he doesn't drink 'cause it's a migraine trigger." *[Laughs.]* My—it never occurred to me that it just might be your personal preference, but that's fine. People like what they like. I don't even like brandy that much! But I do know sometimes you get a brandy, and that it has the initials on it "XO." Do you know what the "XO" stands for?
00:09:05 Jesse Host No!
00:09:06 John Host "Extra Old."
00:09:07 Jesse Host *[Laughs.]* Really?

00:09:09 John Host *[Laughing]* Yeah.

00:09:10 Jesse Host *[Laughing]* That's awesome.

00:09:12 John Host And I think that because "XO" is associated with... sort of fine, luxury brandy, that kinda got back-channeled into a Hong Kong chili sauce called XO sauce. Which is a very pungent—and I think that this is—this is purely off the dome here. And so I'm not gonna Google it. I'll leave that to you, listeners at home, uh, who wish to send me letters about how wrong I am about this, including our dear listeners in Hong Kong. I hope you are doing okay.

But XO sauce is a very pungent, I think sort of Szechuan peppery sauce, that just borrowed the "XO" off of the brandy to give it a little bit of a fancy kick. If you got brandy that is labeled "VSOP," do you know what that stands for? "VSOP"?

00:09:56 Jesse Host No.

00:09:57 John Host "Very Special Old Pale."

[Jesse laughs.]

But do you know what I call you, Jesse? Very Special Old Pal.

00:10:04 Jesse Host *[Chuckling]* Awww. Thank you, John.

00:10:07 John Host Yeah. You're VSOP in my book any day.

00:10:09 Jesse Host Here's something from Grayson:

"When my friend purchases movie tickets for us, he'll deliberately tell me the incorrect start time for the movie. The incorrect time is usually 15 to 30 minutes early, but it has been as much as 45 minutes early. I'm not the kind of person to arrive late to movies. I like to see movies at the Alamo Drafthouse, for example, a theater that won't even let you enter if you arrive late.

I ask you order my friend to give me the correct start time for all movies we see together. Additionally, in damages, I would like to receive one movie ticket to make up for the hour of personal time off I wasted in order to arrive, quote 'on time,' unquote, for *Avengers: Endgame*."

00:10:55 John Host Ah, a little buzz-market for the Alamo Drafthouse. Which I don't mind! I'm glad they exist in this world. I'm glad for the Alamo Drafthouse. And I'm glad for the Nitehawk Theater here in Park Slope, which opened recently and is also a delightful place to go. And do you know why it's so delightful? Aside from the cleanliness, and the decency of the food, and the niceness of the servers, and the care they take in the curation of their films, and the comfort of the chairs, Jesse?

00:11:20 Jesse Host Why is that?

00:11:21 John Host You get to pre-reserve your seats. *[Contented sigh.]* Remember all the cold sweats I had from my Lin-Manuel Miranda story?

00:11:28 Jesse Host *[Laughing]* Yeah.

00:11:29 John Host I feel much better.

00:11:30 Jesse Host I like to go to the Highland Theatre in Los Angeles, California. It's

three screens, it costs six bucks, and no matter what movie you're seeing there's gonna be three eight-year-olds in there.

00:11:40 John Host *[Laughs.]* Yeah! I mean, you know, going to the movies is the greatest. And whether you're going to three screen, six bucks, three eight-year-olds, or you're gonna pay some premium to go to a—sit in a fancy chair and have waiters walk back and forth in front of you while they bring everyone else tater tots, or whatever—please go to the movies! I'm so excited that there's a movie theater in my neighborhood now. I love the Alamo, which is a little ways away. I'm gonna give you a lifehack about that Alamo in a second. And I love the Nitehawk.

And you probably have in your neighborhood as well—in lots of major cities now they have places where you can reserve seats ahead of time, which is like—even if I don't have tickets to the movies, I'm worried that I'm not gonna get a seat. Like, even if I don't have plans to see a movie, I'm like "Will I get a seat in that movie theater?" Now I know. And the most important thing about it is you don't have to arrive early! 'Cause you know that seat is reserved for you!

So I don't know what Grayson's friend's problem is, other than he has... John Hodgman Disease, which is perpetual worry that someone's gonna be late, and they're gonna cancel the movie, and everyone's gonna yell at us.

When you go to the Highland, that's a not a reserved seating type of situation, right?

00:12:46 Jesse Host Absolutely not. John, it's so chill.

00:12:49 John Host It's not a first run house. Yeah.

00:12:50 Jesse Host It is a first run house.

00:12:51 John Host Oh, it is!

00:12:52 Jesse Host Which is one of the great things about it. It's rare to have a six-dollar first run house. You know, I'm not going to see *Star Wars* on opening day or whatever.

00:13:01 John Host No.

00:13:02 Jesse Host But I have never had the slightest concern about not getting a seat. It is no problem. The key is to focus on movie theaters that are just barely getting by.

00:13:12 John Host There are theaters where the vibe is just naturally chill, and the communities they service are naturally chill, and it doesn't matter. Or there are theaters like the Nitehawk and the Alamo that cater to people like Grayson's friend, who suffer from the John Hodgman Disease. *[Stifles laughter.]* Who are—who absolutely have to be on time and have their very special seat picked out for them, and are willing to pay a premium to do so. But either way, Grayson's friend, you don't have to live this way! And you definitely don't have to police your friend.

Grayson's friend, you can relax in the knowledge that your friend will show up and that seat will be there for them if you are going to a reserved seating place. And indeed, if that friend shows up so late

that they are not allowed admittance, then you get to not only enjoy a movie, but ride the crest of an incredible swell of self-congratulation. Which you—I bet you would enjoy.

But here's the thing I've gotta say to Grayson. Do you, uh, also not have the ability to Google a thing? Or even Bing a thing?

00:14:14 Jesse Host

DuckDuckGo that thing, baby.

00:14:16 John Host

Is that like the ProtonMail of search engines? Like if you use it, you're a good person, but if you use the other ones, you're bad and you're being tracked or whatever?

00:14:23 Jesse Host

Yeah.

00:14:24 John Host

DuckDuckGo. DuckDuckGo it, Grayson! You're in charge of the information that gets to you, you don't have to rely on your friend! Look up the time when the movie starts! It's hard to not know what time movie starts these days! You have to make an effort to not know what time your movie starts!

Then Grayson's friend can say "The movie starts at 7:15 in the morning," and then you look it up on DuckDuckGo and you're like "No it doesn't, it starts at 7:15 PM. He wants me to get there 12 hours early! I'm gonna show up when it's the time to show up." You don't have to be pushed around by Grayson.

00:14:55 Sound Effect Sound Effect

[Three gavel bangs.]

00:14:56 Jesse Host

While you were talking I had a great business idea.

00:14:58 John Host

I would like to hear it.

00:15:00 Jesse Host

Airport lounges for movie theaters. So that the kind of people who show up really early for airplanes, and thus need to take advantage of airport lounges—

00:15:09 John Host

[Stifling laughter] Uh-huh.

00:15:10 Jesse Host

—can also show up really early for movie theaters.

00:15:12 John Host

Well, that's what you can do at the Nitehawk or the Alamo! They have like a bar restaurant there where you can just hang out! Do you—Alamo's in a lot of cities now, right?

00:15:20 Jesse Host

There's an Alamo Drafthouse in downtown Los Angeles. I'm much more likely to go to the ArcLight Cinema in Pasadena, California if I wanna spend \$20 to see a movie.

[Both laugh.]

00:15:30 John Host

Yeah, right, no, I understand.

Everyone loves a lifehack. And this is at least true about the Alamo Drafthouse in downtown Brooklyn, which is the one that I go to. The front row seats? Not only are they never taken, but also they are not too close to the screen at all. In fact, they're the perfect distance from the screen. And also, it's much easier for the servers to get at you without being disruptive as they bring you your... truffle-butter popcorn and your fries, or whatever. And also they are recliners! Those front rows are full recliners! It's the best way to see a movie.

That's all. I'm buzz-marketing. I'm sorry.

00:16:12 Jesse Host Have anything to buzz-market about *Avengers: Endgame*?
00:16:15 John Host Robbed of Best Picture. By far. Should have been nominated five times. Loved it. Good job, *Avengers: Endgame*.

You know, here's a little buzz-market! Our friend Chuck Bryant has the *Movie Crush* podcast, where he talks to people about their favorite movies. Go listen to the epic trilogy of podcasts of me and Chuck Bryant talking about *Avengers*, *Avengers: Infinity War*, and then *Avengers: Endgame*. You can hear all of my thoughts.

I'm not a snob like Martin Scorsese; I like things. I get what Martin Scorsese is saying. But these things are more than just thrill-rides. They are a weirdly unique work of art that young John Hodgman, bobbing about in the ocean with Tim McGonagle, talking—dream-casting the *X-Men* movie circa 1982 could never have thought would ever be possible, that they would actually make a 20-year story arc across 3500 different movies. It was just—[sighs]. Are you gonna give that statuette to *Joker*?! Come on. Come on, culture!

Anyway, that's what I had to say about that, Jesse.

00:17:17 Jesse Host I watched *Avengers*. I wasn't nuts about it.
00:17:19 John Host No, it's not for everybody!
00:17:20 Jesse Host I liked that *Spider-Man*. *Spider-Man*, cartoon *Spider-Man*, starring Spider-Ham! With John Mulaney.
00:17:28 John Host Oh, you're talking about *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*.
00:17:30 Jesse Host Loved it.
00:17:31 John Host I believe it won an Oscar award, which is pretty big.
00:17:34 Jesse Host Yeah.
00:17:35 John Host And deservedly so, what a work of art.
00:17:36 Jesse Host For John Mulaney as Best Film Pig!
00:17:39 John Host Aw, I'm gonna watch it again.

Did I ever tell you about when I took our son to see *Joker*? He really wanted to see *Joker*, and... uh, I didn't. But what are you gonna do? So we went to go see it. And it was at the Alamo, in fact! And they showed the trailer for the two movies that *Joker* quite openly rips off, *King of Comedy* and *Taxi Driver*, right before *Joker*. And I don't know what he made of *King of Comedy*, but after he saw the trailer for *Taxi Driver* my son—who is 14—leans over to me in the theater and goes "Why have you never showed me that movie?"

[Laughs quietly.] I'm like "Yeah! I... have good reasons, for not showing you *Taxi Driver* before the age of 14. But yeah! That's the real thing! Martin Scorsese knows what he's doing! This whole movie you're about to see is just a pretend of that!"

And then they asked me to be quiet in the theater.

[Jesse laughs.]

Movies! Gotta love 'em.

00:18:38 Jesse Host Let's take a quick break. More items on the docket coming up in just a minute on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

00:18:44 Sound Effect Transition *[Three gavel bangs.]*

00:18:46 Promo Clip **Music:** Classical orchestral music.

John Hodgman: Hey, everyone! It's I, John Hodgman of the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

Elliott Kalan: And I, Elliott Kalan of the *Flop House* podcast.

John: And we've made a whole new podcast! A 12-episode special miniseries called *I, Podius*. In which we recap, discuss, and explore the very famous 1976 BBC miniseries about Ancient Rome called *I, Claudius*! We've got incredible guests such as Gillian Jacobs, Paul F. Tompkins, as well as star of *I, Claudius* Sir Patrick Stewart! And his son! Non-Sir Daniel Stewart.

Elliott: Don't worry, Dan, you'll get there someday.

John: *I, Podius* is the name of the show! Every week from MaximumFun.org for only 12 weeks. Get 'em at MaximumFun.org, or wherever you get your podcasts.

[Music fades out.]

00:19:31 Sound Effect Transition *[Three gavel bangs.]*

00:19:32 Jesse Host Welcome back to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. We're clearing the docket this week. Michael says:

"When leaving the grocery store with two or fewer bags, my fiancée either leaves the cart near the exit, or she walks it back to the entrance. She thinks this saves the staff time from having to walk to the parking lot in order to retrieve the cart.

I believe that as a shopper, you're expected to walk with the cart back to your car, then place the cart into the cart return vestibules provided by the store. Returning the cart anywhere else causes unnecessary work for the staff, and crowding near the entrance and exit.

I'm seeking an order from Judge John Hodgman to forbid my fiancée from guilt-tripping me when I push a 12-pack of La Croix back to my car in a shopping cart, and insist only that she guilt-trip me for my addiction to La Croix."

00:20:22 John Host I like La Croix. But doesn't it make you thirstier? Haven't we figured that out? Isn't there a chemical in there? *[Stifles laughter.]* Makes you even thirstier?

00:20:29 Jesse Host Eh, it could be. I got one of those bubble machines, but I'm perfectly glad to drink Safeway Select Seltzer.

00:20:36 John Host I love seltzer so much.

00:20:38 Jesse Host We mentioned that I don't drink on the show. *[Stifling laughter]* One of the reasons is because my dad took me to a lot of AA meetings when I was a little kid.

00:20:44 John Host Sure.

00:20:45 Jesse Host And one of the results of my dad being in recovery when I was a child was he always drank club soda. He drank club soda all the time. He always had a giant two-liter bottle of store-brand club soda in the refrigerator. Even in the times when, you know, food was not—I was never hungry, but when food was not plentiful in our house. *[Laughs.]*

00:21:07 John Host Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

00:21:08 Jesse Host And I love. I love it, I love it, I love it forever. I also love my dad used to have—you know how the kind of fancy apple juice that comes in a glass jar instead of a plastic jar?

00:21:18 John Host Oh, yeah, sure! I'll say the name, Martinelli's.

00:21:21 Jesse Host Not the apple-shaped jar, just a regular glass jar.

00:21:25 John Host Oh, okay, sure. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

00:21:27 Jesse Host He used to have one of those jars that had long lost its top. And it was always full of water, and it was always in the fridge. And now I can never drink tepid water. *[Laughs quietly.]*

00:21:37 John Host No, you need to have cold water!

00:21:38 Jesse Host I want that cold fridge water! Just like it came outta that—*[stifles laughter]* re-used apple juice bottle. That didn't have a lid. *[Laughs.]* For years! For years, this bottle with no lid! *[Laughing]* Just soaking up all the flavors of the refrigerator.

00:21:55 John Host I get that for some people, seltzer, club soda, sparkling water, whatever you wanna call it, is, as my children used to call it, "too spicy."
[Both laugh.]

00:22:05 Jesse Host Yeah.

00:22:06 John Host I get it. And I know that people like what they like. But when I have occasion to go out to dinner, and the waitstaff says "Still or sparkling water?" and the person with me says "Still" I'm like... "Didn't you just hear that they offered sparkling?"

00:22:16 Jesse Host *[Laughs.]* That's adventure water!

00:22:18 John Host Yeah! It's the best! It's like a—it's a party in your mouth! And carbonation is a more effective palate cleanser between courses. So you can eat your food and then you can drink some seltzer water, and it resets your mouth for the next piece of food you're gonna put in there.

Too much talking about putting food in mouths. That's gross. But seltzer? Not gross.

00:22:39 Jesse Host What about shopping carts, John?

00:22:41 John Host I don't often order them at restaurants. I'm not sure what the point is.
[Both laugh quietly.]

00:22:47 Jesse Host A basket's plenty.

00:22:49 John Host *[Laughs.]* Yeah. Well, a basket is plenty for sure here in New York. We don't have a lot of shopping carts in New York. But you know,

when I'm up in the commonwealth of Massachusetts, or in the state of Maine, they have big old supermarkets with big old, uh, whatchamacallit—or if I'm driving up to MaxFunCon, and I stop at the Jensen's in Blue Jay, California—my favorite supermarket of all time—that is a traditional straight-aisle old-fashioned supermarket, and they have shopping carts and a parking lot...

Yeah. It really depends on where I am in the lot! I'll either put it in the—what did Michael call it? Receptacle? Vestibule. Cart return vestibule. Good vocabulary for a guy who's got a bad system.

[Jesse laughs.]

No! His system is good! What am I talking about? And it's fine to return them to the vestibules. That's what they're for. But his contempt for his fiancée walking the cart back is inexplicable to me. His comment here, "She thinks this saves the staff time." Yeah! It does save the staff time! It means fewer carts to bring back to the store! I don't get what his problem is. Can you be a devil's advocate, like a Keanu Reeves' son?

[Both laugh quietly.]

00:23:59	Jesse	Host	I can. I can.
00:24:01	John	Host	Okay. Please.
00:24:02	Jesse	Host	I think this is the situation. He is describing her <u>not</u> always returning it to the cart return area or the cart dispensing area at the front of the supermarket.
00:24:12	John	Host	Ohhh.
00:24:13	Jesse	Host	But rather just returning it to the general area by the doors.
00:24:18	John	Host	Oh no, that's no good. That's true.
00:24:20	Jesse	Host	Often there's one side of the supermarket that is the entrance side, and that will have all the carts, and there's one side that's the exit side. And if she's leaving it in between the two of them or leaving it over by the exit door, I can kind of understand where he's coming from. I would also suggest that it's not a significant savings of time for the person who is wrangling the carts because, you know, this is the 21st century. They've got one of those cool... cart-pushing... snowmobiles.

[Both laugh.]

With the special hook rope that ties a thousand carts together and you push them all en masse, and—

00:25:00	John	Host	You talking about a cart Zamboni?
00:25:01	Jesse	Host	Yeah, exactly. Forty-nine carts moves the same as fifty carts, generally speaking. But I am with you, broadly, that I have no contempt for this woman returning the cart if she's actually returning it to the place where the carts are dispensed, yeah.
00:25:16	John	Host	If she's gonna do the job that the other person would have done, and <u>finish</u> the job. That's the thing, Michael's Fiancée. Finish the job. Don't get it part of the way there. Don't do half the job, or even four

fifths of the job, and leave it out by the doors. Bring it in and put it with the rest of the carts. That's what I say.

- 00:25:34 Sound Effect Sound Effect *[Three gavel bangs.]*
- 00:25:35 Jesse Host Yeah. The real contempt is for people who leave their carts rolling around the parking lot, *[stifling laughter]* denting people's cars and taking up parking spaces.
- 00:25:45 John Host Yeah, willy-nilly. As it were. Willy-nilly. My hat goes off to the young man who collects the carts—and I see him every summer up there at the Tradewinds in Blue Hill, Maine—who's collecting those carts and just rocking it. Just grabbing those carts out of that return vestibule and rocking it up there. And you know what? He's only got one arm. And he's incredible. Keep it up, that kid. Just to borrow a phrase from a podcast I like.
- 00:26:14 Jesse Host Wait, am I—am I supposed to also be plugging my favorite grocery store, the Town & Country Market in Porterville, California? It's a dream! And it has its own gas station.
- 00:26:23 John Host Well, that's the classic combo that you don't see often enough, though.
- 00:26:27 Jesse Host This is a market—it is gargantuan. All straight aisles. Every food you could possibly imagine. It has every international food alongside every food from... *[stifling laughter]* the *Brady Bunch*.
- 00:26:43 John Host Yeah. Yes!
- 00:26:44 Jesse Host It has not been updated since 1970, if that.
- 00:26:49 John Host I can picture it!
- 00:26:51 Jesse Host And there it is, right in the heart of California's Central Valley, the breadbasket of the United States, so it's got lots of great fruits and vegetables!
- 00:26:59 John Host I can picture it, because it sounds like the identical twin of Jensen's, my favorite grocery store. Which is in—as I say, in Blue Jay, California, on the way up to the MaxFunCon on Lake Arrowhead, up there in the San Bernardino Mountains. And it, too, is like—it looks exactly like a grocery store that I might have gone to in 1981, as a kid. The aisles are straight. And they are packed with food, and as you pointed out, it is all of the *Brady Bunch* food, *[stifles laughter]* all the old brands and all the new brands. And they're so perfectly—like, it really speaks to my particular mania of a place for everything and everything in its place.

And if you wanna get a sense of what Jensen's is all about, go back into my Instagram feed—[johnhodgman](#), my personal feed, not [judgejohnhodgman](#) the show feed, which you should also subscribe to, but [johnhodgman](#), the personal feed of me, John Hodgman.

Any June, going back ten years, you will find dozens of pictures as I stop there to go up to—before going up to MaxFunCon—you will find dozens of pictures of cans of beans, from me, [taking pictures](#) of just [stuff](#) in the supermarket that I love. And one time I got stopped by a woman in there, 'cause I was just taking all these pictures in the Jensen's, of these weird off-brand cans of lard and stuff, just amazing product packaging I'd never seen, and I love.

And she said "What are you doing?" And I said "I'm just taking a picture of a grocery store that I love, Ma'am. Why?" And she said "My husband owns this store." And I said "Thank you for your service." She said "I wish you wouldn't take pictures here. We're gonna be updating the look of the store soon. It's very dated."

I figuratively got on my knees and begged her not to change a thing about the store. And so far they haven't. Jensen's. What's the name of your place, Town & Country?

00:28:49 Jesse Host Town & Country. Porterville, California.

Here's something from Meg. She asks:

"When is the appropriate time to throw out a birthday cake? I threw out my spouse's birthday cake two days after his birthday, and got in hot water. I made a second birthday cake, and he waited until mold grew on the cake to throw it away. Please tell him he's wrong."

[Both laugh.]

00:29:11 John Host Did she throw the birthday cake into hot water?

[Jesse laughs.]

Did she just fill up the sink with hot water and toss it in there?

[Laughs.]

00:29:17 Jesse Host

Fun.

00:29:18 John Host

I'm kinda the wrong person to ask, 'cause I don't care for cake! Like, I feel like the time to throw away birthday cake is before it gets to the table.

00:29:25 Jesse Host

Yeah, replace it with a birthday pie.

00:29:27 John Host

[Revelatory] Birthday piiie!

00:29:30 Jesse Host

John, I can't eat chocolate, because that is a migraine trigger.

[Stifling laughter] And because my dad was a choc—is a recovering chocoholic.

[Both laugh.]

I can't eat chocolate because it's a migraine trigger, and so... cake is just an absolute wasteland to me. I don't know if people know this, but red velvet cake is just chocolate cake that's colored red.

[Laughs.]

00:29:55 John Host

I did not know that.

00:29:57 Jesse Host

Yeah. And so I'm really left with like, yellow cake, and, you know, white cake. The most beautiful, elegantly made cake in the world to me is a six. ...Outta ten.

00:30:12 John Host

Oh.

00:30:13 Jesse Host

You know what I mean? I gotta be honest. The next category of cake is like, box cake, grocery store cake, that's a five. I mean—

00:30:21 John Host

Right.

00:30:22 Jesse Host

I'm not—the cake isn't horrible! It's—what it is, what it is.

00:30:26 John Host And people love it.

00:30:27 Jesse Host Why would you love it? That's the thing. If I could eat a chocolate cake with chocolate icing on it, you know, that tastes like something—chocolate icing to me is much more palatable than vanilla icing, which... I'm just like "Why am I not eating ice cream right now?"

00:30:41 John Host Right.

00:30:42 Jesse Host And you know, you put ice cream on it, that helps. But I'm married to a beautiful cake hoarder!

00:30:47 John Host Yeah. People love cake. There are people who love it.

00:30:50 Jesse Host My wife will take home cake from any birthday party where cake is being offered. You know how there's always way too much cake, and then at the end of the birthday party, like, "Who wants to take home some cake?" My wife will take it home.

00:31:01 John Host Yeah.

00:31:02 Jesse Host My wife'll keep our children's birthday cakes for weeks on end. But you know what? She eats 'em. She just knocks 'em back a little bit at a time. She just puts in her work and gets it taken care of. It's the only leftovers she eats, as far as I know. *[Laughs quietly.]*

00:31:14 John Host Well, Theresa Thorn knows how to live.

00:31:16 Jesse Host She does. She's a wonderful woman.

00:31:17 John Host She knows what she likes, she likes what she likes, and she takes care of it. Unlike Meg's spouse, who is a cake hoarder but doesn't eat it. Just lets it mold.

00:31:28 Jesse Host A refrigerator is a desiccant. So unless your cake is sealed, it is going to dry out pretty quickly. And that is the quality of a bad cake!

00:31:41 John Host Jesse, let's do a thought experiment. What kind of pie would you like for your birthday?

00:31:46 Jesse Host I'd like a... cherry pie. Do we have ice cream?

00:31:50 John Host Of course. We are à la mode.

00:31:52 Jesse Host Okay, then yes, I'd like a cherry pie. Otherwise I was thinking about maybe like a cream pie of some kind, like a banana cream pie or something. But if there is ice cream, I'm gonna go with a cherry pie.

00:32:05 John Host A banana cream pie...

00:32:08 Jesse Host Banana cream pies are really good. *[Laughs.]* When you can't eat chocolate, you really start to appreciate banana and caramel. *[Laughs.]*

00:32:15 John Host Let's say for the sake of argument—for the pleasure of my mind image—that I have gotten you a banana cream pie. I have sent you a banana cream pie. Which is the most popular Internet banana cream pie company?

[Jesse laughs.]

Is it Casper? Or Lisa?

[Both laugh.]

00:32:38 Jesse Host I'm trying to remember what show I've seen the pies on, but I think it's Acme Corporation. *[Laughs.]*

00:32:42 John Host *[Stifles laughter.]* Sure!

Look. It's simple. You sign up, you just give them your email address. You sign up for a banana cream pie subscription. With order code "Judge John," you get 15% off of your first... twenty-five banana cream pies. Twenty-five banana cream pies sent to your door in our eco-friendly packaging, once a month, every month; you cannot ever cancel your subscription. It's just that simple.

Okay. So I send you a banana cream pie for your birthday. And you have yourself a big old slice or two on your birthday. And then two days later, Theresa Thorn goes "This isn't cake. This is disgusting pie" and throws it away. Two days after your birthday. Birthday plus two. Are you mad? Sad? Neutral? Fine? Secretly pleased? What?

00:33:33 Jesse Host I would be pretty sad. That said... desiccation is not a concern with a cream pie.

00:33:39 John Host No, but you could wrap up a cake properly. I guess I'm saying the birthday person really gets to say when that cake gets tossed.

00:33:46 Jesse Host Who has ever put a—wrapped up a cake properly?!

00:33:49 John Host There's certain kinds of ways to do it.

00:33:52 Jesse Host People just put it in the refrigerator in that big pink paper box.

[John laughs.]

That doesn't seal, John!

00:33:59 John Host Yeah. But I mean, I would say that somewhere between two days and mold is the appropriate time for keeping a birthday cake. And that generally speaking the birthday person gets to decide between two days and mold.

00:34:12 Sound Effect Sound Effect *[Three gavel bangs.]*

00:34:13 Jesse Host Yeah, it seems like more than like, five days, you're no longer storing a cake; you're starting to store a husk.

00:34:20 John Host Yeah, that's pretty true about anything. I mean, with the exception of some obvious preserves. Five days of fresh food? It's probably like, time to eat it or... for-geet it (*forget it*).

[Jesse laughs.]

Two—one more thing about pies, that makes them better than cakes, that I thought about. When you pointed out that Theresa is a cake hoarder. Where can you hoard that cake? Where do you hoard it, Jesse?

[Beat.]

Fridge?

00:34:50 Jesse Host Yeah.

00:34:51 John Host Is there a special kind of cupboard for the hoarding of cakes? No. Is

there something known as a pie safe? Yes! A pie safe, if you don't know, is a cupboard—a very traditional, old-timey kitchen cupboard—that has pressed tin that has holes punctured in it, often in a decorate way, and that's where you put your fresh-baked pies in to cool without people or critters getting in at them. And it's called a pie safe, one of the great names for a piece of furniture ever.

Another thing that I learned using the Internet. You guys, get to know this Internet! If you have a question about how—whether the "X"s are kisses or "O"s are hugs or whatever, look it up! It's fun to learn things! Pie safe...

Banana cream pies for Jesse's birthday, and for my birthday, how about you just get me a classic mold cake? Which is to say... a wheel of Stilton cheese.

00:35:50	Jesse	Host	<i>[Laughs.]</i> Let's take a quick break. When we come back we'll hear a case about cozy attire, and a listener letter with a condiment-based cake recipe!
00:36:02	John	Host	Ohhh! Right! Back to cake.
00:36:04	Sound Effect	Transition	<i>[Three gavel bangs.]</i>
00:36:06	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!](#)

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 Yeardley 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.]

00:36:48	Sound Effect	Transition	<i>[Three gavel bangs.]</i>
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00:36:49 Jesse Host Welcome back to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. This week we're clearing the docket, and we have something from Ben:

"My wife and I each own a Lippi Selk'bag."

00:36:59 John Host What?

00:37:01 Jesse Host I'm looking at a picture of this... item. *[Stifles laughter.]* It appears to be a wearable sleeping bag with arms and legs. And a hood.

00:37:09 John Host Ugh. *[Sighs, laughs.]* Okay. Yep. And so here's an adorable picture of them, Ben and his wife. We'll put this on [the show page](#) at [MaximumFun.org](#), and on our Instagram as well, [judgejohnhodgman](#) on Instagram. Go on.

00:37:20 Jesse Host "Sometimes in the fall, we like to build a fire in our backyard fire pit and invite friends over to hang out. When it's chilly, our Selk'bags are perfect fire attire. However, my wife refuses to wear her Selk'bag if people are coming over. She thinks it's rude to wear something so obviously cozy when we're not providing equal coziness for our guests.

This seems unnecessarily conscientious to me. People who are coming over know how to look up what temperature it's gonna be and plan their dress accordingly. Why shouldn't we wear our Selk'bags if we have them? Am I a monster, thinking this way?"

Well, you do literally look like a monster in this Selk'bag.

[Both laugh quietly.]

00:38:00 John Host Yeah, you look like a stand-up Muppet, dude! *[Laughs.]*

00:38:02 Jesse Host One—

00:38:03 John Host You look like Sweetums, almost! A pink Sweetums!

00:38:06 Jesse Host You're one rubber mask away from being a Japanese kaiju.

00:38:10 John Host *[Cracks up.]*

First of all, along with Banana Cream Pie—which is the Internet's most famous online banana cream pie company, our presenting sponsor—apparently are these Selk'bags! These grown-up footie pajamas. They're high quality, and they make you look like a kaiju!

I think the situation here is, Ben... your wife is pretending that it is inconsiderate to wear your amazing, cool, cozy Selk'bags, and that it will somehow make her guests feel bad that they don't get to have their own cozy, cool Selk'bags, which are basically the REI version of Snuggles. But in fact maybe your wife is a little embarrassed by your grown-up pajamas.

Right, Jesse? That's my instinct here. I mean, the two of you sitting out by the fire together in your matching hilarious wearable sleeping bags? That's adorable. But maybe when friends are over, she doesn't want to be seen in this obviously almost silly-looking... fashion of pure surrender to comfort. Maybe she wants to wear some nicer outdoorsy clothes when guests are around.

00:39:37 Jesse Host I think that while my overall top position on this is that it's

inappropriate to wear these in public...

00:39:46 John Host Mm-hm.

00:39:47 Jesse Host *[Laughs.]* Uh, and that's why I would be embarrassed.

00:39:51 John Host Mm-hm, mm-hm.

00:39:52 Jesse Host I think I sympathize with the wife's position. It does feel like you are inviting someone to your home to participate in a homey activity that's about... coziness. "This is how we do it, but we are not inviting you to participate in it the way that we do it."

00:40:16 John Host I agree. It may not merely be that she's sparing his feelings, and not letting him know that they kinda look like doofuses in these things. That it might actually be good host/hostessing to not flaunt your giant 1981-style, like, child snowsuit made in adult sizes. *[Laughs quietly.]*

But if that were the case, why wouldn't she just get a few for guests? You know what I mean? Like, just go over to... *[stifles laughter]* SelkbagUSA.com, enter in the code word "Judge John—"

[Jesse laughs.]

—and right there, for 20 to 40% off in their sales section, you have a wide variety of different colors of giant full-body down-stuffed diapers for your guests. *[Laughs quietly.]* That you can wrap your friends up in in front of the fire. Get some guest Selk'bags! If you're gonna take over my podcast and make me advertise for them for no money.

And that I guess would be the test, right? If Ben says to his wife "Why don't we invest in six more of these?" *[Laughs quietly.]* Or maybe even just four more of these. "For our friends..." And then her face will tell the tale as to whether or not this is simply a matter of wanting to be a gracious host, or a matter of "Let's keep our private thing private."

00:41:37 Jesse Host I'm with ya.

00:41:39 John Host They do look cozy.

00:41:40 Jesse Host If it's a group activity, it seems fun to me. We're all gonna embarrass ourselves together.

00:41:45 John Host Yeah. Was it the Snuggie which was the big...

00:41:48 Jesse Host Yeah.

00:41:49 John Host ...popular on the Internet, the wearable blankie?

00:41:51 Jesse Host Yeah.

00:41:52 John Host That was called a Snuggie? In case you haven't checked out the picture of Ben and his wife yet, they look like outdoorsy Snuggies.

00:41:57 Jesse Host Eh, it's fun. They're pretty cute in this picture.

00:42:00 John Host Look. This couple is adorable. And I want them to enjoy themselves however they want. But yeah, go ahead and say to your wife, Ben, "Let's get four more of these." Her eyes will tell the tale. They will either shine in delight or widen in horror. That will be the sound of your gavel.

00:42:18 Sound Effect Sound Effect *[Three gavel bangs.]*

00:42:19 Jesse Host We received a letter from a listener named Sam, in response to the episode "[Tried Green Tomatoes](#)." (*Fried Green Tomatoes*.) Not the Sam from the dispute, by the way. Listeners of that episode will remember the obscure cultural reference was a recipe for tomato soup cake.

00:42:35 John Host Tomato soup cake!

00:42:37 Jesse Host Yeah. Sam has a related cake recipe to share. This is what he says:

"Hailing from the province of Nova Scotia—that's in Canada—I have a piece of obscure culinary Canadiana for your pleasure. Allow me to present to you the Great Canadian Ketchup Cake."

00:42:57 John Host Whoa.

00:42:58 Jesse Host "It is widely advertised on Heinz Ketchup bottles. My curiosity got the best of me, and I prepared it for myself and my loved ones. Admittedly there was a peculiar ketchup taste."

00:43:10 John Host *[Laughs.]* Really?

00:43:11 Jesse Host *[Chuckling]* Yeah.

00:43:12 John Host Was there?

[Both laugh.]

00:43:15 Jesse Host "But overall, it was moist and cake-like." *[Laughs.]* "With a kind of generic 'cake' flavor." *[Laughs.]* "I have provided a link to the recipe for your perusal."

We will share that link at our website, MaximumFun.org.

00:43:32 John Host I'm looking at it right now, and I will say that this is no tomato soup cake. Because tomato soup cake—which, the recipe I read into the record was from MFK Fisher and is an American cake dating back to the twenty, thirties, or forties or so—that's a savory cake. That is much more in the realm of like a fruitcake or a gingerbread. A dense, savory cake, and I know that because our colleague at Maximum Fun, *K.T.*, made it and brought it to the Maximum Fun holiday party. And I very gamely enjoyed a slice of it. It was an odd flavor, to be sure, but it was not sweet.

Whereas this picture of... Great Canadian Heinz Ketchup Cake, with buttercream frosting, is clearly passing itself off as Capital-C Classic Cake. It looks like red velvet cake! But instead it's red ketchup cake. And this does not look like it would be for me. And the recipe is provided by Heinz. And look, Heinz? When it comes to ketchup, you're the only brand in town. Sorry, Hunt's. No good. Heinz is the best.

But the quote on the—*[laughs]* the quote on the website says, *[pronouncing the question mark]* "Ketchup in a cake? Created to celebrate Heinz's 100th anniversary in Canada, this show-stopping cake tastes as good as it looks." *[Stifles laughter and makes an uncertain "ermgh" noise.]* Show-stopping. I think that means that as soon as someone baked this for the first time, *The Great British Bake Off* had to cancel itself.

[Both laugh.]

00:45:08 Jesse Host I think it might mean that now that we've talked about it for five minutes, we have to stop this show.

00:45:12 John Host *[Laughs.]* That's right! Oh, are we coming to the end?

00:45:14 Jesse Host Yeah, the docket's clear! That's it for another episode of *Judge John Hodgman!*

00:45:19 John Host Hang on a second, though. It's not the end, 'cause I've got something for you.

00:45:22 Jesse Host Yeah, what's that?

00:45:23 John Host *[Singing]*

When you had left our pirate fold
We tried to raise our spirits faint
According to our custom old with quip and quibble quaint!

But all in vain the quips we heard
We lay and sobbed upon the rocks
Until to somebody occurred a startling paradox

A paradox?

A paradox!

[Speeding up] A most ingenious paradox! With quips and quibbles heard in flocks, but none to beat this paradox! Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!

[Speaking] See, Lin, I learned it! I learned it for you!

00:45:48 Jesse Host *[Laughs.]* I like that I couldn't identify whether Gilbert and Sullivan had written that "Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!"—

[John laughs.]

—or whether that's just how you gloat naturally.

00:45:58 John Host *[Mix of genuine laughter and deliberate smugness]* Ha ha ha HA HA! That's how I gloat naturally!

00:46:01 Jesse Host *[Laughs.]* It's—

00:46:02 John Host *[Singing]*

We knew your taste for curious quips
For cranks and contradictions queer
And with the laughter on our lips
We wished you there to hear

We said if we could tell it him
How Frederic would the joke enjoy
And so we've risked both life and limb
To tell it to our boy!

A paradox, a paradox

A most ingenious paradox

With quips and quibbles—*[speeds up into frantic incoherence].*

[A couple of exhausted sighs, and then returns to regular speech.]

Finally. Full circle. I love *Pirates of Penzance*. Love it!

00:46:24 Jesse Host This week's episode was edited by [Jesus Ambrosio](#). Our producer is [Jennifer Marmor](#). The very model of a modern major general.

[John whistles the tune.]

Follow us on Twitter at [@JesseThorn](#) and [@hodgman](#). We're on Instagram at [@judgejohnhodgman](#). Make sure to hashtag your *Judge John Hodgman* Tweets [#JJHo](#), and check out the [Maximum Fun subreddit](#) to discuss this episode. Submit your cases at [MaximumFun.org/jjho](#) or email hodgman@maximumfun.org.

We'll talk to you next time on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

00:46:57 Sound Effect Transition *[Three gavel bangs.]*

00:46:59 John Host *[Singing]* I am a little boy of FIIIIIVE!

[Both laugh.]

00:47:06 Jesse Host *[Singing]* I want to see the face of GODDDD!

00:47:09 John Host *[Laughs.]*

[Singing]

For some ridiculous reason to which however I've no desire to be disloyal
Some person in authority, I don't know who
Very likely the astronomer royal
Has decided that although for such a beastly month as February,
twenty-eight days as a rule are plenty
One year in every four his days shall be reckoned as nine-and-twenty

Through some singular coincidence
I shouldn't be surprised if it were owing to the agency of an ill-natured fairyyy
You are the victim of this clumsy arrangement
Having been born in Leap Year on the 29th of Februaryyy

And so by a simple arithmetical process you'll easily discover
That though you've lived 21 years
Yet if we go by birthdays you're only five
And a little bit oooverrr...

00:48:08 Music Host A cheerful guitar chord.

00:48:09 Speaker 1 Guest [MaximumFun.org](#).

00:48:11 Speaker 2 Guest Comedy and culture.

00:48:12 Speaker 3 Guest Artist owned—

00:48:13 Speaker 4 Guest —audience supported.