

00:00:00	Sound Effect	Transition	<i>[Three gavel bangs.]</i>
00:00:02	Jesse Thorn	Host	Welcome to the <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> podcast. I'm Bailiff Jesse Thorn. This week: "Objection! Sustainable."
			Hallie files suit against her fiancé, Ramsey. Hallie is serious about conservation and living her life in an eco-friendly way. Ramsey admires what she does, but he doesn't think he can live up to her high eco-standards. Who's right? Who's wrong? Only one can decide.
00:00:25	Sound Effect	Sound Effect	<i>[As Jesse speaks below: Door opens, chairs scrape on the floor, footsteps.]</i>
00:00:26	Jesse	Host	Please rise as Judge John Hodgman enters the courtroom and presents an obscure cultural reference.
00:00:31	Sound Effect	Sound Effect	<i>[Door shuts.]</i>
00:00:33	John Hodgman	Host	"Americans make more podcasts than anyone else on the planet, throwing away about 7.1 pounds per person per day. Across a lifetime, that rate means on average we are each on track to generate 102 tons of podcasts. Each of our bodies may occupy only one cemetery plot when we're done with this world, but a single person's 102-ton podcast legacy will require the equivalent of 1100 graves. Much of that content will outlast any grave marker, Pharaoh's pyramid, or modern skyscraper. One of the few relics of our civilization guaranteed to be recognizable 20,000 years from now is the live podcast episode."
			Bailiff Jesse Thorn, please swear them in.
00:01:17	Jesse	Host	Hallie, Ramsey, please rise and raise your right hands.
00:01:18	Sound Effect	Sound Effect	<i>[Chairs scrape.]</i>
00:01:20	Jesse	Host	Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God or whatever?
00:01:25	Ramsey	Guest	I do.
00:01:26	Hallie	Guest	I do.
00:01:27	Jesse	Host	Do you swear to abide by Judge John Hodgman's ruling, despite the fact that he buys yogurt in bulk and stores it in the skulls of his fallen enemies?
			<i>[The litigants laugh.]</i>
00:01:36	Ramsey	Guest	We do.
00:01:38	Hallie	Guest	Yeah. I do.
00:01:39	Jesse	Host	Judge Hodgman, you may proceed.
00:01:41	John	Host	Hallie and Ramsey, you may be seated.
00:01:42	Sound Effect	Sound Effect	<i>[Chairs scrape.]</i>
00:01:43	John	Host	For an immediate summary judgment in <u>one</u> of yours' favors, can either of you name the piece of culture I referenced when I entered this, the fake Internet courtroom of Judge John Hodgman? Hallie, let's start with you.
00:01:53	Hallie	Guest	It sounded like a... article or something written about food waste, but then with the tombs and it outlasting, it seems like it would be about

plastic or like used computer parts.

00:02:06 John Host No, I—it was all about podcasts! We're making too many podcasts, Hallie! No, no, you guessed right. I was subbing in podcasts for the actual subject of this piece of writing. Okay. Can you—what's your guess as to what the piece of writing is?

00:02:20 Hallie Guest Oh, okay! Maybe—uh, you write that column in... I think the *New York Times*? It's—you're berating someone for too much waste of either food, plastic, or computer parts.

00:02:35 John Host So your guess, Hallie, is a *Judge John Hodgman* column in the *New York Times* magazine. It appears every Sunday in the *New York Times* magazine. And as has once again been proven, an amazing fact of this Earth, everyone who knows the column does not know the podcast exists. *[Chuckles.]* Everyone who listens to the podcast is not sure where the column is! But that's fine! I'm happy. I'm happy to have two diverse readership/listenership of people who like fake fights.

00:03:08 Ramsey Guest Okay. Good guess! I'm putting it in the guess book. What about you, Ramsey?

00:03:15 John Host I would have to go maybe a little wild here. Since I'm unfamiliar—it may be a passage from the Bible.

00:03:23 Ramsey Guest Hmm. *[Stifles laughter.]* The Christian Bible?

00:03:25 John Host *[One or more people laugh quietly.]*

00:03:23 Ramsey Guest The one we usually talk about in the Western tradition?

00:03:25 John Host ...It could be somebody's Bible.

00:03:25 John Host Ah, I can see you're gonna be fun, Ramsey. Alright, we'll put that in the guess book! I think it will come as no surprise to Ramsey, at least, that all guesses are wrong.

[John and one or both litigants laugh.]

Hallie, I appreciated your flattering guess.

[Hallie laughs.]

There's no way I could put that into the *New York Times* magazine, because that—I'm using my computer right now to figure out, that itself is 110 words. My thing can only be a max of 185, including the questions. So I doubt that I would have been as long-winded, or, frankly, as well-written as that.

And it's not the Bible, Ramsey. *[Laughs.]*

00:04:02 Ramsey Guest It seemed Biblical. *[Laughs.]*

00:04:04 John Host No, it's from a book! Book called *Garbology: Our Dirty Love Affair with Trash*.

00:04:10 Hallie Guest Hm!

00:04:11 Ramsey Guest Oh.

00:04:12 John Host By Edward Humes. And if you think that that's my favorite book,

you—I have no idea. 'Cause I just got that quote off of Goodreads. This is one of the ones where I just was like "I don't know. This thing's about recycling, right? And sustainability and garbage... I guess I'll just search Goodreads for recycling quotes." And that was the quote I got. I hope that Edward Humes is not a creep of some kind!

[One or both litigants laugh, John stifles laughter.]

Hope he's an okay person. So let's get into this! Hallie and Ramsey—Hallie, you bring the case against Ramsey. What is the nature of your dispute?

00:04:41 Hallie Guest Well, we have very different attitudes and feelings about sort of living life in a way that takes into account the crumbling infrastructure and climate and Earth around us. So since I was like 12, I've been very mindful of trying to reduce what I buy, or re-use what I buy. So I guess what that looks like in practice is I don't buy new things unless I can help it. I re-use glass jars, and use them to store things. I try not to buy anything in single-serving containers. I sort of wash out like, bags, and then re-use them. I haven't bought Ziplocs in, I don't know, maybe 15 years?

00:05:31 John Host Wh-wh-whoa! Whoa!

00:05:32 Hallie Guest I actually don't know if I've ever bought Ziplocs! They just like, come my way in the course of life, and then I just use them until they have holes in them.

00:05:39 John Host What do you mean, you're getting them from the Ziploc fairy?!

00:05:42 Hallie Guest No, like, you know, somebody will give me something in a Ziploc, or I might rescue one out of a garbage can, if it's like, mostly clean and is just right on top? People throw things away that you wouldn't believe!

00:05:53 John Host You're dumpster-diving for Ziploc bags?! This is the tone of voice of admiration, you have to understand.

[Hallie laughs.]

00:05:59 Jesse Host Incredulous admiration, to be clear.

[She laughs again.]

00:06:01 John Host Yeah! No, no, I cred it! I credit! *[Laughs.]* I believe that she's doing it.

00:06:06 Hallie Guest It's just so easy, to like, take a Ziploc that just is lying right on top of something that has almost nothing in it and then give it a quick rinse. It's just so easy!

00:06:14 John Host I agree that what you described is easy. I just find that it is, in my life—perhaps my eye is not as trained as yours.

00:06:21 Hallie Guest Mm. Right.

00:06:22 John Host It is not often in my life that I am strolling by an open garbage container, to find a basically empty Ziploc lying on top as if to tempt me. If that were the case, I would think that maybe someone was setting a trap for me.

[Hallie laughs.]

This all sounds extremely admirable to me, Ramsey! What is your beef with the way Hallie lives her life?

00:06:40 Ramsey Guest

Because it makes me feel really guilty about myself.

00:06:43 John Host

[Sort of sighing] Ohhh.

[The litigants laugh quietly.]

I forgot, you're a man.

00:06:45 Ramsey Guest

Yes.

00:06:46 John Host

You can't be allowed to feel guilty about yourself!

00:06:48 Ramsey Guest

Well—I mean, in some ways, if we all lived like Hallie, the world would be a much better place. There is nobody I know who has a smaller footprint on this Earth, who is more thoughtful. But it comes to such an extreme, to me, that I don't think I could ever come up to her standards. And I see, as she's coming to my place, that she has to talk herself down from her anxieties noting my waste and my, um, lack of thoughtfulness for this pure Earth compared to hers.

00:07:25 John Host

That seems very sweet, the way you phrased that. But Ramsey, I've seen the photos you sent in. You sure you wanna come on here after taking a fake oath to be truthful, and say that your whooole issue here is that it makes you feel like you cannot live up to the glory that is Hallie?

00:07:46 Ramsey Guest

So you're right. You know, for instance, yesterday we had dinner, and we were—Hallie was cleaning the counter with a paper towel.

00:07:55 John Host

Yeah.

00:07:56 Ramsey Guest

Which was like "Oh, great!" I wasn't sure where the paper towel came from, because I—there's no paper towel roll.

00:08:00 John Host

Oh, the top of some open garbage can somewhere.

[Someone stifles laughter.]

00:08:03 Ramsey Guest

Well... after she was done cleaning the water off the counter, she squeezed it, and then hung the paper towel so she could re-use it. So I think there's a little bit too much involved? It seems to me that the amount of energy necessary to make yourself feel good about keeping the Earth nice and clean and perfect is just a little bit much when you look around this world and see the terrible waste, and, you know, you could do all your best, but look at the neighbor next to you. There's just no way that you're winning this game, and for me in my life, I just—there's only—I care, but there's only so much I'll inconvenience myself.

00:08:43 John Host

Thank you for your honesty, Ramsey. I love how quickly you pivoted from "I just don't think I could live up to her" to "The person I love does a weird thing with a paper towel and it's pointless."

[The litigants laugh.]

'Cause it sounds like this is a very mature relationship. You are in love with each other, correct?

00:08:57 Hallie Guest

Yes.

00:08:58 Ramsey Guest

Absolutely.

00:08:59 John Host And yet you mentioned, Ramsey, that this comes up when she visits you or you visit her. You do not currently cohabit; is that right?

00:09:07 Ramsey Guest So, yeah. So while we're all, you know, lovey-dovey and just engaged, and excited, and very—when I'm at her place, I'm very respectful for her rules, and when she's at my place she's respectful of my rules, even though she has to have the little hyperventilation moments. When we live together, I'm not—I'm hopeful that we can come to a compromise.

00:09:30 John Host You said that you are just engaged. Congratulations.

00:09:33 Hallie Guest Thank you.

00:09:34 John Host When did you get engaged?

[The litigants laugh.]

00:09:37 Ramsey Guest Two days ago.

00:09:39 John Host Wow! Congratulations! That's wonderful! So you both sent in some evidence, and it's highly photographic. All the photos will be posted on the [Judge John Hodgman Instagram page](#), and on [the show page at MaximumFun.org](#), of course. And Hallie, you sent in some photos. They are pictures of your open cupboards full of stacks of old plastic, large, like, yogurt containers. A very admirable hoard of glass jars that you've cleaned out.

00:10:11 Hallie Guest Mm-hm.

00:10:12 Jesse Host Including what appears to be a fair number of otherwise disposable kombucha vessels.

00:10:18 Hallie Guest Well, the thing is I make my own kombucha, and so I re-used the kombucha bottles many times.

00:10:24 Jesse Host When you say "Piles of yogurt containers," and these are—I see one that says "cottage cheese," but they're the large-scale yogurt containers. The kind that you would buy that have maybe, I don't know, 32 ounces or something of yogurt. Not the little cups.

00:10:40 Hallie Guest Mm-hm. Right.

00:10:41 Jesse Host And you've said that this is not all of them—

00:10:45 Hallie Guest Mm.

00:10:46 Jesse Host —and I am seeing what I would characterize as dozens in the picture.

00:10:51 John Host I'm seeing a tower of at least—I'm not sure how many of these ridges are the lids?

00:10:57 Hallie Guest Oh, the lids are behind.

00:11:00 John Host There's at least 40 of them here, I would say.

00:11:02 Hallie Guest Well, I also make my own yogurt, and so I use all those yogurt containers for the yogurt I make. And then the containers—and then the ones that are clear, I use for food that I cook. Like, they're just very good containers.

00:11:14 John Host I understand the words that you're saying...

[Hallie laughs quietly.]

They paint a very admirable and virtuous picture. And I admire you. You have virtue. I'm not sure you understand what the photos are saying.

[The litigants laugh.]

Because—*[laughs]*. People should go to the Instagram, and look at the evidence that Hallie submitted in her own defense! Which is cupboards full of yogurt canisters and glass jars. With the specific proviso, as Jesse pointed out—in her evidence she says "These are some of them, but not all of them, because I have more!" *[Stifling laughter]* Exclamation point.

[One or both litigants laughs quietly.]

That's her defense!

00:11:56 Jesse Host The way these make me feel—and I think you can speak to this, Hallie, in a way that might be informative. But the way looking at these piles of containers makes me feel is that you are motivated—and I won't speculate by what—not to throw away single-use containers. But that... *[stifling laughter]* this has not led to that much management of your intake of single-use containers.

[Someone else laughs quietly.]

Because if these are the empty ones, plus I presume this is not on a day when you had no food in the refrigerator or whatever, this truly does boarder on a hoard.

00:12:46 John Host It presents as hoard-y. I'm just gonna say that.

00:12:50 Hallie Guest Well, okay. Just a couple things. So some of those containers, I did not bring into my own home, I rescued when other people were gonna throw them away. So I don't—

00:12:58 John Host Oh.

00:12:59 Hallie Guest I don't bring in that much. But also, I'm very—I feel like I see gleaming neat stacks of containers to bring to parties, and then I'm like you—I'll just leave it there! Like, "You can keep this food!" I give food—like, if I'm bringing food to someone who's had surgery or something, I can just pack it up in these containers and give it to them. So there's like a flow, in and out.

And also, I am willing to compromise. So I feel like I could restrict to a cupboard. You know, but I want a cupboard for my glass containers, and I want a cupboard for plastic. Like, but I'm willing to compromise!

00:13:35 John Host Mm-hm.

00:13:36 Hallie Guest In a way it would be a relief, frankly, to have there be a limit. I won't deny it.

00:13:41 Jesse Host Hallie, you intend to cohabit with Ramsey upon your marriage?

00:13:44 Hallie Guest This is why it matters, because we won't live in two different places where our own rules can, you know, exist in our own—we're gonna eventually share a space. And so there just has to be movement.

00:13:56 Jesse Host What is your vision for what the rules will be in your shared home?

00:14:02 Hallie Guest Well, we don't have to use the word "rules." Even though we have been. We've been using the word "rules." We don't have to—

00:14:06 Jesse Host *[Amused]* Yeah, even though I just used that after you used it. Immediately after you used it.

00:14:08 Hallie Guest *[Laughs.]* Yeah. No, you're right. I'm not denying it. We have been using the word "rules." But I feel like that presents a picture where, like, one of us is trying to control the other, and neither of us wants to do that.

00:14:21 Ramsey Guest Hm, without rules, it's a slippery slope.

00:14:25 John Host *[Laughs quietly.]* I think once again—you know, I appreciate—I'm sorry to have put you on the defense.

[Hallie chuckles.]

Although both litigants have to defend their points of view in any courtroom. A, what you are doing with this stuff is very admirable. And B, you can't help it that a cupboard full of yogurt containers looks like trash—literally like trash. It just looks like—it looks... it looks like trash.

[Ramsey laughs quietly.]

00:14:52 Hallie Guest *[Stifling laughter]* I think it looks beautiful!

00:14:53 John Host Well... I think you are seeing it from your point of view, and I shall not erase that. And in a moment, we'll—you know, we'll go to Ramsey's evidence, and see what he has documented. But first, you have also sent in one piece of evidence: "Bagel the cat supervising the non-recycling effort."

00:15:13 Hallie Guest Mm-hm.

[Jesse snorts.]

00:15:15 John Host This is—

00:15:16 Jesse Host *[Laughing]* Why is the cat—do you keep your cat under the sink?

[Multiple people laugh.]

00:15:22 John Host Bagel the cat is looking at a small kitchen bin full of juice and pickle boxes and jars. But Bagel—is Bagel a he, she, or a they?

00:15:32 Ramsey Guest Bagel is a she. And as of any cat, if you open a cupboard, it's gonna wanna investigate!

00:15:38 John Host Hm. Not my cat. If you open a cupboard in my house, my cat Lolo, the dumbest cat in the world, is just gonna stare into space. That cupboard could be full of mice.

[The litigants laugh.]

Not interested.

00:15:51 Jesse Host Let's take a quick recess. We'll be back in just a moment on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

00:15:55 Sound Effect Transition *[Three gavel bangs.]*

00:15:57	Promo	Clip	<i>[Quiet background hum of a plane engine.]</i> <i>[Intercom chimes.]</i> Captain: This is your captain with an update from the flight deck. We'll be reaching MaxFunDrive on March 16th. That's right on time. As a reminder, MaxFunDrive runs for just two weeks, and it's the best time of year to support the podcasts you love. If you look towards the front, you'll see your favorite hosts with special bonus content and lovely thank-you gifts for new and upgrading monthly members. Now, sit back, relax, and catch up on your favorite MaxFun shows now, so you can listen to the new episodes releasing March 16th! And thanks again for choosing Maximum Fun! <i>[Intercom chimes again.]</i>
00:16:42	Sound Effect	Transition	<i>[Three gavel bangs.]</i>
00:16:43	Jesse	Host	Court is back in session! Let's return to the courtroom for more justice.
00:16:49	John	Host	Ramsey, you sent in some photos. The caption here is "Servers dropped these off at lunch. Hallie snagged them." Tell me what we're talk—looking at here.
00:16:58	Ramsey	Guest	Well, we went to lunch at a Mexican restaurant. And there were no napkins initially on the table. And the server dropped, you know, a stack of napkins—it looks like there's maybe 20 of them, at least—on the table for us to use. And, you know, normally I would have just used the one or two or five, whatever, to eat my Mexican food, and walked off. But Hallie was like "Oh! Look at these napkins!" And she put them in her purse to take home.
00:17:27	Hallie	Guest	Can I just—I mean, I actually wasn't happy to get the napkins. I wasn't like "Ooh, score, napkins." I was upset that so many napkins had been brought, and certainly I didn't take them off the table until everyone at the table had used all the napkins they wanted to use.
00:17:41	John	Host	It was your impression, I presume, that the restaurant probably would have just thrown those napkins away rather than re-using them for another table.
00:17:48	Hallie	Guest	That's what I figured.
00:17:49	John	Host	Yeah, I think that's probably true. Ramsey, you also sent in a picture here of—it looks like a bottle of honey?
			<i>[One of the litigants laughs.]</i> In a plastic bag? What is this?
00:17:59	Ramsey	Guest	Well, I was making, you know, some bread with my son, and he finished off the honey. 'Cause this recipe required honey. And there was no more honey that I could visualize, in this container of honey.
00:18:11	Hallie	Guest	<i>[Sighs.]</i> Mm.
00:18:12	Ramsey	Guest	And she saw the drops that were in the bottom of the honey—
00:18:15	John	Host	Let the record show that when you said "There was no more honey I could visualize," Hallie sighed deeply.

[One of the litigants laughs.]

Clearly visualizing honey in that moment!

[One or both litigants laugh quietly.]

00:18:26 Ramsey Guest Yeah. Right. So then she took some vinegar and poured it into the honey. What's funny is there was a Ziploc bag, which she had cleaned in my house.

[Hallie laughs quietly.]

00:18:37 John Host Mm-hm?

00:18:38 Ramsey Guest And I didn't even realize that it had been drying somewhere in the house, and she... rescued it, and put the rescued honey container with the rescued honey droplets in there. And she said "Look at this! I'm gonna make some wonderful honey dressing out of it and take it home."

00:18:54 Hallie Guest I would have made it there, but it didn't fit with the meal concept we had. So I was like "I'll just take it home."

00:19:00 John Host My favorite part of this story is Ramsey discovering that you are clandestinely washing and drying Ziplocs in his house in a secret location.

00:19:09 Hallie Guest Actually, you know what? This is relevant. Because it wasn't secret. I put the bag on his drying rack. It's just that he didn't notice it. Because he doesn't notice, like, little ways that you can—

00:19:20 John Host We're all destroying the Earth!

00:19:23 Hallie Guest Yes! And that actually—I'm sure we'll get to it. But it feels like it's bigger than just, like, a specific compromise about how many jars I get, or how much recycling he has to participate in.

00:19:35 John Host He's not noticing how a drop of honey...

[Hallie chuckles.]

...can be rescued with some vinegar and a re-used plastic bag to become a delicious salad dressing!

00:19:44 Hallie Guest It was like a teaspoon of honey.

00:19:46 John Host The thing that this illustrates to me—and a teaspoon is a lot, I hear you, Hallie. This and the previous, and some of the other discussions you had, is not—this is not just a matter, Hallie, of you re-using things that you bring into your home, or, you know, that you purchase for your home. Or that are in your food and waste stream. But that you're actually constantly on the lookout!

[Hallie or Ramsey laughs.]

For stuff you can rescue from restaurants, and from your boyfriend's house, and from garbage anywhere. Ramsey, how does Hallie's constant vigilance for stuff to take home and wash out affect the nature of your relationship?

00:20:32 Ramsey Guest Well, that's a good point. Because so far she does it so seamlessly, and it's so part of her nature, that honestly these little things don't

take all that much time. And so it hasn't affected the quality of our relationship. Especially as she may do things clandestinely at home, when I'm not there. I'm fearful that, you know, over time, maybe these things will... you know, creep up and become an issue.

00:21:01 John Host How long have you known each other?

00:21:03 Ramsey Guest Ooh. Do we have to tell?

00:21:05 John Host Yes!

00:21:07 Ramsey Guest We—*[laughs]* uh, six months.

[Beat.]

00:21:11 John Host You've KNOWN each other six months?!

[Both litigants laugh quietly.]

00:21:13 Hallie Guest Yeah.

00:21:14 John Host Wooowie! When are you thinking you might get married?

[Beat.]

00:21:19 Ramsey Guest Um, we haven't determined that yet.

00:21:21 John Host Somewhere between two and three weeks from now?

00:21:24 Ramsey Guest *[Stifling laughter]* Well, it depends if we can find a used marriage license in the garbage somewhere that we can white out the names.

00:21:31 Hallie Guest *[Laughs.]* I would do that.

00:21:33 John Host You know what? You seem to love each other very much.

00:21:35 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Hallie:** Yeah.

Ramsey: Yes.

00:21:36 John Host Aside from this small issue of you going around taking pictures of things in her apartment that you don't like, Ramsey.

[John and Ramsey or Hallie laugh.]

Including drawers full of re-used rescued Ziploc bags, drawers full of rescued napkins, and so forth. There's one picture I just wanna—I really wanna just focus on this one before we move on. This photo has a single caption, Ramsey. It's from you: "Shower water reclamation system"?

[The litigants laugh.]

00:22:05 Ramsey Guest Well, when I went into her bathroom the first time, there was this huge pot. This is a pot you can cook pasta in for the family of 50 coming in for, you know, dinner.

00:22:16 John Host It's a lobster pot! You could put a—you could put ten lobsters in there, it looks like to me.

00:22:20 Hallie Guest Yeah, it came with a steamer in it. I found it on the ground outside.

00:22:23 Ramsey Guest Oh.

[John bursts out laughing, Ramsey stifles laughter.]

I didn't know that.

00:22:25 John Host I know more about Hallie than you do!

00:22:28 Ramsey Guest *[Laughs.]* Right! Well, it's only been six months. I get to learn something every day, still.

[Hallie or Ramsey chuckles.]

00:22:33 John Host Yeah. I would say so. There's nothing being re-used in this relationship right now.

[John and the litigants laugh.]

00:22:39 Ramsey Guest Right.

00:22:40 John Host It's all—it's all virgin plastic between the two of you.

[The litigants laugh.]

00:22:44 Ramsey Guest So I thought, because her cupboards were full of jars and plastic yogurt containers, that maybe she just didn't have room for this pot.

[Hallie laughs.]

And I'm like "Oh, that's kinda a good place to store a pot." But no. This is where she collects the cold water when she turns the shower on initially, and saves the cold water, and then I believe she uses it for her toilet or something like that.

00:23:08 Hallie Guest Well, I use it in a couple of different ways, but...

00:23:11 John Host I'd like to hear all of the ways!

00:23:13 Hallie Guest *[Laughing]* Okay.

00:23:14 John Host How do thee use your shower water? Let thee count the ways.

[Hallie laughs.]

And I'd like you to work it into your vows.

00:23:20 Hallie Guest *[Laughs.]* I do use it in the back of the—like, in the toilet tank. So it is one flush, basically.

00:23:26 John Host Uh-huh.

00:23:27 Hallie Guest And that is nothing. I know it's nothing in the scheme of things, but it's just hard to watch it go down the drain.

00:23:33 John Host The toilet tank holds a certain amount of water.

00:23:35 Hallie Guest Mm-hm. Right.

00:23:36 John Host And when you flush the toilet...

00:23:38 Hallie Guest Mm-hm.

00:23:39 John Host Right?

00:23:40 Hallie Guest Mm-hm.

00:23:41 John Host It fills up automatically—

00:23:42 Hallie Guest Mm-hm.

00:23:43 John Host —unless you have hacked the system.

00:23:44 Hallie Guest No, 'cause I pour the water in as it's flushing. And so once it reaches a line, it stops running. Do you know what I mean? So the water does come out, but then rather than refill it by the, you know, plumbing, it refills it by my pouring it in. So that's how I—

00:23:59 John Host So you won't go to the bathroom until you have a full flush's worth in the flush pot?

00:24:04 Hallie Guest No, it only accounts for one flush in a day.

00:24:09 John Host Look. Maybe you're letting some of this mellow for a while before you flush it.

[Hallie laughs.]

But then when the time comes to flush, you gotta grab your shower pot.

00:24:18 Hallie Guest Mm-hm.

00:24:19 John Host Take off the lid of the tank.

00:24:20 Hallie Guest Yeah.

00:24:22 John Host Flush...

00:24:23 Hallie Guest Yeah.

00:24:24 John Host And then simultaneously fill up the tank...

00:24:26 Hallie Guest Yeah.

00:24:27 John Host ...so that the tank will not automatically refill. Correct?

00:24:29 Hallie Guest Yeah, it's really easy. Yeah! It's really easy.

[John bursts out laughing. Hallie laughs.]

00:24:31 Ramsey Guest It sounds... well, I mean, to give her credit—! She, you know, only flushes usually once a day.

00:24:40 Hallie Guest That is not true! *[Laughs.]*

00:24:42 John Host If I were you, Hallie, I would stand by that! That's an accomplishment!

00:24:46 Hallie Guest Well... I think about what is pleasant for people that are sharing a space with me, so if I'm by myself, I might have different standards than when I have somebody over.

00:24:55 John Host I understand. Regardless of my ruling, I do think that Hallie, you could probably—if you get in there and look at the mechanism, you can disable the automatic refilling on that tank. So you don't have to—you understand what I'm saying? So you don't have to synchronize it each time. And you just fill it up when it's empty.

00:25:18 Hallie Guest Mm-hm.

00:25:19 John Host You know what I mean?

00:25:20 Hallie Guest Mm-hm!

00:25:21 John Host You don't have to race the—that's all.

00:25:23 Hallie Guest Mm-hm.

00:25:24 John Host That's all I'm saying.

What pleasure do you gain, if indeed it is pleasure—and in—what intrinsic pleasure? I mean, you acknowledge that while all of these are admirable and virtuous efforts, in the scheme of things your action as an individual only has so much impact on the globe as a whole, right?

- 00:25:43 Hallie Guest No impact.
- 00:25:45 John Host Okay. *[Stifles laughter.]* Good! Fair enough! We'll say no impact. But there is impact upon you, right? On your...
- 00:25:52 Hallie Guest Mm-hm.
- 00:25:53 John Host ...sense of well-being and happiness?
- 00:25:55 Hallie Guest It's not that I feel pleasure in things like that. It's more that I feel an absence of guilt. So I recognize that it gets... I take it too far. And I recognize that, in some ways. Although it doesn't—it feels easy for me. But I would never impose it on someone else. But the reason I do it, even though I guess I do believe it makes no difference to what's gonna happen to the world, is that it's my value! I think that living one's values should be intrinsic in and of itself, regardless of the outcome.
- 00:26:30 John Host I'm not sure you're taking this too far, I'm—I mean, we're about to review two of the scariest photos I've ever seen in my life, but hang on.
- [Hallie laughs.]*
- I am struck by the fact that you say "When I do it, I don't feel guilty." In combination with your saying "I know that it's more than I could impose upon someone else," presumably Ramsey. And my question to you is... do you have feelings of intrusive guilt? That these practices help assuage? And are you concerned that when you cohabit with Ramsey, if you make adjustments to his more wasteful lifestyle and set rules that are not quite as... comprehensive as yours, that you are going to feel intrusive guilt throughout the day?
- 00:27:24 Hallie Guest I don't feel that level of guilt or distress anymore. But when I was in grad school, I had a blog called Ecopathology.
- 00:27:32 John Host Okay!
- 00:27:33 Hallie Guest Which was a word that I invented, as far as I know, to describe like a neurotic level of pathology regarding caring too much about the waste, and trying to reduce one's footprint. I mean, I had a nightmare in grad school where somebody was reading a chapter of my dissertation and criticizing me about it, but what I remembered when I woke up is that he had done it on single-sided paper. Like, the paper wasn't printed on both sides, and I was offended that he had wasted paper, not about the content of the dream.
- 00:28:04 John Host And what were you in grad school for, and what is your profession now?
- 00:28:07 Hallie Guest I was getting a PhD in comparative human development, but now what I am is a psychologist.
- 00:28:13 John Host So, look. I know you're a psychologist... but I'm a fake Internet judge. I don't know if you've ever heard of this term called "obsessive-

compulsive disorder"?

00:28:25 Hallie Guest I've—I've heard of it, yeah.

00:28:27 John Host Have you heard of it? *[Laughs.]*

00:28:28 Hallie Guest Yeah, I've heard of it. *[Laughs.]*

00:28:29 John Host Do you understand why I'm raising it now?

00:28:31 Hallie Guest Of course! Of course, yeah. Ecopathology was a kind of, I would say, subclinical OCD. I actually think that the problem is that not enough people have ecopathology, and the tagline for my blog was "The only cure is contagion." Because as Ramsey said, if everyone lived this way, we'd be okay! Well, we probably wouldn't be, 'cause of other things.

00:28:52 John Host You know, you're transitioning in my admiration upwards from a very nice, conscientious person, to maybe one of the best new *Batman* villains of all time.

[The litigants laugh.]

"The only cure is contagion" is some real supervillain stuff.

[They laugh harder.]

00:29:13 Hallie Guest Thank you.

00:29:14 John Host But, you know, look. I don't wanna tell you your literal specialty. But there have been people in my life who have had various levels of OCD. So I have a little bit of familiarity with it. When I've written in the *New York Times* magazine, my little columnette there called *Judge John Hodgman*, I've stated once or twice that the difference between a collection and a hoard is a display case. Like, if you have—or, you know, not necessarily a case, but that it's out in the open and you're displaying it, and it's something that others can take pleasure in, that is in order, that has a beginning, middle, and end to it, and is not something that you're hiding from the world, to serve some deeper need. You know what I mean?

Now, I don't know that there is any way to store dozens and dozens of yogurt containers without it looking a little sketchy. No matter whether it is a collection or a hoard. Do you know what I mean? So the only thing that's left to me is to ask you, a professional psychologist...

00:30:16 Hallie Guest Mm-hm.

00:30:17 John Host You know. Is your ecopathology...

00:30:21 Hallie Guest Mm-hm.

00:30:22 John Host ...in your opinion, an expression of a healthy, positive, sort of self-nourishing interest? Or is it ritual that you are doing to quiet the terrible dream of the wasted paper?

00:30:36 Hallie Guest *[Laughs.]* Sometimes it feels good, and sometimes I feel compelled.

00:30:41 John Host Mm-hm.

00:30:42 Hallie Guest But I don't think that I would be wracked with guilt—I mean, I do a lot of damaging things just by existing in this country and having a certain level of economic privilege. Like, we're gonna get on a plane

three times, like, in the next year, at least. That's not good.

00:30:59	John	Host	Mm-hm.
00:31:00	Hallie	Guest	Like, that wipes out any containers I might save. And I still do it, because it's part of what makes life worth living.
00:31:08	John	Host	Now, but when you're on that plane, are you going to be able to relax, or are you gonna walk up and down the aisles collecting all the barf bags for later use?
			<i>[The litigants laugh.]</i>
00:31:16	Hallie	Guest	I would be able to relax.
00:31:17	John	Host	Yeah, okay. I believe you!
00:31:18	Hallie	Guest	And I think—yeah. And I think I'd be okay with a certain reduction in energy that I put into rescuing things. But also a lot of it, like Ramsey said, I really do without thinking about, and it doesn't bother me at all.
00:31:33	John	Host	It's just part of your routine at this point.
00:31:35	Hallie	Guest	I notice it more when other people <u>don't</u> do things that seem easy, than when I'm doing it, if that makes sense.
00:31:42	John	Host	Ramsey, you know, you initially stated as your reason for bringing the case to this court being that you're not sure you could live up to your beloved. That quickly changed to "I don't like the way she uses paper towels."
			<i>[Ramsey laughs.]</i>
			Which feels like the much truer thing. Does Hallie's behavior, and hobby, and habit, and ritual, concern you in some way? Is that part of the reason that we're talking today?
00:32:07	Ramsey	Guest	I don't see it as an—a real OCD, or a pathology. I think that she truly has a value of being thoughtful and careful about waste and our planet. It's the degree, the energy required, and the gain obtained, to me... isn't warranting, in my value system. Again, I could say that if everybody did it, we would be all better off. But it's just something that I can't attain.
00:32:36	Hallie	Guest	Some part of our dispute is getting missed. Ramsey <u>wants</u> there to be some systemic governmental policy that makes real change. And of course I would want that, too. But we don't have that. So in the absence of that, I still think there's a place for individuals to care. Not necessarily because, like, if it doesn't make a difference—it has to make a difference to be worth it, but because it shows a—the value of caring. And Ramsey participates in other systems that are problematic and can only be sort of, at this point, grappled with at an individual level. And he participates as an individual, rather than wait for there to be broad systemic change.
			He votes, even though the process is problematic. As we may all be feeling. But he votes as an individual. And so why not extend what he's already doing in other areas to do a little more as an individual in an absence of a policy that <u>would</u> lead to more change? I would agree with that.

00:33:37 John Host Alright. But how do you explain this, Hallie? *[Laughs quietly.]* Ramsey sent in two of the most terrifying photos I've ever seen. One is—it's a jar of a white powdered substance that Ramsey thinks might be sugar.

[The litigants laugh.]

The jar itself is of some... off-brand tahini that I've never seen in my life. Does not look like anything I've ever seen in any of the grocery stores. And I go to grocery stores a lot! Of all kinds, stripes, sizes. Aisles straight, aisles crooked, whatever they are. This is Asmar's Tahineh. And what's more frightening to me is that this—not only does this jar of strange-branded tahina full of reclaimed white powder...

[John and the litigants laugh.]

...look intrinsically mysterious, but it looks like it has been buried beneath the Earth for 35 years.

[Ramsey laughs.]

So what is the powder? And what is—how old is this jar?!

00:34:34 Hallie Guest It probably looks old because it has been washed a bunch of times.

00:34:38 John Host Yes.

00:34:39 Hallie Guest I might have used it for different things over the years. But it's sugar. As he knows very well, because he goes into it every morning with his tea.

00:34:47 John Host And then there's another jar, which also looks scary. This jar has been stripped of its label; only a bare amount is left. It's full of a black, crumbly substance that looks like grave dirt.

[Hallie laughs.]

And it does feel like this was taken out of the fruit cellar of the cabin in *The Evil Dead*.

[Hallie laughs.]

What is this?

00:35:10 Hallie Guest That's Early Grey tea.

[John snorts.]

And you can tell if you smell it. But he does—he has a good point. And I would be more mindful of labeling jars that I know what they are, but I wouldn't—I shouldn't assume—I mean, he didn't even get to my spice cabinet, but nothing in there matches the label. I would label jars for him. It's Earl Grey, you can smell it. But yeah, I would label jars for him.

00:35:32 Jesse Host I like to imagine, Hallie, that you're running like a children's science museum, and like—*[laughs]* you just like, turn out all the lights, and have people smell their way to the exits.

[Jesse and Hallie laugh.]

00:35:48 Ramsey Guest Her place is scratch-and-sniff.

[Hallie laughs.]

00:35:50 John Host Ramsey, before I go to my verdict, there are a number of vectors by which one could approach a critique of Hallie's... habits and practices. Particularly if you are going to start living with this person. Now, one of them might be "I don't know that I can live up to her ideals." And you've offered that one. Another one is "Some of the stuff she does seems a little over-the-top," with the paper towels and the Ziplocs and so forth. You've offered that one.

You do not seem concerned about her mental hygiene, and you know, I'll leave that to you, Hallie. You're the psychologist; heal thyself. Diagnose thyself. But you know, I just felt the need to bring it up to let you both respond to that. To make sure that that wasn't part of the discussion.

And then fourth of all, there's just an aesthetic issue. Like, these jars are scary. And I don't want them in my house. You've really moved between all of these vectors, Ramsey, and I'm not sure which one is truly the crux. So I think it might become clear when I ask you, very specifically, Ramsey: If I were to rule in your favor, very specifically, what would you like me to order happen in the home that you will eventually share?

00:37:05 Ramsey Guest Well, you know, firstly, as you alluded to, I don't want anything to look junky. And if there is reclaimed materials, it could be hidden away a little bit. Second, I don't want it to impact our quality of life and our ability to—"Oh, we need a pot and pan set, but we can't fit it into our place because we have a bunch of containers that we have to put instead." So I don't wanna inhibit our quality of life, and our ability to have a normal, functioning household by... you know, clutter.

00:37:42 John Host And that's fair, because you never know when a lobster pot is gonna come in off the street!

[Hallie chuckles.]

00:37:47 Ramsey Guest Right.

00:37:48 Hallie Guest That's right. *[Laughs.]*

00:37:49 Ramsey Guest And—you know, and again, I understand, "Okay, I can save a little bit of energy here." But in my mindset, I look at the energy we expend on a, you know, yearly basis in driving cars and whatever it is. You know, some sort of balance. I wouldn't feel proud of myself to save a napkin when I'm going to go fly in a plane the next day. That doesn't make sense to me. So I think to not inhibit our quality of life for a value which... may not make a difference.

00:38:25 John Host Okay. You're both employed? You have—what is your profession, Ramsey?

00:38:29 Ramsey Guest I'm a surgeon.

00:38:30 John Host You're a surgeon! Okay. It sounds as though you might be able to buy or rent in Philadelphia a home of some size, or an apartment of

some size?

00:38:37 Ramsey Guest Sure.

00:38:38 John Host One that might be able to accommodate the anticipated quantities of yogurt containers and a Ziploc drying rack?

[Hallie stifles laughter.]

00:38:44 Ramsey Guest Or maybe one with a bunker!

00:38:46 John Host *[Laughs.]* I have two questions for you, Hallie. Obviously, one: How would you have me order if I were to rule in your favor? But also, when you do decide to cohabit and you move in together into this new place, I presume you're gonna wanna bring all of your existing collected... jars of rainwater and grave dirt and—

[John and one or both litigants laugh.]

—empty canisters and bags with you, right? It's part of your dowry?

00:39:15 Hallie Guest *[Bursts out laughing.]* I'm willing to compromise on that. When I moved into the place I live now, I got rid of like 30 jars. And I still have so many jars! *[Laughs.]* And I recently got rid of a whole, like, collection of plastic utensils. So I'm willing to compromise, I do not need to bring everything.

00:39:32 John Host Okay!

00:39:33 Hallie Guest I think that I want Ramsey to live in the system we have, not the system he wishes we had. So whatever that means to him. It does not have to look like how it means to me. But I want at least a cabinet for my jars, and I want a cabinet for my containers, and I won't go beyond the cabinet.

And he's right. My place does not look hoard-y. Everything is behind cabinets, and it doesn't like, spill out into common spaces. It looks nice. That's not a problem, keeping it that way.

And I'd want us to recycle, even if—as he believes, maybe correctly—it's all a scam.

00:40:10 John Host Gotcha. Alright! Is that true that you believe recycling is a scam, Ramsey?

00:40:15 Ramsey Guest I do, but I would admit that it's possible that's what I want to believe to save myself the energy from recycling.

00:40:20 John Host *[Stifles laughter.]* Okay, fair enough.

I think I've heard everything I need to in order to make my decision. I shall dive into the dumpster that is my chambers, and I'll be back in a moment with my verdict.

00:40:28 Sound Effect Sound Effect *[As Jesse speaks below: Door opens, chairs scrape, footsteps.]*

00:40:29 Jesse Host Please rise as Judge John Hodgman exits the courtroom.

00:40:33 Sound Effect Sound Effect *[Door shuts.]*

00:40:34 Jesse Host Ramsey, how are you feeling about your chances?

00:40:35 Ramsey Guest Oh, I feel pretty good! I'm very—I'm very happy with the evidence that I submitted.

00:40:40	Jesse	Host	Hallie, how are you feeling about your chances?
00:40:42	Hallie	Guest	I mean, I—I would never expect Ramsey to live like me. So I wasn't even asking for that. I would <u>certainly</u> know I would lose if I was. But... oh, who knows? He does a good job of giving like, hybrid verdicts where he somehow manages to make both people happy.
00:40:58	Jesse	Host	We'll see what the judge has to say about all this when we come back in just a second on the <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> podcast.
00:41:03	Sound Effect	Transition	<i>[Three gavel bangs.]</i>
00:41:04	Promo	Clip	Music: Classical orchestral music.
John Hodgman: Hey, everyone! It's I, John Hodgman of the <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> podcast.			
Elliott Kalan: And I, Elliott Kalan of the <i>Flop House</i> podcast.			
John: And we've made a whole new podcast! A 12-episode special miniseries called <i>I, Podius</i> . In which we recap, discuss, and explore the very famous 1976 BBC miniseries about Ancient Rome called <i>I, Claudius</i> ! We've got incredible guests such as Gillian Jacobs, Paul F. Tompkins, as well as star of <i>I, Claudius</i> Sir Patrick Stewart! And his son! Non-Sir Daniel Stewart.			
Elliott: Don't worry, Dan, you'll get there someday.			
John: <i>I, Podius</i> 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.			
<i>[Music fades out.]</i>			
00:41:50	Sound Effect	Transition	<i>[Three gavel bangs.]</i>
00:41:51	Jesse	Promo	We're taking a quick break from the courtroom because we've got some cool stuff going on! Not least of which is that next week is the start of the 2020 MaxFunDrive.
00:42:04	John	Promo	<i>[As a dramatic announcer echo]</i> MaxFunDrive!
00:42:05	Jesse	Promo	<i>[Dramatic announcer echo]</i> MaxFunDrive! Chka ch-chwooo!
<i>[Back to regular voices.]</i>			
00:42:07	John	Promo	It's the time of year when if you are able to be generous and to become a member or upgrade your membership, it really helps us out the most.
00:42:13	Jesse	Promo	It's gonna be really cool. We got all kinds of cool stuff planned. There's a big meet-up day. There's a big live show on the 27th where I will be performing a song with— <i>[laughs]</i> .
00:42:26	John	Promo	Yes!
00:42:27	Jesse	Promo	With Renee from Can I Pet Your Dog? She and I are doing a duet from <i>Little Shop of Horrors</i> . This is part of Operation Jesse Sings, a thing where I embarrass myself in public by singing.
00:42:39	John	Promo	You do a really good job! You've been singing in the live shows, and killing it! And you have a wonderful voice. And most of all, bravery.
00:42:48	Jesse	Promo	Yes. <i>[Laughs.]</i>

00:42:50	John	Promo	That's 98.9% of what showpersonship is: Bravery.
00:42:54	Jesse	Promo	That'll be on the 27th, in the late afternoon Pacific time, early evening East Coast time, streaming at MaximumFun.org . But most importantly is just remember all of these shows, including this one, are supported by Maximum Fun members! And that's the time to become a member.
			I have some really cool guests on Bullseye , my arts and culture interview show, this week that I think <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> listeners will like to listen to. One of them is the <u>legendary</u> actress Annette Bening.
00:43:24	John	Promo	Oh, wow.
00:43:25	Jesse	Promo	Who's in a wonderful new movie, and of course is just a general legend. She and I talked about all kinds of things. <u>Plus</u> , also this week on <i>Bullseye</i> : Will Forte. And I know what you're thinking, John! Do I spend roughly half of the interview just talking about <i>MacGruber</i> ? Yes, the answer is yes. It's almost all <i>MacGruber</i> stuff. We—sure, we touch on his time on <i>Saturday Night Live</i> . <i>[Laughs.]</i> We touch on his new—his wonderful new film, which is called <i>Extra Ordinary</i> . <i>[Laughing]</i> But mostly it's just <i>MacGruber</i> talk.
00:43:57	John	Promo	<i>Medallion Status</i> is my latest book of true stories from secret rooms. Half Hollywood stories from me, your Judge John Hodgman. That's available wherever books are sold. Prior to that I wrote a book called <i>Vacationland</i> , Jesse Thorn. Did you know that?
00:44:09	Jesse	Promo	Yeah, I've read both of these books! They're great books.
00:44:12	John	Promo	In that book I tell a story about going to a college in the American South, the very North of the American South, and doing a speaking engagement there. And that's where I met Daddy Pitchfork and Pitchfork Junior, the father and son indie rock fanatics. The professor who invited me to do that is a great guy named Professor Benjamin Click. He is a professor of Mark Twain-ology. And he and I are gonna do an event together—I haven't seen him since then—at the Mark Twain House in West Hartford, Connecticut. Uh, that's a state in New England. It really is, Jesse, I didn't—I didn't just make that up. I know I forget sometimes.

[Jesse laughs.]

And that's on April 4th. And if you've never been to the Mark Twain House, it's where Mark Twain lived! And there's this whole beautiful museum attached to it. And he and I are going to be on stage chatting with each other and taking your questions. It'll be a little *Vacationland* reunion. If you're in the New England area, or can get there, just Google "Mark Twain House, Hartford" and you'll find their website and the event details right there! It would be fun to see you! I've not been doing a lot of live events lately—*[stage whisper]* 'cause I've been working on other projects that I'll tell you about at another time.

[Regular voice] Speaking of the MaxFunDrive, Jesse Thorn—this is gonna be a little bit of a time warp for people, but... I happened to record a very special MaxFun members-only episode of a certain podcast that I like to call *Jordan, Jesse, Go!* And in the midst of it, for

some reason, I decided to create a subreddit dedicated to the sport of extinct hockey. The Hartford Whalers, the Quebec Nordics, the Atlanta Flames. All those great hockey teams that went nowhere but left behind these beautiful logos that I like. It's the only sport that I enjoy.

It's called Extinct-underscore-Hockey—or I should say r/extinct-underscore-hockey.

It was just a couple days ago that I made it. And it—things are popping off over there on that subreddit, Jesse.

[Jesse laughs.]

We're having a great time.

00:46:01	Jesse	Promo	Lot of good—I got in on some conversation about the San Francisco Spiders, who played in the Cow Palace when I was a teenager in San Francisco. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:46:08	John	Promo	There you go! It's—look, extinct hockey brings back memories you didn't even know you had! We got 3—we have 320 members now! So... it's pretty good!
00:46:17	Jesse	Promo	<i>[Still laughing]</i> Let's get back to the courtroom.
00:46:19	Sound Effect	Transition	<i>[Three gavel bangs.]</i>
00:46:20	Jesse	Host	Welcome back to the <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> podcast.
00:46:22	Sound Effect	Sound Effect	<i>[As Jesse speaks below: Door opens, chairs scrape on the floor, footsteps.]</i>
00:46:23	Jesse	Host	Please rise as Judge John Hodgman re-enters the courtroom and presents his verdict.
00:46:27	Sound Effect	Sound Effect	<i>[Door shuts.]</i>
00:46:28	John	Host	"An unconditional moral obligation which is binding in all circumstances, and is not dependent on a person's inclination or purpose." That's the categorical imperative. Immanuel Kant, nineteen—sevent— <i>[laughs]</i> . "19." 1985! <i>[Laughs.]</i> No, 1785. <i>Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals.</i>

I was just looking that up right now, so obviously I stumbled over the words a little bit, but you get the point. It is what Hallie is pointing towards. Acting your life, as much as possible, in a sense of moral purpose that you would like to see reflected throughout all of the known universe!

Obviously we're not going to fix this planet, as Elizabeth Warren has pointed out, by not using plastic straws. That is a very, very small gesture towards what we hope might be a universal gesture to avoid using plastics and non-renewable disposables as a whole, as a society, as an Earth. And that's going to rely as much—if not much, much more—upon restructuring the industries that cause this massive waste, and through governmental regulation and policy, as well as individual responsibility and sustainability.

And obviously I agree with Hallie on that point. I've heard a lot of guys in my life—and a funny thing, they happened to all be guys—

say "I don't—*[laughs]* I don't recycle these cans and bottles because recycling is a scam. They take it all to the same garbage place." And I think that that's true, in certain communities.

And yet, I don't know for sure. So I'm going to act in a Kantian way, and act in the way that is consistent with the way I hope the universe will act. A, that we are not going to deceive our people, *[stifles laughter]* and say that it's being recycled when it's just being thrown in the same landfill. B, to advocate for that. And C, to, you know, separate out the bottles and the cans! And the paper and stuff!

Hallie, I appreciate your Kantian jam in this whole discussion. I do not appreciate your dancing around the fact that this is fun for you!

[John and Hallie laugh quietly.]

It's fun to have a purpose that makes you feel good. To come up with systems that reduce waste. You came up with the lobster pot shower water re-flush system. That's ingenuity! Which I think would only be made more fun by getting into that toilet tank and hacking it so that it doesn't refill automatically! Then you control it.

00:49:25 John Host

I'm glad of your hobby. There is a correction that I would make, Hallie. You paint wonderful word pictures as you describe your hobby, practice, and ritual. You make it sound great.

[The litigants laugh quietly.]

You also paint pretty good smell pictures. When you told me "You could just unscrew that weird-looking jar of black, crumbly grave Earth, and you would know—*[stifles laughter]* that's Earl Grey tea." But you can't un-paint—*[laughs]* the scary pictures that I saw! The picture pictures! Not word pictures, not smell pictures! Scary! Scary-looking!

[The litigants laugh.]

I think there is a limit to how aesthetically pleasing you can make a ten-tall stack of yogurt containers look. They have to be behind closed doors. There is no reason that you cannot—just as you might reclaim a jelly jar and make it into a wonderful and frankly shatter-resistant, you know, rocks glass for drinking ice water or your favorite beverage—there's no reason you can't take an extra moment to make your virtue also aesthetically pleasing. That means doing a little work and scraping off the rest of that label. Maybe putting on another label. Or just making it look less scary! Okay, Hallie?

00:50:54 Hallie Guest

Sure! Yeah!

00:50:55 John Host

Now. You two are in a very young relationship. I was frankly shocked—

[Ramsey laughs.]

—to hear that you had gotten engaged after knowing each other six months. That's none of my business. That's not what brings you here.

[One or both litigants laugh quietly.]

If it is your intent to get married, and then to live together, I might counsel a—maybe a slightly longer engagement period than your dating period.

[The litigants laugh.]

So you can hash all of this stuff out a little bit more. But when—if and when, and I'm banking on when—you commit to buying a place together, I would say that Hallie, you've already demonstrated a spirit of compromise. You say you cannot force Ramsey to live his life the way you do. Nor can Ramsey force you to live your life the way he does, by ignoring recycling. You have to kind of force each other to live about halfway the way the other one does.

I cannot rule against Hallie's practices and hobby. It is obviously something she gives thought to. And whether she wants to admit it or not, takes pleasure from. It's a good moral impulse, to reduce waste.

I cannot force Ramsey to realign his thinking to a more Kantian universalist pose. I think you've given him food for thought, Hallie. And as your relationship grows and deepens and matures—say, maybe after another... nine days from now!

[The litigants laugh.]

When you've really been together for a long time... Ramsey might start thinking that way. Naturally.

00:52:39 John Host

So ultimately, how do I rule? Well, the only thing I can really rule is on actual behavior. And therefore I am forced to rule in Ramsey's favor. And I'm not gonna rule on a necessary reduction of the amount of time, energy, and attention you spend to this. But rather a consideration that you'll now be sharing your passion, and all your bags and containers and plastic forks, with another human being. Therefore I think it is important that you start your new life together cohabitating, first of all, with a clean slate. I think it's time to get rid of that terrifying tahini jar.

[The litigants laugh quietly.]

I mean, well, keep the tahini jar 'cause it's in use right now for sugar. But the empty stuff has to be—it has done its work so far in your life. Some of it goes back a long time! It is time to repurpose that out of your life. When you enter the home, I would order you to start fresh. Because you are starting fresh together. You're gonna have enough of your own truly psychic garbage that you will both be bringing to this relationship.

[The litigants laughs.]

Try to minimize the physical garbage that you're bringing into it. That said, I order you to continue with your project, with consideration that it be aesthetically un-scary. Lobster pot in the shower—that's hard. It's hard to make that not—un-scary. But I'll allow it, if you hack that toilet, and perfect the system.

[The litigants laugh.]

I hope, and think you should, if it's possible, find a place in Philadelphia that has, like, a pantry? I mean, I know space is at a premium in the city. But it might have a pantry or a—kind of a larger closet? That can just, like, be your hobby area? Like, where you can have a dedicated drying rack for Ziploc bags.

[Hallie laughs.]

00:54:47 John Host Dedicated storage for all that stuff. That should be something that you maybe want to look at incorporating into your house hunt, depending on what you're looking for. Somewhere you can really just go and wash your containers out.

[Hallie laughs.]

I am delighted that you take pleasure from reducing waste. It makes me think and be more mindful, and will make Ramsey think and be more mindful of his waste habits. And while I technically find in his favor, I wish you the very best of luck. And no, I will not marry you, I don't do that for people.

This is the sound of a gavel.

00:55:19 Sound Effect Sound Effect *[A toilet flushing.]*

00:55:23 John Host Judge John Hodgman rules; that is all.

00:55:25 Sound Effect Sound Effect *[As Jesse speaks below: Door opens, chairs scrape on the floor, footsteps.]*

00:55:26 Jesse Host Please rise as Judge John Hodgman exits the courtroom.

00:55:29 Sound Effect Sound Effect *[Door shuts.]*

00:55:30 Jesse Host Hallie, was that the baby-splitting that you hoped it would be?

00:55:33 Hallie Guest Um, I'm still kind of reeling from all of my containers having to be thrown away. And I just need to clarify, because it sounded at first like he was saying I have to throw them away now. But then I think he was saying only when you bring them—don't bring them into a new place.

00:55:48 Sound Effect Sound Effect *[Door opens and shuts.]*

00:55:49 John Host Don't bring them into a new place.

00:55:51 Hallie Guest Yeah, I'm reeling from it. I'm like, feeling something. The rest of it was fine. I have to like, process the containers thing.

00:55:58 John Host If you're feeling anxiety, I encourage you to explore that—

[Ramsey and/or Hallie laughs.]

—before you move in with another person.

00:56:04 Hallie Guest *[Laughs.]* Yeah, no, it's no problem when we move in together. And I actually feel like in some ways, I didn't lose the case, because the judge came in talking about Kant, and it fits with the underlying thing that I care more about, which is living one's values.

00:56:18 Jesse Host *[Stifling laughter]* Ramsey, how do you feel about marrying someone

whose values you're about to violate?

[The litigants laugh.]

00:56:26 Ramsey Guest I don't want you to feel beat up upon by the evidence that I had submitted.

[Hallie laughs.]

Because as you said, it's kind of about the values, not about your really dirty containers which I can't stand and I would be really upset if they were in my house. Um, but—

00:56:41 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Hallie:** They're not dirty!

John: Now we're getting somewhere! Why didn't you lead with that?!

[The litigants and John laugh.]

00:56:48 Ramsey Guest But yeah. I'm not nervous or anything about our engagement and about you.

00:56:52 Hallie Guest The containers are clean. However, it is actually useful to hear that they look scary, 'cause I had no idea.

00:56:57 John Host That's part of the joy of being married to another person.

[The litigants laugh.]

00:57:00 Hallie Guest Yeah.

00:57:01 John Host They literally call you on your garbage.

[The litigants laugh.]

00:57:04 Jesse Host Well, Hallie, Ramsey, thanks for joining us on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

00:57:08 Sound Effect Transition *[Three gavel bangs.]*

00:57:09 Jesse Host Another *Judge John Hodgman* case in the books. We've got Swift Justice coming up in just a second, but first our thanks to Derek Warnken for naming this week's episode. If you wanna name a future episode, be sure to like *Judge John Hodgman* [on Facebook](#).

You can follow us on Twitter at [@JesseThorn](#) and at [@hodgman](#). You can hashtag your *Judge John Hodgman* Tweets [#JJHo](#), and chat about this week's episode and every *Judge John Hodgman* episode on Reddit at [MaximumFun.Reddit.com](#). You can see the evidence, including the cat who lives under the sink, at [@judgejohnhodgman](#) on Instagram; follow us there. You can also find it on this episode page at [MaximumFun.org](#).

This week's episode recorded by Thomas Plummer at Forge Recording in Oreland, Pennsylvania. Our editor is Jesus Ambrosio. Our producer is Jennifer Marmor.

Now! Swift Justice, where we answer your small disputes with quick judgment. Here is something from Kat. Are you ready, John?

00:58:08 John Host I am ready.

00:58:10	Jesse	Host	<i>[Stifling laughter]</i> "Is it a terrible, terrible idea for my boyfriend to use dish soap as body wash?"
00:58:16	John	Host	Just a point of clarification: Did Kat say a "terrible" idea, or a "terrible, terrible" idea?
00:58:21	Jesse	Host	<i>[Stifling laughter]</i> Kat said two "terrible"s, and then said "He claims all soap is the same."
00:58:27	John	Host	Uh, I would say that's <u>three</u> "terrible"s. <i>[Laughs.]</i> And I know that because I know that dish soap is very astringent. It is harsh! And I know that because I used to clean my eyeglasses with Dawn, and it stripped off the non-reflective coating on the glasses that I needed for my on-camera work, and I had to buy a whole new ones. It took off an invisible layer of coating! It's gonna hurt your skin, dude! Don't do it!
00:59:00	Jesse	Host	Okay, that's it for this week's episode. Submit your cases at MaximumFun.org/jjho or email hodgman@maximumfun.org . Remember, no case is too small. We'll talk to you next time on the <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> podcast.
00:59:13	Sound Effect	Transition	<i>[Three gavel bangs.]</i>
00:59:14	Music	Transition	A cheerful guitar chord.
00:59:15	Speaker 1	Guest	MaximumFun.org .
00:59:17	Speaker 2	Guest	Comedy and culture.
00:59:18	Speaker 3	Guest	Artist owned—
00:59:19	Speaker 4	Guest	—audience supported.