

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. We're in chambers this week to clear the docket, and with me as always is the world's must justice man, Judge John Hodgman.
00:00:15	John Hodgman	Host	That's me!
00:00:16	Jesse	Host	Hi, Judge Hodgman!
00:00:17	John	Host	Yes, hello! Jesse Thorn, how are you? You know what? Hang on a second. Let me tell you. I'm on top of the world. You know why?
00:00:24	Jesse	Host	Uh, no! I don't! <i>[Laughs quietly.]</i>
00:00:27	John	Host	I'm looking here at a copy of this week's weekly packet, the weekly five-page newspaper from the part of Maine where I go some of the time, to see this headline:  "GSA Combo Places Second at National Jazz Festival." <i>[Gasps.]</i> Jesse, remember when we did our live show up there in Portland, Maine?
00:00:48	Jesse	Host	Sure.
00:00:49	John	Host	And we had the Night & Day Trio starring Joel Mann, the taciturn bass man?
00:00:53	Jesse	Host	Of course!
00:00:54	John	Host	Did I introduce you to the saxophonist, Mr. O? Mr. Orlofsky?
00:00:57	Jesse	Host	Yes, I met Mr. O!
00:00:58	John	Host	Yeah. Mr. O is the jazz band teacher at the high school. Every summer he performs at the Blue Hill Fair. It's my <u>favorite</u> thing in the world. This jazz combo is so hot. These kids playing the jazz are <u>so</u> adorable, and good at it! The drummer was incredible. Check <u>my Instagram feed</u> to find out. They just went to Philadelphia. They took second in the nation! Second in the nation, Mr. O! Bringing home the... silver. <i>[Laughs.]</i> The silver in jazz!
00:01:26	Jesse	Host	I would expect nothing less of Mainers! That's probably America's greatest hotbed for jazz. Perhaps second only to Salt Lake City, home of the Utah jazz.
00:01:35	John	Host	<i>[Laughing]</i> That's why they call it Jazzland, USA!
00:01:37	Jesse	Host	<i>[Laughing]</i> Yeah!
00:01:40	John	Host	I just want to say congratulations to Melodious Thunk, the GSA senior jazz ensemble.  <i>[Jesse laughs quietly.]</i>  And Mr. O. For bringing home the silver from Philadelphia. But I'm also on top of the world 'cause I'm talking to you, my friend Jesse Thorn, <u>and</u> ... I hope you're doing okay. Hope you're up there on the top of the world with me. <u>And</u> we have another friend here.
00:02:01	Jesse	Host	Yeah. I'm doing great, because I was singing musical theatre on the way here in my car.
00:02:06	John	Host	Oh!

00:02:07 Jesse Host That's a safe space for me to be a 16-year-old again, performing musical theatre in my car.

*[John laughs.]*

And I decided—I made arrangements, I'm not gonna—look. This is just what they call in show business, which I am definitely in as a professional podcaster...

00:02:21 John Host That's right.

00:02:22 Jesse Host This is what they call a tease. But my friend Renee and I—Renee being one of the hosts of the great MaxFun dog podcast *Can I Pet Your Dog?*—my friend Renee and I have made some arrangements to perform some musical theatre at the MaxFunDrive live finale show, on the last day of the MaxFunDrive.

00:02:42 John Host What?!

00:02:43 Jesse Host It's very exciting. I'm not gonna reveal anything further. Other than to say... K.T. has been—our office manager—has been looking into costuming. Uh, she has a sideline in roller derby coaching, so she's ready to go on that front. And K.T. has placed a few orders on my behalf, and I think I'm gonna be looking great. That's all I'm gonna say! That's all I'm gonna say, John. Don't browbeat me! That's all I'm gonna say.

00:03:13 John Host No, I'm not gonna browbeat—I know what the surprise is, 'cause we were chatting off the air before we got to recording here. It's gonna be very, very exciting. Jesse, the one time I happened to be in LA for the big MaxFunDrive finale in MaxFun HQ—one of the best nights of my life, so much fun, so exciting—I wish I could be there to see whatever surprise you and Renee have got cooked up! But I guess the doors are closed and the blinds are down, and you have to be there in order to see it. Right?

00:03:43 Jesse Host No, it's gonna be live-streaming on the Internet—

00:03:45 John Host What?!

00:03:46 Jesse Host —for all to see and mock!

00:03:49 John Host You—

00:03:50 Jesse Host For allll to see my—witness my shame! As I do my best to recreate... uh, the production I was in when I was 16 years old.

Okay! We have a guest on the program! One half of Maximum Fun's brand new smash-hit podcast—it's taking off like a rocket ship!—FANTI, Tre'vell Anderson. Hi, Tre'vell!

00:04:14 Tre'vell Anderson Guest Hello, hello, hello!

00:04:15 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** Hello, Tre'vell!

**Jesse:** What a joy to have you here.

00:04:17 Tre'vell Guest Thank you for having me!

00:04:19 Jesse Host I now see the entire world through the *FANTI* lens.

00:04:22 Tre'vell Guest As you should.

00:04:23 Jesse Host *FANTI* is like—it—to call it a—like, I've been saying "podcast about

problematic faves or favorite problematics."

00:04:31 Tre'vell Guest

Mm-hm!

00:04:32 Jesse Host

But that sells short what it is.

*[Tre'vell laughs.]*

I was just talking with friend of *Judge John Hodgman* Linda Holmes about how much she loves the show. And she was like "You know, I feel like when you say that, people expect a certain thing, and it's so much more than that! It's so much funnier, and like, more big-hearted."

00:04:49 Tre'vell Guest

Mmm.

00:04:50 Jesse Host

"And more insightful, like actually insightful." But now I feel like I am obsessing over what are my FANTIs, and what are the FANTIs of—like, I just learned—I've been watching the new *Star Trek* show.

00:05:06 Tre'vell Guest

Mm-hm!

00:05:07 Jesse Host

And I talked to my friend Benjamin Harrison, who's a host on MaxFun and has been [podcasting about](#) the new *Star Trek* show.

00:05:15 Tre'vell Guest

Right.

00:05:16 Jesse Host

And he told me that apparently the guy who invented *Star Trek*, Gene Roddenberry, was maybe a bad person?

*[Jesse and Tre'vell laugh.]*

00:05:22 Tre'vell Guest

Yeah.

00:05:23 Jesse Host

Which I didn't know! *[Laughs.]*

00:05:25 Tre'vell Guest

Does that surprise you, though?

00:05:26 Jesse Host

Well, n—well, here's the thing!

*[Tre'vell laughs.]*

Then he also pointed out to me—you know, like, *Star Trek* takes—one of the great selling points—I'm taking this from my high school AP US history teacher Ms. Letterer, who was a real Trekker. Very committed Trekker. Talked about it in class a lot.

*[Tre'vell laughs.]*

But like, one of the big selling points of *Star Trek* is that it's a—like a utopian, post-conflict world.

00:05:47 Tre'vell Guest

Right.

00:05:48 Jesse Host

Right? Post-conflict, post-scarcity. Like it's an amazing world of magic where, you know, in 1967 or whenever *Star Trek* was on television, there were people of many races, there were—you know.

00:06:01 Tre'vell Guest

Mm-hm.

00:06:02 John Host

Women could even be executive officers in the pilot, but they had to re-film.

*[All three laugh.]*

Then Nichelle Nichols—who was incredible as Uhura, of course—gets the job of space operator. *[Laughs.]*

00:06:16 Jesse Host Yeah. *[Laughs.]*

00:06:17 John Host Space telephone operator.

*[Tre'vell laughs.]*

But I—it is an idealistic show that presents a vision of a—of an enviable future.

00:06:18 Jesse Host *[Laughing]* But, as Ben pointed out, it's basically fundamentally completely imperialist.

00:06:29 John Host Yeah.

00:06:30 Jesse Host And I was like "Yeah, I guess I never really thought about that, but..."

*[Tre'vell laughs.]*

"Definitely so!" *[Laughs.]*

I—so I guess I'm wondering, Tre'vell—

00:06:36 Tre'vell Guest Mm-hm?

00:06:37 Jesse Host —if the fact that you are doing this show on a week-to-week basis has completely altered your perspective on the entire world.

00:06:44 Tre'vell Guest Well, I don't know! I feel like I've always been a person who has like, looked at things through many different lenses, right? Able to like, uplift and recognize somebody or something for like, what they mean to the culture, but also be like... they're a little shady, or a little problematic, as well. And so like, we say that *FANTI* is the home for complex and complicated conversations about the gray areas in your lives. The people, the places, the things that you love, even though they may not love you back, right?

And so like, I feel like that's my default as a Black queer person. *[Tre'vell and John and/or Jesse laugh.]* Um, I have a variety of parts of my identity that don't like the other parts of my identity.

00:07:21 Jesse Host Tre'vell, are you telling me that the world may contain some problematics for—

00:07:25 Tre'vell Guest *[Laughs.]* Listen!

00:07:26 Jesse Host —for a nonbinary African American person? *[Stifles laughter.]*

00:07:30 Tre'vell Guest It is not as rosy as the girls like to think it is out here in these streets.

*[John and Tre'vell laugh.]*

00:07:36 Jesse Host What is the next thing that you're really excited about busting into on *FANTI*?

00:07:40 Tre'vell Guest Well, you know, we get into it all! You know, we're talking about the Black—the invasion—we're calling it an invasion of Black British actors coming over, and taking all of the—

00:07:50 John Host Mm-hm.

00:07:51 Tre'vell Guest —quote-unquote "taking all of the jobs from the Black American actors." We've already gotten—

00:07:56 Jesse Host To be fair, they're taking all the jobs from the rappers who act.

[*Tre'vell and John laugh.*]

00:08:02 Tre'vell Guest Which is probably for the better. [*Laughs.*] Now that we think about it. But we're also going to get into one of my faves, who's Mo'Nique.

00:08:08 John Host Mm.

00:08:09 Tre'vell Guest Who I love, she's my favorite actress of all time. But like, you know... she tried to have us boycott Netflix, you know, a few months ago? And we're like "Girl, what are you doing? [*Laughs.*] We're already sharing, you know, our passwords among five people. Why would we—?"

00:08:21 Jesse Host Like "I'm trying to watch *Tuca & Bertie* here..."

[*Tre'vell laughs.*]

00:08:24 John Host Right?

00:08:25 Tre'vell Guest Right. So yeah! We're getting into all of that complicated, complex stuff about some of our problematic faves and favorite problematics, in your words!

00:08:34 John Host Well, Tre'vell, you know, a piece of settled law on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast of course is "People like what they like." But what if you like something that... maybe you shouldn't like, totally? [*Laughs.*]

00:08:42 Tre'vell Guest Right. [*Laughs.*]

00:08:43 John Host It's hard to work through those feelings! And that's why *FANTI* is so much fun.

00:08:46 Tre'vell Guest And we're gonna give you all the fun you need, myself and my co-host Jarrett Hill.

00:08:50 John Host Uh-huh.

00:08:51 Tre'vell Guest We do what needs to be done, if I say so myself.

00:08:53 John Host Thank you for doing that emotional labor for us.

[*Tre'vell and Jesse laugh.*]

00:08:56 Tre'vell Guest That's what I'm here for.

00:08:57 John Host I appreciate it.

[*Tre'vell laughs.*]

I really appreciate it.

00:08:59 Jesse Host Let's get into the justice! Here's something from Elise. She says:

"My husband and I go out to eat once a week, and we alternate who chooses the restaurant. When it's my husband's turn to choose, he presents two to three options he likes, and he makes me choose from those options. I contend that presenting two to three options doesn't count as choosing! And in effect, I end up deciding where we go each week. Please order my husband to choose a single restaurant so I don't have to choose for him."

00:09:30 John Host Mm!

00:09:31 Jesse Host I can relate to this dilemma. Not directly this, my wife and I don't have the conflict of—around choosing a restaurant. *[Stifling laughter]* Mostly because we never leave the house, 'cause we have three children.

*[Tre'vell laughs quietly.]*

But I, deep inside me, have a terror that unless I have explicit, specific permission and like, a demand, for me to choose based on my preferences, that if I choose something for my wife... I am walking into some kind of trap.

00:10:12 John Host Mm-hm.

00:10:13 Jesse Host And I will ruin our relationship and get—and end up divorced.

*[Jesse and Tre'vell laugh.]*

Basically. And—*[laughs]* and I wanna be clear, John?

00:10:22 John Host Yeah.

00:10:23 Jesse Host Not because my wife has ever led me into a trap. She never has in her entire life.

00:10:28 John Host No. No.

00:10:29 Jesse Host *[Stifling laughter]* It is truly about my own childhood emotional trauma.

*[Tre'vell laughs quietly.]*

That remains unprocessed.

00:10:36 John Host Like, so what kind of choice—if it's not going out to dinner, what kind of choice are you making for you and Theresa that you're afraid will lead to her divorcing you? Like, picking out something to listen to on the stereo, or picking out a movie, or what?

00:10:51 Jesse Host Yeah. I think picking out a movie is a pretty perfect example. My—Theresa and I have been together since... uh, frankly Theresa and I have been together since the VHS era.

*[Tre'vell laughs.]*

00:11:01 John Host Yeah. Yes.

00:11:03 Jesse Host I think we started dating in 1997 or '8?

00:11:05 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** Mm-hm.

**Tre'vell:** Oh, wow.

00:11:07 Jesse Host So we used to go to the video store on Valencia Street in San Francisco, when I was still living at my mother's house. And we'd wander down there, and I found the anxiety of picking a video for the two of us to watch completely debilitating.

00:11:29 John Host Yeah.

00:11:30 Jesse Host And my wife has extraordinarily democratic and generous tastes. She's not picky. And I am picky. I'm a weird picky grumpus about that kind of stuff. And she isn't. But I was terrified that I was gonna mess it up, for that same reason.

00:11:48 John Host What did you pick?

00:11:50 Jesse Host I picked a bootleg VHS of the British television show *Brass Eye*.

00:11:55 John Host *[Laughs.] Wow.*

00:11:56 Jesse Host Uh, created by Chris Morris. That they had at this particular video store, which unfortunately this video store closed a couple years ago. But it was called Lost Weekend Video. *[Stifling laughter]* But they had a whole section of bootleg Chris Morris videos you could get.

*[Tre'vell laughs quietly.]*

You could rent *The Day Today* and *Brass Eye*. And my friends from [Kasper Hauser](#) told me I should check it out.

00:12:12 John Host I can't stand up right now, 'cause I would be off mic. But let me give you a mental standing ovation.

*[Tre'vell and Jesse laugh quietly.]*

Because one thing I admire about that is, Jesse? You are not hiding yourself to the woman you love.

*[All three laugh.]*

Like, for someone who was just making the case that he overthinks the choices that might affect his life with his loved one, and gets trapped in a cycle of self-doubt, you really picked a pure Jesse Thorn pick. A bootleg of Brass Eye. A bootleg of esoteric comedy. Which, by the way, is pretty much the most brilliant thing I ever saw. When Jay Evans, my old dear friend from home, showed me the same—not the same bootleg, but another bootleg, in Brookline, Massachusetts—probably around the same time!

Tre'vell, does this happen to you?

00:13:02 Tre'vell Guest Yeah!

00:13:03 John Host Do you ever get paralyzed making a decision for other people?

00:13:05 Tre'vell Guest Well, I kinda feel like I am Elise's husband.

00:13:08 John Host Yeah.

00:13:09 Tre'vell Guest So like with me and my partner, I do this thing where I present options for him to choose. But the reason why I do it is because he's always on somebody's diet, or he's always like—

00:13:20 John Host Yeah.

00:13:21 Tre'vell Guest —has feelings about what we eat! Whereas like, I eat everything!

00:13:23 John Host Yeah, yeah. Right.

00:13:24 Jesse Host Wait. On somebody's diet?

00:13:26 Tre'vell Guest Somebody's diet!

00:13:27 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Jesse:** Like on the—

**Tre'vell:** Atkin's diet, or—

00:13:28 Jesse Host Oh, Dr. Atkins.

00:13:29 Tre'vell Guest You know. *[Laughs.]*

00:13:30 Jesse Host So that would be an example of being on Dr. Atkins' diet.

00:13:32 Tre'vell Guest *[Laughs.]* I don't know. Weight Watchers, I don't know.

00:13:34 Jesse Host The Mr. T diet...

00:13:35 John Host Yeah.

00:13:36 Tre'vell Guest Doing a—a juice cleanse or some foolishness.

00:13:38 John Host Yeah.

00:13:39 Tre'vell Guest And so I provide options for him, because he's got everything going on, and I can—I will literally eat anything. All the time.

00:13:46 John Host Yeah. You know that diet, Jesse Thorn, developed by that famous nutritionist Dr. Phineas T. Keto?

*[All three laugh.]*

00:13:53 Jesse Host Uh-huh. Sure.

00:13:56 John Host So for you, Tre'vell, it comes down to food.

00:13:58 Tre'vell Guest Yes!

00:13:59 John Host Right. It's—

00:14:00 Tre'vell Guest It comes down to my partner having specific thoughts about what he should or should not be eating, and me being able to eat literally everything. And so I provide options so that he can choose a restaurant that will have something that fits within whatever dietary restrictions he has that week.

00:14:17 Jesse Host Yeah, my—my trap, John, is definitely about me having hyper-specific tastes.

00:14:23 Tre'vell Guest Mm.

00:14:24 Jesse Host Like, over-developed, hyper-specific tastes in a variety of areas. And opinions, as listeners of this show probably know.

*[Tre'vell laughs.]*

And then—but me also being terrified that if I express those hyper-specific tastes, it's going to lead to disaster, and thus desperately begging my wife for a kind of explicit blanket permission to express my hyper-specific tastes.

00:14:49 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Tre'vell:** Mm-hm.

**John:** Right. Yeah.

00:14:51 Jesse Host When she's pretty chill. She's more of a Tre'vell.

00:14:52 John Host I think she's probably pretty used to your hyper-specific tastes by now. She knows you're a—a bootleg of *Brass Eye* guy!

*[Tre'vell laughs.]*

00:14:58 Jesse Host She did ask that we stop watching that new *Star Trek* show the other night because, uh, we were eating dinner while we were watching it and they were... removing a cybernetic eye. *[Laughs.]* And there was a—



00:15:08 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Tre'vell:** That sounds like a good reason to stop watching it during dinner.

**John:** Yeah.

**Jesse:** Yeah. There was a lot of robot blood. *[Laughs.]*

00:15:10 Tre'vell Guest Yes.

00:15:12 John Host But Tre'vell, if you feel like Elise's husband sometimes...

00:15:15 Tre'vell Guest Mm-hm.

00:15:16 John Host Do you get the sense that your partner feels like Elise? That he feels frustrated that you're just not—that you're not making the call? Or does he appreciate the fact that you're like "I don't know what you're eating these days. So here's a bunch of rice, here's a steak—"

*[Tre'vell laughs.]*

"—and here's a Jell-O shot. Like, whatever you're doing, let me know."

00:15:34 Tre'vell Guest I'm sure he probably feels closer to Elise in that, you know, he tells me to make a decision and I don't make a decision.

00:15:40 John Host Right.

00:15:41 Tre'vell Guest I end up making him make the decision.

00:15:43 John Host Right.

00:15:44 Tre'vell Guest But, you know, I always tell him that like, he could also not make the decision and I can choose something, but then he just has to deal with whatever I've chosen.

00:15:51 John Host Yeah.

00:15:52 Tre'vell Guest And like, if his diet is that important to him, then, you know, that could create some issues, right? Like if I choose something that like, he can't eat this week. You know? Then he's gonna be staring at me stuff my face at the table!

00:16:05 Jesse Host I think for us, in our relationship, that with me and my wife, we've managed this a lot by just making the rules a little more explicit.

00:16:14 Tre'vell Guest Mm.

00:16:15 Jesse Host And the expectations a little more explicit. So sometimes, if I'm having a bad day emotionally, *[stifles laughter]* and it gets to be 8:30—which is the time when we have time to watch one television show—I will just let my wife know that I only have... a *30 Rock*, *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*, or *Cheers* level of emotional bandwidth.

00:16:36 Tre'vell Guest Mm!

00:16:37 Jesse Host I need to watch a show that will make me feel nice and happy. And then sometimes I—the palate is broader.

00:16:46 Tre'vell Guest Mm-hm.

00:16:47 Jesse Host And we can watch a *Lodge 49*.

*[John or Tre'vell laughs quietly.]*

Or a *Barry*.

00:16:55 John Host *[Stifling laughter]* I'm basically at the end-of-the-evening emotional state now where I can't even watch a show.

*[Jesse and Tre'vell laugh.]*

Like, the most culture I can take in is staring at a single-panel illustration of Green Arrow drawn by Neal Adams circa 1977.

*[Jesse laughs.]*

I just fall asleep to that. That's all I need.

*[Jesse and Tre'vell laugh.]*

But see, Tre'vell, what you're describing to me feels more like a communication.

00:17:20 Tre'vell Guest Mm-hm.

00:17:21 John Host Between two adults. Than what Jesse is describing, which is pure mind chaos.

*[All three laugh.]*

And what I feel like Elise is describing here—like, I feel like Eli—I think that Jesse, you—and you, Tre'vell—have sort of maybe opened Elise's eyes a little bit to what's going on behind the curtain—

00:17:42 Tre'vell Guest Mm-hm.

00:17:43 John Host —with regard to her husband and his terror of making decisions. There may be real emotions involved. Fear of making the wrong decision, or feeling paralyzed with an abundance of decisions and so forth. But that said... this reminds me of something. Now, I have been spending a lot of—you know, I was just saying, like, most of the time it is true that—like, I think last night I just looked at one panel of a 1977 *Justice League of America*—uh, no, excuse me! It was a Neal Adams illustration from an old *X-Men* comic book. Not—let's not talk about it anymore.

*[Tre'vell laughs quietly.]*

I've also—*[laughs]* I've also, when I'm not able to consume real culture, like full novels and junk, I read little short stories. And by short stories I mean I read Yelp reviews of restaurants.

*[Jesse laughs.]*

Because Yelp is my favorite collection of very short fiction written by incredibly unreliable narrators.

00:18:33 Jesse Host Where all the conflict is either racism or parking-based?

*[Tre'vell laughs.]*

00:18:38 John Host Yeah. *[Laughs.]* I've also been reading—I've also—and I blame the Maximum Fun Reddit for this, honestly, Jesse. 'Cause you tricked me! You didn't lie, but you said that the Maximum Fun subreddit on Reddit is the only nice part of Reddit. *[Laughs.]* And that's true! And

I've really been—I've really enjoyed engaging with all of the Maximum Fun subredditors on the Maximum Fun subreddit, and I've been commenting and responding to people's nice comments on the *Judge John Hodgman* episode stuff and the *I, Podius* episode threads and so forth. And then I got started—like I'm like "Maybe there's some other parts of Reddit that I can read."

*[Jesse or Tre'vell laughs quietly.]*

And unfortunately I did. And now I'm addicted to a different book of incredibly unreliable short stories called, uh—the subreddit is—and this is—I have to use some strong language here—"Am I the *[censor bleep]*?" And this—

*[All three laugh.]*

00:19:29 Jesse Host

I've looked at that one before.

00:19:32 Crosstalk Crosstalk

**John:** *[Laughing]* Yeah.

**Jesse:** That's really intense.

**John:** It's very popular!

00:19:34 John Host

It's really intense. I mean, it is like *Judge John Hodgman* with zero guard rails.

*[All three laugh.]*

It is people writing in going "In this situation where I disagree with my partner, my spouse, my father-in-law or whatever... am I the a-hole, or is this other person the a-hole?" And it's intense! It's like—I feel like we're *Gilligan's Island* and it's *The Sopranos*, basically, of conflict resolution.

*[Tre'vell and Jesse laugh quietly.]*

Or non-resolution, in this case.

00:20:05 Jesse Host

Yeah, I mean, if you've ever thought that *Judge John Hodgman* is a lesson in the manifestations of structural misogyny in American society? And the sort—as particularly in a domestic context, like the little here-and-there manifestations of... what it means. *[Stifles laughter.]* The many casual ways that men don't even realize they're being monsters? Uh, that subreddit—

00:20:33 John Host

Yeah.

00:20:34 Jesse Host

Woow.

*[Tre'vell laughs.]*

00:20:36 John Host

Yeah. Yeah.

00:20:37 Jesse Host

Because—I'm just gonna say it here—when a dude is asking, usually the answer's yes.

*[Tre'vell and John laugh.]*

00:20:47 John Host

When a dude is asking "Am I the a-hole?" usually the answer is yes! Yeah, I know! Tre'vell—you know, in the now coming up on ten years

of doing this podcast, it has been—and I've said this before. It has been incredibly instructive to me to see the data in the disputes, particularly the small domestic disputes, between heterosexual romantic domestic partners.

00:21:08 Tre'vell Guest

Mm-hm.

00:21:09 John Host

I wouldn't have presumed that dudes are always the monsters, and are always wrong. *[Laughs.]* But I can't argue with the data.

*[Jesse laughs.]*

It's just time and time and time and time again. Not always! Not 100%! Not all men! Ha haaa!

*[Tre'vell laughs.]*

But it happens a looot. And in small ways, and AITA as it's called on Reddit is truly—you know, as Jesse said, it's a dataset worth reckoning with.

00:21:35 Tre'vell Guest

I'm just surprised that y'all can actually like, stomach the Reddit of it all!

*[Jesse laughs.]*

'Cause I haven't touched Reddit in years, and don't plan to.

00:21:45 Jesse Host

There are some friendly Reddits besides the Maximum Fun Reddit, which is almost universally really sweet and friendly. And they love *FANTI*, by the way.

00:21:54 Tre'vell Guest

Oh, great! Maybe I should check it out now! *[Laughs.]*

00:21:56 Jesse Host

But like, I haven't encountered any toxicity on my slow cooker subreddit, or my—

00:22:00 Tre'vell Guest

Ohh!

*[John cackles.]*

00:22:02 Jesse Host

—or my "people who collect VHS tapes" subreddit.

*[Tre'vell laughs quietly.]*

Or my vintage stereo equipment subreddit.

00:22:08 Tre'vell Guest

Wow.

00:22:09 Jesse Host

All of those are really chill and positive places.

00:22:12 Tre'vell Guest

Did not know all of these subreddits existed.

00:22:14 John Host

Yeah.

00:22:15 Jesse Host

Oh, there is a subreddit for a thing where you go onto a bridge and you get an industrial magnet attached to a fishing line, and you drop it into the river, *[stifles laughter]* and then you pull up something made out of metal, and it's just like... "Aw, I found a—half a carburetor!"

00:22:29 Tre'vell Guest

Wow.

00:22:31 Jesse Host

*[Stifling laughter]* It's amazing.

00:22:32 Tre'vell Guest Interesting. Okay.

00:22:33 Jesse Host It is amazing.

*[Tre'vell laughs.]*

00:22:34 John Host But I will say, Tre'vell, I would not encourage anyone to go to the subreddit "Am I the A-hole?" Unless you really wanna feel bad feelings.

*[Jesse laughs.]*

00:22:46 Tre'vell Guest Mm. I'll keep that in mind.

00:22:47 John Host After a while.

*[Tre'vell laughs.]*

It's hard—it's hard, and people are in hard circumstances there, and you're just reminded "Yeah! There are a-holes! Really bad ones." But I give it credit, and I bring it up here, only because it introduced me to a cartoonist named Emma. Emma is a commenter from time to time on this board. She lives in France, and I believe is French. And she did this whole cartoon about a—what it feels like when you are a woman in a heterosexual couple, and you're trying to feed your child and get dinner on the table, and something boils over, and the dude goes "You should have asked me for help, I would have helped you."

And the whole comic is about how that is the—entirely an inappropriate thing to ask. Like, you are a whole human being, dude!

*[Tre'vell chuckles.]*

You are—you have field awareness of what's happening. You do not need your mommy-wife's specific request that you help out, in order to realize that another human being needs help.

00:23:53 Tre'vell Guest Right.

00:23:54 John Host You just need to open your eyes. And she wrote a whole comic about that, and then put that along with a bunch of her other comics in a whole book called *The Mental Load*, which is about the mental load that—and it doesn't have—it obviously is not necessarily only in male/female partnerships, although there are reasons that it happens that way.

But it's often the case in a relationship where one person is doing a loot of the thinking about everything that needs to happen, and the other person is just like, "Tch. I'll just let you handle this. Let me know if you need anything." And that's not fair!

So I was really thrilled, and I bought her book *The Mental Load* from Books Are Magic here in Brooklyn. It's great. And I think it really described a lot of what these disputes that come up often on "Am I the A-hole?" or the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast, the one you're listening to right now!

You know, what Elise resents here—I suspect—no matter what her husband's mental chaos is... the whole point of this exercise of

trading off choice of restaurant is A, everyone gets to try something that they want and it's fair and it's equal, and B, half the time I don't have to think about it! I don't wanna think about where we're going for dinner! I just want you to make the decision!

And Elise's husband is making her bear the mental load not only of her night to decide, but also his night to decide. And that might be because he's trying to be conscientious. It might be because he's nervous—*[laughs]* that if he chooses the wrong restaurant, she will divorce him.

*[Tre'vell laughs quietly.]*

Some people think that way!

*[Jesse laughs.]*

00:25:28 John Host I have 100% confidence that Elise's husband has a defense. But I would still say, Elise's husband, you're wrong. Take the mental load. Of this one thing! Choose that restaurant. If it's not to Elise's liking, I guarantee you, you're not gonna get divorced! If it's a bad choice and it's humiliating to you, I guarantee you, humiliation happens to everybody all the time! And you can deal with it a little bit. You can deal with one bad dinner.

It is not conscientious to put the mental load on the person who's trying to unload.

00:26:07 Sound Effect Sound Effect *[Three gavel bangs.]*

00:26:08 John Host By the way, Jesse Thorn, I just wanna say... I find it so adorable that you and I share this bootleg of *Brass Eye* experience.

*[Jesse and Tre'vell laugh.]*

So exciting to me. It really warmed my heart. I miss Jay Evans so much. He lives in—lives down in Richmond, Virginia, and works in the art store there. Love him.

I mean, I think—that thing probably—I mean, you know, I think probably shaped my mind in an important way, and I never would have gotten there without Jay. So thank you, Jay.

But also, I will say I've known my wife and have been in love with her—forget about the VHS era. The Beta era.

*[Jesse and Tre'vell laugh.]*

And on one of our very first—maybe our first date! I was the kind of guy who did not feel the way you did, Jesse. I was like "I am going to decide what movie we're gonna watch! Because it is my job, as a guy, to put my taste into your head!"

*[Tre'vell laughs quietly.]*

And she came over and I said "Would you like to watch with me my very favorite movie, *The Third Man*, starring Joseph Cotten and Orson Welles?"

And my wife said... "Uh, no."

[All three laugh.]

00:27:21 Tre'vell Guest

Smart woman.

00:27:23 John Host

She has not seen it to this day.

[Tre'vell laughs.]

And I thank her for that lesson. [Laughs.] That that's not what dating is about. Especially since if she had—if she had watched *The Third Man* that night of our first date? I guarantee you she would have divorced me. Even before we got married. Years before we got married.

[Jesse and Tre'vell laugh.]

Divorced.

00:27:42 Jesse Host

I mean, that's because of her legendary antipathy towards zither music!

[Jesse and/or Tre'vell laughs quietly.]

00:27:47 John Host

[Affronted sigh.] You're talking about—you're talking about Anton Karas's hit song—

[John and Jesse or Tre'vell laughs.]

—"The Theme from *The Third Man*"? The number one—

00:27:55 Jesse Host

Performed on the zither. [Laughs.]

00:27:57 John Host

The number one zither song of all time?

[Jesse laughs.]

00:28:00 Tre'vell Guest

Oh my.

00:28:01 John Host

Tre'vell, you ever see *The Third Man*?

00:28:02 Tre'vell Guest

No, I don't think I—I don't think that's something I should be doing.

00:28:05 John Host

Yeah. Yeah.

00:28:06 Jesse Host

I mean, consider it! It's pretty great.

00:28:08 John Host

No, no. No, no, no.

00:28:09 Jesse Host

But we're not gonna make ya.

[Tre'vell laughs.]

00:28:10 John Host

I'm not—I used to advocate for *The Third Man* a lot. It's fine. It's good, it's fine, it's not... but that song. Boy, that theme song. That song was on jukeboxes!

00:28:19 Jesse Host

If you ever need a zither jam—

00:28:21 Tre'vell Guest

Who ever needs a zither jam, though?

00:28:23 Jesse Host

Who knows?! When it comes up, you're armed!

*[Tre'vell laughs.]*

You're locked and loaded now! You know what your zither jam is.

Okay. Let's take a quick break. More items on the docket to be cleared! With Tre'vell Anderson from *FANTI* on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

00:28:38 Sound Effect Transition

*[Three gavel bangs.]*

00:28:40 Promo Clip

*[The sound of radio static punctuates the conversation, overlaid by a distant, ringing note.]*

**Rocket Ship One:** Mission control, this is rocket ship one. Come in, mission control.

**Mission Control:** This is mission control. Go ahead.

**Rocket Ship One:** We have incoming, and it looks big.

**Mission Control:** Can you identify?

**Rocket Ship One:** It looks like—*[electronic beeping]* some sort of... pledge drive. Affirmative. It's MaxFunDrive.

**Mission Control:** That's a verified MaxFunDrive. Countdown to MaxFunDrive is initiated.

*[Keyboard clacking.]*

**Mission Control:** Can you project a time to intercept?

**Rocket Ship One:** Based on the current trajectory, MaxFun Drive will be here from March 16 to March 27.

*[Keyboard clacking.]*

**Mission Control:** March 16 to March 27, Roger. Rocket ship one, can you confirm a visual on common MaxFunDrive phenomena, such as the best episodes of the year, bonus content, and special gifts for new and upgrading monthly members?

*[The beeping of an electronic readout.]*

**Rocket Ship One:** We have a visual. Great episodes, bonus content, premium gifts confirmed. And more. ...It sure sounds quiet down there. Mission control, what's your status?

**Mission Control:** All systems go, rocket ship one! Just catching up on our favorite MaxFun shows so we can tune in to MaxFunDrive episodes between March 16 and March 27. Over and out.

**Rocket Ship One:** *[Laughs quietly.]*

*[The clicking stutter and static of communication being cut off.]*

00:29:42 Sound Effect Transition

*[Three gavel bangs.]*



00:29:44 Jesse Host Welcome back to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. We're clearing the docket with our pal Tre'vell Anderson from the smash-hit podcast *FANTI*. Here is a justice request from Tom:

"I work in the dish room at Pizzeria Beddia in Philadelphia."

00:30:02 John Host Mm.

00:30:03 Jesse Host "One of my coworkers often puts on music before I get there for my shift, even when they're not actually working in the room. How can we best equally divide the speaker time? I'm hesitant to address it with them directly because they have a bad temper, and I don't wanna start a fight over something so small. Also, I'm an only child, so I am not a fan of conflict.

I hope you can stop in for a pie next time you're in Philly. I think it might even give Regina Pizzeria a run for its money."

That's the one you guys talked about on *The Doughboys*, right?

00:30:33 John Host Yeah, yeah. Let's—we'll not talk about Pizzeria Regina right now. Unless you want to, Tre'vell. Do you know Pizzeria Regina from Boston?

00:30:39 Tre'vell Guest I'm not familiar. I'm not real—I'm into, you know, regular pizza joints.

00:30:44 John Host Okay.

00:30:45 Tre'vell Guest Like Domino's.

*[All three laugh.]*

00:30:47 Jesse Host *[Laughing]* Wow. That's a problematic fave.

*[Tre'vell laughs.]*

00:30:49 John Host Yeahhh! That—that's maybe one of the original problematic faves.

00:30:54 Tre'vell Guest Right.

*[Jesse laughs.]*

00:30:55 John Host First of all, Tre'vell, sometimes things slip through the docket that aren't proper disputes. Like sometimes people are having fights with themselves.

00:31:02 Tre'vell Guest Mm-hm.

00:31:03 John Host Sometimes people are really just asking more etiquette questions. Which is—this is sort of like a workplace etiquette question.

00:31:10 Tre'vell Guest Yeah.

00:31:11 John Host This is also kind of a pre-dispute. Right? Because Tom is afraid of getting into a fight with his coworker. I think this coworker sounds scary! What do you think, Tre'vell?

00:31:20 Tre'vell Guest I think that Tom needs to... step his cookies up.

00:31:27 John Host Oh!

00:31:28 Tre'vell Guest And by that what I mean is, you know, Tom presents themselves as a grown person.

00:31:33 John Host Yes.

00:31:34 Jesse Host True.

00:31:35 Tre'vell Guest *[Chuckles.]* You know? And so if you want to change the music on the speaker... you should confront the person! Say "Hey, Sis! This... cute song, but can I play something?"

00:31:45 Jesse Host I think from now on all of your verdicts, John, should start with "Patient presents... as a grown-ass person."

*[Tre'vell and John laugh.]*

00:31:55 John Host Doing the rounds! Dr. Tre'vell! The patient presents...

00:32:00 Tre'vell Guest I'm just saying!

00:32:01 John Host ...as a grown-ass human.

00:32:02 Jesse Host John, this is truly a classic *Judge John Hodgman* dispute.

*[Tre'vell laughs.]*

That anticipates conflict that might not even exist—

00:32:11 John Host Yeah!

00:32:12 Jesse Host —due to social anxiety.

00:32:13 Tre'vell Guest Right.

00:32:14 John Host Yeah! Well, I mean, the patient presents as a grown human.

*[Tre'vell laughs.]*

But also presents as an only child. Emphasis on "child." And I, Tre'vell, am an only child, and therefore I grew up without any rehearsal of conflict whatsoever.

00:32:28 Tre'vell Guest Mm.

00:32:29 John Host And it terrifies me!

00:32:30 Tre'vell Guest Mm.

00:32:31 Jesse Host Yeah. Why do you think, Tre'vell, that I thought I would get divorced if I picked the wrong video?

*[All three laugh.]*

00:32:40 John Host But I think you're absolutely right, Tre'vell. I mean, this is part of just being a grown-up human being in the world! Is saying—is being able to say "Do you mind if I put on something else for a little while?" Right?

00:32:54 Tre'vell Guest I also wonder if it's like—is the music bad? 'Cause like if the music is bad, then that's one thing. Or is it just, like, you don't like... you don't like hip-hop, or you don't like country, or you don't like, you know, Mariachi music or whatever the case is, and you just want a little diversity? I think you can have that conversation, right, in a way that is like, easy and approachable! And like, won't lead to a big blow-up or anything.

00:33:17 John Host What kind of music do you think...

*[Tre'vell laughs.]*

...a guy with a bad temper who works in a pizzeria in Philadelphia, who turns on the music and then leaves the room—

*[Tre'vell and John laugh.]*

—is listening to? *[Laughs.]*

00:33:32 Tre'vell Guest

I meeean—

00:33:33 John Host

I mean, I'm gonna venture to say bad music.

*[All three laugh.]*

00:33:37 Jesse Host

Well, I don't—let's not say bad music! Perhaps specialized music.

00:33:42 Tre'vell Guest

Spe—ooh, specialized!

00:33:43 John Host

Mm!

00:33:44 Jesse Host

You know, I think if I worked in a pizzeria with a pizzeria guy who got there before me and turned on the music, my imagination says that they're playing relatively brutal metal.

00:33:53 Tre'vell Guest

That's what I was gonna go say.

00:33:54 Jesse Host

Which is by no means bad music, but it is one of the musics I would least want to listen to while working in the back of a pizza shop.

00:34:01 John Host

Can we agree that since Tom describes this person as having a bad temper—and that's just Tom's point of view; who knows? But can we agree that probably this music that Bad Temper Pizzeria Guy is listening to is scary to Tom? That Tom finds this music scary music?

00:34:17 Tre'vell Guest

Mm-hm.

00:34:18 Jesse Host

*[Stifles laughter.]* I think it would be great if Tom just got in there every day and this person that he was so scared of at the pizzeria was just putting on, like, Natalie Imbruglia or something like that.

*[Tre'vell laughs, John cracks up.]*

Like "I don't—I just—I get overwhelmed by feelings, and..."

00:34:35 John Host

So Tre'vell, I'm gonna be Tom. And you be my coworker.

00:34:39 Tre'vell Guest

Okay!

00:34:40 John Host

Alright. I'm gonna do a little roleplay.

00:34:42 Tre'vell Guest

Alright.

00:34:43 John Host

And you choose how you wanna respond.

00:34:44 Tre'vell Guest

Okay.

00:34:46 John Host

"Oh, hey, Tre'vell. Um... I know—I know you're usually... *[sighs]* I don't know how to say it. Do you mind if I put on, um, the *Third Man* theme? By Anton Karas? Before we make pizza?"

00:34:57 Tre'vell Guest

"I don't know what the hell that is. I do mind."

*[Beat.]*

00:35:00 John Host

"Oh. Okay."

*[Beat.]*

"Um... can we listen to something else?"

*[All three laugh.]*

00:35:08 Jesse Host Yeah, you took a really intense tack on this roleplay, Tre'vell!  
00:35:10 Tre'vell Guest *[Laughing]* Did I? Did I?  
00:35:13 John Host This is—that was like my worst nightmare. *[Laughs.]*  
00:35:14 Tre'vell Guest Well, he—he said that—Tom said that the person has a bad temper, and so I was just like, "The person's probably gonna be very, like, 'no,' at the beginning."

*[Jesse laughs.]*

You know?

00:35:24 John Host Riiight.  
00:35:25 Tre'vell Guest And you've gotta like, wear them down or something!  
00:35:26 Jesse Host Here's the thing. I think it's enti—it's conceivable that they will have a reaction like that. But I think it's much more likely that you don't even have to approach this as a conflict! Because it is not yet a conflict.  
00:35:38 Tre'vell Guest Right.  
00:35:39 John Host Yeah!  
00:35:40 Jesse Host As far as this person knows—as far as this coworker knows to this point, they're doing a great job by making sure there's music in the back so that people can enjoy some music while they work. All Tom really has to do is go to that person and say like "Hey, I'd love to contribute to the music. Is it okay if I change it when you're not here, or could—is there some kind of timeshare arrangement on the play button or whatever?"

00:36:04 Tre'vell Guest Mm-hm.

00:36:05 John Host Yeah.

*[Tre'vell laughs quietly.]*

00:36:06 Jesse Host And I—and the odds are that even for a person with a terrible temper, that will be totally fine and will not lead to a tempestuous situation.  
00:36:17 John Host Yes. Odds are. But you heard my roleplay with Tre'vell! *[Laughs.]*  
00:36:21 Jesse Host Yeah.

*[All three laugh.]*

It could—

00:36:22 John Host That could happen!  
00:36:23 Jesse Host —could break otherwise.  
00:36:24 John Host That could happen! That could happen, and it was my worst nightmare, and it made me feel awful.

*[Tre'vell laughs.]*

But you did the right thing. That was the right thing to do.

00:36:29 Tre'vell Guest Tom could also just take, like, you know, some other steps. And like, unplug the speaker!

00:36:36 John Host Oh, sabotage!

*[Tre'vell laughs.]*

00:36:38 Jesse Host I don't want anyone's answer to this to be passive aggression.

*[Tre'vell keeps laughing.]*

Passive ag—there's not even regular aggression yet present. Let's establish regular progress—pro—aggression from this other person before we start—

00:36:53 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Jesse:** —coming up with undermining schemes.

**Tre'vell:** Before we take other steps.

**John:** Yeah.

**Tre'vell:** I can hear that. Fine, fine.

00:36:57 John Host Yeah! "I don't know what happened, uh, coworker! For some reason the Bluetooth speaker just ended up in the bottom of this vat of tomato sauce!"

*[Jesse laughs.]*

00:37:05 Tre'vell Guest "It just slipped and fell! I don't know what happened!"

00:37:07 John Host Yeah, "I was over on this side of the room and I saw it jump off!"

*[Tre'vell and John and/or Jesse laugh.]*

Look. Tom. Tre'vell is right. Go to your coworker. You're both human beings. Human beings can say to one another "Uh, hey, do you mind if I put something else on the speaker for a little bit? If you don't mind? I was thinking of this, this, and this." Probably that person will be like "Yeah. Obviously. I'm a human being, too."

Now, that person might be a monster.

*[Tre'vell laughs quietly.]*

And go "NOOO!" Or cut you to the quick the way Tre'vell did me.

*[Tre'vell chuckles.]*

But look what happened! I lived! I'm alive! It's not fatal. It's not fatal to be shut down. Maybe your boss'll be in the room, and your boss'll be like "That's terrible. You're fired, Bad Temper Guy!" And then you get to pick all the music. Alllll of the music! And you know what music you have to pick. The only music that should be playing while you're making a pizza. The theme from *The Third Man* by Anton Karas.

*[Jesse and Tre'vell laugh.]*

00:38:00 Sound Effect Sound Effect *[Three gavel bangs.]*

00:38:02 John Host We're gonna move on, but Tre'vell, I ask you: at some point, when it is convenient to you... just dial up, on your machine, the *Third Man* theme by Anton Karas—master of the zither—and imagine making a pizza to that music. I think you'll be delighted.

00:38:18 Tre'vell Guest I... will figure that out.

*[Tre'vell and John laugh.]*

00:38:20 John Host Okay. Thank you.

00:38:21 Jesse Host Here's something from James:

"I detest washing dishes. Whenever I prepare a snack, I will..."  
*[Laughs quietly.]* This is amazing. This is beautiful.

*[John and Tre'vell laugh.]*

I love that James is the one who wrote this in. Bless you, James. A thousand thank-yous.

"Whenever I prepare a snack, I will tear off a section of cardboard from one of the many packaging boxes that have been set aside for the recycling and use this as a makeshift paper plate."

*[John laughs, Jesse stifles laughter.]*

00:38:48 Tre'vell Guest I can't.

00:38:49 Jesse Host "My roommate thinks this is uncouth! And wants me to use regular ceramic dishware. I argue as long as I'm not serving food to others in this way, or using it for something messy, it's completely harmless. I'm eating French toast off of Popsicle packaging as I type this message. Who here is right?"

*[John and Jesse laugh quietly.]*

00:39:09 John Host Tre'vell?

00:39:10 Tre'vell Guest Jesus have mercy.

00:39:11 John Host I heard you—

*[Jesse laughs.]*

Tre'vell, I heard you say "I can't."

*[Tre'vell laughs.]*

And I understand! But what if I were to say, politely, "You must!"

00:39:19 Tre'vell Guest *[Laughs.]* I just—there are such things as paper plates. There's no need for you to, you know...

00:39:26 Jesse Host Well, this is the ecological choice. It's—

00:39:28 Tre'vell Guest Is it???

00:39:29 Jesse Host It—well, it keeps from—*[laughs]* it keeps you from having to use the paper plates as well?

*[Tre'vell and Jesse laugh.]*

As the Popsicle packaging? I guess? If you're eating something like French toast, uh, you will not be able to recycle that Popsicle packaging after you've eaten off of it.

00:39:44 Tre'vell Guest Exactly!

00:39:45 Jesse Host Because it will be food-soiled and no longer recyclable.

00:39:48 Tre'vell Guest Exactly! That's not the point I was going to make, but that is a very good one—

00:39:51 Jesse Host *[Stifling laughter]* Thank you.

00:39:52 Tre'vell Guest —that helps my side. *[Laughs.]*

00:39:54 Jesse Host Yeah, no, I think you're still—*[stifling laughter]* you're still reacting to the astonishing fact that this man eats French toast off of a Popsicle box.

00:39:59 Tre'vell Guest Off a Popsicle box! I—I'm just in—I'm—I'm just confused! Like, I wonder how he started doing this. Like, were there no plates clean—?

00:40:09 Jesse Host Let me explain. When you're a heterosexual man in a room—

00:40:12 Tre'vell Guest This is definitely some straight stuff right here.

00:40:14 Jesse Host *[Laughing]* In—yeah. Yeah.

00:40:15 Tre'vell Guest The gays know better.

00:40:16 Jesse Host In a roommate situation, and especially if the other people in your house are also heterosexual men—

00:40:23 Tre'vell Guest Mm-hm.

00:40:24 Jesse Host —and especially if you are a young person who's relatively new to independent living...

00:40:29 Tre'vell Guest Okay.

00:40:30 Jesse Host You will go to extraordinary lengths to—or many will go to extraordinary lengths to avoid behaving like an adult human being.

*[Jesse and Tre'vell laugh.]*

00:40:43 John Host And justifying your laziness with some kind of crackpot theory that you will then type into a podcast with your maple syrup-covered fingers.

*[Jesse and Tre'vell laugh.]*

I mean, that's the thing. We know exact—James is—I admire James for being very up-front about this! He doesn't like to do the dishes! One day—*[stifles laughter]* he had some French toast cooking, and he looks in that sink full of dishes, and he's like "I don't wanna clean that dish. I'm gonna tear off this piece of Popsicle cardboard. And now I've solved the problem! I am lazy, and I get to put a gloss of eco-responsibility on top of it. Hurray for me! Once again I triumph and am the hero of every story." That's James's point of view!

But it's gross, right? I mean, Tre'vell, it's gross.

00:41:29 Tre'vell Guest I—listen. You're not gonna see me eating off of no cardboard.

*[Jesse laughs.]*

00:41:33 John Host Right.

00:41:34 Tre'vell Guest I have plastic plates at my house, and I still use the glass. It just—I just—it just... I think you're right, Jesse, that they're probably in school, very young, and like it just makes sense to James to do this. But coming from an adult?

00:41:50 Jesse Host Mm-hm.

00:41:51 Tre'vell Guest I'm gonna need James to do better.

00:41:53 Jesse Host And I can let you know, John—you're in New York; we're in Los Angeles together—that Tre'vell presents as a...

*[Tre'vell cracks up.]*

...grown-up human being. *[Laughs.]*

00:42:06 John Host I mean, we have to agree. This is uncouth. Right? He says his roommate thinks this is uncouth, right? Who here votes that that's couth? It's uncouth.

00:42:13 Jesse Host Yeah, so stipulated.

00:42:14 Tre'vell Guest *[Laughs.]* Yes.

00:42:16 John Host I have to say, I'm tempted to James's argument that even though it's uncouth, if he's not serving food to others...

00:42:22 Tre'vell Guest Mm.

00:42:23 John Host ...it's completely harmless. And I guess that's true. I think it hurts yourself to some degree, James. To be eating French toast off of a popsicle carton. Mostly because... that stuff doesn't have a rim! You can't have French toast and syrup on a conveyance that does not have a rim. That does—not gonna work as a plate. And that cardboard is too flimsy! Like, even if I were to give you every benefit of every doubt, what you have described is a bad idea.

Now, I will say this. Lots of places won't accept pizza boxes for recycling 'cause they are already food-soiled. If you were to spend an afternoon, James, with a boxcutter or an X-Acto knife, cutting out perfectly pizza-slice-shaped pieces of cardboard from old pizza boxes and using those to eat a single piece of pizza? That would be some flair! That I would enjoy!

*[All three laugh.]*

00:43:24 Jesse Host *[Laughing]* Yeah.

00:43:27 John Host But if you're eating your food off of just trash? Uh-uh. You deserve better than that, James. You deserve better than to eat food off of trash. Make that trash into an artwork? Then you got something. Then you're—then you can be ecologically responsible.

00:43:45 Jesse Host A shared living situation is a social contract. You are responsible for obeying shared social norms with the people with whom you live. And in this case we're talking about basic couth.

00:44:04 Tre'vell Guest Listen.

*[John laughs.]*



00:44:06 Jesse Host And so for me, if I were in this situation—I didn't live that long in a shared living situation, but if my college roommate Nathaniel for example—in a non-romantic shared living situation. But if my college roommate Nathaniel—if I had come home and seen him eating off of a cardboard box, I would have felt the same way as James's roommate. And—but if he ate off of a cardboard box at home alone while I was not there, I guess I could have dealt with that. But like, at a certain point—

*[Tre'vell laughs quietly.]*

I know we all have our way that we like to do things, and I think that having roommates involves some accommodation of that. There also has to be, in order to just establish a baseline for human life, some basic expectations of couth in any shared living situation. And this is not an unreasonable one from James's roommate.

00:45:02 Tre'vell Guest

It's just asking you to use a plate. It's very simple.

00:45:04 John Host

Yeah. Jesse, I hate—I—I very rarely say this, but—to you, my friend, but nope.

00:45:11 Jesse Host

Oh.

00:45:12 John Host

To me that's not the issue at all.

00:45:13 Jesse Host

Really?

00:45:14 John Host

Even if he's alone, eating French toast off of a Popsicle carton is a perversion.

*[Jesse and Tre'vell laugh.]*

This is not about putting calorie ballast into your mouth as quickly as possible! Feeding yourself, even alone, deserves self-respect and ritual. So, as I say, if you make your own paper plates that are, you know, circular or triangular—if you add something, if you're bringing something literally to the table in terms of thoughtfulness and mindfulness—eat off of whatever you want! Especially if you're alone.

But, you know, don't—that—when was the last time you guys saw a Popsicle box?! I've seen them!

*[Jesse and Tre'vell laugh quietly.]*

That's the thin stuff! You can't put French toast on there! Respect yourself, James! Do better.

00:46:09 Sound Effect Sound Effect

*[Three gavel bangs.]*

00:46:10 Jesse Host

Take it from the Staple Singers. Respect yourself.

Let's take a quick break. When we come back we'll hear some letters about Santa Claus, and have some in-depth Santa Claus discussion after the break. We're gonna get into Santa Claus.

00:46:25 John Host

That's a content warning. Okay, parents? That's a content warning.

00:46:29 Jesse Host

We're gonna get into it. From a parent's perspective.

00:46:31 Sound Effect Transition

*[Three gavel bangs.]*

00:46:34 Promo Clip *[Very quiet indistinct background chatter throughout.]*

**Ben Harrison:** Alright, Adam. Uh, Maximum Fun wants us to record like a promo to tell people that they should listen to [The Greatest Generation](#). You wanna do that?

**Adam Pranica:** No! I am tired of all the extra work. I just wanna talk about *Star Trek* with my friend.

**Ben:** I—I think it... it would be good to like, try and get some new listeners by appealing to the audiences of other shows? Like, this'll only take a minute or two. It could be good for us!

**Adam:** We sit down for an hour every week and talk about a *Star Trek* episode and make a bunch of idiotic fart jokes about it. It's embarrassing. If it got out that we made this show, I think it would make us unemployable.

**Ben:** Adam... I have bad news for you. We have tens of thousands of listeners at [MaximumFun.org](#).

**Adam:** Oh my god... I think I'm gonna throw up.

*[A phone rings in the background.]*

**Ben:** *The Greatest Generation!* A *Star Trek* podcast by a couple of guys who are a little bit embarrassed to have a *Star Trek* podcast. Every Monday on [MaximumFun.org](#).

**Adam:** I'm really gonna be sick.

00:47:21 Sound Effect Transition *[Three gavel bangs.]*

00:47:23 Jesse Promo Judge John Hodgman, we're taking a quick break from the show to talk about what we've got going on. First and foremost, of course, everyone who's listening to and enjoying this show should check out [FANTI](#), the newest Maximum Fun podcast, with Tre'vell Anderson, our guest on the show!

00:47:39 John Promo It's really a delight. And like, it's funny, it's smart. Provocative—thought-provocative! And useful, I feel like. I feel it's a podcast with social utility built in.

00:47:51 Jesse Promo I think that's a fair description.

00:47:53 John Promo It makes you think about stuff! While also having a real good time.

00:47:56 Jesse Promo Have you got anything interesting going on?

00:47:59 John Promo Nooo!

No, wait a minute, I do! *[Laughs quietly.]* Everyone knows that I and Elliott Kalan of [The Flop House](#) recorded 13 sweet episodes of a miniseries podcast called [I, Podius](#), which itself is devoted to the famous 1976 BBC miniseries about Ancient Rome called *I, Claudius*. I've been talking about it all over the place, here, there, and everywhere, and certainly in this podcast. And I encourage you to please take a listen to it. And if you do, and you like it—and I hope you do!—review it? Let a person know. Let a friend know. We're really proud of the work we did.

One thing I would ask you to also consider doing... is I'm getting a lot—it's a delight. I'm getting a lot of letters, Jesse, from people who are listening to *I, Podius* talking about their childhood experiences watching *I, Claudius*! It's a feature that we had in the show where we read letters that we had solicited long before we started recording the show, from people who saw it in Latin class, people who saw it with their mom and dad, not realizing that there was going to be some nudity in it. Lots of fun letters. And I love 'em!

But if you send them to my address right now—[hodgman@maximumfun.org](mailto:hodgman@maximumfun.org)—I'll read 'em. I'll enjoy them. But they'll be lost to the world! I don't want this to be lost to time! Because we've recorded the whole podcast. We can't put your letters in the podcast now. What can you do to share them? Well, you could do what Claudius did: Write 'em down on a scroll and bury them to be found a thousand years from now.

Or, better, why don't you go to the Maximum Fun subreddit on Reddit? Where we'll announce the—each episode, and people have been commenting on the episodes as they come out, and I'm in there mixing it up and thanking people for watching, and answering questions.

If you've got a memory of *I, Claudius* that you wanna share, don't just send it to me! I'm not even gonna forward that to Elliott Kalan! He'll never know you wrote! But if you put it on that Reddit—Maximum Fun subreddit—I'll see it, and other people will see it, and we'll have a good time together.

00:49:59 John

Promo

One other thing I'll talk about real quick. I often forget to mention... I got a [SoundCloud](#)! Jesse. I got a SoundCloud. I have two things on that SoundCloud. One of them I forget what it is. And the other is... a [recording](#)—a live recording—of the one-person *Vacationland* stage show that I did long before I wrote the book *Vacationland*. The book is based on this one-person show I did. It's a comedy show! It was recorded in Toronto at the Just for Laughs Festival—Juste pour rire—couple of years ago in the beautiful Queen Elizabeth Theatre there in Toronto.

And I'm very proud of it! And we recorded it, and wasn't sure what to do with it, and I decided—it was sitting around while I was writing the book, and I decided "You know what? I'm gonna put it on my SoundCloud for free." So that's another thing that you can go—I'm not making money off of that! Go take a listen if you enjoy it. Just, uh, put in SoundCloud, uh, Hodgman... You know what to do, you know how to use a thing.

*[Jesse laughs quietly.]*

And go over to that—and go over and send your memories of *I, Claudius* into the comments over there at the Maximum Fun subreddit, which is a really fun community that I'm really enjoying interacting with.

Jesse, what do you have going on?

00:51:05	Jesse	Promo	Well, of course, the reason <i>I, Podius</i> exists is because of the success of last year's MaxFunDrive, and this year's MaxFunDrive is around the corner! Maximum Fun is <u>not</u> supported by advertisements. It is not supported by putting it behind a paywall. It's not supported by licensing, it's not supported by merchandise. It's supported by members! And the MaxFunDrive is when we ask you to join us.
			That is just around the corner! It will start March 16th. We've got all kinds of special episodes, and special stuff is happening. There's gonna be a live streaming show at the end. Lots of people are doing live stuff over the course of that on nearly two weeks, and I hope that you will consider joining us, if you're not already a member of Maximum Fun, during the MaxFunDrive. 'Cause that's what keeps our lights on! And feeds our children, and so on and so forth. And it means a lot to us.
			So keep your eyes on the calendar. March 16th is when it begins. It only runs for less than two weeks. So be ready for it. It's coming for ya. It's gonna be a great time.
			Let's get back to the docket!
00:52:12	Sound Effect	Transition	<i>[Three gavel bangs.]</i>
00:52:14	Jesse	Host	Welcome back to the <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> podcast. We're clearing the docket. We've got Tre'vell Anderson; they're one of the hosts of <u>FANT!</u> The brand new smash-hit—
00:52:25	Tre'vell	Guest	Smash-hit!
00:52:26	Jesse	Host	—arts and culture podcast from Maximum Fun. I don't know, what—it counts as smash-hit, right?
00:52:32	Tre'vell	Guest	I'll take it!
00:52:33	Jesse	Host	You feel like a hit?
00:52:34	Tre'vell	Guest	I am always a hit, with or without the podcast, so I guess...
00:52:36	John	Host	That's right, exactly.
00:52:37	Tre'vell	Guest	...you know, <u>with</u> the podcast it's a <u>smash-hit</u> .
00:52:40	Jesse	Host	That's a—that's fair.
			<i>[Tre'vell giggles.]</i>
00:52:41	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	<b>John:</b> Yeah.
			<b>Jesse:</b> That's <u>very</u> fair.
00:52:42	Jesse	Host	We're gonna get into Santa Claus now. Tre'vell, do you have Santa Claus experience?
00:52:45	Tre'vell	Guest	I mean, yes?
00:52:47	Jesse	Host	Like at home as a child, right?
00:52:48	Tre'vell	Guest	I'm about to say, I don't know what you mean by "Santa Claus experience," but...
			<i>[All three laugh.]</i>

Like "I don't know where this is going, um, but... I think so?"

00:52:57 Jesse Host *[Laughs.]* Yeah. Does Santa Claus visit your home around the holidays now?

00:53:01 Tre'vell Guest Uh, n-no? Not now. But, you know, I feel like when I was younger, there was some talk of a Santa. To a point.

00:53:09 Jesse Host Yeah.

00:53:10 Tre'vell Guest To a point.

00:53:12 Jesse Host A modest Santa. Modest dose of Santa.

00:53:13 Tre'vell Guest You know, I feel like after my mom got tired of me, like, thanking Santa too many times, she was like "Okay, I bought it, alright?" You know?

*[John and Jesse laugh.]*

00:53:20 John Host Yeah.

00:53:21 Tre'vell Guest I think it was one of those situations.

00:53:22 John Host Santa is a problematic fave on this podcast.

00:53:25 Tre'vell Guest I think so—I'd agree with that! Yes!

00:53:27 John Host And in life. Yeah. There is a lot of problems with Santa. There's a lot of illogic to Santa. And then one of the things that we've discussed—and here is really—we gave you the content warning, parents. If you don't wanna hear any more about this, turn it off.

Tre'vell. Santa... is... a myth.

*[All three laugh quietly.]*

Santa's not real. He's not a real guy. Not a real home invader. It's a story that parents tell to children. I hope this is not news to you, Tre'vell.

00:53:51 Tre'vell Guest It is not. It is not.

00:53:52 John Host Right. And I am of the strong opinion that parents shouldn't lie to their kids. And to encourage them to think of Santa as being as real as their favorite fictional character. Which is pretty real! But to not actually trick kids. Because there was a bad experience in my family. When our daughter just—got really upset, and felt like a friend died when we explained that there was no real Santa. It was hard.

That's just my opinion. People can do what they want.

This dispute was whether or not the gifts from Santa on Christmas morning should be wrapped. And I said—this goes back a couple weeks now—and I said of course they should be wrapped! They should be wrapped in special Santa paper. But I got a bunch of letters!

Before we get into them, Tre'vell, do you have an opinion based on your experience? Or just good taste. Should gifts from Santa be wrapped?

00:54:53 Tre'vell Guest I feel like all gifts should be wrapped! Right?

00:54:56 John Host Yeah. I think so.

00:54:58 Tre'vell Guest Like, why—'cause if it's unwrapped you remove kind of that... Christmas morning energy of unwrapping!

00:55:07 John Host Yeah. I'm with you. And yet... I got many, many, many letters. Basically telling me to—in so many words—eat French toast off a Popsicle box for my bad opinion.

*[Jesse and Tre'vell laugh.]*

And people were saying—lots of people saying "When I grew up, Santa presents were always unwrapped!"

00:55:29 Tre'vell Guest Hmm!

00:55:30 John Host "And that's how we knew which ones were coming from Santa." And a lot of the people writing in said—and this is like a consistent thing. It's like "The story was Santa is making these presents up in the North Pole. He's not buying them from a store! He made that Atari 2600!"

*[Tre'vell laughs quietly.]*

He—*[laughs]* he had a—he—well, he didn't. He—actually, you know, he's got a—an army of elf... flunkies, who I hope are in a union, making this stuff.

*[Tre'vell laughs.]*

And that therefore it would never be wrapped. What did one—someone wrote in, Jesse. What was one of the letters that we got there?

00:56:06 Jesse Host This is one from Sharon. She said:

"Imagine the kids' surprise when wow! Their most-wanted gifts are sitting next to Santa's empty glass of milk. Moreover, in the loopy wee hours of Christmas Eve when Santa is most active, there's room for boundless creativity. It's fun to pull out a mini-figure and arrange it next to Rudolph's uneaten carrot, setting the box of Lego underneath the plate. You can also pose Barbie in her Corvette, jauntily waving to a stuffed octopus who has a tentacle on one of Santa's cookies."

It's nice of Santa to share his cookies with the stuffed octopus, I think.

*[Beat.]*

*[Tre'vell and John laugh.]*

00:56:46 John Host That's true. I think this stuffed octopus is one of Santa's gifts, though, right? 'Cause it's unwrapped, I guess?

00:56:50 Jesse Host Yeah, but I mean, it's a long trip from the North Pole. It would die if it didn't get anything to eat.

00:56:55 Tre'vell Guest Oh, lord.

00:56:56 Jesse Host I think ideally it would be eating krill or whatever.

*[Jesse and Tre'vell laugh.]*

00:57:00 John Host Anyway... Tre'vell, what I'm saying—like, we got this letter from all over the country. I thought maybe it would be a regional thing.

00:57:05 Tre'vell Guest Mm-hm.

00:57:06 John Host Some people wrote in to say, you know, that the Santa present is purposefully unwrapped so that the kids can go down and play with it while their parents get a little extra sleep that morning or whatever?

00:57:16 Tre'vell Guest Hmm.

00:57:17 John Host But I got letters from Jennifer, from Hanna, from Alberto, from Jason, Kurt, Wayne, Alex. So many people. And this is one of those rare situations, Tre'vell, and I'm glad you're here to see this, where I'm gonna say—and I don't think I've ever said this on the podcast—you're right. I'm wrong.

00:57:32 Tre'vell Guest Wow.

00:57:33 Jesse Host Wow.

00:57:35 John Host Yeah. I don't like that. I don't like saying it!

00:57:38 Tre'vell Guest Are you wrong, though?

*[Tre'vell and John laugh. Someone claps a few times.]*

00:57:42 Jesse Host Yeah.

00:57:43 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** To—teach—teach me, Tre'vell. Teach me, Tre'vell.

**Jesse:** How about this? How about this?

00:57:46 Jesse Host Is it possible that John is right and these people are right, and that there's no exact right way to make Santa Claus?

00:57:52 Tre'vell Guest I mean, yes! That is possible, that everyone is right, and you can do whatever the hell you want to do in your house with your presents.

00:58:00 John Host Yeah.

00:58:01 Tre'vell Guest I'm just thinking of like, y'all must have a lot of presents, to have some presents that are Santa's that are unwrapped, and other presents that I guess are from the family that are wrapped. 'Cause in my household there wasn't two separate groups. *[Stifles laughter.]* You just—your presents is your presents is your presents.

00:58:16 John Host Ohhh!

00:58:17 Tre'vell Guest Whether they're from Santa or your parents. And like—and it's already limited, 'cause we didn't grow up with a lot of money.

00:58:21 John Host Right.

00:58:22 Tre'vell Guest So like, we don't have time for this "These are Santa's, these are from Mom."

00:58:26 Jesse Host So it was like a game-time decision for your mom?

00:58:28 Tre'vell Guest No, I—we would write, you know, "To Such-and-such, from Santa," or "From Mom" or whatever on the package. So like—

00:58:35 John Host Right.

00:58:36 Tre'vell Guest But the—part of the idea of Christmas morning, I feel like, is you know, making the youngest kid that is there clean up all of the

wrapping paper.

*[John laughs.]*

00:58:44 Jesse Host Yeah. Sure.

00:58:45 Tre'vell Guest Right? You can't do that when all of Santa's gifts are unwrapped!

00:58:48 Jesse Host That's a treasured tradition.

00:58:49 Tre'vell Guest You know? I just—but yes. Maybe everyone is right in this situation, and you do what works for you and the Santa from your region.

00:58:56 Jesse Host There's also something from Emily, who pointed out that the letter writers can't stop wrapping their presents from Santa now. "Like the regrettable elf on the shelf, you can't give up the tradition once you've started it."

And that does feel like it drives at the heart of it to me, John, which is part of the point of a tradition is its arbitrariness. And so, you know, when you are enacting a ritual of some kind, you are committing yourself to enacting that ritual. And maybe it was inappropriate to ask someone else to change their ritual.

00:59:32 John Host I don't know! You know...

*[Jesse laughs.]*

I—I really feel like... okay.

*[Tre'vell laughs.]*

Yeah, but... America has a lot of traditions that I'm glad we've gotten rid of. *[Stifles laughter.]*

00:59:44 Tre'vell Guest Oof. You and me both.

00:59:45 John Host I think that—yeah. I think that we need to have some flexibility with regard to tradition. I think that we need to appreciate that a gift-giving situation such as Christmas is a moment of thoughtful generosity. I think that our rituals and our traditions should emphasize that we are lucky to be together, and that we have the means and the ability to be generous with one another. And whatever ritual best expresses that is the one you should go for. And if there—and I—when I'm saying I'm wrong about Santa wrapping—look. I think all presents should be wrapped. That's what presents are.

But I do acknowledge that there is a existing, beyond regional, tradition of unwrapped presents from Santa that I was not aware of. I apologize to all of you who wrote in. I think your Santa kink is valid. Fine.

*[All three laugh.]*

And I think that if two families come together that have different traditions, you sit down, you work out, and you make a new tradition for the family! And I hope that the tradition is "Don't trick your kids into thinking there's actually a man coming into the house." 'Cause that's A, scary, and B, a deception.



But that's me. That's my Santa kink. No Santa kink.

01:01:05 Jesse Host Our docket is clear! Tre'vell, if you were gonna recommend one episode of *FANTI* for our listeners to check out, which one would you recommend?

01:01:15 Tre'vell Guest Well, I would recommend all of them first and foremost, 'cause they're all wonderful. But—

01:01:18 Jesse Host But let's say—let's say our listeners are anxious people who would like their decisions to be made for them in a clear manner.

*[Tre'vell and John laugh.]*

01:01:25 John Host Yeah! Don't put that mental load on me!

01:01:26 Tre'vell Guest I can do that! I would say I would listen to [our conversation](#) about Gayle King's interview with Lisa Leslie around Kobe Bryant's death.

01:01:33 John Host Mm-hm.

01:01:35 Tre'vell Guest A lot of people had feelings about it, and Jarrett and I as journalists had special feelings about it.

01:01:41 Jesse Host Yeah. As a semi-journalist myself, I listened to that episode and found it incredibly insightful and compelling, and spoke to my own strong feelings about the situation from a variety of perspectives.

01:01:54 John Host Tre'vell, thank you so much for people here! And for showing yourself. And to—

*[Tre'vell laughs quietly.]*

And being so awesome. And for doing *FANTI* with Jarrett. It's available every Thursday on [MaximumFun.org](#), or wherever you get your podcasts, right, Jesse?

01:02:09 Jesse Host You got it! F-A-N-T-I is how it's spelled. It's a portmanteau of "fan" and "anti," if you haven't figured it out yet.

*[Tre'vell laughs.]*

Our thanks to Tre'vell Anderson for joining us this week! They're on Twitter at [@TrevellAnderson](#), T-R-E-V-E-L-L-A-N-D-E-R-S-O-N. And Tre'vell's a very fun follow on Twitter.

Our producer is [Jennifer Marmor](#). Follow us on Twitter at [@JesseThorn](#) and [@hodgman](#). We are on Instagram at [@judgejohnhodgman](#). Make sure to hashtag your *Judge John Hodgman* Tweets [#JJHo](#), and check out the MaxFun subreddit at [MaximumFun.Reddit.com](#), where John Hodgman has been showing up a lot lately!

Submit your cases, please, at [MaximumFun.org/jjho](#) or by email at [hodgman@maximumfun.org](#). No case is too big or small. We're always grateful for every case that you offer us.

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

01:03:06 Sound Effect Transition *[Three gavel bangs.]*

01:03:08 Music Transition A cheerful guitar chord.

01:03:10	Speaker 1	Guest	MaximumFun.org.
01:03:12	Speaker 2	Guest	Comedy and culture.
01:03:13	Speaker 3	Guest	Artist owned—
01:03:14	Speaker 4	Guest	—audience supported.