

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. We're in chambers this week, clearing the docket. And with me as always is the star of the podcast <i>The Hollywood Handbook</i> — <i>[John laughs.]</i> —Judge John Hodgman.
00:00:17	John Hodgman	Host	You should—I won't say anything. Go check it out. I appeared on <i>Hollywood Handbook</i> . And it was quite a—quite an emotional journey.
00:00:23	Jesse	Host	And a wonderful podcast. Sean and Hayes. Shout-out to Sean and Hayes.
00:00:27	John	Host	But Jesse? Hello.
00:00:28	Jesse	Host	Hello, John.
00:00:29	John	Host	Spring sprang in Brooklyn! Woke up this morning with the window open a little bit. Chilly, but nice. Sound of a mourning dove <u>yelling</u> outside my window. I've never heard a <u>louder</u> — <i>[Jesse laughs.]</i> You know, a mourning dove is a pretty low-key dove. <i>[Chuckles.]</i> You know what I mean? It's a pretty low-key member of the—a lot of pigeons will go— <i>[coos loudly]</i> ! But a mourning dove kinda goes... <i>[quiet and hoarse]</i> "hnn... hh... hhh!"
00:00:54	Jesse	Host	Yeah, it's—not to be confused with that... all-night dove.
00:00:58	John	Host	<i>[Laughing]</i> Right.
00:00:59	Jesse	Host	That thing's willing.
00:01:00	John	Host	Yeah, maybe this one had been up all night. Maybe this one had gotten into a supply of my—my son's energy drinks or something, left out on the—in the yard. But it sounded like this: "WHAAA! WHAAA!" I'm like, "What is that sound?!" My family tells me it's a mourning dove. But it woke me up out of a <u>big</u> dream. I used to have the most boring dre—this is dream journal time, Jesse.
00:01:24	Jesse	Host	This is <u>everyone's</u> favorite part of every podcast.
00:01:26	John	Host	That's right.
00:01:27	Jesse	Host	It comes—it's the segment that comes right before "Podcasters Discuss Los Angeles Outdoor Shopping Mall, The Grove."
00:01:33	John	Host	<i>[Laughs.]</i> Itself a dream!
00:01:35	Jesse	Host	Yeah.
00:01:36	John	Host	A dream of return to a time that was somewhat normal! I've been—
00:01:40	Jesse	Host	Yeah. Where a... <i>[stifling laughter]</i> pretend streetcar carries you 800 feet.
00:01:44	John	Host	I'm ready for it. I'm ready for that. That's a dream.

I, uh—you know, normally my dreams are, "I was walking down the street. And then I was trying to make, um, a—a reservation for a rental car, and I couldn't get it to take my date of birth," and then I wake up screaming.

00:01:59 Jesse Host Mm-hm.

00:02:00 John Host It's the worst dream I have. Not being able to fill out forms properly. But my dreams have gotten a little bit more intense. You have any intense dreams, lately? What'd you dream last night, Jesse Thorn? Or recently.

00:02:09 Jesse Host Yeah! I did—*[stifles laughter]* I have had some intense dreams. The most recent really intense dream was, I was thinking about changing the furniture in my house.

00:02:16 John Host Mm!

00:02:17 Jesse Host To be more traditional. So my wife and I went to an antiques auction.

00:02:21 John Host Sure.

00:02:22 Jesse Host And to get to the antiques auction, *[stifles laughter]* we had to take—do you know those kind of, like, bus trains that you have to take at the airport sometimes? To get you from—

00:02:30 John Host I only know fake street cars that take me 800 feet, so nooo.

00:02:33 Jesse Host *[Laughs.]* It's—it's sort of like that, but like, 50% more *Tron*.

00:02:38 John Host Uh-huh! Okay! Like a light cycle.

00:02:39 Jesse Host *[Stifles laughter.]*

Um, so we had to take one of those bus shuttles, like at Dulles Airport in Washington, DC. And it took us to, uh, the auction, and we sat down, and it was in kind of an amphitheater.

00:02:50 John Host Yeah.

00:02:51 Jesse Host And sitting next to me was Holly Hunter.

00:02:53 John Host Sure.

00:02:54 Jesse Host And I was so happy to see Holly Hunter. I'm the biggest Holly Hunter fan.

00:02:57 John Host Well, you interviewed her on *Bullseye*, did you not?

00:02:59 Jesse Host And she was such a joy, such a delight, and so appropriate—

00:03:02 John Host A dream, you might say. Yeah.

00:03:03 Jesse Host—in contrast to Dream Holly Hunter, who in front of my wife was hitting on me... relentlessly.

[John laughs and claps, Jesse stifles laughter.]

Just would not take no for an answer.

00:03:13 John Host Yeah. Yeah.

00:03:14 Jesse Host Holly Hunter. I—look—who among us—

00:03:16 John Host That's kinda my dream, too. *[Laughs.]*

00:03:17 Jesse Host Who among—*[laughs]*. Who among us would—*[laughs]*—not consider ourselves lucky to be hit on by Holly Hunter?

[John sighs.]

But! I'm a happily married man; I was there with my wife.

00:03:29 John Host

Right. Awkward situation.

00:03:30 Jesse Host

And I was like, "Simmer down, Holly Hunter!" And it got so bad that I missed bidding on this armoire that I wanted to buy.

00:03:36 John Host

[Snorts.] This truly sounds—

00:03:38 Jesse Host

Yeah.

00:03:40 John Host

Such a Jesse Thorn dream mirror. Dream nightmare.

00:03:43 Jesse Host

I know. I know.

00:03:46 John Host

Um, but you were dreaming about something that you aren't able to do yet. We hope we are moving forward, back into those times when we can gather together and bid on armoires. My dream was about a big dinner at a restaurant, unmasked. And it was—in this dream, it was just a big publishing dinner party that had been—you know, had been canceled last year, and we were all back after the pandemic. And it was after some kind of publishing awards ceremony? I don't know. I—it was a fake event.

But I just remembered in the dream, "Oh, I did this two years ago, and it was great." But now I'm here at this big, long, long, long table. In a restaurant. Uh, and I'm at one end of the table, and I'm all by myself. It's like, a banquette and chairs, and it's unbalanced, so I'm at the—I'm the odd end of the chairs. 'Cause there's no one in front of me, I'm by myself. And down at the other end of the table, they're getting all of the food, and all of the drink, and I'm getting nothing.

But! Also at the other end of the table are all the people that I don't... want to talk to. Or get trapped into a conversation with. Especially in a banquette situation, where there's no escape. So I'm at my end of the table, with no food, but people that I like. But then the people that I like leave. They gotta go run an errand. And I'm sitting there all by myself, feeling completely abandoned. Thinking there's no way to go back to normal, to my old life. Of publishing industry dinners, where I—I didn't have to pay. I'm just abandoned by the past.

And then you know what happens in my dream, is a group of really nice young guys, kinda in their twenties, and they're this college team of, like, rugby players or something. And they may even have been, like, Scottish or Irish. They were just really adorable. And they all sat down in the banquette in front of me, because there was nowhere else to sit in this restaurant, and they didn't realize that this was a private party, and they all sat in front of me. And you know what I said to these guys, Jesse?

00:05:43 Jesse Host

What's that, John?

00:05:44 John Host

"Get outta there. Get out. This isn't your—"

[Jesse laughs.]

"This isn't your table!"

[Both laugh.]

The friend—

00:05:52 Jesse Host "That is Susan Orlean's seat! She might come back to talk to me!"

00:05:57 John Host That's what I said! "The friends who abandoned me might come back!"

And the nice guys are like, "Oh, okay, sorry!"

I'm like, "Go—go to a different restaurant! There are no seats here for you!"

00:06:07 Jesse Host "Do you see the placard there that says 'Mary Roach'?"

00:06:10 John Host *[Laughs.]* Totally! And then my friends—it wasn't Susan Orlean or Mary Roach. They would never do that to me. I know the—I know which friends left.

00:06:18 Jesse Host Yeah.

00:06:19 John Host I know which friends left and didn't come back. And then finally I'm back—

00:06:21 Jesse Host If you're one of those leaver friends, and you're listening right now, you know who you are.

00:06:25 John Host Yeah. Right. Finally at the end of the dream, one person, an acquaintance from the far end of the table, comes down to check up on me. And he just leans over, and he says this really funny thing. He said, "My book sold more copies than *Vacationland* and *Medallion Status* combined."

[Jesse laughs.]

That's pretty standard publishing dinner banter in the real world. That's how we talk. *[Stifles laughter.]*

00:06:45 Jesse Host Yeah.

00:06:46 John Host But I woke up screaming like a mourning dove. You know what I mean? AAAUGH!

[Both laugh.]

Okay.

00:06:53 Jesse Host Let's get into the docket. Here's something from Jeff:

"My wife and I enjoy watching *Jeopardy*."

00:06:58 John Host Ah!

00:06:59 Jesse Host "Of course, when we know the response, we both enjoy saying it out loud, as if we were playing the game, too! I want to be a contestant on this show one day, so I insist on waiting until the host has finished reading the clue before responding, and responding in the form of a question.

However, my wife will usually say the correct response as soon as she knows it. Worse, she doesn't put it in the form of a question. For instance, if the clue was, 'This radio personality is the co-host and

bailiff of the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast,' my wife would say, 'Jesse Thorn!'

Instead of the correctly phrased, 'Who is Jesse Thorn?'"

00:07:37 John Host

Mmm. Hmm!

00:07:39 Jesse Host

[Laughing] You don't have to work hard to find somebody to say "Who is Jesse Thorn?" I'll tell you that much right now.

[John laughs.]

"Please order my wife to wait until the host has finished reading the clue, and then answer in the form of a question. Thank you very much."

00:07:53 John Host

Oh. Wow. This is, um... This is a tough one! Ooh. Um... Uh, Jesse—um—I'd like to use my phone-a-friend?

00:08:06 Jesse Host

[Laughing] Okay, sure.

00:08:07 John Host

My phone-a-friend option? Okay.

00:08:08 Jesse Host

Sure. Well, if we're playing by *Jeopardy* rules, absolutely!

00:08:11 John Host

[Stifles laughter.] Right? It's part of the game. Everyone knows. Let's just see here. Elliott... Kalan... Our friend Elliott Kalan from *The Flop House* and *I, Podius* was—and he was on *Jeopardy*. So I'd like to get his take on this. Let's see if I can get...

[Internal phone signal.]

Let's see if we can get him on the phone.

[Another ring.]

Come on, Elliott.

[Another ring.]

Well. At least he hasn't declined me, yet.

[Another ring.]

[Another ring, which cuts off.]

00:08:51 Elliott Kalan Guest

[Answering machine.]

Hi, you've reached Elliott Kalan. I'm not here at the moment, or my phone is turned off, so please leave a message, and I'll get right back to you. Thank you. Bye.

00:09:00 Crosstalk Crosstalk

[Elliott's phone proceeds into a standard voicemail instructional recording.]

Phone: At the tone, please record your message.

John: Okay. I know what to do; I've—I've been alive for 50 years.

Phone: When you have finished recording, you may hang up, or press 1 for more options.

John: Yeah, I know! I know how—

[Beep.]

00:09:07	John	Host	Elliott, it's John Hodgman from the <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> podcast. I'm here with Bailiff Jesse Thorn and Producer Jennifer Marmor. Look, we've got a question about <i>Jeopardy</i> . I <u>don't</u> know the answer. I <u>don't</u> know the answer. Um, I guess you're busy right now, but if— but if you can call back, uh, I really need your help on this one. Thanks very much, Elliott. This is—you're my friend, and I phoned you. Bye.
00:09:25	Jesse	Host	<i>[Stifles laughter.]</i> Oh, man! John! Does this make me Regis Philbin?
00:09:28	John	Host	<i>[Stifling laughter]</i> Of course it does.
00:09:30	Jesse	Host	<i>[Whispering]</i> Yes!
00:09:31	John	Host	Of course it does! You've always been Regis Philbin!
00:09:32	Jesse	Host	<i>[Whispering]</i> Yes! <i>[Not whispering]</i> Yes! That's why I'm wearing this silver necktie, with this silver shirt!
00:09:37	John	Host	That's right. <i>[Chuckles.]</i> And—you've—the silver necktie, and a silver shirt, and a 1928 photo from New Year's Eve at the Overlook Hotel. You've <u>always</u> been Regis Philbin. Of course you have.
00:09:46	Jesse	Host	<i>[Chuckles.]</i> <i>[Whispering]</i> Yes... <i>[Stops whispering.]</i>
00:09:48	John	Host	Alright. We'll see if Elliott calls back. We'll hold this one to see if Elliott calls back, and we can get his insight on this. <i>[Stressed sigh.]</i> But meanwhile, do we have another case we can hear while we're waiting for Elliott?
00:10:00	Jesse	Host	Yeah. Here's a case from Kurt: "I would like you to issue a judgment against my wife for regularly criticizing one of <u>my</u> recurring comedic shticks." <i>[Laughing]</i> Oh no... <i>[Stifling laughter]</i> Rarely does it go off the rails in the first sentence. <i>[John laughs.]</i> "An homage to the 1983 comedy <i>Trading Places</i> ."
00:10:24	John	Host	Mm-hm?
00:10:26	Jesse	Host	Which film is, we will admit, somewhat—uh, this is inter—editorial

interjection.

00:10:29 John Host Right.

00:10:31 Jesse Host A—a great but problematic film. Uh, if you would like to problematize it, uh, send your least favorite scenes to hodgman@maximumfun.org.

00:10:39 John Host Whoa, thanks—! Thanks very much. I guess—I guess I deserve it, for...

00:10:42 Jesse Host Yeah.

00:10:43 John Host ...hearing this case.

00:10:44 Jesse Host "In this role reversal-themed film, after Dan Aykroyd's character sees Eddie Murphy's character being driven in his Mercedes, wearing his Harvard tie, Aykroyd's character says, 'He was wearing my Harvard tie! Can you believe it? My Harvard tie. Like, oh, sure, he went to Harvard!"

That was my famous Dan Aykroyd impression.

00:11:06 John Host *[Snorts.]* Incredible.

00:11:08 Jesse Host "Thirty-eight years later, whenever I see someone wearing clothing advertising a college or university, I say in a spot-on Louis Winthorpe voice, 'Like, oh, sure, he went to Mississippi State!' or—"

Well, I should do the voice.

[Over-the-top and with an exaggerated American Southern accent]
 "Oh, sure! He went to Mississippi State! Or, 'Oh, sure! She went to Simmons!"

[John laughs.]

[Jesse stops the... impression?]

Classic Dan Aykroyd voice. "Whatever the case may be. Upon hearing this, my wife rolls her eyes and groans. Your Honor, she thinks my shtick is derivative and tiresome. I say it's an original twist on a classic line that's funny because it's so oft repeated! Please order my wife to cease rolling her eyes."

00:11:56 John Host Yeah, I—I got this one, and I chose to only remember *Trading Places*, rather than re-watch it.

00:12:03 Jesse Host Yeah.

00:12:04 John Host I have memory enough to know that it is... uh... complicated and problematic for all sorts of reasons that were very common in 1983, that are receiving due interrogation now in the present. Fair enough. But... I gotta say, it is the first movie where I heard the term "pork bellies." I gotta give it that.

00:12:23 Jesse Host Yeah. Yeah, one of the—I mean... almost certainly the top comedy commodity.

00:12:29 John Host *[Stifles laughter.]* That's right. I mean, it's—it's not as—I mean, there's no way frozen concentrated orange juice futures... Well, I don't know! Which is funnier? I think maybe they made the right call, uh, Timothy Harris and Herschel Weingrod, in that writing. Because

"pork bellies" sounds funnier.

But the fact that this movie hinges—the climax of the movie hinges on a rousing—*[stifles laughter]*—short-squeeze scene—*[laughs]*—involving Dan Aykroyd and Eddie Murphy shorting, uh—or doing some stock manipulation around the futures of frozen concentrated orange juice, I think that's a little funnier. Frozen concentrated orange juice is very, very specific and funny.

00:13:09 Jesse Host Alright. I'll buy that.

00:13:11 John Host And I would say that there's a lot in this movie that probably holds up comedically. "Looking good, Louis." "Feeling good..." Whatever. You know. That is comedically sound.

00:13:23 Jesse Host Yeah. I think the last time I saw it was probably five years ago, and I was impressed at how much of it, uh, held together comedically. The comedies of that era are—*[stifles laughter]*—are not known for their, uh...

00:13:33 John Host Right.

00:13:35 Jesse Host *[Stifling laughter]* Their consistency as films.

00:13:36 John Host Yeah. And, I mean, it is itself an interrogation of class and race. In a rel—

00:13:41 Jesse Host A ham-handed one.

00:13:42 John Host Sure.

00:13:43 Jesse Host Or pork-bellied one.

00:13:44 John Host Yeah. But the—its intentions are clear. Obviously... you know, Jamie Lee Curtis, who is someone I love as a performer—her career, she admits, was completely changed by this movie. It got her out of horror movies and into *A Fish Called Wanda*, and on to an incredible career in different ways, is it—it supposedly—but, you know, without *Trading Places*, we only would have had *Doctor Detroit*. Dan Aykroyd's movie career would not have taken off, and then we never would have gotten *Nothing But Trouble*, which is a movie I find to be a lot more problematic and comedically unsound.

[Both laugh.]

So don't watch that one, either!

00:14:22 Jesse Host It's a real comedic *Titanic*.

00:14:24 John Host Yeah. But I would say that—so, comedically, though—at least what I recall from it, including this joke... holds up. Would you say that this joke, in the context of *Trading Places*, holds up? The Dan Aykroyd going, "Oh, sure, like he went to Harvard."

00:14:37 Jesse Host Yeah, sure. I mean, it's a—yeah. It's a satire of Dan Aykroyd's character's perspective.

00:14:45 John Host Yeah. He's an insufferable snob.

00:14:48 Jesse Host Yeah.

00:14:49 John Host Makes presumptions about people based on what they look like, and where they come from. What we call... a Harvard man. *[Chuckles.]* I went to a different college.

00:14:58 Jesse Host Mm-hm.

00:14:59 John Host So what's happening, though, Jesse—'cause you—

00:15:02 Jesse Host So did I.

[Both laugh.]

00:15:08 John Host Jesse, can we do a remake of *Trading Places* where we're the Mortimer brothers?

00:15:12 Jesse Host Yes, please.

00:15:13 John Host Okay.

00:15:14 Jesse Host You know there was a guy at my college who always wore a Harvard sweatshirt?

00:15:18 John Host The same one over and over again, or he had a variety of them?

00:15:21 Jesse Host I think he just had the one, and he would wear it—he would wear it, and you'd be—you'd say, "Dude. This is UC Santa Cruz."

00:15:29 John Host Right.

00:15:30 Jesse Host "What is the symbolism of this sweatshirt?"

00:15:34 John Host Right!

00:15:35 Jesse Host "Does your older brother go there?"

00:15:36 John Host Right!

00:15:37 Jesse Host Like, "What does this mean?" *[Laughs.]*

00:15:39 John Host What does it mean?! What is the—and this, I think, you—it speaks exactly to the question here. Like, when you—when someone wears a Harvard sweatshirt, or a Harvard sweater, at UC Santa Cruz, it's saying something, but you don't know what it's saying. Right?

00:15:52 Jesse Host Yeah, I talked to him about it. It says that he loved social dancing. Something called social dancing.

00:15:57 John Host Was he—*[laughs]*—was he wearing a raccoon coat and a boater hat as well?

00:16:03 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** Is social dancing some kind of 1920s college—?

Jesse: *[Laughs.]* I think—now that I think about it, when I talked to him, he was sitting on a flagpole.

00:16:08 John Host *[Laughs.]* Yeah, exactly. Got a bowl of goldfish under his arm?

00:16:11 Jesse Host *[Laughing]* He—you know, he fell out of a telephone booth, and mentioned to me...

00:16:15 John Host *[Pompous]* "Well, you know, Jesse, I enjoy social dancing."

[Back to usual tone.]

That's my famous... Thurston Howell III imitation. But I'm—like, my instinct was—*[stifles laughter]*—when I heard this bit about Kurt's shtick, like—I get it. That's a funny... riff. On a classic joke. I could see how that could be funny. I could see that that would be funny.

But then I kinda dug into it a little bit more deeply, and I'm like, well... what is this joke doing? We know what the Dan Aykroyd joke is

doing. It is presenting the point of view of an insufferable snob. But Jesse, you're a student of comedy, and a practitioner. You're a practitioner student.

- 00:16:58 Jesse Host Yeah, I'm a student and practitioner of comedy, and a student and practitioner of American Studies at UC Santa Cruz.
- 00:17:04 John Host There you go. So if you were to unpack Kurt's... inversion, or version of this joke, what is it doing from your point of view?
- 00:17:13 Jesse Host Bothering his wife.
- 00:17:15 John Host *[Laughs.]* You're saying that intrinsically, it has no comedic value whatsoever.
- 00:17:22 Jesse Host *[Stifling laughter]* The premise of this joke is that he is upsetting the person he loves most in the world.
- 00:17:30 John Host Well, if you're talking about me, John Hodgman, you're right. I'm a little upset by this joke in a way I didn't expect to be at first. Because at first, I was like, "Okay. I get that you take pleasure out of it, because you're repeating a bad joke in front of your wife. And it's that kind of anti-humor of constant repetition of the dumbest thing."

But intrinsically, I was kind of like—it was kind of funny to go like, "Oh, sure, he went to blah blah blah." Like, whatever it was. You know? Like...

And if it's a random sample of college regalia that will trigger Kurt's joke... I'm gonna tell you, Jesse, I'm into it. I think that's kind of—it's stupid. And annoying. But kind of funny. If every—whatever the college or university is that they see. If it's a random application of quote-unquote snobbery, or performative snobbery, that's funny.

But I'm curious about the examples that Kurt gave. Mississippi State. And Simmons College, now Simmons University, in Massachusetts. I'm not sure whether he's making fun of snobs, or being one.

- 00:18:45 John Host Is he trying to suggest—is the inversion of the joke that it would be stupid to be snobby about going to Mississippi State? Which—I don't know anything about that institution, but I'm sure it has its pros and its cons, and the people who go there go there in good faith, trying to get an education and better themselves. Like, why would we make fun of that particular institution?

You know, I hope you're not out there, Kurt, making fun of any of the incredible alums from Simmons College. Like Gwen Ifill! Of *PBS NewsHour!* American journalistic hero. Or Barbara Margolis, a prisoner's rights advocate who served as the official greeter of New York City. I'm sure you're not making fun of Simmons College, which first admitted Black students in 1914, and eschewed all racial and religious quotas, and was one of the most accepting universities or colleges of its time.

Or that you're making—I'm sure you're not making fun of women's—women-focused undergraduate education in general. I mean, I hope that you're not, Kurt. But only you know that.

So... I would say this. Just as it's important to analyze *Trading Places*—and probably while we're at it, Jesse, we should probably

re-analyze *Analyze This* and *Analyze That*. Who knows? Who knows what's going—I don't remember those movies. I didn't see 'em.

[Stifles laughter.]

00:20:10 John Host But it is just important to make sure that you're being careful with your comedy, and to analyze it. I encourage you, Kurt, before you make this joke again, to look at what your premise is. And make sure it's saying what you want it to say.

And I would say until you do that, I order a stay of making this joke for one calendar year. A—you are prohibited from making this joke for one year. Give your wife a well-deserved break while you explore your comedic premises, and also, what else should I punish him with, Jesse?

00:20:47 Jesse Host One day a week—most likely Saturday if he's a churchgoer, Sunday if he isn't—he has to wear a Harvard sweatshirt. A hoodie. You know, the burgundy kind.

00:20:58 John Host *[Sighs.]* Wow. And then one evening a week, a Harvard tie? I mean, surely that's got to be...

00:21:05 Jesse Host *[Chuckles.]* Oh. Yeah. He has to wear a Harvard tie to the club.

[John laughs quietly.]

00:21:08 Sound Effect Sound Effect *[Three gavel bangs.]*

00:21:10 John Host Producer Jennifer Marmor, has Elliott Kalan called back yet?

00:21:13 Jennifer Marmor Producer Not yet.

00:21:14 John Host Okay. Keep an eye out. I really wanna answer that question!

00:21:17 Jesse Host *[Stifles laughter.]* We're gonna take a quick break to hear from this week's partners. We'll be back with more cases to clear from the docket on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

00:21:26 Sound Effect Transition *[Three gavel bangs.]*

00:21:29 Jesse Promo It's the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast, as always, brought to you by you, the members of MaximumFun.org. All of the folks who've gone to MaximumFun.org/join.

We're also supported this week by our friends at Brooklinen!

00:21:46 John Promo Jesse Thorn, you know that I am a—I'm a Brooklinen convert. Hundred percent. I like Brooklinen so much that my classic combination of graphite sheets with graphic and steel oxford stripe comforter cover is now known as the Hodgman Collection.

00:22:04 Jesse Promo Sure.

00:22:05 John Promo Anyone who gets any bedding from Brooklinen that gets them in that color combo, send me a photo. I wanna see your version of what my bed looks like.

Everyone deserves to sleep in ultimate comfort, and that starts with your bedsheets, your comforter, your pillows. Brooklinen can help you get your best sleep.

00:22:22 Jesse Promo You know, John, it was just 92 degrees here in Los Angeles.

00:22:27 John Promo Right.

00:22:29	Jesse	Promo	Spring has sprung fully.
00:22:30	John	Promo	Right.
00:22:32	Jesse	Promo	It's the time to get yourself some cute little loungewear shorts!
00:22:34	John	Promo	Oh!
00:22:36	Jesse	Promo	That's what time it is, baby! Get yourself those Bleecker shorts made of French terry!
00:22:40	John	Promo	Whoa!
00:22:41	Jesse	Promo	<i>[French pronunciation]</i> Adorable!
00:22:42	John	Promo	Yeah!
00:22:43	Jesse	Promo	Lounge in style!
00:22:44	John	Promo	Those are really cute shorts!
00:22:45	Jesse	Promo	Yeah, they're little cuties, there's no doubt about it!
00:22:47	John	Promo	And look, if—if you favor your calves, like I do, over your thighs... there's the slightly longer Bowery short!
00:22:55	Jesse	Promo	Mm-hm!
00:22:56	John	Promo	Bleecker and Bowery! Named for—
00:22:57	Jesse	Promo	You got it.
00:22:58	John	Promo	Named for streets in New York City, where I live now!
00:23:01	Jesse	Promo	Treat yourself to ultimate comfort with Brooklinen's comforter collection.
00:23:05	John	Promo	Go to Brooklinen.com and use promo code "Hodgman" to get \$25 off with a minimum purchase of \$100.
00:23:13	Jesse	Promo	That's B-R-O-O-K-L-I-N-E-N.com , and enter promo code "Hodgman" for \$25 off with a minimum purchase of a hundred dollars.
00:23:25	John	Promo	That's Brooklinen.com , promo code "Hodgman."
00:23:29	Jesse	Promo	We're also supported this week by our friends at Babbel! John, have you learned any new phrases lately?
00:23:36	John	Promo	Foreign phrases, in other languages, you mean?
00:23:39	Jesse	Promo	<i>[Stifling laughter]</i> Yeah, well, either one. Whatever seems most appropriate to the moment.
00:23:43	John	Promo	Mais oui, Jesse!
			<i>[Jesse laughs quietly, John stifles laughter.]</i>
			Here is my foreign language phrase of the week: Ce si ne pas un monstre de Frankenstein!
			<i>[Jesse laughs.]</i>
			Se si ne paz un monstre Frankenstein!
00:23:56	Jesse	Promo	Ooh la la!
00:23:57	John	Promo	You'll figure out what that means later in the episode. I learned French in high school, Jesse.
00:24:02	Jesse	Promo	Yeah?

00:24:03	John	Promo	I <u>loved</u> learning French. I <u>loved</u> Joe McClellan, the permanent substitute teacher in the French department, who wore a beret and rode a motorcycle. I actually enjoyed Language Lab, because I like vinyl records and wearing headphones. I <u>love</u> sitting in a booth. I feel safe in a booth. I feel like I'm part of a big machine.
00:24:20	Jesse	Promo	Oh, yeah. Doing your job.
00:24:22	John	Promo	Doing my job! But that was 1988. Vinyl records in a booth without any sort of feedback is no way to learn a language today! Not when you have Babel!
			Now, Jesse, as you know, I'm brushing up on my Spanish. Because I live in New York City, and like Los Angeles, this is effectively a completely bilingual city. I—it's a point of... good citizenship to be able to communicate in Spanish. And also we're planning our trip to Mexico City, which is gonna happen at some point.
00:24:51	Jesse	Promo	Sííí.
00:24:53	John	Promo	And to learn and brush up on my Spanish, I'm using Babel, the number-one–selling language-learning app. It's a fun and easy way to learn a new language! Whether you'll be traveling abroad to Mexico City with me and Jesse, or connecting in a deeper way with family, or the city in which you live, and your neighbors, or you just have some free time and wanna do some brain teases, Babel teaches bite-sized language lessons that you will actually use in the real world.
00:25:19	Jesse	Promo	Babel designs those 15-minute lessons with practical, real-world conversations in mind.
			"Where is the flea market? How do I get to the flea market? Do they have flea markets in this city?"
			<i>[John laughs quietly.]</i>
			Things you'll use in everyday life.
00:25:32	John	Promo	Of course.
00:25:34	Jesse	Promo	Other language-learning apps use AI for their lesson plans. Babel lessons were created by over a hundred language experts.
00:25:41	John	Promo	With Babel, you can choose from 14 different languages, including Spanish, French, Italian, German, and as always, the <u>inexplicable</u> choice of the <u>entire</u> Yale football team for fulfilling their language requirement: Indonesian!
00:25:55	Jesse	Promo	<i>[Stifles laughter.]</i> There you go.
			Right now when you purchase a three-month Babel subscription, you'll get an additional three months for free!
00:26:01	John	Promo	That's six months for the price of three! Just go to Babbel.com , and use promo code "Hodgman."
00:26:07	Jesse	Promo	That's B-A-B-B-E-L.com , code "Hodgman" for an extra three months free. Babel. Language for life!
00:26:17	Sound Effect	Transition	<i>[Three gavel bangs.]</i>
00:26:19	Jesse	Host	Welcome back to the <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> podcast. We're clearing

the docket, and we have a case here from Laura:

"Road trips! Stop any time for fun things and take your time? Or break land speed records with no breaks whatsoever? Judge, please settle this dispute. Thank you."

00:26:38 John Host Whoa, Laura! Swiftest question ever.

00:26:43 Jesse Host *[Stifling laughter]* She did not stop at the road stop to pee on that one.

00:26:46 John Host No, she made a land speed record! With that question—

00:26:49 Jesse Host *[Stifling laughter]* She always travels with a Gatorade bottle.

00:26:53 John Host There was nary a, "I beseech thee, Judge John Hodgman!" to be found. You know? No \$10 words. All good, solid \$3 words. Five-buck words, I'll say. And an interesting dispute. Jesse. Do you have an instinctive reaction to Laura's question?

00:27:12 Jesse Host I'm always torn on this issue.

00:27:13 John Host *[Exhales thoughtfully.]* I know, right? That's why it's a good one.

00:27:16 Jesse Host For me, when it is me, I'm glad to stop wherever—

00:27:20 Jennifer Producer Elliott Kalan's on! Elliott Kalan's on!

00:27:23 John Host Oh! Well! *[Stifling laughter]* Laura, you'll have to wait, because my friend called back!

[Jesse laughs.]

Elliott Kalan, it's John Hodgman! Thank you for calling in! Uhhh, as you know, I host the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast, and, uh, we are—you and I are friends. You're on the *Flop House* podcast, also a member of Maximum Fun.

00:27:40 Elliott Kalan Guest Mm-hm. Yes.

00:27:41 John Host And we co-hosted the *I, Podius* miniseries on Maximum Fun. But one thing I know about you aside from the things that I just said—

00:27:48 Jesse Host Thank you, John, for reminding Elliott that the two of you have met.

[Elliott laughs.]

00:27:52 John Host I just—I don't—I would hope that the listeners to this show have the context to understand who Elliott Kalan is in my life. And I know one other fact about Elliott that I'd like to share. You went on Jeopardy as a contestant.

00:28:04 Elliott Guest Yes.

00:28:05 John Host With Ken Jennings as the host.

00:28:08 Elliott Guest Yes.

00:28:09 John Host A lifelong dream come true. We were talking about our dream journals earlier.

00:28:12 Elliott Guest Aw, that's very sweet.

[Jesse laughs.]

00:28:13 John Host Had you ever dreamed of being on—like, literally had a dream of being on *Jeopardy* as you were going through the intense

preparation to become a *Jeopardy* contestant?

00:28:22 Elliott Guest I mean, by "dream," do you mean like an actual sleeping dream, or a fantasy? Like a daydream.

00:28:26 John Host A sleeping dream.

00:28:27 Elliott Guest I did not—surprisingly, I did not have any fantas—any sleeping dreams. I think all of my anxiety about appearing on *Jeopardy* was channeled through the anxiety dreams I already have, which are about—I'm at the *Daily Show* offices, and it's rehearsal time, and I don't have a script ready, and I'm like, "I don't even work here anymore!"

[Jesse laughs.]

"Why am—why am I responsible for this script right now?"

00:28:45 John Host Classic. Classic.

00:28:46 Elliott Guest So I think I just had more of those. Yeah.

00:28:49 John Host My nightmare of going back to high school as an adult, and not having prepared for the class, has been replaced. I'm now upped to working at the literary agency, and being like, "Why am I here again?"

00:28:57 Elliott Guest Oh, okay! *[Laughs.]* Yeah!

00:28:58 John Host *[Stifling laughter]* "I'm in—I'm in my late 40s. What happened?"

00:29:01 Elliott Guest It's interesting how your—

00:29:02 John Host I've not gotten to *The Daily Show* yet in my—

00:29:03 Elliott Guest Your dream life really lags behind your real life, in a noticeable way.

00:29:06 John Host Dramatically. Yeah.

00:29:07 Elliott Guest Yeah.

00:29:08 John Host I can't wait 'til I get that *Daily Show* dream!

00:29:10 Elliott Guest Oh, that'll be so sweet. I wonder if it's because your mind understands how fragile it is, and that if you were dreaming about what was actually going on in your life, you wouldn't know—uh, as the great sage once said—whether you are dreaming or awake. You know, whether you're—right now you don't know whether you are a man who used to be on *The Daily Show* dreaming you work at a literary agency, or a man who works at a literary agency dreaming that you used to work at *The Daily Show*.

00:29:32 John Host Is this how you introduced yourself on *Jeopardy*?

[John and Jesse laugh.]

00:29:33 Elliott Guest It is. Uh, they edited most of it out.

[More laughter.]

At the end of the show they say, uh, "Portions not impacting the gameplay have been edited," and a lot of it was me. Trying to—trying to just—*[laughs]*—meditate on life.

00:29:44 Jesse Host In the end it just was you saying, "Yeah, I am a comedy writer!"

[Elliott and John laugh, someone claps.]

00:29:49 John Host Uh, Elliott! Here is the dispute. This dispute is brought to us by Jeff. He and his wife enjoy watching *Jeopardy*. Jeff would like to be on *Jeopardy* at some point in the future.

00:29:58 Elliott Guest Mm-hm.

00:30:00 John Host When they're watching the show, they—as many people do—play along. And when they know the response—not the answer, of course. 'Cause the response is a question.

00:30:09 Elliott Guest Mm-hm.

00:30:11 John Host They will yell it out. But Jeff's wife does not wait until the answer is finished—

00:30:18 Elliott Guest Ah. I would—

00:30:19 John Host Jeff's wife does not wait until the prompt is over, and Jeff's wife does not always use the question form of an answer.

00:30:27 Elliott Guest I was wondering if—when you said *Jeopardy* question, I was wondering if it was gonna be about someone answering before the question is finished being read.

00:30:34 John Host *[Exhales sharply.]* Right.

00:30:35 Elliott Guest Uh, because that is—

00:30:36 John Host Like you just tried to do.

00:30:37 Elliott Guest Yeah. Exactly.

00:30:38 John Host Yeah. Right.

00:30:39 Elliott Guest Well, 'cause I'm gonna say, I'm guilty of the same exact thing.

00:30:40 John Host Yeah.

00:30:41 Elliott Guest I'm a much faster reader than anyone else in my family, so I know the answer right away, and I wanna shout it. 'Cause I wanna make sure that my family, who already knows that I'm smart—

[John laughs.]

—but I need to know, emotionally, that they know that I'm smart.

00:30:49 Jesse Host Yeah.

00:30:50 John Host You need to know. You need to know that they know.

00:30:51 Elliott Guest And that I know that answer.

00:30:52 Jesse Host And specifically smarter than them. *[Laughs.]*

00:30:54 Elliott Guest And smarter than them on that one particular thing. And sometimes—I remember in—there was one time—

00:30:57 Jesse Host *[Laughing]* Smarter than your six-year-old, for example.

00:31:00 Elliott Guest One time we were watching *Jeopardy*, and it was a question about Larry Niven's *Ringworld*, a book that I know nobody in my family has read or heard of, except for me.

[Jesse laughs quietly.]

00:31:07 John Host Yeah.

00:31:08 Elliott Guest And I still yelled it out ahead of time, as if I had to get there. Just in

case my seven-year-old had decided to get—dip into 70s science fiction lately. You know.

[Jesse laughs.]

00:31:17 John Host Did you yell out, "Larry Niven's *Ringworld!*"? Or did you yell out "What is Larry Niven's *Ringworld!*?"

00:31:21 Elliott Guest Well, I—Larry Niven was in the clue, so I just said, "What is *Ringworld?*"

00:31:24 John Host Okay.

00:31:25 Jesse Host Mm-hm.

00:31:26 Elliott Guest And I gave them a real look, like, "Mm? Eh?" And then I—and—

[John laughs.]

00:31:27 Jesse Host And your son Sammy said, "Well, I recently dipped into 70s science fiction—"

[Elliott laughs and claps, Jesse stifles laughter.]

"And *Ringworld* is..."

00:31:36 Elliott Guest And he was like, "Well, Dad, tell me. Who were the *Ringworld* engineers? Who built it?"

And I was like, "I haven't read that far in the series."

[Jesse laughs.]

But the, uh—I—so I totally sympathize with that. I would say that not answering in the form of a question, it feels like, if you have agreed ahead of time as—as a *Jeopardy*-watching unit that that is okay—

00:31:56 John Host Right.

00:31:57 Elliott Guest —then I would say it's okay. But obviously on the show, you would not get the points. And as they tell you in round one, Single Jeopardy, they may... nudge you. They may prod you to say it in the form of a question, but in Double Jeopardy round, they will not prod you. The training wheels are off. If you don't remember to say it as a question, you're just losing that money.

00:32:13 John Host *[Exhales sharply.]* Donezo.

00:32:14 Elliott Guest And then someone else is gonna scoop up and take it by adding, "What is" or "Who is" to the front. 'Cause the—here's the secret. It doesn't matter if the question that you ask is grammatically correct. You could say, "When is Ben Franklin?" They gotta take it!

[John cracks up, Jesse laughs.]

'Cause it's technically a question. You know?

00:32:30 John Host That's not—no they don't have—you're trying to destroy the competition. You're—you're mounting—

00:32:32 Elliott Guest They—no, they tell you that—they tell you that ahead of time!

00:32:35 John Host You're mounting a return to the podia.

00:32:37 Elliott Guest No, no, no. I am—

00:32:38 John Host And you're just trying to psych people out, including Jeff.

00:32:41 Jesse Host Elliott, could you just answer... "Is Ben Franklin?"

00:32:45 Elliott Guest *[Laughing]* I don't think that one is acceptable!

[Jesse chuckles.]

But they say, they're like, "It doesn't matter if it's the right question front. It just has to be a question." 'Cause they know people get nervous.

Uh, I think it's—it all depends on—in my opinion, on how you get the—how you agree on the rules ahead of time. But if it is really bothering the person you're playing with to—that you're not waiting until the clue is finished being read—and again, this is something I have been guilty of many times—then it feels like you are kinda not playing fair with them. You're taking unfair advantage of how fast your eyes work. You know?

00:33:17 John Host Could it hurt Jeff's training to be a *Jeopardy* contestant? Like, for example, I refuse to play Words with Friends, because I don't believe in Words for—with Friends. I believe in Scrabble with enemies.

[Elliott chuckles.]

And I don't want the extra letters—the extra—the location and the number of double and triple word score squares to mess up my knowledge and memory of the board, and the probabilities.

00:33:46 Elliott Guest Hm! Mm.

00:33:47 John Host So I won't—I don't wanna pollute my mind. Is Jeff's wife polluting his mind by not playing the game the way the game is played?

00:33:56 Elliott Guest She certainly might be throwing off his internal timing, of when he needs to be ready to answer the question, possibly. Uh, here's the thing. This is what—one of the things that tripped me up on—when I was on *Jeopardy*. But this, and also the fact that one of the other contestants was just much better at it. Than me. Uh, the other contestant was—I think we were at the—about the same level.

Is that you have to get the timing of when you buzz in to answer.

00:34:20 John Host Right.

00:34:21 Elliott Guest And it's very difficult to do. In theory, you buzz in when the person—when the host is finished reading the question. But really, you kinda wanna, like, jump it by a fraction of a second. So that you can get in in between the time when the buzzers are opened up, and before anybody else does. And so I think it's gonna hurt his timing if she is answering the question super early. 'Cause he's gonna start thinking that he has to buzz in halfway through the clue being read. When really, you wanna buzz in, like, as close to the end of it as humanly possible.

00:34:48 John Host Are you suggesting this couple should get marital buzzers?

00:34:50 Elliott Guest *[Beat. Thoughtful inhale.]*

I mean, uh... which—now—there's—marital buzzers could be more than one... item. We're talking about a—the—the—

[Someone laughs.]

00:34:59	John	Host	I don't know what you mean.
00:35:00	Jesse	Host	<i>[Stifling laughter]</i> Jeopardy. Jeopardy buzzers.
00:35:01	Elliott	Guest	Yeah. Oh, <i>Jeopardy</i> —for <i>Jeopardy</i> ones. Where I think they call them sig—they—
00:35:02	John	Host	Jeopardy. Marital buzzers.
00:35:05	Jesse	Host	I mean, <i>Jeopardy</i> does have a licensed line of marital buzzers.
00:35:08	Elliott	Guest	Of—of marital help buzzers. Yeah.
00:35:09	Jesse	Host	Yeah. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:35:10	Elliott	Guest	Now, uh, in <i>Jeopardy</i> they refer to them, I believe, as signaling devices. So I think maybe they should get a marital set of signaling devices. Uh, two devices, and then maybe a third, in case they wanna expand the family at some point. And then they—yeah. And they should just play it that way. If they did, that would actually be much better practice for Jeff. I <u>should</u> have done that when I was practicing, and I found out that the—
00:35:34	John	Host	Instead of dominating your children, you should have used a marital—
00:35:36	Elliott	Guest	<i>[Laughing]</i> Exactly!
00:35:37	John	Host	—or a family signal device?
00:35:38	Elliott	Guest	Should've used a signaling device. The guy who was the champion when I was on, he said at one point—he was like, "Oh, yeah. Well, I found a used signaling device that was similar to the one used on <i>Jeopardy</i> , and I practiced on that." And I was like, "Well. He certainly wanted this more than I did." Because I did not go to that length. <i>[Jesse laughs.]</i> I—I'll wrap a bunch of masking tape around a pen. Around a click pen, to make it feel like a buzzer device. But I didn't go all the way to buying a used one. So I think—yeah! And I think—you know what? I think this could bring back a certain, um... enjoyable competitiveness to their relationship?
00:36:09	John	Host	Mm-hm.
00:36:11	Elliott	Guest	Where neither has an edge. It's a level playing field. And it becomes more—
00:36:13	John	Host	I don't like the way you're wagging your eyebrows when you say, "enjoyable competitiveness."
00:36:16	Elliott	Guest	Mm, no, and it'd be— <i>[laughs]</i> —because—no, the same—the way that, like, uh—you know—
00:36:19	John	Host	This is getting a little—Elliott Kalan's getting saucy in a way that makes me a little uncomfortable.
00:36:22	Elliott	Guest	No, no. Just in the way where you see—you see movies about, like,

married thieves who are always trying to out—or married conmen, who are always trying to, like, outsmart each other.

00:36:30 John Host

Right.

00:36:31 Elliott Guest

You know, and that's how they keep things—the spice alive.

00:36:32 John Host

Yeah!

00:36:34 Elliott Guest

As opposed to how you would keep the spice alive in the *Dune* universe, which is by going to the planet Arrakis and—

00:36:37 John Host

No. Stop it. Can we—can you mute him?

[Elliott and Jesse laugh.]

Can you mute him, Jennifer? Mute him immediately.

[Jesse laughs.]

We don't need this. We don't need to go down this... sandworm hole.
[Laughs.]

Elliott Kalan, what is the exact ruling that I was planning to give? That's my answer, and it's correct! That one that you said!

[Elliott, Jesse, and John laugh.]

Thank you! Thank you!

00:37:00 Elliott Guest

"What is," and then—and then all the stuff I said. Yeah.

00:37:02 John Host

And when is it? Elliott, don't go away.

[Elliott laughs.]

Real quick. Here we go. This is from Laura. I want you to weigh in on this, 'cause we were just getting into this when you called. Thank you for calling, by the way.

00:37:11 Elliott Guest

Oh, sure. Oh, my pleasure. And I apologize; I wasn't there when you first called and left a message. Um, I was—it was personal stuff. You don't need to know about it. Alright, I'll tell you.

00:37:21 John Host

Oh, boy.

00:37:24 Elliott Guest

I was, uh—*[stifles laughter]*—I was just re-living the questions I got wrong on *Jeopardy*, and telling my—kicking myself about not answering correctly.

[Jesse laughs.]

00:37:31 John Host

Give me the answer that you—the response that you wish you had given. When you're falling asleep, and you think of this response that you should have given. And it wakes you up, and you don't sleep for the rest of the night.

00:37:43 Elliott Guest

I mean, to be honest, what really makes me fall—what really keeps me up is other episodes where there were questions—there were better Final Jeopardies that I would have gotten. And I'll be like, "Why didn't I get that one?!"

But, uh—so the Final Jeopardy question, you were supposed to name the biggest and smallest countries that border the Mediterranean Sea.

00:37:57 John Host Okay.

00:37:58 Elliott Guest And I did not have enough time to think through it, so I just started writing down the names of countries. And I realized after the fact, I should have written a joke answer to save face in that moment. And I should have written, "What is a very big country and a very little country?"

[John snorts.]

00:38:11 John Host And I'm kicking myself that I didn't do that dumb joke. *[Laughs.]* Let me tell you something—let me tell you something. The—that would have been a disaster.

[Elliott laughs.]

00:38:15 Jesse Host Yeah.

00:38:17 John Host That would've been—you would've been... so despised on the *Jeopardy* message boards.

00:38:22 Elliott Guest Yeah. They don't like it when you don't take it seriously.

00:38:24 John Host No.

00:38:25 Elliott Guest Yeah.

00:38:26 Jesse Host There's only one great joke triumph in the history of *Jeopardy*, and it's the time that my friend Louis Virtel got a Double Jeopardy right and did snaps.

00:38:32 Elliott Guest Oh, boy. *[Sighs.]* I have—I have heard this story so many times from Jesse.

00:38:38 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** I'm gonna say—

Jesse: 'Cause it's one of the greatest things!

Elliott: *[Inaudible]* Louis Virtel snap story. *[Laughs.]*

00:38:41 Jesse Host I admire Louis Virtel, one of the funniest, brightest guys out there, and I admire that he got that Double Jeopardy right and threw up some snaps!

00:38:48 Elliott Guest There was a Daily Double that I wish I had gotten. Because—that one of the other contestants got. It was a question about *Fiddler on the Roof*, a musical that is a very important one to my family. We watch it multiple times a year.

00:38:59 John Host Sure.

00:39:00 Elliott Guest And I was so mad that I didn't get it, 'cause the—

00:39:01 Jesse Host We should mention that Elliott's family are fiddlers.

[John laughs very quietly.]

00:39:04 Elliott Guest I should mention, yeah. We—it's because—well, we're ethnically fiddlers. We're kind of, like, culturally fiddlers. We don't practice.

[John and Jesse laugh.]

00:39:12 John Host Um—*[laughs]*—I haven't touched a fiddle in who knows how long.
So you're—you're bad at it. You're bad at fid—you're bad at playing the violin.

00:39:14 Elliott Guest Bad at fiddling. I mean, I practiced—I went to fiddle school from age 9 to 13, then I had my—*[stifles laughter]*—I had my Bow Mitzvah.

00:39:21 Jesse Host *[Laughing]* Yeah. Yeah.

00:39:22 Elliott Guest And then after that, I just haven't touched the fiddle.

00:39:24 John Host You're also pretty bad at being on the roof, 'cause I can see right now on the Zoom—

[Elliott cracks up.]

—you're inside a house. That's, again—*[stifles laughter]*—

00:39:29 Elliott Guest Yeah, that's true. Yeah, we're fiddlers under the roof now.

00:39:32 John Host Yeah.

00:39:33 Elliott Guest It's—but, uh, the—I was—

00:39:34 John Host Alright. *Fiddler on the Roof* quesh.

00:39:36 Elliott Guest So the answer was just, "What is *Fiddler on the Roof*?" And if I had answered it, I—I think about this sometimes. I would have answered it like Tevye says "Fiddler on the roof" in the show, and I would have said, "What is *Fiddler... on the Roof!*"

[Someone laughs quietly.]

'Cause that's how he says it at the beginning of the show.

00:39:50 John Host Mmm.

00:39:52 Elliott Guest And it would have gotten a big laugh. My grandma would have enjoyed that.

[Jesse and Elliott laugh.]

00:39:56 John Host I think that that is just corny enough to actually get a big laugh and buy-in from the *Jeopardy* message boards.

[Jesse laughs.]

00:40:01 Elliott Guest Thank you, I appreciate it.

00:40:02 John Host But on the other one? You dodged a bullet on the other one. Don't feel bad about that one.

00:40:05 Elliott Guest Okay. That's fair. Okay. Thank you.

00:40:06 John Host Uh, "What is Gibraltar and... *[uncertain]* Egypt?" How'd I do?

00:40:12 Elliott Guest It's, uh—it's Monaco and Algeria, it turns out.

00:40:13 John Host Ohhh. Algeria...

00:40:15 Elliott Guest Algeria's the biggest country in Africa, which I knew, but I wouldn't put two and two together, and...

00:40:19 John Host Right.

00:40:20 Elliott Guest And Monaco's just this tiny little place that just exists for rich people to store their money. Uh... you know.

00:40:25 John Host Speaking of—

00:40:26 Elliott Guest But anyway. So what was—what did Laura write in about? *[Laughs.]*

00:40:28 John Host Speaking of Monaco, Monaco is the home of the Grand Prix—*[stifles laughter]*—race car race, where you are trying to break a land speed record, but Laura asks:

"Road trips!"

[Elliott laughs.]

"Stop any time for fun things and take your time? Or break land speed records with no break whatsoever? Please settle this dispute."

Jesse Thorn was just saying when it's himself, he's happy to stop and explore whatever vicissitudes of landscape, uh, or his own mind, uh, come up! Maybe stop at a little rest stop, right? Or a tourist attraction.

00:40:58 Jesse Host Yeah, I like to stop at the thrift store. If I see a town that seems big enough to have a thrift store, I'll stop at the thrift store.

00:41:05 John Host Yeah.

00:41:06 Jesse Host I like to stop at a local attraction. That seems fun to me. And I will also drive out of my way to eat a tasty local food rather than a side-of-the-highway fast food.

00:41:19 John Host Of course.

00:41:20 Jesse Host And the only one of those that I do when I have my children in the car is that last one. I will try and plan some food that is, uh, better than fast food.

00:41:33 John Host Yeah. That's—'cause that's something you have to stop for, no matter what.

00:41:36 Jesse Host Right.

00:41:37 John Host I mean, even if your children are impatient, and they wanna get to where they're going. I'm not sure if you've encountered this, Elliott, as a parent, that sometimes little kids are impatient in car trips?

[Someone laughs quietly.]

Constantly asking... *[stifling laughter]* "Can we go to that thrift store?"

[Elliott, Jesse, and John laugh.]

"Can we go to that thrift store?"

00:41:53 Elliott Guest My children are a little out of the ordinary, in that they are incredibly lazy, and just like sitting in a car.

00:41:59 John Host Nice!

00:42:00 Elliott Guest Sometimes when we're about to go on a six-or-seven-hour drive to my in-laws, my son will get in the car very early, and just be sitting there. 'Cause he just can't wait to be in the car.

[Jesse or John laughs quietly.]

And I'm like, "You know we're not leaving for, like, 40 minutes. And then you're gonna be in the car for six hours."

And he's like, "I just like being here!"

00:42:14 John Host Well, yeah! Right! They've learned not to have any ambition or passion in their lives, 'cause their father will just beat them at *Jeopardy* no matter how hard they try.

[Jesse bursts out laughing.]

00:42:23 Elliott Guest Exactly, yeah. *[Laughing, inaudible.]*

00:42:24 John Host So why not just—why not just go along for the ride? Let Dad drive the car. *[Inaudible.]*

00:42:28 Elliott Guest But I was raised as a—as a—stopping places and looking around. My mother in particular. We would go on driving trips, and she would do the research ahead of time, where she'd be like, "The Hoover Vacuum Cleaner Museum's on the way!"

[John or Jesse exhales sharply.]

Or like, "We're gonna go to the caviest cave in the USA! We're gonna find out what makes it so cavey!" So like, we used to do a lot of that stuff, and I really miss it, and I'm looking forward to doing that when my children are old enough that, like, they—I think they're gonna get something out of it other than just being bored and ruining my enjoyment of a room full of Hoover vacuum cleaners of all makes and models.

[Jesse laughs.]

00:43:03 John Host I mean, I think—yes. And first of all, those are incredible stops, and I definitely—you know, we did *I, Podius* as a thank-you podcast. *[Stifling laughter]* A thank-you second job.

[Elliott laughs.]

To the listeners of MaxFun, during the MaxFunDrive a couple of years ago, and we hope to get together and do a podcast again soon. And I think you and—

00:43:24 Elliott Guest Yeah, yeah. Love to.

00:43:25 John Host You and I on the road, looking for the caviest cave?

[Elliott bursts out laughing.]

That's definitely a post-pandemic pod that I would like to do with you. So let's put that on the list.

00:43:32 Elliott Guest Mm-hm. Oh, that would be great! Yeah, *Cave Boys*!

00:43:35 John Host But I—I think that—*[stifles laughter]*—I think "the caviest cave" is probably the best. That was your line, anyway? Why are you trying to—?

00:43:40 Elliott Guest Yeah, yeah. Oh, no, no. There is—no, there literally is a cave called

00:43:47 John Host the cave—that bills itself as the caviest cave in America. And so—
Alright. This is definitely—I can't. I'm so excited this is gonna happen.
Okay.

[Elliott and Jesse laugh.]

But back to Laura's dispute. *[Stifles laughter.]* I think—I think that Jesse and Elliott are correct! Like, there are a couple of factors. One, do you have buy-in from the rest of the people in the car? Everyone—I like to stop! I like to stop. I'd like to explore. And, uh—and—but you need to get buy-in from the rest of the people in the car. And also, it really depends on why you're traveling.

Laura asked about a road trip, specifically. And for me, "road trip" implies... it's the journey, not the destination. If you're just—but if you are just trying to get to Altoona, Pennsylvania, for example. Or Vacaville, California. Or Atlanta, Georgia. I'm—I'm presuming I'm a mindhunter? From the show *Mindhunters*?

[Elliott laughs.]

00:44:35 Jesse Host

Right.

00:44:37 John Host

[Stifles laughter.] Those are all the places they went.

Do you wat—by the way, how old are your kids, Elliott?

00:44:39 Elliott Guest

Uh, they're seven and two.

00:44:41 John Host

Do you watch *Mindhunter* with them yet? *[Laughs.]*

00:44:44 Elliott Guest

Not yet. Uh, we're—*[stifles laughter]*—

00:44:45 John Host

[Stifling laughter] It's a show about behavioral sciences, and killing people.

00:44:49 Elliott Guest

I mean, the two-year-old might like it. The seven-year-old gets a little squeamish around, uh, violence or peril.

00:44:53 John Host

Yeah.

00:44:54 Elliott Guest

But the two-year-old is very into, as he calls it, spooky stuff. So...

00:44:57 John Host

Yeah. My—my son is making us watch all the *Mindhunters*. And it's a great show! I had only seen a couple of episodes. I hadn't really processed that he had already watched the en—both seasons, completely.

[Elliott laughs.]

Like, in two days, earlier in the pandemic. He's like, "This is a good episode. Wait'll you see Manson. Wait'll you see Manson."

[Elliott laughs.]

Anyway! Um, road trip. Road trip means you stop, and you take a break. You gotta get buy-in from the people in the car. But if you're on a destination trip, then, you know, you wanna—you wanna keep it fast. You wanna keep it swift. I will just give this one shout-out, though. Because Jesse, your impulse to—I think I've talked about this before, but I'll say it again. 'Cause I'm not sure that Elliott knows.

Your impulse to go get good, interesting, local food, even if it takes a little bit of time out of your day—like when we went to Traveler Food And Books on the way to Boston from New York. A—it's a great—it's on the border of Connecticut and Massachusetts, and it's a restaurant that's also a crummy used book store, and you get a free book with every meal. That's great.

[Elliott laughs quietly.]

00:46:02 John Host

But if you are driving from New York, or really any point south of Massachusetts to Maine? Don't take the 295 cutoff shortcut that the map program will tell you to take, to save you seven minutes. Stay on 90, then go north—then right before you go north on 495, stop at the Wendy's in Southborough, Massachusetts. Mark my words! Harken to me, listeners! There is something about this Wendy's!

[Elliott laughs, John stifles laughter.]

I stopped at this Wendy's! And it's just a—it's just a normal Wendy's, next to a normal Cumberland Farms. And I got this drive-through burger. And by the time I hit the New Hampshire border, I was crying, this burger was so delicious.

[Elliott laughs quietly.]

And I have gone—made a point to go back many times. And I've been to other Wendy's, and they're not good. But this one is on point every time. So when you're road tripping, stop at the Wendy's in Southborough, Massachusetts, look it up. You can find it.

Any other—besides the caviest cave, Jesse Thorn, any other road trip must-see destinations, for when we're back on the road again?

00:47:17 Jesse Host

I mean, the honest truth is there aren't a lot of good destinations along the road from San Francisco to Los Angeles, which is the one that I most typically take. But I will say that it's—it's worth heading over to Los Baños. Um, not to see their famous baños. Uh, but rather to just enjoy some decent food. There's both a pretty good barbecue place, and a restaurant called the Wool Growers Restaurant. Uh, which serves—

00:47:46 John Host

Whoa!

00:47:48 Jesse Host

—Basque food. Now, the Basque food of Central and Southern California is—has very little to do with the Basque region of Europe. *[Laughs.]* Um, it is—it is a very particular kind of family-style communal table restaurant that serves, um, a variety of interesting foods. Among them, lamb. And it's very affordable, and really tasty.

00:48:17 John Host

Wool Growers is a great name for a restaurant.

00:48:21 Jesse Host

Yeah, it's a great restaurant! My children hate it, by the way.

[John snorts.]

Could not hate it more.

00:48:28 John Host

Jennifer Marmor, you got any road trip recommendations?

00:48:32 Jennifer Producer Yeah. Uh—*[laughs]*—
[Jesse laughs.]
 Um—

00:48:36 John Host Whoa.

00:48:37 Jennifer Producer Coming from Santa Cruz to Los Angeles, I would often check out, in Castroville, the world's largest artichoke statue. It's pretty cool.

00:48:46 John Host Whoa.

00:48:47 Jesse Host Yeah!

00:48:48 Jennifer Producer Um—

00:48:49 Jesse Host So tired of too-small artichoke statues!

00:48:52 Jennifer Producer Yeah. And I would make a point to drive on the 101 instead of the 5, because it's prettier. And, um, always stopped at Madonna Inn, in San Luis Obispo, to use the bathroom at least. Wonderful, wonderful hotel. All of the rooms have different themes. It's very floral, very pink. It's... I love it. I love it so much.

00:49:14 Jesse Host Pretty extraordinary place.

00:49:15 Jennifer Producer Yeah.

00:49:17 John Host Alright! I can't wait to go on a road trip with you guys, for a—like, a—maybe a tour! Like a *Judge John Hodgman* tour!

00:49:23 Jennifer Producer Ohhh, how novel! *[Laughs.]*

00:49:26 Jesse Host I know.

00:49:27 John Host Let's think about that! Let's plan it, and stop at all these places, and then... maybe not even do any shows! How about that?

00:49:32 Jesse Host Yeah. *[Laughs.]*

00:49:33 Jennifer Producer *[Laughing]* Sounds great.

00:49:35 Jesse Host *[Laughing]* I'm in.

00:49:36 John Host Well, Elliott Kalan, you are the co-host of *The Flop House* with Dan McCoy and Stuart Wellington, here on the Maximum Fun network. With new episodes available every... what day?

00:49:48 Elliott Guest Every... Saturday.

00:49:49 John Host Every Saturday! Can't wait to—

00:49:52 Elliott Guest Every Saturday, you'll either get a full-length episode or a mini, which is when we let our hair down, and waste everybody's time.

00:49:58 John Host *[Stifles laughter.]* That's right.

00:49:59 Elliott Guest Even more so than usual.
[Jesse laughs.]

00:50:00 John Host Often the minis are longer than the full-lengths. *[Laughs.]*

00:50:02 Jesse Host *[Laughing]* Yeah.

00:50:03 Elliott Guest *[Laughs.]* That's possible, yeah.

00:50:04 Jesse Host *[Stifling laughter]* Elliott, when you say "waste everybody's time," you mean in contrast to when you talk for 90 minutes about the movie

Supergirl?

00:50:10 Elliott Guest Yeah. Exactly. So this is—we waste your time—we're, uh, talking about, uh—well. Famously, for me at least, is a—as mentioned earlier, uh, there's a book called *Dune*.

00:50:20 John Host Oh no.

00:50:21 Elliott Guest And we had Tom Brokaw on to talk about *Dune*—

00:50:22 John Host Jennifer? *[Sighs/groans.]*

00:50:23 Jesse Host Oh, jeez.

00:50:24 Elliott Guest —and the trailer for about 40 minutes. So, uh... *[Stifles laughter.]*

[Jesse groans.]

00:50:25 John Host Alright. You know what? I'll back off for a second, because your 40-minute Tom Brokaw impersonation, talking only about *Dune*, was one of the greatest things I've ever had in my ears.

00:50:36 Elliott Guest Oh, thank you very much.

00:50:37 John Host Rivalled only by the time we got to share together with you in my ears on the *I, Podius* podcast. Looking forward to co-hosting with you the new podcast, *Caviest of Caves*.

[Elliott cracks up.]

Or whatever it may be. Thank you very much, Elliott, for taking the time to share your opinions here on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

00:50:57 Elliott Guest Thank you so much for having me. Love the show. Love to be on it. It's great.

00:51:00 John Host And next time you have a *Daily Show* dream... I'll be in it. I'll see you in my dreams.

[Elliott and Jesse laugh.]

00:51:07 Jesse Host Yeah, bad news for you, Rob Riggle. You're out, and Hodgman's in.

[Elliott laughs.]

00:51:11 John Host Yeah. Put me in the dream! Put me in the dream. I wanna be in—I wanna move forward with my dream life, from the literary agency to *The Daily Show*, and I need you to bring me along, Elliott. Can you do that?

00:51:22 Elliott Guest I'll—I'll try my best.

00:51:24 Jesse Host Our thanks to Elliott Kalan. Let's take a quick break. When we come back, another new segment: Frankenstein or No!

00:51:30 Sound Effect Transition *[Three gavel bangs.]*

00:51:33 Jesse Promo It's *Judge John Hodgman*. We're taking a quick break from clearing the docket. What's going on with you, John?

00:51:39 John Promo Well, Jesse, I took my double-vaccinated body—thanks, lifelong asthma—for a masked walk on Sunday. And I dropped by Books Are Magic to pick up a book. I'm back in the neighborhood, so if you need signed copies of *Medallion Status*, *Vacationland*, or any of the books I've written, you can just go to BooksAreMagic.com, please,

and order a signed or personalized copy if you wish it.

Or if my personally fondling and—and defacing your book is not a priority for you, you can go anywhere books are sold or loaned, as well as anywhere audiobooks are sold or loaned, and check out those books, *Medallion Status* and *Vacationland*. Uh, even though that guy in my dream sold more copies of those books, I'm still proud of them.

David Rees and I continue to work on... not one but two secret projects? But the good news is that these secret projects seem to be getting close to becoming un-secret. So I will tell you what I can tell you, when I can tell you it. But in the mean time, I urge you to check out *Election Profit Makers*, the podcast that David makes with Starlee Kine, and David Rees's friend from seventh grade and a whole human being in his own right Jon Kimball.

They are really kind of magical together. It's really a funny podcast, uh, arguably about current events. But David talks a lot about, um, sound manipulation through guitar pedals. And Starlee Kine has been doing some matchmaking for listeners. It's really just very, very good company. And I encourage you to check it out. It's called *Election Profit Makers*.

00:53:05 John Promo

And finally, MaxFunDrive is coming up! I'm gonna mention it here, and I'm gonna mention it later in the podcast. If you have a story you'd like to share about what the MaxFun family of podcasts has meant to you over the years, or even just this week... won't you share it with us, please?

Write to memberstories@maximumfun.org. Or call and leave a voicemail. 323-601-8719. Did I say it too fast? Just listen closely... after the break.

Jesse, what's going on with you?

00:53:28 Jesse Promo

Well, we have a really cool guest on *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn*, my NPR show. The great [Christopher Lloyd](#)!

00:53:34 John Promo

Wow!

00:53:36 Jesse Promo

Christopher Lloyd, 82 years old.

00:53:38 John Promo

Wow.

00:53:39 Jesse Promo

Still playing 62-year olds, has he has been for the past 40 years.

[Both laugh.]

00:53:43 John Promo

Yeah.

00:53:45 Jesse Promo

Christopher Lloyd, such a—such a fascinating dude. So Christopher Lloyd-y. He does almost no press, so we were really—

00:53:52 John Promo

Well, I was gonna say! Someone you—I don't think I've ever heard an interview with him before.

00:53:56 Jesse Promo

Yeah. I mean, he really is—he describes himself as painfully shy.

00:54:00 John Promo

Wow.

00:54:03 Jesse Promo

And, uh, yeah! He was really wonderful. And, uh, also,, uh, the lead

singer of the great band [Gang of Four](#) this week!

00:54:10 John Promo I didn't know Christopher Lloyd was the lead singer of Gang of Four!

00:54:14 Jesse Promo Yeah. Really into politically driven dance punk.

[John laughs.]

Highly influential, uh, to second wave dance punk.

[John laughs, Jesse stifles laughter.]

You know, your LCD sound systems, your—

00:54:23 John Promo Yeah.

00:54:25 Jesse Promo So on and so forth. So, yeah. Check out *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn*.

And in the Put This On Shop, we just added a new section called [Cards, Patches, and Games](#).

00:54:34 John Promo Uh-huh.

00:54:35 Jesse Promo Uh, right now, what it features—it's growing. But right now it features Dark Crystal trading cards, Rad Dudes trading cards, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles trading cards, and Yo! MTV Raps cards.

00:54:47 John Promo *[Whispering]* Wow. Look at that incredible—

00:54:49 Jesse Promo Plus—

00:54:50 John Promo *[Stops whispering.]*

That incredible drawing of Aughra on the Dark Crystal cards there. Oh my gosh.

00:54:53 Jesse Promo *[Laughs.]* Plus Bart Simpson patches from the 90s, and, uh, *[stifles laughter]* three board games I found from, I think, the 70s? One is called Ulcers. One is called Organized Crime. And one is called Los Angeles Scene.

00:55:08 John Promo *[Laughs.]* How many Dark Crystal packs do you got? Roughly speaking.

00:55:13 Jesse Promo I have one box full, so I mean, that's two or three dozen.

00:55:18 John Promo So it's not—it's not gonna be a problem if I order three right now? I'm not gonna—?

00:55:20 Jesse Promo No, please do! I—no, I encourage you! *[Laughs.]*

00:55:22 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** Okay, good. I'm doing—I just didn't wanna—

Jesse: *[Stifling laughter]* I encourage you to shop at my store, John.

00:55:25 John Promo I just didn't wanna, you know, absorb all your stock before this plug is even over.

00:55:30 Jesse Promo No. [PutThisOnShop.com](#), and don't worry. There's plenty more stock to be found. Check out the Put This On spring collection! Why not get yourself an [Abercrombie & Fitch safari jacket](#) from the 60s? Why not get yourself a—a [polo blazer](#)? Why not get yourself a [football watch fob](#) from the 20s?

We did sell our tiny green toilet. That is sold. So you—you can't buy

that tiny toilet.

00:55:59 John Promo Sorry, Jesse. I was too busy buying these sweet, sweet Dark Crystal cards. What were you saying about a tiny green toilet? Should I get that, too?

00:56:06 Jesse Promo *[Laughs.]* Yeah.

00:56:14 John Promo Anyway, PutThisOnShop.com, and you can use the code "VintageJustice" for free shipping on almost everything.

00:56:21 Jesse Promo Okay, I'm tracking—I'm tracking my order. I don't see—has it—is it coming to me yet? Have you sent these cards to me yet, Jesse?

00:56:26 Sound Effect Transition They're coming very soon. We'll be back—*[stifles laughter]*—in just a second on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

00:56:29 Promo Clip *[Three gavel bangs.]*
Music: Cheerful, jazzy, old-timey music plays in background.

Freddie Wong: Hey, you like movies? How about coming up with movie ideas over the course of an hour? 'Cause that's what we do every week on *Story Break*, a writers' room podcast where three Hollywood professionals have an hour to come up with a pitch for a movie or TV show based off of totally zany prompts.

Will Campos: Like that time we reimagined *Star Wars* based on our phones' autocomplete!

Will: Luke Skywalker is a family man and it's *Star Wars* but it's a good idea.

[Multiple people laugh.]

Matt Arnold: Okay. How about that time we broke the story of a bunch of Disney Channel Original Movies based solely on the title and the poster?

Matt: Okay, Sarah Hyland is a 50-foot woman. Let's just go with it, guys.

00:56:57 Promo Clip **Freddie:** Or the time we finally cracked the Adobe Photoshop Feature Film.

Matt: Stamp Tool is your Woody, and then the autofill—

Freddie: Ohhhh.

Matt: —Is the new Buzz Lightyear!

[Multiple people laugh.]

Freddie: Join us as we have a good time imagining all the movies Hollywood is *[accusatory voice]* too cowardly to make! *[Dramatic voice]* *Story Break* comes out every Thursday on Maximum Fun. *[Regular voice]* I don't know why I'm using this voice now.

[Music ends.]

00:57:14 Sound Effect Transition *[Three gavel bangs.]*

00:57:16 Jesse Host Welcome back to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. I'm Bailiff Jesse Thorn. With me, Judge John Hodgman. And here is a case from Rick:

"My five-year-old daughter was talking me through the cast of the Netflix show *Super Monsters*. She said that Frankie was a zombie. I corrected her, and said he was a Frankenstein. But she insisted any reanimated corpse is a zombie.

I read one argument online that zombies are supernatural, while a Frankenstein is reanimated through science. But really, aren't most zombies the result of viruses these days? And viruses are science!

Also, does it really matter that a zombie is a single corpse, while a Frankenstein is a collection of body parts? For example, if I sew one zombie's head to another zombie's body, is it now a Frankenstein?"

00:58:12 John Host Mm.

00:58:13 Jesse Host "I don't want my daughter to make an embarrassing mistake if she ever meets a Frankenstein, so would appreciate you clarifying the position.

In other news, your podcast through this pandemic has been a weekly source of comfort, company, and joy, and I cannot thank you, Jesse, and the rest of your team enough."

Thank you, Rick. That's very kind of you.

00:58:32 John Host Thank you, Rick. That's you, Jennifer. "The rest of your team."

00:58:34 Jesse Host Yeah. That's Jennifer Marmor.

00:58:37 John Host You're the rest of our team. Thank you, Rick! But this is not the place for praise. This is a place for judgment!

But! If you, like Rick, do have a story you'd like to share about Maximum Fun and what it means to you—particularly in advance of the MaxFunDrive that's coming up—please share it! Write to memberstories@maximumfun.org, or call 323-601-8719. And maybe we will share your story on the air during our Maximum Fun Drive!

If you're a Dracula, don't call.

00:59:07 Jesse Host You can send a voice memo directly to memberstories@maximumfun.org if that's easier. Just record a voice memo on your phone and hit that share button.

00:59:14 John Host Right. Right. 'Cause remember when I left a voicemail earlier in this episode? It was very—it was—frankly, it got me very nervous. I don't do it very often.

00:59:21 Jesse Host I got confused, uh, because, uh, this is a podcast, and, uh... you were doing something from 1988.

[John laughs.]

Like, we might as well say, "Call that 323 number and you'll reach our answering service." *[Stifles laughter.]*

00:59:35 John Host Exactly. But whether you call 323-601-8719, or send a voice memo to memberstories@maximumfun.org... no Draculas, please. We do not need Maximum Fun stories from Draculas, correct, Jesse?

[Beat.]

00:59:49 Jesse Host I hate Draculas.

00:59:50 John Host Right. So! We are not talking about Draculas. We are talking about Frankensteins. Uh, anyone who writes me a letter about Frankenstein's Monster? Do not expect a response. You know what we're doing. Talking about Frankensteins.

Now, Jesse. [Stifles laughter.] I found a photo of this character, Frankie, from the show *Super Monsters*. And I have sent it to you. In your opinion, this photo—which I got from the [Fandom.com](https://www.fandom.com) page for *Super Monsters*—is Frankie a Frankenstein? Or no.

01:00:24 Jesse Host Frankie is a Frankenstein.

01:00:25 John Host Frankie is a Frankenstein? Why do you say that?

01:00:28 Jesse Host He's green.

01:00:30 John Host Mm-hm.

01:00:31 Jesse Host He has stitches on his forehead.

01:00:32 John Host Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

01:00:34 Jesse Host He wears a signature striped shirt and shorts combo—

01:00:40 John Host Mm-hm! Mm-hm.

01:00:41 Jesse Host —that indicate the tattered clothing of a Frankenstein.

01:00:44 John Host Top of the head kind of flat. Right?

01:00:48 Jesse Host Top of the head is flat. Now, there are no bolts on Frankie's head.

01:00:50 John Host No bolts. Right.

01:00:53 Jesse Host Bolts are an important part of the revivica... Bolts are an important part of the revivification—[stifles laughter]. Bolts are an important part of the revivifi—

[Laughs.]

01:01:06 John Host Leave all this in.

01:01:07 Jesse Host Oh, please leave this in. Bolts are an important part of the revivi—revivification process!

01:01:13 John Host Right!

01:01:15 Jesse Host [Stifling laughter] For Frankensteins.

01:01:16 John Host They're the—they're the lightning terminals!

01:01:17 Jesse Host Yes. That's where you put the lightning into the Frankenstein to make it come to life. Uh, but, I mean, I presume that Frankie, being a child, is probably just the chi—the natural-born child of two Frankensteins.

01:01:30 John Host Well, that's the thing. Here's what I gotta tell you, Jesse. Frankie... is not a Frankenstein. Sorry. Based on the [Fandom.com](https://www.fandom.com) page for *Super Monsters*—

01:01:42 Jesse Host Do not—not for one moment can you tell me that he is—[laughing] a

Frankenstein's Monster!

01:01:48 John Host Nope! He's not!

01:01:49 Jesse Host *[Laughing]* Don't even think about it!

01:01:52 John Host According—well, I think technically his last name is is... Stein?

01:01:56 Jesse Host Mm-hm.

01:01:58 John Host But according to the [Fandom.com](https://www.fandom.com) page for *Super Monsters*, Frankie is—I quote, "He is a half-human, half-Frankenstein hybrid." That's a direct quote.

01:02:06 Jesse Host Wow, like a centaur!

01:02:08 John Host Yes. *[Stifles laughter.]* Exactly. Like a centaur, Jesse.

01:02:12 Jesse Host I think... humans should be allowed to marry Frankensteins! Love is love is love is love!

01:02:17 John Host I agree. And the [Fandom.com](https://www.fandom.com) page for *Super Monsters* does go to some length to explain Frankie's extended biological family and parentage, which... it's odd to think about in Frankenstein lore. I mean, Frankensteins hugging and kissing to produce live offspring is not part of the traditional lore, but I guess it's better than thinking that Frankie is made out of dead children!

01:02:39 Jesse Host Yeah. Yeah.

01:02:40 John Host Sorry, Rick's daughter. Had to go there. You know what I'm talking about.

01:02:42 Sound Effect Sound Effect *[Three gavel bangs.]*

01:02:43 Jesse Host Yeah. Stitching.

01:02:44 John Host Anyway, that's the ruling within the *Super Monsters* Cinematic Universe, AKA Universal's Light Dark Universe? I don't know. But what about in general, Jesse? What about these arguments? Is a Frankenstein a zombie? Or no.

[Pause.]

01:03:00 Jesse Host No, I don't think a Frankenstein is a zombie.

01:03:02 John Host Mm.

01:03:03 Jesse Host I don't think that viruses are science. I think viruses are natural.

01:03:07 John Host Right. Okay. I see your point. This is a contagion.

01:03:10 Jesse Host We fight viruses with science.

01:03:11 John Host Right.

01:03:12 Jesse Host Such as the vaccines that everyone is now starting to be able to get—

01:03:16 John Host Right.

01:03:17 Jesse Host —and I encourage everyone to get. But, uh—and the flu shots that everyone gets every fall, I hope.

01:03:23 John Host Right.

01:03:25 Jesse Host But, uh, no. I would argue that it's fair to say that Frankensteins are created by science, and specifically animated by electricity.

01:03:34 John Host You gotta—yeah.

01:03:35 Jesse Host Because *Frankenstein* is the—you know. The original text, in many ways, of science fiction! Like, it is the—it is that idea of what hath man wrought? You know, the—

01:03:51 John Host Half—half man? Or hath man?

01:03:54 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** You're talking about a—*[laughs]*—

Jesse: What half man wrought?

01:03:57 Jesse Host It's about a centaur who creates—*[stifles laughter]*—

01:03:58 John Host *[Laughing]* Creates—

01:04:00 Jesse Host —who finds a bunch of corpses. Um—and, uh, yeah!

01:04:04 John Host Makes them into Frankensteins with his hooves?

01:04:07 Jesse Host I think that's as good an explanation as any. Now, the definition of a zombie is much looser. Certainly it is rooted in, you know, problematic colonialist ideas about Caribbean religions.

01:04:23 John Host Right.

01:04:24 Jesse Host But since then—perhaps, in part, because of that—uh, those problematics—the definition of what a zombie can be has branched all over the place in various fiction writers' imaginations.

01:04:39 John Host In contemporary worlds, it is more of a contagion situation.

01:04:43 Jesse Host Yeah. And let's be honest. These things aren't real. These are fictional.

01:04:49 John Host Right. They're not like—well, I don't wanna say it.

01:04:51 Jesse Host Yeah. Neither do I.

01:04:52 John Host And these are stories. These are stories.

01:04:54 Jesse Host These are just stories.

01:04:55 John Host These are just stories. They're not, like, a real problem.

01:04:58 Jesse Host Yeah. ...Draculas.

01:05:01 John Host *[Sighs.]*

[Pause.]

Wow. Think about it.

01:05:05 Jesse Host Sorry.

01:05:06 John Host Yeah, I know.

01:05:07 Jesse Host Sorry.

01:05:08 John Host Eh.

01:05:09 Jesse Host You know, I don't think—look. This is my take-home from this.

01:05:12 John Host Yeah.

01:05:14 Jesse Host *Super Monsters* is hardly the worst show on television. *Super Monsters* is a perfectly nice show. I've seen *Super Monsters*.

01:05:19 John Host I'm not familiar with it, but I take your word for it. It looks very charming. Their—

01:05:22 Jesse Host It's a perfectly—it is a charming show. It's a—

01:05:25 John Host Their [Fandom.com](https://www.fandom.com) page is very nice. It's no Spirit Halloween fandom page, but it's good.

01:05:29 Jesse Host Right.

01:05:30 John Host Yeah.

01:05:31 Jesse Host I—I wanna suggest a different children's television show. That, in name at least, is just as—as my child Frankie—I have a child named Frankie—would say, "pooky."

01:05:41 John Host Mm-hm?

01:05:43 Jesse Host Um—[laughs]. Frankie and Gabriel, Elliott's son, share a love for the 'pooky. And there is a show on the streaming service Netflix called *City of Ghosts*.

01:05:56 John Host Oh!

01:05:58 Jesse Host That my kids have been watching. And it doesn't actually have anything spooky in it. It is—the ghosts are the voices of the people in various neighborhoods that the show investigates. And it is as beautiful a children's television show as I have seen in quite some time.

01:06:16 John Host Right.

01:06:17 Jesse Host It is an entirely unpatronizing investigation of urban neighborhoods and the people who live there, that is—that my children genuinely love. From my four-year-old up to my nine-year-old. They all really like the show, which is very rare. And it's very beautiful! One of the creators, I think, was a long-time *Adventure Time* employee.

01:06:38 John Host Oh! Fantastic.

01:06:40 Jesse Host So it's no surprise, given the magic of that show. But yeah! *City of Ghosts* on Netflix. I worry that it is... too artsy for, uh—for too many families, and won't get many more episodes. So I hope that it will, and I hope everyone will check it out, 'cause it's really gorgeous. It's really—

01:06:57 John Host Created by Elizabeth Ito, it says here on the Internet. *City of Ghosts*.

01:07:01 Jesse Host Thank you, Elizabeth Ito, for making this beautiful show.

01:07:04 John Host *Adventure Time* also a great, great show, and one that I enjoyed very much with my kids, and as well, um, *Steven Universe*, obviously. And now my top recommendation for a kids' show is obviously *Mindhunter*.

01:07:17 Jesse Host Yeah.

01:07:18 John Host Uh, it's on Netflix.

01:07:19 Jesse Host Mm-hm.

01:07:20 John Host It's about, um, an emotionally, uh, challenged, uh, person. Who becomes obsessed with interviewing mass murderers. In the 1970s.

01:07:29 Jesse Host Shall we dip into the mail bag?

01:07:30 John Host Let's not dip in. Let's diiive in!

01:07:34 Jesse Host Fantastic.

01:07:35 John Host We have a letter! And the letter, Jesse, is for you.

01:07:38 Jesse Host Oh, wow!

01:07:39 John Host They sent it to me. Because every week, I repeat my email address, which is hodgman@maximumfun.org.

01:07:48 Jesse Host Mm-hm.

01:07:49 John Host And every week, you... don't say your email address!

01:07:52 Jesse Host Nope.

01:07:53 John Host Which is probably a good decision for you. But that means people want to express themselves to you through me. Jacob writes:

"I greatly enjoyed the most recent episode, 510, 'My Own Avocado Creation.' But I was especially pleased to hear Jesse reference the composer Steve Reich's composition *Different Trains* when deliberating about the pronunciation of cray-on. Cray-on.

I am a music teacher, and a big fan of Steve Reich's music, especially *Different Trains*, *Music for 18 Musicians*, *Electric Counterpoint*, etc. In the spirit of homage, I present to you my own minimalistic creation, 'Different Crayons,' in the hopes that this fulfills Jesse's plea.

I'm a big fan of the show. Thank you for doing all you do."

Jesse, you did make a plea, after talking about *Different Trains*. For someone to create a *Different Trains*—well, what was your plea, again?

01:08:48 Jesse Host I think it was—I wanted someone to create a *Different Trains*—esque composition out of the musicality of the various pronunciations of the word cray-on.

01:08:59 John Host Cray-on.

01:09:00 Jesse Host Yeah.

01:09:01 John Host And here's what I have to say. I received... more than one letter about people complimenting you on your reference to the composition *Different Trains*, recorded—I now see, in—via Wikipedia—in 1988, by the Kronos Quartet. Uh, and everyone was like, "Oh, *Different Tra*—" and on the Reddit! At [r/MaximumFun](https://www.reddit.com/r/MaximumFun). Everyone's talking about Jesse dropping this hot *Different Trains* ref.

01:09:29 Jesse Host Yeah.

01:09:30 John Host And I'll tell you, in that moment on the podcast record, Jesse? And until this very moment, that reference went—[whistles]—straight over my head. I would not have gotten a summary judgment in my favor. I had no idea what you were talking about. So for those who still don't know, can you explain a little bit about what *Different Trains* is, and set us up to listen to Jacob's interpretation of it?

01:09:50 Jesse Host Yeah, sure. I mean, Steve Reich is one of the most famous, if not the most famous, composers of new music in the United States, or contemporary classical music, or whatever you wanna call it.

01:10:02 John Host Yeah.

01:10:04 Jesse Host And one of the things he's best known for is experimenting with media. Or experimenting with instrumentation. And *Different Trains* is one of his most famous pieces. It is a piece composed in part for tape loops. So essentially, the story of it is that Steve Reich, when he

was a child, his parents were separated. And he traveled during the 1940s, coast to coast via train, by himself, to visit his parents and—you know, serially. You know, go from his mother's house to his father's house, and vice versa.

And it occurred to him as an adult that during this same time that he was traveling back and forth across the United States between his parents' homes, uh, other Jewish children in Europe were traveling on what were called Holocaust trains. He realized that he as a Jew in the United States was, you know, traveling between his parents' homes, and other children during this time were traveling, in some cases, to their death.

And so he interviewed a number of people about their experience. He interviewed a pullman porter who had worked on trains, including, you know, ones that he might have ridden on when he was a child in the United States. And he interviewed a few Holocaust survivors who had been children who had traveled on Holocaust trains in Europe. And he composed a—a really beautiful piece that drew for its melodic inspiration on the melody in the voices.

01:11:41 John Host

Right.

01:11:42 Jesse Host

In those recordings.

01:11:43 John Host

Cool.

01:11:44 Jesse Host

So he—I think he originally did it on tape loops, and then I think maybe it can also be performed on, like, a sampling keyboard? But it is a beautiful and haunting piece that is... you know. It—when it comes to—*[stifles laughter]*—when it comes to new music, and Steve Reich particularly, weirdly one of his more hummable tunes.

[John laughs.]

Um, both because the presence of language kind of stimulates the remembering part of your brain, but also because there is so much melody in speech. And, uh—so, yeah. I was reminded, as we heard those little pieces of tape, and they grew more and more abstract, hearing people say, "Crayon" over and over.

[Both laugh.]

And I thought Jacob did a really nice job! Jen, maybe you could play—before we hear Jacob's. Maybe we could play just a little bit of the Kronos Quartet original recording of Steve Reich's *Different Trains*. Just a few seconds.

[Music fades in.]

01:12:51 Music Music

Different Trains by Steve Reich. Movement 1, "America — Before the War."

Orchestral music with a prominent string section. The piece gets faster and higher, and then slows down, plateaus, and quiets as the interview audio begins.

From Chicago
From Chicago

From Chicago
From Chicago to New York

[Music fades out.]

01:13:22	Jesse	Host	And then, uh, Jacob sent us his version!
01:13:25	Music	Music	"Different Crayons," by Jacob. After the first line, the music begins. Light, rhythmic percussion.
			Chip: <i>Liam, you need to go get your crayons.</i>
			<i>Liam, you need to go get your crayons.</i>
			<i>[Song continues more quietly as Jesse speaks.]</i>
01:13:32	Jesse	Host	The docket is clear. That's it for another episode <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> . Our producer is Jennifer Marmor. The rest of our team is Jennifer Marmor. Follow us on Twitter at @JesseThorn and @hodgman . We're on Instagram at @judgejohnhodgman . Make sure to hashtag your <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> Tweets #JJHo . And check us out on the Maximum Fun subreddit to chat about this week's episode! That's MaximumFun.Reddit.com .
			Submit your cases at MaximumFun.org/ijho , or email hodgman@maximumfun.org . We'll talk to you next time on the <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> podcast.
01:14:11	Music	Music	Ashley: <i>Okay, guys. You need to get your crayons out.</i>
			<i>[Line repeats as the song fades out.]</i>
01:14:16	Sound Effect	Transition	<i>[Three gavel bangs.]</i>
01:14:20	John	Host	Hey, you know what? I'm gonna Ferris Bueller you. You still here? What are you doing here? You think there's gonna be a post-credits sequence <u>every</u> week? Can't do that. Not <u>every</u> week. Go home! You got enough content this week. Be glad you got that cool song. Thanks, Jacob.
01:14:32	Music	Transition	A cheerful ukulele chord.
01:14:33	Speaker 1	Guest	MaximumFun.org .
01:14:34	Speaker 2	Guest	Comedy and culture.
01:14:36	Speaker 3	Guest	Artist owned—
01:14:37	Speaker 4	Guest	—audience supported.