

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

00:00:02 Jesse Thorn Host Welcome to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. I'm Bailiff Jesse Thorn. We're in chambers this week, clearing the docket. And with me is real judge... and fake doctor, Judge John Hodgman.

00:00:15 John Hodgman Host That's true; I'm not allowed to practice fake medicine anymore. They figured out I was fake.

[Jesse laughs.]

Uh, here's—hey! By the way, here's to all of the real doctors out there. And nurses. And health professionals.

00:00:27 Jesse Host Yeah.

00:00:28 John Host Who are—and all the helpers who are helping, and all the grocery workers and delivery people, and everyone who's gotta be out there in the world, rather than sealed hermetically in your fake Internet court chambers like me. I'm here in Brooklyn, New York, as always, where... *[chuckles]* today, Jesse, it started with sun, turned into—I don't wanna use the word "apocalyptic." Getting tossed around a lot these days.

[Jesse laughs quietly, John stifles laughter.]

But very heavy rain and lightning storm. Then beautiful sunshine again. Then another heavy rain and lightning storm. And now it is one of the most gorgeous spring days I've ever peered out at through the curtains during a global lockdown. And you're at home, right?

00:01:09 Jesse Host Yeah, I'm—I'm in Chez Thorn.

00:01:12 John Host Yeah.

00:01:13 Jesse Host As it is known to no one.

00:01:15 John Host *[Chuckling]* Mm-hm.

00:01:16 Jesse Host I spent my morning—it's been actually—we have not yet had spring here in Los Angeles.

00:01:22 John Host Right.

00:01:23 Jesse Host But it just seems like it's coming over the mountain right now.

00:01:27 John Host Yeah.

00:01:28 Jesse Host So we have a very beautiful day today. It'll get hot later this week, but we have a beautiful day today, and I took my dog for a—my dog Sissy for a very long walk, uh, so that I wouldn't have a panic attack!

[Both laugh.]

00:01:41 John Host That's the thing about—you—there was a lot of snow up in Maine, I heard from my neighbors, in April. Here it's been cold and gloomy. And today was just such—like, it—it's unnerving to watch the ecosystem go through the mood swings that I am going through. Do you know? And—

[Both laugh.]

And yet it feels comforting! Like, even the atmosphere is going like

"Yeah, I don't know what to do either these days. Sometime—you know? Like, ugh. It's like, I'm lucky I woke up today." Said the atmosphere. *[Stiffles laughter.]* "Have some lightning."

00:02:12	Jesse	Host	My friend Dan Kennedy—writer and, uh, Moth podcaster Dan Kennedy—
00:02:17	John	Host	Yeah!
00:02:18	Jesse	Host	—said something the other day that I have taken to heart. Which is an old AA saying, aphorism—or at least 12-step aphorism.
00:02:27	John	Host	Right.
00:02:28	Jesse	Host	Which is "Move a muscle, change a feeling." So when I'm having bad feelings, which I have had many times—
00:02:35	John	Host	Sure.
00:02:36	Jesse	Host	—I am trying to turn those into physical actions, so I can release some of that juice. And it is—it helps a lot! It helps a lot.
00:02:44	John	Host	And just one muscle will do it, huh? Just move one muscle?
00:02:47	Jesse	Host	<i>[Laughs.]</i> Yeah. I mean basically, yeah! Just—the idea—it's about isolation, right?
00:02:52	John	Host	Mm-hm.
00:02:53	Jesse	Host	You—any physical trainer will tell this. So I'm working on my latissimus dorsi right now.
00:02:57	John	Host	<i>[Laughs.]</i> Alright. Yeah. What's that muscle in—in real human talk, Jesse? Remember, I'm a <u>fake</u> doctor.
00:03:04	Jesse	Host	The lat.
00:03:05	John	Host	The lat.
00:03:06	Jesse	Host	That's the lat.
00:03:07	John	Host	Yeah.
			I'm working on an involuntary muscle. I'm working on 100% 24/7 deployment of the twitch above my right eye. That's the one I'm working on.
00:03:14	Jesse	Host	<i>[Laughing]</i> Yeah! I been twitching, too!
00:03:18	John	Host	Yeah. Lot of—lot of twitches.
00:03:19	Jesse	Host	Is this what being a Twitch streamer is?
00:03:22	John	Host	That's exactly what it is. No, we're podcasters!
00:03:24	Jesse	Host	Yeah.
00:03:25	John	Host	And this podcast is called <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> . And the good news is, first of all, my jeans still fit.
00:03:32	Jesse	Host	<i>[Inaudible.]</i>
00:03:33	John	Host	Second of all, I managed to get a couple of diet Cokes. From the world. Third of all, we're here back with you to dispense some Internet justice, clearing the docket! Why don't we get started?
00:03:44	Jesse	Host	Here's something from Emilia about grocery delivery services.
00:03:49	Clip	Clip	Emilia: Hi, Judge! So, my mom has started ordering groceries to be delivered to her house due to COVID-19. She is older and has pre-

existing conditions, so it's understandable that she would be scared to go grocery shopping.

On the other hand, my Aunt Diane and I have been talking, and it just sort of feels elitist to have your groceries delivered to you. So in that case, should people who don't have pre-existing conditions be switching to grocery delivery? Or should they be going to the grocery store and possibly risk spreading their germs around?

Let me know. Thank you, and wishing you all the best. Emilia.

00:04:25 John Host This is the horns of a dilemma! We're stuck on the horns of the dilemma. And boy, I hope someone Purell'ed those horns. 'Cause I...

[Jesse laughs.]

Jesse, what is your foraging system these days? We'll set—let's set aside the ethics of this question. And instead just—I'm just curious. What's your foraging situation these days?

00:04:48 Jesse Host I'm doing all the grocery shopping for my family.

00:04:51 John Host Wow.

00:04:52 Jesse Host Because I'm the biggest! And the best able to weather the roving gangs.

[Both laugh.]

You know, the public health advice has been, if possible, to shop every two weeks. I think with my family of five, I—that's—that is not very manageable, especially for fresh food.

00:05:10 John Host Right.

00:05:11 Jesse Host So what I have been doing is going to the Pasadena farmers market once a week.

00:05:17 John Host Yep.

00:05:18 Jesse Host That's my Saturday morning activity. The line takes a while, because it is very spaced, and they are having limited interactions within the market itself. But, you know, I cover up and bring my hand sanitizer, and take care of business, fill a couple big bags with fresh food.

00:05:36 John Host Yeah.

00:05:37 Jesse Host And then I have been trying to do the regular grocery store as infrequently as possible. So I would say, um, somewhere between—somewhere around every other week, I'm going to the regular grocery store. And then to the extent that I have needed—if we plan badly and run out of milk or some other child necessity that is like a basic—

00:06:00 John Host Right.

00:06:01 Jesse Host —there is a convenience store near my house, and there is also a—what they call a mother's nutrition center.

00:06:08 John Host Oh!

00:06:09 Jesse Host Which is—sells groceries that are convenient for people who have food vouchers, but also sells groceries to the public. And they have a really good kind of, um, "they bring you the food" system.

00:06:22 John Host Mm-hm.

00:06:23 Jesse Host For—just for basics. You know?

00:06:24 John Host Yeah.

00:06:25 Jesse Host Just breakfast cereal, milk, bread, things like that. So I've gone there once or twice to fill in in an emergency. But, um, yeah. The general answer is once a week at the farmers market, every other week at the grocery store, and then I've probably been to a convenience store or the mother's nutrition center three times in total.

00:06:48 John Host Yeah. I mean, I think the general message from the court of *Judge John Hodgman* is... do the best you can. We're—we're all—

[Both laugh.]

You know. We're all under an extreme amount of... of mental load, if we're lucky enough to be under zero viral load so far. But of course what you pointed out, Jesse, in jest, is like—you know, your being the largest one so you can hold your own against the roving, you know, *Mad Max* gangs—there is a feeling, right, of... of apocalypse, you know? To empty streets? In—whether it's in Los Angeles or in New York, and stay-at-home orders, it's very hard to take in without making reference to... the only frame of reference with have to this sort of thing, which is popular culture!

And the problem with popular culture is—and specifically zombie popular culture—it has trained us all to think of ourselves as the heroes of the story, A. B, as the uninfected. Who C, must avoid the infected—the zombies—at all costs! And that means barricading yourself in your house, or dressing up like a samurai, or doing what it takes. Get—bugging out and getting outta town, or doing what it takes to protect yourself and your family.

But the situation here isn't that we are all protecting ourselves from roving gangs of zombies. We are the gang of zombies! We don't know how this thing works! And lots and lots of people have it who don't show any symptoms, who may never show any symptoms. And they have to watch, and we have to watch, where we rove. That's what this is all about. That's what all the staying at home is all about. We got—we can't be roving around like packs of zombies, biting people! Our job is to not zombie-bite other people. Not just to not get bit.

Now, I think what you're doing sounds very super responsible, Jesse. And you're covering up, and you're minimizing contact, 'cause that's how this thing spreads. I think what your mom, Emilia, is doing, is absolutely appropriate. You know, I shout-out to all of the volunteers and services, and workers! Who are bringing groceries to people who are immunocompromised, or have pre-existing conditions, or are simply elderly, who simply can't—you know, can't afford, literally, to go out shopping. That's absolutely right.

00:09:16 John Host And as far as you as an individual, as an asymptomatic person who doesn't necessarily have a pre-existing condition, you know, I—I think that the job here is to lessen the load. On hospitals, on essential workers, on the people you're living with. That is to say, make sure you shower and do your dishes, and go easy on

confusing dad jokes. Don't ask for the Kung Pao chicken all the time, like—

[Jesse laughs quietly.]

—go—take it—reduce the mental load. As the French comic artist Emma puts it.

And I think that going out to the farmers market or to the grocery store, and following the guidelines that they are asking of you—because it's in their interest to keep everyone healthy, especially their workers—that's helping in the way you're asking to be helped. Right? Because that allows the delivery people, who are essential workers, to make more and frequent deliveries to the people who cannot afford to go out into this world.

But when you go out, go out responsibly. Cover up. Right? Wash your hands, put on your face mask, because you don't know what you might be coughing or spreading around. Keep your distance—really keep your distance. Go easy on the jogging. I mean, I know everyone needs to have fitness in the world, but you know... like, walking through Prospect Park, there—the—it's not just joggers, it's also bikers and inline skaters and walkers, and everybody kinda forgets, when you're in a beautiful spring park, that, you know, you can't really be going over and huffing and puffing near people. You have to get out of the way.

And then do the best you can to get what you want! And the other thing I would just advise... under these circumstances specifically only... we all know that the best way you're getting a ripe tomato is to lick all of them, and then take—take the one that tastes the best.

[Jesse laughs, John stifles laughter.]

That's probably not a good idea.

00:11:12	Jesse	Host	I've had people in my family who have been homebound.
00:11:19	John	Host	Yeah.
00:11:20	Jesse	Host	And needed groceries to be delivered to them in order to be responsible, both—you know. Both because in some cases they <u>couldn't</u> leave the house physically, but also because if they were ill they did not want to leave the house, for obvious reasons, because they wanted to be responsible to <u>others</u> as well. And I think probably as a general guideline, if you are <u>able</u> to leave the house to get your groceries, and able to do it as infrequently as possible, you know—
00:11:52	John	Host	Yeah.
00:11:53	Jesse	Host	—every other week or so, please do that.
00:11:56	John	Host	Yeah!
00:11:57	Jesse	Host	If you're not, don't feel bad about it!
00:11:58	John	Host	Exactly! Do your very best, bearing in mind to lessen the load on others. Don't lick the tomatoes. And Emilia, I think you're doing great.
00:12:08	Sound Effect	Sound Effect	<i>[Three gavel bangs.]</i>

00:12:09 John Host And by the way, Jesse Thorn, speaking of delivery of food... you're doing a wonderful fundraiser for Meals on Wheels on social media, correct?

00:12:17 Jesse Host Yeah! We've had—we've raised some thousands of dollars for Meals on Wheels.

00:12:23 John Host And I know that our friend Ayelet Waldman has organized a thing in the East Bay called [East Bay FeedER](#), which has a GoFundMe, and what they're doing is buying—they are buying meals from local restaurants in the East Bay, and then delivering it themselves. They're volunteers, right? So they're putting themselves in this. And then delivering it to healthcare workers in the East Bay.

And here in New York, there is an organization called [Invisible Hands](#)—that is started by Liam, one of my wife's former students—that is taking all of these college students who came back to New York with nothing to do, and training them in stringent, you know, sanitary practices. And they're just going shopping for elderly people and other immunocompromised people. There might be something like this, Emilia, in your neighborhood, that you might want to spread the word about! At the very least. There's a lot of good work being done during these hard times.

00:13:23 Jesse Host Here's something from Courtney!

00:13:25 Clip Clip **Courtney:** Hi, Judge Hodgman. My partner likes to keep the shower curtain closed at all times. It looks nicer, and reduces mildew build-up.

00:13:32 John Host Now, finally we're getting to something important!

00:13:34 Jesse Host I know.

00:13:35 Clip Clip **Courtney:** I sometimes get irrationally anxious that someone may be hiding behind the curtain. When I inevitably pull back the curtain to alleviate my anxieties, I first need to overcome a surge of adrenaline akin to the expectation of a jump-scare in a horror film.

My partner doesn't take this anxiety seriously, and continues to close the curtain even when it is dry. Should I work through this admittedly irrational fear? Or can people just fear what they fear?

00:13:58 John Host Hmm!

00:13:59 Jesse Host I don't know that those are the two choices, John.

00:14:02 John Host *[Laughs.]* Well, how would you identify the choices?

00:14:04 Jesse Host Well, I think there are a couple of issues at play here. One is I think it seems clear to me that Courtney's fear really interferes with her life, and is much more important than the desire for... to not look at the tub.

00:14:24 John Host You think it's more important than mildew build-up?

[Jesse laughs.]

Wait a minute, are you saying that—*[laughs]*.

00:14:29 Jesse Host I guess—do they have their exhaust fan directly over the shower, and so the idea is that it—it... sucks the steam out better if it's not having to suck from the whole bathroom? Is that the theory?

00:14:44 John Host I don't even know what the words you're saying are—I think what the—

[Jesse sighs.]

Courtney's partner likes to keep the shower curtain closed so that it dries, rather than having it—

00:14:52 Jesse Host Oh, sure!

00:14:53 John Host —after being wet, left—you know, if you take a shower and then push the curtain aside, and it just lays against itself in a pleated fashion, I can tell you from personal experience, mildew builds up there. And it's gross! But I hear what you're saying. Like, you know, in a devoted romantic partnership—even in a devoted non-romantic roommateship—someone's feelings are more important than mildew.

00:15:20 Jesse Host I would say that that said, it—Courtney should work through this irrational anxiety. And not out of obligation to her partner, but because it will improve her life. And this is exactly the kind of thing that... cognitive behavioral therapy is good at. *[Laughs.]* I mean, it's good at a lot of different things! You know? But, uh, focused cognitive behavioral therapy, or even its—simply its principles—could really transform this part of her life. And from what she's describing, a real surge of adrenaline every time she's using the bathroom, it would for me be worth it to do that work.

But I don't think that she needs to do that for her partner, but rather because it would improve her life.

00:16:15 John Host Sure! I mean, this is a challenging time to seek therapy. There's a lot of teletherapy options out there. But equally so, Courtney, you can rest assured, now more than any other time, there's probably not an extra person in your apartment. *[Laughs.]*

But I get it! Courtney, I wanna—I wanna say this: I feel you on this. Bathrooms are scary. And I'm a man who is about to turn... *[unhappy sounds]*... 49 years old. And I would say it is only within the past two years that I've gotten over the conviction that if I am not out of the bathroom by the time the flushing stops, I will be possessed by the devil.

[Jesse laughs.]

Conviction. Absolute conviction. After the flushing, I would go back in, wash my hands. But I'm like—this goes back to all—you know, the—my whole preteen *Exorcist* terror period—terror of being possessed by the devil. And I still feel it! Like, it's really hard to get over these things! I absolutely sympathize, Courtney. But I think you're gonna be okay. I think you will be glad if you work on this a little bit. And I think, Courtney's partner, you will be glad if you are supportive of Courtney's work here! I hope you are not diminishing of her feelings, even though it is—it is not likely that there is a scary person in the shower.

00:17:40 Sound Effect Sound Effect *[Three gavel bangs.]*

00:17:41 John Host Now, Courtney. If you will, please... honor my judgment, and please step away from the podcast. Turn it off for a second. 'Cause I have a

message just from your partner about how your partner can support you.

Courtney's partner... as soon as this is all over, and we kinda go back to normal and we can be together again, email me your address. We're gonna have a fun time. I'm gonna—

00:18:03 Jesse Host

[Laughing] No!!!

00:18:05 John Host

No, this is gonna help! I'm gonna—*[laughs]*. I'll come over to your apartment. And the next time Courtney's getting ready to have a shower, I will hide in there. And I'll go "Surprise! I'll have the Kung Pao chicken!" And that'll be great! Don't you think, Jesse? That'll get her—that'll get her over it. Don't you think?

[Beat.]

00:18:22 Jesse Host

I don't—I don't know if that's what a therapist would recommend.

[John laughs quietly.]

That's why—that's why I think it might be worth seeking a professional's opinion.

00:18:29 John Host

Well, as—*[laughs]*.

00:18:31 Jesse Host

Or maybe reading a book.

00:18:32 John Host

Well, alright. It's a race.

[Jesse laughs.]

It's a—Courtney, it's a race!

[Both laugh.]

Do the best you can, given the circumstances, to do a little research into cognitive behavioral therapy... or, get ready for a surprise from your Judge John Hodgman. You never know where I might turn up!

00:18:54 Jesse Host

[Stifles laughter.] Let's take a quick break. More items on the docket coming up in just a minute on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

00:19:00 Sound Effect Transition

[Three gavel bangs.]

00:19:03 Jesse Promo

The *Judge John Hodgman* podcast is, now more than ever, supported by all of the members of MaximumFun.org. All the folks who've gone to MaximumFun.org/join, to kick our shows a few bucks every month. We're very grateful to everybody who has stuck with us through these tough times, and to everybody who started a new membership in these tough times. It has kept our lights on. We're very grateful to you.

We're also supported this week by our friends at Babbel! Babbel is an app for your telephone, and other platforms, that you can use to help learn a new language in just 10 to 15 minutes a day.

00:19:45 John Promo

Yeah! You know, so, Jesse, I live—as you do—in a multilingual city. And I've—have some Spanish. But I've really been meaning to build it up again for years. And I have to say, I've been working with Babbel, and it's—really makes it easy to dust off the old telarañas of

the brain—the cobwebs, the telarañas, of the brains—and get back into it. And I'm having a lot of fun!

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[Both laugh.]

—talking using normal words, like "hello" and "thank you" and "I don't understand" and "please repeat." *[Stifles laughter.]* And their speech recognition technology helps you to improve your pronunciation and accent, as well. And Jesse, can I also add one other thing?

00:20:52 Jesse Promo

Yeah?

00:20:54 John Promo

Babbel has some podcasts associated with it, language instruction podcasts. And in their Spanish-language suite of podcasts, they have one for more advanced students, and it's all in Spanish. But they also have one called *A Zero to A Hero* podcast, in which Héctor, a Spanish teacher, teaches Catriona, a Scottish woman, to speak Spanish. And I've—I never knew how much I needed to hear a woman with a Scottish accent learn to speak Spanish. It's incre—it's an incredible podcast!

[Both laugh.]

00:21:25 Jesse Promo

[Sounding out Spanish vowels with a Scottish accent] Ah! Eh! Ee! Oh! Ooh!

00:21:28 John Promo

[Laughing] Fantastic!

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00:21:38 Jesse Promo

Go to [Babbel.com](https://www.babbel.com) and use the promo code "Hodgman" on your free three-month subscription.

00:21:45 John Host

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00:21:55 Sound Effect Transition

[Three gavel bangs.]

00:21:57 Promo Clip

Music: Fun, cheerful music.

Kirk Hamilton: Video games!

Jason Schreier: Video games!

Maddy Myers: Video games! You like 'em?

Jason: Maybe you wish you had more time for them?

Kirk: Maybe you wanna know the best ones to play?

Jason: Maybe you wanna know what happens to Mario when he dies?

[Someone chuckles.]

Maddy: In that case, you should check out [Triple Click!](#) It's a brand new podcast about video games.

Jason: A podcast about video games?! But I don't have time for that!

00:22:17 Promo Clip

Kirk: Sure you do. Once a week, kick back as three video game experts give you everything from critical takes on the hottest new releases—

Jason: —to scoops, interviews, and explanations about how video games work—

Maddy: —to fascinating and sometimes weird stories about the games we love.

Kirk: *Triple Click* is hosted by me, Kirk Hamilton.

Jason: Me, Jason Schreier.

Maddy: And me, Maddy Myers.

Kirk: You can find *Triple Click* wherever you get your podcasts, and listen at [MaximumFun.org](#).

Maddy: Bye!

[Music finishes.]

00:22:43 Sound Effect Transition

[Three gavel bangs.]

00:22:44 Jesse Host

Welcome back to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. We're clearing the docket this week. We've got something from Jessica. She asks:

00:22:52 Clip Clip

Jessica: What day is garbage day?

00:22:53 John Host

Tuesday. Why?

00:22:55 Clip Clip

Jessica: I believe that it's the day the sanitation workers come around our neighborhood and pick up our garbage and recycling. My husband says it's the day prior, when we put out our garbage and recycling containers. His logic is that it's the day we are actively engaged in garbage pickup. My logic is that his idea doesn't make sense, because garbage day is the day the garbage is picked up, and words have meanings, and we can't just dissolve into anarchy. Thank you!

00:23:17 Jesse Host

I like the idea of, uh—in what appears to be, uh, a—*[laughs]* heterosexual marriage, that it's the wife that is—that is ending with the flourish "Words have meanings; we can't dissolve into anarchy!" That's fun.

00:23:31 John Host

[Laughs.] Yeah. That's an, uh—that's an unusual twist.

00:23:33 Jesse Host

[Laughs.] I can only assume she's jabbing the air with a pointed finger.

00:23:38 John Host *[Laughs.]* Uhhh, first of all, can I just say, I'm so glad garbage is being collected. *[Laughing]* Thanks!

00:23:45 Jesse Host Yeah. *[Relieved laugh/sigh.]* Thank you, sanitation workers. God bless you.

00:23:48 John Host Thank you sanitation workers! God or whatever bless you, exactly!

I don't—you know, Jesse, for me, this is a—I have a feeling on this. But it's mostly a feeling. Because I live in a multi-unit condominium apartment building. And we have a garbage room, where we can take our garbage any day, night, dawn, gloaming, twilight, whenever we feel like it. It's a remarkable thing. And Baron, our superintendent, on the appropriate days, packs it all up and puts it out all on the street. Thank you, Baron.

So for me, there—I think Tuesday is garbage day on our block. That is to say, the day it is collected. What's the—what would you call garbage day in your neighborhood?

[Beat.]

00:24:39 Jesse Host *[Quietly]* I would call it the day that it's collected—

00:24:40 John Host Yeah.

00:24:41 Jesse Host —because words have meanings, and we can't just dissolve into anarchy.

00:24:44 John Host Yeah! The night before has a special name! Garbage night.

00:24:48 Jesse Host Garbage Eve?

00:24:49 John Host Garbagemas Eve!

[Jesse laughs quietly.]

Celebrate it! Honor it! But—and also honor the sanitation workers. You pack that stuff up the night before, and you put it out on the street. It doesn't disappear, Jessica's husband. People come and get it for you! Honor them! Best Garbagemas ever!

00:25:11 Sound Effect Sound Effect *[Three gavel bangs.]*

00:25:12 Jesse Host *[Stifles laughter.]* Here's something from Joshua.

00:25:15 Clip Clip **Joshua:** Hello, Your Honor. I want to buy a Nintendo Switch for the family, especially during this pandemic. We have a seven-year-old, a five-year-old, and a two-year-old. And while I don't want my kids playing inappropriate games, I do think it's semi-important for my older two to at least start to familiarize themselves with modern games, so they don't get left behind by their peers.

My wife is firmly opposed to this idea. She thinks it's a waste of time and money. Help!

00:25:38 John Host *[Stifles laughter.]* Left behi—I saw "left behind," I'm like "Left behind... in the Rapture?" That's where my mind is going.

00:25:43 Jesse Host Yeah. *[Laughs.]* "Oh, they're only gonna be playing—" *[laughs].* What is that Nintendo game called? *Bible Wars* or something?

[Both laugh.]

00:25:49 John Host There was—*[stifles laughter]* there was—there was a *Left Behind*—branded video game! Based on the popular 1990s series of Rapture-themed, uh, commercial thriller novels. But I never played it.

00:26:04 Jesse Host Wow! Really? The one I was thinking of was called *Bible Adventures* for the Nintendo.

00:26:08 John Host Was that for the Nintendo?

00:26:09 Jesse Host Nintendo Entertainment System, the NES.

00:26:12 John Host Yeah, yeah. The NES. What—do you have a—now, look. You have three children, kind of in this age range.

00:26:17 Jesse Host Yeah.

00:26:18 John Host Do you have a video game system in your home?

00:26:21 Jesse Host *[Laughing]* John, I have three.

00:26:24 John Host One for each!

00:26:26 Jesse Host Here's how it happened, John.

00:26:27 John Host Alright.

00:26:28 Jesse Host Because I don't want people to think that I'm the kind of guy that goes out and buys three video game systems.

00:26:32 John Host It takes me by surprise that you would spend worthy tweed-and-ascot money on video games. But then, you're—I'm always surprised by people's hobbies! So please, tell me.

00:26:43 Jesse Host Well, I bought—I have had, for many years, an Xbox.

00:26:48 John Host Right.

00:26:49 Jesse Host And then one time on *Jordan, Jesse, Go!*, my comedy podcast with my friend Jordan, I was complaining about how everyone was talking about playing *Spider-Man*, but they don't have *Spider-Man* on Xbox.

00:27:01 John Host Right.

00:27:02 Jesse Host And somebody that works at Sony—

00:27:04 John Host No.

00:27:05 Jesse Host —went into their, like, pressroom—

00:27:06 John Host No!

00:27:07 Jesse Host —and found a PlayStation, and mailed it to me.

00:27:09 John Host What?!

00:27:10 Jesse Host Which is the only time that something like that has really worked out, except for—well, one time the—a guy who runs social media for Can You Handlebar mustache wax—

00:27:18 John Host Uh-huh.

00:27:20 Jesse Host —sent me a box of mustache wax.

[John exhales forcefully.]

It's very nice mustache wax.

00:27:21 John Host That's incredible. Well, you don't need it right now.

00:27:23 Jesse Host I don't.

00:27:24 John Host 'Cause you're clean-shaven.

00:27:26 Jesse Host It—well, I'm—I'm getting back there.

00:27:27 John Host Yeah.

00:27:28 Jesse Host But I don't need it yet. Uh—

00:27:29 John Host And then?

00:27:30 Jesse Host And then—so, for some time, I had this PlayStation that I only used to play baseball and *Spider-Man*, because they also don't have baseball on the Xbox.

00:27:37 John Host No.

00:27:38 Jesse Host So then, my friend Jordan Morris texted me, at the start of Safer-at-Home. And he said "Hey, I have a Nintendo Wii U. Do you want that for your kids?"

00:27:51 John Host Right.

00:27:52 Jesse Host And I said "Uh, I don't know!" and he said "It has *Zelda* on it," and I was like "Yep! I do want it!"

[Both laugh.]

Because I wanted to play *Zelda*. Another game that they don't have on Xbox. *[Laughs.]* And so he brought me this Wii U, and the Wii U is actually—my kids don't really play on the—my oldest is eight, and they don't really play on the, uh, Xbox or PlayStation. We've got a couple of sort of puzzle games. But it's just, you know, the games that are maybe content-wise appropriate for them are not really developmentally beneficial to them?

00:28:28 John Host Right.

00:28:29 Jesse Host I would say? They're mostly kind of, uh, hyperactive, uh, reaction-time games, you know? Jump-jump-jump-jump. Slash-slash-slash.

00:28:40 John Host Right.

00:28:41 Jesse Host And they tend to be—even the ones that like, don't show blood or whatever, they tend to be violent in theme.

00:28:46 John Host Right.

00:28:47 Jesse Host But for the Nintendo Wii U, which is a semi-failed game system that came out between the Wii and the Switch, the—it has like a motion controller and stuff.

00:29:01 John Host Yeah.

00:29:02 Jesse Host And you can get like—and I got a few—sort of like, exercise games and dance games and stuff. Which, uh, sometimes is actually useful for the kids. But I'm generally, frankly—I'm more likely to side with the mom here. I don't think they need to worry about getting left behind.

00:29:23 John Host No.

00:29:24 Jesse Host And I don't think, generally speaking, that—while I like video games and am not opposed to them—*[stifling laughter]* I don't think they're a priority, for brain development or whatever.

Like, there are certainly video games that are good for brain

development, but—

00:29:45 John Host So—yeah.

00:29:46 Jesse Host But mostly for older kids, and... you know. I mean, I think there will be a point where you won't be able to stem the tide. That's my general parenting philosophy, is...

00:29:56 John Host Right.

00:29:57 Jesse Host Only buckle when you have to buckle. *[Laughs.]* Don't advance-buckle.

00:30:01 John Host Here's the thing, Joshua. As you know, I am a parent of two human children. They are teens. And they've had video games in their lives all their lives. Our friend Jonathan Coulton is a parent to two slightly younger children, and they have had video games in their lives available to them all their lives. And on tablets, and on consoles, etc.

And our friend John Roderick, of Maximum Fun's own *Friendly Fire* podcast, is a parent of one child! A younger child, a daughter. And he was very concerned about this issue of bringing video games and screens in general into his daughter's life. He felt that, you know, while there is value and fun there, these are essentially dopamine-producing mechanisms. And he would make the point that there are great brains—*[chuckles]* that evolved in our world before there were video games. Uh, Nikola Tesla! Is one. Grace Hopper is another. Lots and lots of them! Lots and lots of people got smart without—

00:31:13 Jesse Host I think it's just the two that you said.

00:31:16 John Host No—nope! *[Laughs.]* Many, many more!

00:31:18 Jesse Host I think it's just two.

00:31:19 John Host Many, many more got smart and learned hand-eye coordination before video games hit the scene.

And he was very struck about this, and he said to Jonathan—I remember 'cause John Roderick told me this story—he said to Jonathan, "How are you not concerned? About what screens, this relatively new technology, is... will do to your kids, and their emotional and functional development?"

And Coulton said to Roderick "Well, that's—they said the same thing about television. I want my kids to grow up in the world. This is the world. We don't know what it will do. But we've never known, and I want them to be a part of this world, and technology is—is an—is an—a remarkable tool, and whether you like it or not, it's here!"

And John Roderick was like "Yeah, I guess you're right."

Well... guess what? Jonathan Coulton's kids have grown up happy and healthy. So far. One of 'em likes this stuff more than the other does. But they are wonderful full human beings with a lot of fun and engagement. My children have grown up having played a lot of Wii games back before the Wii U, when it was just the Wii. Including old-school *Animal Crossing*, which is now sweeping the nation and the planet.

And yet, I would ask, now that we are Safer-at-Home all together all the time, that you—Jesse—call your friend at PlayStation... and ask them to please come and take away the PlayStation in my house.

[Both laugh.]

If PlayStation can giveth, may they also please taketh away? Because we live in a open-concept apartment, where the living room and the dining room and the kitchen are all the same, and basically also part of the—of all three bedrooms.

00:33:08 Jesse Host

Wait, did you say the—the living room, the dining room, and the kitchen? I think what you meant to say was the gaming parlor!

00:33:17 John Host

[Laughs.] That's right. From the moment my son wakes up, until distance learning has to start, and then as soon as that's done he's back at it, it is pure... *Apex Legends* I think is the thing now. Talking with his friends, whatever. And it is taking over the whole apartment! And I'm not against video games. I love games. I wish I had time to play games. They are a legit form, a meaningful form, of storytelling. It's how my son engages with story.

But here is what staying at home has taught me. We all need to do the best we can, we all need to be kind to each other, *Apex Legends* is an important way for 14-year-old boys to socialize during social distancing. But it's not as good as... walking around together? In the—in the world? Which I hope we can get back to?

And open-concept living was a horrible, horrible idea. People need rooms. People need privacy. So—

[Both laugh.]

00:34:13 Jesse Host

Ultimately—*[laughs]* ultimately your beef here is with home-flipping television series.

00:34:20 John Host

Yes! And I'm glad and surprised to say that I am friends with the Property Brothers, but we need to have a talk about this! People need rooms!

[Jesse laughs.]

And walls! But also... my point is this, Joshua. When you bring this into your house, it's all over. This will never go away. It will stay with you for the rest of your child-rearing. So it's an important decision, and one not to take lightly.

We're all doing our best, and we all do the best we can, but... at this point, you have this unusual opportunity. Right? Where the peer pressure outside your house isn't as strong as it would be as if those kids were going to school and going over and playing with each other. Playing with other kids' house. Seeing video games. Coming home saying "I want this! I want this! I want this!"

While I think it's a definite parenting life-hack, and sometimes life-saving hack, to deploy a fun wholesome game that the—that a Nintendo system might provide, so that you get a little bit of a break, you also have a real advantage right now to help your kids build a

lifelong love of reading, and enjoying non–video game content. 'Cause we know that as soon as everything gets normal again, that's gonna be a part of their lives.

The decision is yours to make, Joshua. But I agree wholeheartedly with my bailiff and yours, Jesse Thorn. You are making this argument in bad faith. You are in no way concerned with your children's development. You want a Nintendo Switch for yourself, so you can play *Animal Crossing* just like everybody else. *[Stifles laughter.]* Admit that, and then you and your partner can have a conversation about this. But don't come to me, trying to get me to say this is gonna help a two-year-old's development and social cohesion with their peer groups or whatever. You just wanna play *Animal Crossing*! You wanna build an island, and rule it. Like an animal.

I wouldn't if I were you, Joshua. But whatever you do, do it in good faith.

00:36:13 Sound Effect Sound Effect *[Three gavel bangs.]*

00:36:14 Jesse Host Let's take a break! When we come back, we'll hear a case about apologies.

00:36:18 Sound Effect Transition *[Three gavel bangs.]*

00:36:20 Promo Clip **Music:** Bright, cheerful music.

Speaker: Hey, podcast fan! We have a quick favor to ask. We'd like to get a better idea of who you are and what you care about. So if you have a couple moments to spare, go to MaximumFun.org/adsurvey. There we've got a short, anonymous survey that won't take any more than ten minutes to fill out. Plus, if you finish it, you'll get a 10% discount on our merch at the MaxFun store! MaxFun shows have always relied on support from our members, and always will. The survey will help keep the few ads we do run relevant and interesting for you. Again, that's MaximumFun.org/adsurvey. All one word. And thanks for your help.

[Music fades out.]

00:37:06 Sound Effect Transition *[Three gavel bangs.]*

00:37:07 Jesse Promo Judge Hodgman, we're taking a quick break from the episode. You have been doing your Instagram Live show...

00:37:14 John Promo Yeah.

00:37:15 Jesse Promo ...every day!

[John laughs quietly.]

Every week day!

00:37:18 John Promo Week day. And I do it—*Get Your Pets* is my daily weekday talk show where I interview, pretty much at random, people's cats and dogs and other pets live on Instagram. Usually in the afternoon. I've talked about it before. I do it only on the week days, mostly so I remember what a weekend is? And everyone else?

[Both laugh.]

And it's free, and I would never charge for it. It's just some emotional support animal therapy for everybody, including and especially me. I've made a lot of new friends. I got to meet the pets of many former litigants. What's up, Big B? What's up, Professor Pre-Washed Truffles in Portland? And if you wanna join us, it would be great. I announce the time that I'm gonna be recording it every morning on my Instagram account. Which feeds to my Twitter and my Facebooks and everything else. But I'm at [Instagram.com/johnhodgman](https://www.instagram.com/johnhodgman). And you can go there and follow me if you want to be alerted as to whenever I go live.

I'd also like to point out that we are closing in on the end of *I, Podius!* My podcast with Elliott Kalan about the great BBC historical Rome miniseries, *I, Claudius*. Episode, uh, XI—that's "eleven" to you and me—just dropped on Monday. Next up is episode XII, that's "twelve." That covers the end of the *I, Claudius* miniseries. Will there be a special bonus episode after that? Hmm, I wonder! Please subscribe and find out. It's free! And of course if you hate free things... you can always go to MaximumFun.org/join to help us keep the pod-lights on. Thank you for your support, if you've been able to keep it up. We really appreciate it! But, uh, it's hard times for everyone. So do your best.

Jesse, what's going on with you?

00:38:56 Jesse Promo

Yeah! Well, as our listeners know, I not only co-host this show. I'm also the co-host of *Jordan, Jesse, Go!*, another comedy show from Maximum Fun. The one from the bosom of which this show leapt many years ago, *Jordan, Jesse, Go!* And... we have a special guest on *Jordan, Jesse, Go!* this week. It's our friend... John Hodgman! Yes, that's right! We recorded this episode, uh, before the troubles of the world began. So it is a "troubles of the world"—free episode that we had intended to be an episode for the MaxFunDrive, but since we postponed the MaxFunDrive, here it is for you now!

So if you've always thought about trying to check out *Jordan, Jesse, Go!* or something, and you thought—you need a little kick in the butt to do it, well, now's your chance! 'Cause here—now your real hero, John Hodgman, is the guest on this week's program.

00:39:47 John Promo

I really enjoyed recording this episode with you, because it's always fun to visit with you and Jordan. And also, this was the genesis of the only subreddit that I've ever created. It is a subreddit on the subject of extinct hockey.

[Jesse laughs quietly.]

Listen to the birthplace of the [extinct hockey subreddit](#) on *Jordan, Jesse, Go!* this week, then check in with the subreddit Extinct_Hockey, and see just how many extinct hockey fans there are out there. It's amazing.

00:40:12 Jesse Promo

All you gotta do is take your phone outta your pocket right now and search in that podcast app for *Jordan, Jesse, Go!* and hit subscribe. Uh, you're gonna love it! I think!

[John laughs quietly.]

Uh, let's get back to the docket.

00:40:22	John	Promo	I <u>know</u> !
00:40:23	Sound Effect	Transition	<i>[Three gavel bangs.]</i>
00:40:25	Jesse	Host	Welcome back to the <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> podcast. We're clearing the docket this week, and here is something from Brian.
00:40:32	Clip	Clip	Brian: I'm seeking an injunction against my wife Courtney. When our four-year-old son mistreats our dog Brick, she will correct our son and then insist that he apologize to Brick. While he should of course be corrected, I argue that an apology to an <u>animal</u> is the phoniest of all phony apologies.
00:40:47	John	Host	<i>[John and maybe Jesse laugh quietly.]</i>
00:40:48	Clip	Clip	Brian: An apology is meant to soothe the offended, not to punish the offender. Dogs don't understand regret, <u>or</u> most human emotions. Please order her to cease.
00:40:57	Jesse	Host	I like that the dog is named Brick.
00:40:59	John	Host	I was just gonna say the same thing!
00:41:00	Jesse	Host	I hope they have a cat named Looper.
00:41:02	John	Host	<i>[Cracks up.]</i>
			<i>[Sing-song]</i> The films of Rian Johnson!
00:41:06	Jesse	Host	<i>[Laughs.]</i> The hamsters are the Brothers Bloom?
00:41:10	John	Host	Yeah, that's right.
			<i>[Both laugh quietly.]</i>
			Aaand, uh, what other kinds of pets are there? I should know, I've been interviewing a bunch of 'em.
00:41:17	Jesse	Host	Well, there's a—one final Jedi. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:41:20	John	Host	There's one last Jedi. <i>[Laughs.]</i> And then there's Knives Out! The parakeet!
			<i>[Jesse laughs.]</i>
			<i>[Imitating a parakeet]</i> "Knives Out! Knives Out!"
			<i>[Regular voice]</i> That's scary! Never mind. Don't do that. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
			Uh, yeah. I think we can all agree Brick is a great name for a dog, but I think, Jesse, we'll probably agree that, uh, Brian is wrong in every possible way here.
			<i>[Both laugh.]</i>
			For—I—as you know, Jesse Thorn, because you've been a <u>delightful</u> guest, or I should say your dogs Coco and Sissy have been delightful guests on my shelter-at-home times side-hustle, <i>Get Your Pets</i> —my weekday daily talk show on Instagram Live with people's cats and dogs and other pets... I—I started this thing—I used to do it a little bit last year just for funs, but then I started—once everyone had to start staying at home, I was like "I wanna see some pets. It

will make me feel better to see some pets. And I bet it would help some other people to feel sort of less alone if they get to see other people's pets."

So... this is a plug. I'll plug it. I'm not making any money off it, so it's fair to plug. FTP. Every afternoon, pretty much, on a week day, I'll set up an Instagram Live and interview all these incredible cats and dogs and snakes and parakeets, and everything else. And I've learned a lot about all of these pet-havers all over the world. Public healthcare workers in Cape Town, park rangers in Ireland, teachers in Hawai'i, all over the place.

And I've learned a lot about animals, too. Particularly dogs, which I've never—I've never owned a dog. And I understand more about dogs, and their behaviors, and their quirks, and how when they are anxious they will yawn and lick themselves. Such as when a stranger from the Internet is talking at them, asking about how their day has been, and that's why that's happening all the time.

But one thing I've definitely learned about dogs is, uh, they are very, very, very, VERY sensitive to human emotions. They get it! They are wildly empathetic creatures! Who absolutely understand regret, for sure! *[Chuckles.]* And I think also sympathy and kindness. So don't say, Brian, that they don't understand human emotions. Don't think that dogs don't understand human emotions just because maybe you don't, Brian.

00:43:53 John

Host

Even if the dogs of the world were not the wildly empathetic emotionally sensitive creatures they are, but instead the borderline sociopaths you think they are, and maybe are yourself, Brian... apology-modeling is good! Apology is not meant to simply soothe the offended! It is meant to punish the offender! It is to humiliate in the greatest sense! To force humility upon the offender, and to reset the relationship.

And phony apologies are a part of this, too. Phony apologies ease friction in close quarters. By phony apologies I don't mean completely insincere apologies, but apologies you give even though you think maybe you were still right. You apologize to someone because you know it's the right thing to do.

Phony apologies are almost as important as sincere apologies. And in that spirit, Brian, let me say this to you: I'm sorry. I'm sorry for suggesting that you might be a sociopath.

Is that a real apology, or a phony one? You'll never know.

[Jesse laughs.]

But yeah! Apologize to your dogs! Brian, I order you to apologize to Brick! Say "I'm sorry I thought you didn't understand human emotion," and be nice about it. Don't do it the way I did, like, real yelly. Or he'll bite 'cha.

00:45:06

Sound Effect

Sound Effect

[Three gavel bangs.]

00:45:08

Jesse

Host

We have an update from Jeremy and Allison, from the dispute "[And Baby Makes Plea](#)." (*And Baby Makes Three*.) Which we heard with

our friend Nick Offerman as expert witness.

So the two of them couldn't figure out how to make room in their home for their new baby while also maintaining a guest room and keeping Jeremy's workshop space. Allison writes:

"Over about three months, Jeremy cleaned out and re-organized his work room to make a guest room for my parents, turned that stack of mahogany into a gorgeous dining table, tore out the dog run in the back yard, leveled and re-sodded the yard, and helped me transform the Hodge Podge Lodge into a viable nursery. However—"

00:45:47	John	Host	So first—let me break in here for—first of all, Jesse, to clarify the Hodge Podge Lodge is what they were going to name what would become the nursery. And second of all, Jesse—
00:45:56	Jesse	Host	At the time it was—yeah, a pile of discarded stuff from their house.
00:46:00	John	Host	Right. <i>[Stifles laughter.]</i> And second of all, Jesse, just again to break in, I apologize... in the past three months, have you made any dining room tables?
			<i>[Both stifle laughter.]</i>
00:46:11	Jesse	Host	I have <u>not</u> made any dining room tables recently.
00:46:14	John	Host	Tear—did you re-sod anything? A yard? Or even a patch of grass?
00:46:19	Jesse	Host	My son and I planted some sunflower seeds—
00:46:22	John	Host	Well, you—
00:46:23	Jesse	Host	— <i>[laughing]</i> but that's as far as far as we've gotten.
00:46:24	John	Host	You know what? You're—
00:46:25	Jesse	Host	They also may have been, uh, ranch-flavored.
00:46:27	John	Host	<i>[Cracks up.]</i> Were they David's brands, or Bigs sunflower seeds?
00:46:34	Jesse	Host	Oh, David's all the way.
00:46:35	John	Host	Yeah.
00:46:36	Jesse	Host	I'm a ball player.
00:46:37	John	Host	Yeah! Well, I think that's a good thing. You did more than I did in the past three months, at least in the sodding and building department. For people who are just doing their best, good job, Jeremy! Alright, go on with the letter.
00:46:48	Jesse	Host	"However, my mother would like to complain that I made her sound, quote, 'like a decrepit old woman,' un-quote, on the podcast. In fact, she slept just fine on the air mattress when she came for the baby's birth."
			So I think we can stipulate she's not decrepit.
00:47:02	John	Host	Yeah.
00:47:03	Jesse	Host	And can—is capable of sleeping on an air mattress, though, uh, there is no need to <u>make</u> anyone sleep on an air mattress in a situation where air mattress—sleeping is not necessary.
00:47:14	John	Host	True enough. Settled law.
00:47:15	Jesse	Host	"We welcomed our son into the world in July."

00:47:19 John Host Awww.

00:47:20 Jesse Host "He's nine months old now, and an absolute love. We're grateful for him every day. Meanwhile, Jeremy's Mustang is coming along nicely—"

[John laughs.]

And she started a side hobby drawing cartoons. These people are too productive!

00:47:33 John Host I—yeah, I forgot about the Mustang hobby, too! Wow!

00:47:36 Jesse Host I'm—I have to be frank. This is—this is too—this is embarrassing me. Previously I was just able to attribute it to like, "They have more rooms than I do because they live in a different part of the country."

00:47:49 John Host Yeah, a different style of living.

00:47:50 Jesse Host Where you can just have rooms.

00:47:52 John Host Yeah.

00:47:53 Jesse Host But now I'm—now I'm out. Now I'm against them. This table's too pretty.

00:47:58 John Host *[Laughs.]* Yeah, you can see the—

00:47:59 Jesse Host It's a really nice-looking table.

00:48:01 John Host You can see the picture of this table—*[laughs]* on our Instagram, at [Instagram.com/judgejohnhodgman](https://www.instagram.com/judgejohnhodgman), as well as on the show page at [MaximumFun.org](https://www.MaximumFun.org). As well as some yet-to-be-finished, but beautiful, *Judge John Hodgman*-themed needlework to be hung in the Hodge Podge Lodge! And Jesse, I've checked out Allison's comics. And they're very cute and charming! And you can check those out at KickFeetComics on Instagram. K-I-C-K—we'll put a link into the show page. KickFeetComics on Instagram.

Glad it's going well for you all there! I look forward to coming to the Hodge Podge Lodge and hiding behind your shower curtain as soon as possible.

00:48:43 Jesse Host *[Laughs.]*

The docket's clear. That's it for another episode of *Judge John Hodgman*. Our producer is Jennifer Marmor. Follow us on Twitter at [@JesseThorn](https://twitter.com/JesseThorn) and at [@hodgman](https://twitter.com/hodgman). We're on Instagram at [@judgejohnhodgman](https://www.instagram.com/judgejohnhodgman). Make sure to hashtag your *Judge John Hodgman* Tweets #JJHo, and check out the Maximum Fun subreddit to discuss this episode. You can submit your cases at [MaximumFun.org/jjho](https://www.MaximumFun.org/jjho), or email hodgman@maximumfun.org.

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

00:49:16 Sound Effect Transition *[Three gavel bangs.]*

00:49:19 Music Transition A cheerful guitar chord.

00:49:20 Speaker 1 Guest [MaximumFun.org](https://www.MaximumFun.org).

00:49:22 Speaker 2 Guest Comedy and culture.

00:49:23 Speaker 3 Guest Artist owned—

00:49:24 Speaker 4 Guest —audience supported.