

00:00:00	Sound Effect	Transition	<i>[Three gavel bangs.]</i>
00:00:02	Jesse Thorn	Host	Welcome to the <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> podcast. I'm Bailiff Jesse Thorn. This week, "Suing for Soul Custody."
			Elena brings the case against her husband Jason. Jason would like to sell his soul on a blockchain. Elena thinks this is a terrible idea.
			Who's right? Who's wrong? Only one can decide.
00:00:21	Sound Effect	Sound Effect	<i>[As Jesse speaks below: Door opens, chairs scrape on the floor, footsteps.]</i>
00:00:22	Jesse	Host	Please rise as Judge John Hodgman enters the courtroom and presents an obscure cultural reference.
00:00:29	Sound Effect	Sound Effect	<i>[Door shuts.]</i>
00:00:30	John Hodgman	Host	"Hmm. That Adam. He was a tough proposition. I tried him with everything, you know! Grapefruit. Bananas. Nectarines. Nothing! But finally, that apple!"
			Bailiff Jesse Thorn, please swear the litigants in.
00:00:49	Jesse	Host	Elena, Jason, please rise and raise your right hands.
00:00:51	Sound Effect	Sound Effect	<i>[Chairs scrape.]</i>
00:00:52	Jesse	Host	Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God or whatever?
00:00:57	Elena	Guest	I do.
00:00:58	Jason	Guest	I do.
00:00:59	Jesse	Host	Do you swear to abide by Judge John Hodgman's ruling, despite the fact that he has invested <u>his</u> lifesavings in something called Sassy Donkeys?
00:01:08	Elena	Guest	Absolutely.
00:01:09	Jason	Guest	We do.
00:01:10	Jesse	Host	It's a virtual good.
00:01:12	John	Host	Yeah. I'm telling you, Jess! Sassy Donks—that's the way to go!
00:01:15	Jesse	Host	Yeah. All the donks I've purchased to this point have been <u>entirely</u> fungible.
00:01:20	John	Host	Get— <i>[chuckles]</i> —get in on the ground floor of them Sassy Donks.
00:01:22	Jesse	Host	Judge Hodgman, you may proceed.
00:01:24	John	Host	Elena and Jason, you may be seated.
00:01:25	Sound Effect	Sound Effect	<i>[Chairs scrape.]</i>
00:01:26	John	Host	For an immediate summary judgment in <u>one</u> of yours' favors, can either of you name the piece of culture that I referenced as I entered this court of fake Internet <u>international</u> law? As we speak to you now, you are in Sydney, 'Stralia. Elena, what is your guess?
00:01:44	Elena	Guest	Oh. Um— <i>[stifling laughter]</i> —uh, I—
00:01:45	John	Host	You have one?
00:01:47	Elena	Guest	That wasn't quite what I expected. Okay—
00:01:48	John	Host	Oh, what were you expecting?

00:01:49 Elena Guest Uh, maybe something slightly less Biblical.

00:01:53 John Host We're talking about the sale of a soul here! Where did you think I was gonna go?!

00:01:57 Elena Guest I was going the blockchain angle!

00:01:59 John Host The blockchain angle! Well, see, you miscalculated, because... I don't know what that is, and many people have tried to explain it to me! And maybe Jason will succeed this time. What was gonna be your guess for the blockchain angle? Which is, by the way, a terrible nineties band.

00:02:15 Elena Guest Uh, maybe an Elon Musk Twitter thread.

00:02:20 John Host An Elon Musk Twitter thread. That's not impossible! I'll put that guess into the guess book.

"That Adam, he was a tough proposition. I tried him with everything, you know! Grapefruit, bananas, nectarines, but finally, that apple!"

Jason of Sydney, Australia, what is your guess? If I may ask.

00:02:36 Jason Guest Is it a line from the 2000 remake of the 1967 classic—

00:02:39 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Jason and John:** —*Bedazzled*?

00:02:40 John Host No! I thought someone would think I would go there, but no, I zipped when you zagged!

[Someone laughs quietly.]

I've seen no *Bedazzles*.

00:02:46 Jason Guest Such a shame. Great film.

00:02:47 Elena Guest Missing out! Great films.

00:02:49 John Host Which is the one that I should see? The orig?

00:02:51 Jason Guest No.

00:02:52 Elena Guest Definitely not.

00:02:53 Jason Guest It's a little bit too... from the past.

00:02:55 John Host Oh. Okay. Is it problematic?

00:02:56 Jason Guest Yeah, a little bit.

00:02:57 John Host Oh.

00:02:59 Jesse Host Is one of the main problems that it doesn't have enough Brendan Fraser in it?

[John laughs.]

00:03:01 Jason Guest Correct. And Liz Hurley. Let's face it. *[Stifles laughter.]*

00:03:04 John Host Really? I should—I should see the re-make of *Bedazzled*. But does that one have Peter Cook in it as the devil?

00:03:09 Jason Guest It does not. It has Liz Hurley in it as the devil!

00:03:12 John Host Alright! That's pretty good.

00:03:13 Jesse Host She was known as the Peter Cook of her generation.

00:03:15 John Host Definitely. *[Laughs.]*

I was definitely leaning older-school. To your newer-school. Because I was quoting from a film—a 1973 television movie that was a backdoor pilot for a television comedy that never got made. It was a workplace comedy set in Hell, called *Poor Devil*. Co-starring... Christopher Lee as Mr. Lucifer, the boss, whom I was quoting. And starring... Jesse Thorn, do you know this one?

00:03:47 Jesse Host

[Laughing] No!

00:03:48 John Host

You don't know?

[Stifles laughter.]

The poor devil who just can't—he's just a klutz, my goodness, and he just can't get people to sell their souls! And this whole TV movie is about this character trying to get Jack Klugman to sell his soul.

[Jesse cracks up, John stifles laughter.]

And the poor devil is, uh... Sammy Davis Jr. *[Stifles laughter.]*

It's an incredible document. You can find it on YouTube. Sammy Davis Jr., of course... never was a confirmed member of the Church of Satan in San Francisco.

[Someone laughs quietly.]

But he did apparently attend some parties there at The Black House. Anton LaVey's Black House, which was the headquarters of the Church of Satan in San Francisco, which of course was a—a secular organization. It was not actual Satan worshippers, but just sort of... libertines with a kind of "'do what thou wilt' be the whole of the law." I know, I know, it's Aleister Crowley. Don't get down on me. It was basically, like, Ayn Rand fanatics with goat masks. That was the Church of Satan.

Great movie. Which you didn't guess! So now we must hear the case, which is about blockchain... and about your eternal soul.

Elena, you come to seek justice in this court. Tell me the justice that you seek.

00:04:58 Elena Guest

Well, uh, late last year, Jason—who I describe as a bit of a wantrepreneur; he's always coming up with, uh, business ideas.

00:05:06 John Host

[Sharp exhale.]

Hold on, I'm writing that one down.

[Elena chuckles.]

Is that—do you have that trademarked globally, or just in Australia? 'Cause I'm about to make a fortune.

00:05:13 Elena Guest

I wish! *[Laughs.]*

00:05:15 John Host

"Wantrepreneur." Alright. Go on. He's a wantrepreneur.

00:05:20 Elena Guest

So he's been coming up with business ideas, uh, I—I'd imagine well

before we got together, but for the entirety of our relationship.

00:05:26 John Host Hm. How long have you been together, if I may ask?

00:05:28 Elena Guest We've been together for eight years, married for three.

00:05:30 John Host Congratulations.

00:05:31 Elena Guest Thank you.

00:05:32 John Host Okay.

00:05:33 Elena Guest Um, and late last year he was in the process of pitching me quite a good business idea, I think—

00:05:38 John Host Oh!

00:05:40 Elena Guest —and he added onto that, while we were on a walk one day, the fact that he would like to sell his soul on the blockchain.

00:05:48 John Host ...Alright! First of all, what was the good business idea he was pitching you? Am I—are we allowed to—can we *Shark Tank* this?

00:05:55 Elena Guest I don't think he wants me to share that, 'cause it's still one he's—

00:05:57 John Host Oh, it's proprietary!

00:05:58 Elena Guest —[laughing] he's considering.

00:05:59 John Host It's proprietary!

00:06:00 Jesse Host It's an app that's a sort of... virtual watering hole.

00:06:02 John Host Virtual hangout? Yeah, a virtual watering hole? Jason's Place? That kind of thing?

00:06:06 Jesse Host Mm-hm.

00:06:08 Elena Guest It's a bit "metaverse", you know?

00:06:09 John Host Yeah, yeah! No, absolutely, fantastic. Alright. You know what? I'll make it happen for you if you sell me your soul. We'll talk about it later. Point is, I'm not the devil. No one can prove it.

Second point is—Jason. Before we get into whether or not you should sell your soul... on the blockchain? A blockchain? I don't know. I need you to explain to me what is a blockchain. And I want you to understand that I'm not coming at this from, like, and old geezer, like, "What are these blockchains anyway? I think they're dumb 'cause I don't understand them, wahhh!"

I'm coming at it like... My brain cannot absorb this information. I want to know. Smart people—including Jonathan Coulton, my dear friend who has been explaining things to my dumb head for a long time, even back when my dumb head was functioning properly—couldn't get it through to me. Can you explain what a blockchain is? And then we'll talk about how you sell your soul on it.

00:07:02 Jason Guest Happy to. Uh, so, I think the best way I've understood it is it is a digital ownership certificate application, done with lots of different computers in lots of different places. But basically all it does is work really, really hard, and use a lot of energy to figure out who owns what.

00:07:19 John Host This certificate is a—is a bit of code somewhere?

00:07:22 Jason Guest It is. I think it's a—it's an entry into a ledger.

00:07:25 John Host Okay! A virtual ledger.

00:07:28 Jason Guest A virtual ledger, which no one pers—so it's not, like, your spreadsheet, say. Uh, or my spreadsheet, or the bank's spreadsheet.

00:07:34 John Host Right.

00:07:35 Jason Guest Instead it's a spreadsheet which lots of different people, uh, independent and all incentivized to get it right, work to get it right.

00:07:41 John Host Oookay. And so essentially you are—and, you know, cryptocurrency is... works because it is tied to, or connected to, blockchain? Is that correct? Each coin—

00:07:51 Jason Guest I think it exists on it. Uh, so—

00:07:55 John Host I don't—now you're talking—how can a—

[Jason laughs.]

How can a cryptocurrency be on a blockchain? They all—it's all floating around! In the... virtual *[inaudible]*.

00:08:03 Jason Guest In the ether! Right? Yeah. Yeah.

00:08:04 John Host Yeah, right.

00:08:05 Jason Guest Well, the other piece is—reflecting on your own, say, banking—uh, your money exists on the bank's proprietary—

00:08:12 John Host What do you know about—what do you know about my money? What is going on here?

00:08:14 Jason Guest *[Laughs.]* All of our moneys. Uh, exists on, uh, banks' IT systems. Effectively, you know, they've got a—um, a line which is, uh, the venerable Judge John Hodgman, and money. And you can then move that money to other people, or you can keep it, or you can earn some interest on it. But it is—it is sort of... like a blockchain, uh, without the whole—

00:08:37 John Host Okay, I'm not that old.

00:08:39 Jason Guest "Nobody owns it. Everybody works to fix it."

00:08:40 John Host I know how—I know how money work—I know how money works.

00:08:41 Jason Guest *[Laughs.]* Well, it's the—it's the same deal. So it—so just as money is kind of spooky—

00:08:45 John Host It's not the same. If it were the same, it would be the same. It's different. By the way, thank you for using my full legal name, The Venerable John Hodgman.

[The litigants laugh.]

I'm a little worried that you have access to my birth certificate, apparently.

00:08:55 Jesse Host But he can tell that you're wearing your mortarboard!

[John and Jesse laugh.]

00:09:00 John Host Here's what I got out of this, Jason, and you can tell me if I'm—

00:09:01 Jason Guest Mm.

00:09:03 John Host —if I'm on-target, or off-target. "Blockchain" refers to, uh, a—a

computer code that is unique and identified with a thing—a asset that you own in the virtual world. And that could be a coin, or that could be a non-fungible token, but this blockchain is the thing that indicates it is yours, and yours alone, and it is unique. Is that more or less correct?

- 00:09:28 Jason Guest Sounds good to me. I think—yeah. It goes to the idea of, like... Uh, there can only be one, or there can only be the set number, and it figures out who is owning that nominal... thing.
- 00:09:39 John Host Sure. The *Highlander* principle.
- 00:09:40 Jason Guest I think you did it much better than I did. So yes, thank you.
- 00:09:42 John Host The *Highlander*—there can only be one. Yeah.
- Okay. So. Here you are, having a stroll along the promenade of Sydney, Australia, with your wife. And you are pitching this incredible business idea. What was it, again?
- [Half beat.]*
- 00:09:57 Jason Guest It's not even that good, but because Elena doesn't want to share it, I feel like I shouldn't share it?
- 00:10:01 John Host Oh, okay! Alright! No, I understand. So apropos of nothing, you bring up this idea of you wanna sell your soul—
- 00:10:07 Jesse Host Jason, I wanna hear about this idea. Why don't I buy you a virtual drink?
- [John and Elena laugh.]*
- 00:10:12 Elena Guest Why don't you play a virtual round of golf?
- 00:10:14 John Host I don't know if you're dropping us a hint. But if you are talking about frof in the metaverse...
- [Someone laughs quietly.]*
- 00:10:20 Jesse Host Meta-frof. We just got rich, John.
- 00:10:21 John Host We just got rich.
- Okay. So you're pitching virtual frof. But too bad that Jesse Thorn and John Hodgman already—The Venerable John Hodgman already, uh, trademarked that. So then you're like, "What am I gonna do to make money? I know, I'll sell my soul on blockchain."
- How's this gonna work? What does this involve?
- 00:10:39 Jason Guest This is a very good question. So part of the genesis of the idea is I have some technical friends who like doing the spooky stuff on the blockchain, which frankly is—as probably my, um, articulation of how it all works—uh, technically beyond me. But they assure me it works in various ways, and they want to do something. Um, and—uh, so—
- 00:10:58 John Host Are you talking about wizar—*[laughs]*—wizards??? What do you mean, "the spooky stuff on the blockchain"?!
- 00:11:05 Jason Guest You know, they—they do the—the black magic coding thing.
- 00:11:07 John Host You're talking about Internecromancers?
- 00:11:10 Jason Guest Exactly. Yes. They're very spooky. And then they pass as regular

software engineers by day. But at night, they do all sorts of weird things on—on the line.

00:11:18 John Host Oh my goodness!

00:11:19 Jason Guest Mm-hm.

00:11:20 John Host This is, like, the new Church of Satan. Sammy Davis Jr. would be glad to join your club; it's quite a party!

Tell me about the spooky stuff they're doing online after hours. Are you joking me?

00:11:29 Jason Guest Uh, no, no! One fellow, um, has created a marketplace for NFTs. Uh, which tacks onto, um, the marketplace and the NFT platform of an Australian, uh, Web3 business called Immutable. So he—he's done that. And he's quite into the whole thing.

00:11:50 John Host None of this sounds spooky yet. What are you talking about, the spooky stuff they do? Like—

00:11:54 Jason Guest Well, I think—how it all work—

00:11:55 John Host Are you talking about legitimately spooky, like, "Toil, toil, boil and bubble," or are you just—?

00:11:57 Jason Guest No, no, I mean—I mean, like, digital—

00:11:59 Jesse Host "Spooky" in the sense that it's destabilizing the governmental and financial systems of our world.

00:12:05 John Host Ohhhkay! Sorry.

00:12:08 Jason Guest And—and facilitating the ownership of digital goods. Which kind of feel a little ethereal and not quite real, and the ownership you get through the blockchain feels a little—little spooky as well, in the sense of getting a—a gift—like, an ownership certificate, uh, pointing to a thing which anyone can download, so it's—it's kind of this—this social fact of ownership, rather than any practical—

00:12:30 John Host Yeah.

00:12:31 Jason Guest —exclusive rights to the thing you own. Right?

00:12:34 Jesse Host Jason, you don't have to explain it to us! We got seven stars named after us, baby.

[John laughs.]

00:12:39 Jason Guest Hey-hey!

00:12:38 Jesse Host And we got the certificates to prove it.

[Jason laughs.]

00:12:40 John Host Yeah. I just urge you to choose your words very carefully. Because—

00:12:45 Jason Guest Technical wizardry should be distinguished from black magic. It's all... metaphysical wizardry, right?

00:12:49 John Host Well, yeah! First of all, 'cause that's stuff scary. Yeah! Yeah. And when you say—like, I mean, all of these wor—like, when you say, "Oh, technically a—a bitcoin is on a blockchain," these words have no meaning. I need to—they're all—they're purely metaphorical. So when you say something is spooky, I have to ask myself: Is that a metaphor? Or are you talking about a g-g-g-g-g-ghost? And I don't

wanna have to—I'm trying to—I'm trying to help you figure this out. So don't send me down blind alleys.

[Jason laughs.]

Metaphorical ones. Or literal ones! With the enchanting idea that there are literal blockchain enchanters, *[stifles laughter]* who claim to be able to tag souls to blockchain. Which is what you—that's your innovation!

Alright. So you have some friends who are messing around on the blockchain, going—*[laughs]*—they're going out to parks late at night. Uh, drinking some Jägermeister. Doing some pentagram graffiti. Maybe doing some weird secret rituals on blockchain. But they're just kids hanging out and having a good time. No need for a Satanic Panic. Got it. How do you put your soul on a blockchain? Why are we even talking about this? It seems impossible!

00:13:55	Jason	Guest	So, it's the same as putting any physical artwork or digital artwork kind of on the blockchain. You basically create the ownership certificates <u>on</u> the blockchain.
00:14:04	John	Host	Okay.
00:14:05	Jason	Guest	Pointing to it. And you can—you know. You've got all sorts of interesting design choices, like, "Do I want to sell my whole soul in one unit? Or do I wanna chop it up into a lot of little pieces, and sell each of those?"
00:14:15	John	Host	It's the promise of a soul, like a dollar bill is the promise of a money.
00:14:20	Jason	Guest	Yeah!
00:14:21	John	Host	Or like when you're too cheap to get your parents a proper Christmas gift, you send them a card saying "This entitles you to one free back-rub."
00:14:27	Jason	Guest	That's right. And just instead of kind of the current NFTs, with the digital art kind of attached to it—all they do is have a link which points to, um, a non-blockchain, uh, part of the web where this digital file is stored.
00:14:41	John	Host	Yeah.
00:14:42	Jason	Guest	It would instead just be kind of Jason's soul. Or one ten-thousandth of Jason's soul, or whatever unit I want to sell.
00:14:47	John	Host	So—yeah, I can see a world in which this could work! If NFTs, which are just, like, a bad digital image of a... raccoon wearing a—a porkpie hat, or whatever, is selling for three million Australian dollars or whatever. You go out there with Jason's soul, buy a piece of Jason's soul, I've got the digital certificate to prove you own it... There are probably some people who would speculate in that market. That would be a big—a big market... innovation. Right? I've never heard of it before. Have you? ...No. He shakes his head no.
			Elena—may I ask why you don't like this idea?
00:15:23	Elena	Guest	Well, I've got two main problems with the idea of Jason selling his soul.
00:15:28	John	Host	Sure.

00:15:29 Elena Guest One of them, uh, comes perhaps from a bit of *Simpsons*-related trauma.

00:15:35 John Host Alright.

00:15:36 Elena Guest *[Stifles laughter.]*

From the episode of *The Simpsons* where Bart sells his soul.

00:15:40 John Host Mm-hm!

00:15:41 Elena Guest And, uh, has suddenly not the ability for automatic doors to open, and has no breath—

00:15:46 John Host Right.

00:15:47 Elena Guest And when all of the other kids are rowing to the island in the afterlife, he's on his own without his soul to help him row, so he just goes around in circles.

00:15:54 John Host Aw. Right.

00:15:56 Elena Guest And although I'm not a religious person, I am a little bit superstitious, and I like to hedge my bets.

00:16:04 John Host Sure!

00:16:05 Elena Guest And as a married couple, I'm—

00:16:06 John Host Agnostiics! We—

00:16:06 Elena Guest *[Laughing]* Agnostics, yeah.

00:16:07 John Host We make no claims, *[stifles laughter]* we take no risks.

00:16:10 Elena Guest Exactly. *[Chuckles.]*

So my concern is if Jason did successfully sell his soul, that upon, uh, our deaths, um, that might make the afterlife, uh, non-ideal. And we might not get to be together.

00:16:23 John Host Right.

00:16:25 Elena Guest And he might end up in some kind of purgatory.

00:16:27 John Host Right. I mean, we—when you consider all of the possible outcomes of death, there is one that there could be a literal... Heaven, with white robes and lyres, *brrring brrring brrring*. And there could be a evil devil down in Hell, poking Anton LaVey with a fork and making him cry, and Anton LaVey's going like, "I was only joking!"

00:16:49 Elena Guest And even if it's not that, we don't know if there is a soul, and if it's potentially useful. So it seems like—

00:16:54 John Host Right, it could be—could be handy.

00:16:56 Elena Guest Could be handy!

00:16:57 John Host Yeah, you might need it to help canoe. As you learned from *The Simpsons*.

00:17:00 Elena Guest *[Stifling laughter]* Absolutely.

00:17:03 John Host You're not willing to risk your beloved's soul.

00:17:05 Elena Guest No.

00:17:06 John Host Either for money or Internet spooky cred.

00:17:09 Elena Guest For nothing.

00:17:11 John Host For nothing at all.

Let me just understand what the stakes and the terms are here. Jason... I don't want a thousandth of your soul. I don't want a little bit of it. I want the whole thing. What are you charging for the whole soul? I'm gonna hang it on my—hang it on my wall.

00:17:27 Jason Guest I think it's whatever the person who is willing to pay the most is willing to pay.

00:17:31 John Host Yeah, I know.

[Jason laughs.]

But you've gotta have an idea—a hope of what you might be going for here. Think of the dumbest NFT that you can—what's the dumbest NFT that you can think of? I had raccoon with a porkpie hat.

00:17:42 Jason Guest Aw, the wacky whales. The whale one.

00:17:45 John Host Tell me what a wacky whale—

00:17:46 Jason Guest Oh, they're just pixelated whales.

00:17:48 John Host So, alright. Let me just explain to the other people who are not children in this listenership. An NFT stands for a "non-fungible token." It's usually an image, which in the digital age normally could be reproduced endlessly. That's what Walter Benjamin was talking as a—about. Art in the age of mechanical reproduction, that there is no authenticity to a digital image 'cause it can be recreated and replicated perfectly, endlessly.

Instead you tag one of them with a little bit of blockchain... juice, or whatever. And all of the sudden that becomes a non-fungible—that means it is not tradable for anything else other than itself—token. It is unique, and owned by someone, and you can sell it.

These wacky whales. How much does a wacky whale go for?

00:18:28 Jason Guest Oh, I'm not sure. I think—I think the whole set went for, like, \$500,000 USD.

00:18:34 John Host \$500,000. How many wacky whales you get in that pack? In that wacky pack?

00:18:38 Jason Guest Like, a lot. This is why I thought that sort of a ten thousandth might be a—a good angle. I think there was—in the thousands. So, you know—

00:18:46 John Host *[Stifling laughter]* Thousands of wacky whales.

00:18:48 Jason Guest Thousands of slightly different, pixelated wacky whales.

00:18:51 John Host Okay.

00:18:52 Jesse Host Are they different amounts of wacky, or all the same?

00:18:53 John Host Good question.

00:18:54 Jason Guest I think it's just thematically wacky. So I think more, like, different flavors of wacky, rather than degree.

00:19:00 Jesse Host Or just the juxtaposition is wacky, of the different types of whales.

00:19:04 Jason Guest Maybe the fact anyone is willing to pay any money for digital whales

is wacky? So it just sort of comes for free?

00:19:10 Jesse Host Let's take a quick recess. We'll be back in just a moment on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

00:19:15 Sound Effect Transition *[Three gavel bangs.]*

00:19:17 Sound Effect Transition *[Three gavel bangs.]*

00:19:19 John Host Here's what I'm gonna say, Jason. As soon as this episode airs, if I have not ruled in your favor and you've not already gone to market with the Jason's Soul NFT, someone is gonna put their soul—they're gonna hear this, and they're gonna be like, "Good idea." And there're gonna be a lot of souls available. Maybe the market'll be flooded.

But even then, the first person who takes the soul to market is gonna make thousands upon thousands of dollars. Is my guess. Get a lot of attention.

00:19:48 Elena Guest I believe that Grimes has had her soul for sale for a couple of years, and no one has yet purchased it.

00:19:54 John Host Oh! Okay! Well, I did not know that! I did not realize that! So—did you think this idea was original to you, Jason? Or have you been misrepresenting yourself this entire time?

00:20:05 Jason Guest I did think it was original to me. Particularly at the time I was pitching it.

00:20:09 John Host It was a terrific idea. Grimes—the pop star. This is why you were going with that, um—with that Elon Musk idea, Elena, right? Isn't Grimes the pop star—?

00:20:17 Elena Guest I may have had an angle.

00:20:19 John Host It says here on the Internet, "Grimes, the mother of X Æ A-Xii and girlfriend of Elon Musk, is selling her soul. Only there's not a blockchain in sight. It's up for grabs for a cool ten mil, but she hasn't made a NFT of herself. Alex Masmej, who did tokenize himself—" is the term here—"discusses the proposed sale. Artist Lincoln Townley says turning a soul into a token won't work."

This is from decrypt.co. Looks like one of the leading news sites in the crypto culture of today.

Okay, so it's not the first time. Grimes is up for ten million. Frankly, I think it's overpriced. I think a thousand dollars Australian probably would be a starting point. Would you dispute that, Jason? What would you be hoping to get?

00:21:04 Jason Guest My—my best case would be... a moderately priced Australian and Sydney home, in particular.

00:21:12 John Host *[Chuckling]* Oh, okay!

00:21:13 Jason Guest Um, but I would settle for a deposit.

00:21:16 John Host A deposit on a house in Sydney, Australia. Okay.

00:21:19 Jason Guest That's right.

00:21:20 John Host And what would be the amount it sold for where you're like, "This was a terrible idea. I didn't get enough." Like, obviously five dollars would be bad, but less than what? A hundred? Less than a thousand?

00:21:31 Jason Guest Uh, 50,000, I—I think?

00:21:34 John Host If you don't break 50k Australian on your soul...

00:21:37 Jason Guest That's right. It's a bit embarrassing, isn't it?

00:21:39 John Host You're gonna—it's gonna be a little embarrassing. Well, it's—look! I think you put a good price on your—on your immortal being.

So Elena, you said no. How did that make you feel, Jason? When Elena said, "No, I don't want you to do that."

00:21:52 Jason Guest A little bit hurt and deflated. Um... I felt like she didn't understand why I wanted to.

00:21:57 John Host Yeah.

00:21:58 Jason Guest And it got conflated as kind of being a bad business idea, where I think it's, like, clearly a scheme, rather than a business idea. It's a one-time arbitrage opportunity. Doesn't make the world particularly better. Uh, but is fun to think about, and potentially do.

00:22:13 John Host *[Stifles laughter.]* "Particularly" better! In what infinitesimal way does it make the world better? Other than I suppose making me have a good time. I guess that's true. Alright. Entertainment value.

00:22:23 Jason Guest Yeah!

00:22:24 John Host Yeah.

00:22:25 Jason Guest Uh, and something to do, right? Like, you've gotta—striving and, um... making something—anyway! Yeah. But does not make the world particularly better.

00:22:32 John Host But let me investigate that just a second more. Because you made a differentiation between "scheme" and "business idea." Define the difference between those two. And this would be a scheme. Not a business proposal.

00:22:47 Jason Guest Clearly a scheme, yeah.

00:22:48 John Host Right.

00:22:49 Jason Guest So a business idea is, uh, to create something which delivers more value to customers than it costs for the business to create that thing. And so it is kind of sustainable. It make—it genuinely makes the world better. Uh, people get a thing they wouldn't have got otherwise, or the flavor of a thing they wouldn't have got otherwise. And they're paying a price they're willing to pay, and the business is doing it in a way which is efficient enough that they make some money, and wacko, happy days.

Uh, where a scheme is much more—uh—

00:23:18 John Host A scheme is a thing you make up to annoy your partner.

[Elena laughs.]

00:23:20 Jason Guest Exactly! And it comes out of the same part of the brain. Right? Uh, but sometimes, um, an opportunity is not sustainable, and is not kind of wholesome, or as wholesome as a business is. Uh, it's a little bit dirty, and it's a little bit of a—you know.

00:23:36 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** A little bit—a little bit shady.

Jason: It's a—it's a scheme! Yeah.

John: A little bit—yeah.

00:23:38 John Host Like, how could selling your soul on blockchain not be considered wholesome? That's ridiculous. Jason, what is your background? Are you in business?

00:23:47 Jason Guest I am. And so professionally, I tend to have to put the—the sober, voice-of-reason hat on. Uh, when sort of working in a professional capacity. And so I think I have a lot of leftover business creative energy, which often, uh, fuels this constant stream of either business ideas or schemes. Which just come out of my mouth, whether I want them to or not, uh, to my trusted confidante.

00:24:12 John Host And so you felt deflated when Elena said no. For those of us who follow the—the Jason's Soul Market, your soul really took a nosedive that day. I'm lucky I stayed in, 'cause it has slowly recovered value and reinflated itself. But you were a—you were a husk of a human that day.

00:24:28 Jason Guest I was. I think I was a little bit hurt that Elena thought it was a business idea rather than a scheme, in that she thought that I thought it was something actually substantial and meaningful, rather than—you know, at least a thought exercise, and at most, you know, a little side project to do with some friends.

00:24:44 Elena Guest I would like to refute that.

00:24:46 John Host Please! Refute away.

00:24:49 Elena Guest Because I remember the conversation very vividly.

00:24:50 John Host Yes.

00:24:52 Elena Guest And I initially thought it was a joke. And probed further. And Jason was very insistent that it was a real idea, and even had a plan for how he was gonna market and enact it. And that was when I started to panic, *[stifles laughter]* realizing that he was potentially actually going to do it. Um, and said no.

00:25:11 John Host Yeah, but—I think, Jason, you would say that it is—it was not a joke. Nor was it a business plan. It was simply a scheme.

00:25:19 Jason Guest That's correct.

00:25:20 John Host Of the get-rich-quick varietal.

00:25:23 Jason Guest Very much so. And so there was a concrete plan. To Elena's point, there was absolutely a concrete plan.

00:25:27 John Host Yeah.

00:25:29 Jason Guest Uh—

00:25:30 John Host You didn't spring this on her on your romantic walk without having your deck available, to show her your 35 slides.

00:25:36 Elena Guest He did indeed. *[Stifles laughter.]*

00:25:38 Jason Guest Well, I had some pre-thinking down, but no—yeah—

00:25:40 John Host Wait a minute. Elena, did he bring out a—did he bring out a laptop and show you his presentation?

00:25:45 Elena Guest No! That was part of the problem.

00:25:46 John Host What do you mean? He should have?

00:25:49 Elena Guest If he'd had a really well-thought-through presentation, maybe he would have been able to convince me.

00:25:54 John Host Okay. Uh, hit me, Jason. This is your shot to convince both Elena and me.

00:25:57 Jason Guest Okay. So, the technical side is—

00:26:00 John Host Don't go on any blind alleys.

00:26:01 Jason Guest Alright.

00:26:02 John Host Don't talk about wizards.

00:26:03 Jason Guest Straight down the middle.

00:26:04 John Host Yeah.

00:26:05 Jason Guest Okay. So—so you need two pieces. You need, uh, fulfillment of the soul on the blockchain. And my technical friends can do that. And they might take a cut, but that's okay.

And then on the other side is you need demand. You need to kind of, um, do some work to get people aware that a soul is for sale, that it's my soul, that it's interesting—

00:26:23 John Host Jason, Jason, Jason. We all know that you can attach a soul to a blockchain simply by putting it on one! We know that you have secret wizard friends who are able to do it! But yeah! I'm wondering: Where's the market for this? Who wants to buy Jason's soul? How do you reach those people? What is your promotional budget? *Shark Tank* it for me, my friend! Tell me how it goes!

00:26:44 Jason Guest Excellent. So what we would do is—because we have no money, uh, to put into it—

00:26:48 John Host Right.

00:26:49 Jason Guest —is go for a PR approach. And so Australia—and I'm not sure if this is the case in the US—but our morning television in particular, uh, will put literally anything on the air.

00:27:00 John Host Hm.

00:27:01 Jason Guest If there is a half decent media release written.

00:27:03 John Host Sure.

00:27:04 Jason Guest And so the goal would be to hit all of those easily accessible, high content value for them, opportunities.

00:27:12 John Host Sure.

00:27:13 Jason Guest So we'd be getting into—

00:27:14 John Host You do the kook circuit on Australian morning TV.

00:27:15 Jason Guest You do! Exactly.

00:27:16 John Host Okay.

00:27:17 Jason Guest Like the person who married themselves, I would be the guy who was selling his soul on the blockchain, and they get to talk about blockchain, and *[inaudible]*.

00:27:22 John Host We have listeners, by the way, who have married themselves. So please, tread lightly. It is a valid life choice.

00:27:28 Jason Guest I apologize.

00:27:29 John Host Hannah did a great job.

00:27:30 Jesse Host Jason, what's the evidence for your claim you can get on these morning shows? What—what morning shows have you been on?

00:27:36 Jason Guest This is a very good point. Uh, I have not personally been on the morning shows, but, uh, people I've worked with in a professional capacity have gotten on for various things. Like... digital wills, or, um, mattresses in a box. Or, um—

00:27:51 John Host Whoa, whoa. First you're making fun of people who marry themselves. Now you're making fun of mattresses in a box? What, do you wanna destroy all podcasts?

00:28:00 Elena Guest He's very pro—mattress in a box.

[The litigants chuckle.]

00:28:03 Jason Guest *[Stifling laughter]* I'm—I'm actually quite pro—

00:28:05 John Host This is the lifeblood of all podcasts!

00:28:07 Jason Guest The Premier Australian mattress in a box business was in fact my employer for, uh, a number of years. So I—I am very pro—the mattress in the box.

00:28:16 John Host Did they get to go on, uh, morning television?

00:28:19 Jason Guest They did! But I think they ended up actually buying an infomercial and doing a comedic take on—on those infomercials.

00:28:24 John Host Yeah. You don't have any money; you have to book yourself on the kook circuit.

00:28:27 Jason Guest Well, exactly. Yeah.

00:28:28 John Host How are you gonna break into that highly—highly competitive circuit?

00:28:31 Jason Guest It's true. It's true. Uh—

00:28:32 John Host Send a press release.

00:28:33 Jason Guest Press release. You know.

00:28:35 John Host Yeah.

00:28:36 Jason Guest I know someone who does do these press releases for other people, and I could ask a favor, and—

00:28:40 John Host Alright.

00:28:41 Jason Guest —they could kind of dress it up appropriately.

00:28:42 John Host Beyond the television—the morning television circuit... Is that your whole plan?

00:28:47 Jason John It's most of my plan, I'm not gonna lie.

00:28:48 John Host You're putting all your souls in that basket?

00:28:50 Jason Guest It really is, yeah.

00:28:51 John Host Okay.

00:28:52 Jason Guest And hopefully from the back of that it's, you know, vaguely interesting enough.

00:28:54 John Host Any top target? Any ideal?

00:28:58 Jason Guest My—my ideal—and this also for personal reasons, I think. If you really... boil it down. Uh—

00:29:03 John Host I think a lot of this is for personal reasons, yes.

[Jason laughs.]

00:29:07 Jesse Host I think most of it's pretty civic-minded!

[Multiple people laugh.]

00:29:11 Jason Guest Making the world just a teensy bit better! Uh, no. Uh, there's a morning show which is hosted by a gentleman called Kochie.

00:29:18 John Host Uh-huh.

00:29:19 Jason Guest And I kind of wanna get on to Kochie's morning show.

00:29:24 John Host Now, you sent in some evidence, the two of you. Including some samples of, uh, David Koch. Okay. And he is—you sent in a photo of him, and he's—you know, he's in that classic TV contrarian pose, of he's got one arm under his elbow with one finger touching his lips whimsically. And, uh, some clips from his show. He's a very spry guy. You describe him—I believe, Elena, you sent in this evidence—as a "Boomer dad TV presenter that Jason wants to be interviewed by." Uh, Kochie is a—like, a financial commentator, right, on these shows?

00:29:59 Jason Guest Bafflingly, he's also the main anchor host.

00:30:02 John Host Oh—

00:30:03 Jason Guest So he manages to maintain a portfolio career of—he's got his own, um, Internet-only retail investor finance service. A media platform, which is his own kind of business. And he also is the anchor host on, um, I think it's called *Mornings*, or—or—

00:30:18 Elena Guest It's *Sunrise*, J.

00:30:19 Jason Guest *Sunrise*. My mistake.

00:30:20 John Host Oh my god—Elena. He doesn't even know the name of the show that he wants to be on.

00:30:26 Jesse Host That he knows he can get on.

00:30:28 John Host That he knows he can get on. What are you gonna do, write them a letter saying, "Hey, I would love to be on your show, whatever it's called"?

[Elena laughs.]

"I know Kochie! Let's make this happen! Signed, Soul Seller. Jason."

00:30:41 Elena Guest I think Jason is hoping that his idea is so enticing and appealing that that will be enough for them to want to have him on.

00:30:50 John Host Hey, first to market—if Grimes weren't already out there for ten million... If you could be possibly the first Australian, perhaps, I mean... I could see that could be compelling to a morning TV show. But you've got no—I mean, are—Elena, do you think that he's secretly hoping that you're gonna step in and be the grown-up in this situation, and like, remind him of the names of the shows that he wants to be on?

[Stifles laughter.]

00:31:12 Elena Guest I think that—

00:31:13 John Host Professionally?

00:31:14 Elena Guest —it definitely would only happen with my... genuine support and help. Because he's not that great at the administration side of things.

00:31:23 John Host I would say that your presentation so far—and this is not personal—but has been a little lackluster. This is a very interesting idea, um, but you're tell—you're telling it in a very sideways kind of way, and every now and then you bring up an idea and then you don't remember what the name of the show is gonna be. There's not a lot of pizzaz in this soul-selling scheme.

00:31:42 Jesse Host Yeah, I'd like to see you wearing, like, an outfit covered in dollar signs or something like that.

00:31:47 John Host Yeah, for sure! *[Laughs.]* I mean, I need to see some props. Do you know what I mean? I need you, like, mopping up a spill with an incredible—with a ShamWow or something, and going like, "This—this mop soaks up dollars because it's made of my soul!" I don't know, something like that!

[Sighs.]

00:32:04 Jesse Host Judge Hodgman, you remember Slim Goodbody?

00:32:06 John Host He was an Am—American television personality who wore a spandex suit that had all his organs printed on it.

00:32:11 Jesse Host What if we got Jason one of those?

[Elena laughs.]

00:32:14 John Host Oh, right! *[Stifles laughter.]*

But you can't find the soul, uh, on a map of your organs! The soul is elusive. That's what makes it so sellable. You don't even know if it's real.

Jason, real talk.

00:32:26 Jason Guest Mm.

00:32:27 John Host Do you—do you believe your soul is real?

00:32:30 Jason Guest I have to say yes, 'cause I wanna sell it... but I don't think I'm gonna miss it.

[Elena laughs.]

00:32:35 John Host I—*[laughs]*—I think it may be gone. May have—you may have lost it a long time ago.

Elena...

00:32:40 Elena Guest Yes.

00:32:41 John Host I know that you're agnostic on the subject of souls. He says that he has to say he believes in it. This is a scheme. Is he misrepresenting?

00:32:49 Elena Guest I don't believe that Jason believes that he has a soul.

00:32:52 John Host Yeah. It's gonna be a hard sell.

00:32:55 Elena Guest Although he has described himself in the past as a teacup agnostic. So... he probably believes there's, like, a tiny percent chance that it exists. But as much as—what did you say, Jason? A teacup is... orbiting Saturn.

00:33:08 Jason Guest That's right.

00:33:09 John Host I see.

[Someone laughs quietly.]

I thought that that meant you were neutral on whether or not teacups themselves existed.

[Elena laughs.]

Yeah, I mean, look—!

00:33:15 Jesse Host We can all agree teacups have souls.

00:33:19 John Host We can all agree that they have souls.

00:33:32 Elena Guest What are some of the other—*[sighs]*—ventures that Jason has presented in the past, Elena? And what—what does his habit of presenting them to you—uh, how does that bear on this topic?

Well, Jason has presented a range of business ideas and/or schemes over the years. Uh, some of them have been really good, and the only reason why he hasn't been able to do them has been just a variety of structural issues. So there was a really good bank idea. He was gonna start a neobank. But somebody else... did it first. *[Stifles laughter.]* Um—

00:33:52 John Host Mm.

00:33:53 Elena Guest He had a business when we first got together called Cash Goat, which... I honestly can't remember what it was. But I got behind a hundred percent.

[Jesse laughs.]

00:34:01 John Host I was wondering what this tea towel or something that you sent in—a photo of a—a tea towel, or an embroidery that says "Cash Goat" on it.

00:34:06 Elena Guest It's a—it's an embroidery of the logo for the business idea that I did, to—to show my full support of his... business nerdery.

00:34:15 John Host Is this your original design, Elena? This Cash Goat logo?

00:34:17 Elena Guest It is, yes!

00:34:18 John Host It's two goats facing each other. It's beautifully, uh, needle-pointed.

00:34:21 Elena Guest It's kind of like they're on a dollar bill.

00:34:24 John Host Oh, yeah, I can see that now! Cash Goat. That's pretty incredible. Jason... what was Cash Goat, and why didn't it work? When it had one of the greatest needlepointed logos of all time.

00:34:35 Jason Guest Cash Goat was a way for retail banking clients, uh, to turn themselves from cash cows into something much less attractive. It would aggregate your banking relationship and seek out the best introductory rates for savings accounts across all of the major banks

in Australia, and automatically move your money about. Uh, so that you could basically get that better rate.

00:34:56 John Host Now, you know what? That was an incredible presentation.

[Elena chuckles.]

Didn't understand a word of what you were talking about, but it had—it had obvious knowledge, it had obvious passion, and it had a plan.

00:35:05 Jesse Host And I think you believe that banks are real.

00:35:08 Elena Guest *[Laughs.]* He was working for one at the time, when he came up with the idea, so...

00:35:13 John Host Uh, why didn't you implement Cash Goat, and put that into the world? Or did you, and did it fail terribly, and now—now I'm making you feel bad?

00:35:20 Jason Guest No, it was technically difficult and it wasn't a big enough market. There wasn't enough kind of value creation in doing that, so it kind of went—was put on the backburner.

00:35:30 John Host Right. And goats don't have that much money! Traditionally.

00:35:33 Jason Guest That's—that's the point. You gotta shrink the cow to the goat. You know, that's the end state. That's the aspiration.

00:35:38 John Host I understand.

00:35:39 Jesse Host You know, John, they don't need that much money. I happened to visit some goats at a goat farm recently.

00:35:43 John Host Right.

00:35:44 Jesse Host There were some dried leaves on the floor.

00:35:46 John Host What—what happened? Did they buy them?

00:35:48 Jesse Host The woman told me, "Those are their Doritos."

00:35:51 John Host *[Laughing]* What?!

00:35:52 Jesse Host Dried leaves are Doritos for goats, so they don't need money. They don't need to buy Doritos. There's dried leaves right there. That's what the woman told me.

00:36:00 John Host I mean, in our household, that's a big slice of the pie chart. The Dorito expenditures are very high.

00:36:05 Jesse Host Yeah.

00:36:06 John Host If I were a goat, I could just be eating leaves for free.

00:36:08 Jesse Host Dried leaves, yes.

00:36:09 John Host Elena, is there a business venture aside from Cash Goat that you wish Jason had followed through on, that was not—that is not selling his soul?

00:36:16 Elena Guest Oh, that's a good question. Uh, he had a wonderful, um, funeral business idea that he did actually work on for a while.

00:36:24 John Host I—I would like to know more.

00:36:27 Elena Guest *[Chuckles.]* Jason, if you describe it, you should include the aqua cremation element.

00:36:31 John Host Yes, please include the aqua cremation element!

00:36:34 Jason Guest O—okay. Uh, so I was working for the mattress—online mattress—direct-to-consumer mattress business at the time.

00:36:43 Elena Guest Do a tighter, shorter version, Jason.

00:36:44 Jason Guest Okay.

00:36:45 John Host Wait a minute.

[Jason laughs.]

Let me just see if I can guess where this ends up.

[Jason or Jesse laughs.]

00:36:48 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** "You got this mattress—"

John & Jason: "—in a box."

[Elena and Jason laugh.]

00:36:51 John Host "Now use the box as a coffin!" Right?

00:36:54 Jason Guest It's—it's not, but—

00:36:57 John Host "When do you buy a new mattress? When someone has passed away in the family!"

00:37:00 Jesse Host "When your loved one dies, you simply slip them into the plastic sleeve provided, then attach a vacuum nozzle—"

00:37:07 John Host Yeah!

[The litigants laugh.]

Reverse! Reverse it! That's a little dark humor. Okay.

00:37:12 Jason Guest But the—I suppose the "in a box" was, uh, kind of relevant, at least thematically? But from a business point of view, what's wonderful about the mattress business is that the amount of money it costs you to acquire a customer is kind of paid up front, and it's—it's much better than other kind of business models on that count.

00:37:29 John Host Hang on—hang on a sec—hang on a second, Jason.

[Jason or Elena laughs quietly.]

This is what I wanna hear from you:

"Thank you so much for seeing me today, Judge John Hodgman. You know, people have been dying for a long time. And what are your choices when you die?"

[Elena laughs.]

"How do you lay your loved ones to rest? You bury them. In the Earth. Or you bury them at sea. Or maybe you cremate them and sprinkle their ashes around. Or if you're really fancy, you follow your loved one's will and taxiderm them so they can be around forever, diaphonized, by your mantelpiece! How about a new fresh choice for a new fresh generation? Ha. Or let's say not-so-fresh, right? 'Cause they're corpses! Anyway. Little joke for you. I'm here with a

remarkable new technology—"

[One or more people laugh.]

00:38:14 John Host "A remarkable new funeral business that's going to change the way you look at funerals for the rest of your natural life."

What is it? Now I'm listening!

00:38:26 Jason Guest It's called aquamation, or aqua cremation. So the—the problem with regular cremations is that they use a lot of energy. A lot of carbon goes into the atmosphere. It's a very—

00:38:35 John Host Right. And they also only have one name: Cremation. Why have one? It can be aquamation or aqua cremation!

00:38:40 Jason Guest Exactly.

00:38:41 John Host Good business sense right there.

00:38:42 Jason Guest You get all of those search terms. Uh—

00:38:43 John Host Jason, I just want you to know I love you. I'm just teasing you; I apologize.

[The litigants laugh.]

00:38:48 Jason Guest So the technology is very old, and well known. But I think, frankly, we've just been too squeamish to use it. But so instead of, um—

00:38:58 John Host Oh boy, here we go.

00:38:59 Jason Guest —burning the—disposing of a body by, um, putting them into a very hot kiln, one puts the body into an alkaline solution at moderate heat over a period of three or four hours, and create a really nutrient-dense fertilizer, which can then be used to support, you know, various wonderful gardens where people can walk to remember their loved ones in a much greener and, um, almost more natural.

00:39:24 John Host Question for you. If my loved one passes away and I have them... acremated—or aquamated. Or acra-quimamamatebed. What do I take away from the process at the end? And can it be [poured down a toilet in Disney World?](#)

00:39:39 Jason Guest So you—you wouldn't... You wouldn't take the fertilizer. But you do get ashes out of the process.

00:39:45 John Host So like cremation.

00:39:46 Jason Guest Yeah, like cremation. You get the same thing.

00:39:50 John Host Elena, I think maybe selling his soul is all he's got left.

[Elena laughs.]

Of all the ideas I've heard pitched, that's the one I barely understand.

00:39:57 Elena Guest What about his Prince Prints shop? I believe that was a scheme, not a true business idea, though.

00:40:02 John Host What was the venture? Prince Prints?

00:40:04 Elena Guest It was a shop that sold prints of Prince. *[Stifles laughter.]*

00:40:07 John Host Prints of the artist formerly and forever known as Prince.

00:40:11 Elena Guest Correct.

00:40:12 John Host Well. I see.

00:40:13 Jason Guest You could extend it, though, and print other princes, like Andrew and Philip, and...

00:40:18 John Host Let's not.

[Elena laughs.]

Let's not extend it. To them.

00:40:22 Jason Guest *[Cracking up]* That—that's fair. I think that's a good choice. It was a different time.

00:40:25 John Host "We've got a great Prince! We got a great Prince that everyone—everyone can agree is—"

[Stifles laughter.]

What about getting tattoos of Prince, the artist, at the end of your finger? And then you have Prince prints.

[Elena laughs.]

00:40:37 Jason Guest Prince prints prints!

00:40:38 John Host Alright. If I were to rule in your favor, Jason, what would you have me order?

00:40:42 Jason Guest I would like the option to sell my soul. Even if I don't use it.

00:40:48 John Host Why would I rule in your favor if you're not going to use it?

00:40:51 Jason Guest I feel like it's a bit of an overstep.

00:40:54 John Host Are you a little a—a-scared?

If I rule in your favor, you are clear to sell your soul on blockchain. Elena is out of the equation. What else could be holding you back? Is there some spiritual squeamishness?

00:41:06 Jason Guest No, the bottom of the NFT market is falling out. And because as the discussion today has illustrated, I won't be the first globally. I'm not sure how deep and valuable for "first Australian soul on the blockchain" might be. So I'm not sure the commercials will add up.

00:41:26 John Host Elena, if I were to rule in your favor, what would you have me order?

00:41:28 Elena Guest Well, I would like an injunction to stop Jason from ever selling his soul while we're married.

00:41:33 John Host Mm-hm.

00:41:34 Elena Guest And I would also like him to have to find a way to signal to me whether or not something he is pitching to me is a true business idea or a scheme that I don't have to get so involved in.

00:41:48 John Host Well, but the schemes are also legit—they're not jokes. It's—if anything, we've finally, in our culture, gotten clarity between what is a business idea and what is a scheme. Business idea, what, creates somewhat more worth for the world? And a scheme is just... a goof. That genuinely would make money.

00:42:07 Elena Guest Well, I end up having to get quite involved in Jason's business ideas and schemes.

00:42:11 John Host Right.

00:42:12 Elena Guest It can take up a lot of my—my life. And we have a little baby at the moment, so I have less capacity—

00:42:17 John Host Oh, congratulations!

00:42:18 Elena Guest Thank you! But I have less capacity for extended planning for both businesses and schemes, so he should pick what he wants my energy to go towards.

00:42:28 John Host If I may ask, how old is that baby?

00:42:30 Elena Guest Uh, 15 months.

00:42:31 John Host Ooh.

00:42:32 Elena Guest Yeah.

00:42:33 John Host That's a nice fresh soul.

00:42:34 Elena Guest *[Laughing]* It is.

00:42:35 John Host That's a good one! Not Jason with his old soul. How old are you, Jason, if I may ask?

00:42:39 Jason Guest Thirty-five.

00:42:41 John Host Ugh. That soul has gone off.

[Sniffs.]

Throw it in the bin, as they say. Got a nice fresh soul in the house. ...Don't worry, I'm not gonna make you sell your baby's soul. That's not gonna be part of my ruling.

00:42:52 Elena Guest *[Laughing]* Thank goodness.

00:42:54 John Host Does Jason genuinely put a lot of mental load on you as he's brainstorming his schemes and his ideas?

00:42:59 Elena Guest It depends on which—which one. Prince Prints, not so much.

00:43:03 John Host Right.

00:43:04 Elena Guest Uh, but definitely some of the—the more, um, serious ideas, we spend a lot of time thinking about and talking about, and exploring.

00:43:15 John Host Do you take pleasure in them?

00:43:16 Elena Guest To a certain extent.

00:43:19 John Host Do you cease taking pleasure in discussing business ideas when it becomes clear that they are simply thought experiments that aren't going to happen?

00:43:24 Elena Guest Yes.

00:43:25 John Host Okay.

00:43:26 Elena Guest Particularly if they're things that I... don't actually think Jason should do. Like selling his soul.

00:43:32 John Host Why is it important to you, Jason, to be an entrepreneur?

00:43:36 Jason Guest Ooh, there's a question.

[Pause.]

00:43:38 John Host Ladies and gentlemen, Jason has apparently just passed away.

[The litigants laugh.]

I have seen his soul leave his body, and, uh, they're coming on the Zoom now to aquacremate him as per his final wishes.

Please.

00:43:49 Jason Guest It's—I think that the creative problem-solving at the start of a business venture is very interesting. Uh, and fun and enjoyable. It is like my version of doing the crossword, as I've come to... know myself more, I realize. Like, this is what I do for fun rather than what I do for money. Uh, so it is the act of thinking what might be, and thinking it through, at sometimes a little bit too much detail, I think more so than the act of genuinely going after a thing.

Until, I suppose, I find the thing where there isn't a reason to stop. And that might never come. But to date, there's always been a reason to stop with the schemes. Or the business ideas.

00:44:36 John Host Okay. So it hasn't happened yet. But you enjoy the thought process.

00:44:40 Jason Guest I do.

00:44:42 John Host Is there anyone else in your life that you can talk to about this than Elena? Maybe someone in a... wantrepreneur club down the road in the—in the local... shrimp and barbie hut or whatever, like, you could go to?

00:44:54 Jason Guest This is a very good point. I do have other people in my life to tell me that things are bad ideas. Or good ideas, but usually—

00:44:58 John Host No, no! I'm talk—not talking about that! That's what Elena is for.

[Elena chuckles.]

I'm talking about friends who also enjoy the thought experiments. You know, because when you say, "It's like a crossword puzzle to me," crossword puzzle tends to be a relatively solo pastime. I mean, you might chat with your—your loved one about, like, "What do you think three down is?" or whatever. But it's usually an internal monologue, not a monologue you thrust upon your life partner.

Um, maybe—but there could be a friend! That loves to talk about these schemes. Is there someone, Elena, in Jason's life like that, or no?

00:45:34 Elena Guest Jason does have a number of, uh, business friends. True friends that also are business nerds.

00:45:41 John Host Sure.

00:45:42 Elena Guest And I think Jason does already talk to other people about his business ideas particularly, maybe less so his schemes. Um, and I think for me that's part of where my, um, desire for him not to sell his soul comes from. Because I get asked all the time about his previous business ideas from our friends. "What happened to the funeral business?"

00:46:03 John Host Mm.

00:46:04 Elena Guest "What happened to the bank?"

[Stifles laughter.]

And I'm the one who has to talk at length about why it didn't work out. And I don't wanna have to talk to our friends about Jason's... failed attempt to sell his soul—

00:46:14 John Host Oof.

00:46:15 Elena Guest —because it a bit embarrassing!

00:46:16 John Host If it goes for less than 50,000, it's gonna be pretty rough.

00:46:19 Elena Guest *[Stifling laughter]* Or worse, if nobody buys it!

00:46:21 John Host I think I've heard everything I need to in order to make my decision. I'm going to—um, I'm going to go into my own personal Hell, and sit here for a while and stew, and I'll be back in a moment, uh, with my verdict.

00:46:32 Sound Effect Sound Effect *[As Jesse speaks below: Door opens, chairs scrape, footsteps.]*

00:46:33 Jesse Host Please rise as Judge John Hodgman exits the courtroom.

00:46:36 Sound Effect Sound Effect *[Door shuts.]*

00:46:37 Jesse Host Elena, how are you feeling about your chances?

00:46:40 Elena Guest Ooh. Uh, I think it could go either way. So nervous.

00:46:43 Jesse Host What do you think could be the worst thing that could happen?

00:46:45 Elena Guest Well, I'm glad that the judge has ruled out ordering us to sell our baby's soul. Because that would definitely be the worst outcome.

[Jesse laughs, Elena stifles laughter.]

Um, but—but following that, um, giving Jason permission to sell his soul would be a pretty devastating start to my day here.

00:47:00 Jesse Host Jason, how are you feeling?

00:47:01 Jason Guest Pretty good.

[Elena and Jesse laugh, someone snorts.]

00:47:07 Jesse Host *[Laughing]* You're still nodding over there.

00:47:09 Jason Guest I—

00:47:10 Jesse Host You've been nodding continuously this whole time.

00:47:12 Jason Guest I feel like the judge understood, uh, the gist of the idea. And understood the—the pleasing elements of it.

00:47:21 Jesse Host What's the line between successful and unsuccessful on this sale? When the sale goes through, what's the number you need to see on the ledger to know that you didn't fail?

00:47:30 Jason Guest A deposit for the—like, a median house in our area. Which is, unfortunately, \$350,000. So aim high.

00:47:38 Jesse Host So if you—if you sold your soul and you had \$200,000 Australian, you'd be—that would be a—that would be a failure?

00:47:46 Jason Guest I think so. It's—it's my soul...

00:47:49 Jesse Host Wow. Alright, well—*[laughs]*—

00:47:51 Jason Guest Inflation—everything's gotten expensive in Australia. *[Laughs.]*

00:47:54 Jesse Host I just wanna put it out there. I don't know what blockchains are, I don't know how they work, but if anybody's got 200 grand on my soul... let's do this.

[Elena chuckles.]

We'll see what Judge Hodgman has to say about all this when we come back in just a second on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

00:48:09 Sound Effect Transition *[Three gavel bangs.]*

00:48:11 Sound Effect Transition *[Three gavel bangs.]*

00:48:13 Promo Promo *This dynamic promo has not been transcribed, as it changes weekly.*

00:51:37 Sound Effect Transition *[Three gavel bangs.]*

00:51:39 Sound Effect Sound Effect *[As Jesse speaks below: Door opens, chairs scrape, footsteps.]*

00:51:40 Jesse Host Please rise as Judge John Hodgman re-enters the courtroom and presents his verdict.

00:51:47 Sound Effect Sound Effect *[Door shuts.]*

00:51:48 John Host So I don't know who Alex Masmiej is. And I don't know if I'm pronouncing that name correctly. M-A-S-M-E-J. But I was checking out, uh, crypt—decrypt.co, which is this website. And apparently he sold fractional shares of himself as customized tokens on the Ethereum blockchain. And this is himself, not just his soul. The whole thing. Uh, the tokens allow token holders to vote on aspects of his life, and even make a profit from any money he makes. And he topped out at \$20,000.

[Someone sighs.]

Twenty thousand dollars. Not so great compared to what you were looking for. But let me tell you this: He didn't include his soul. Just his life. Life is cheap. But the soul? I mean... something special about that. No matter what your belief system—or disbelief system—is. It's obviously a very highly charged metaphor that we—runs through a lot of our culture. Whether it's *Bedazzled* or, uh, Tommy Johnson or Robert Johnson selling their respective souls to the devil at the crossroads to be able to play blues. Whether it's, uh, Sammy Davis Jr. trying to take Jack Klugman's immortal soul. He—spoiler alert, he fails at the end. That's why all Jack Klugmans go to Heaven.

It's a very, very compelling idea, that you could have—I mean, you could have whatever you want. You could sell your soul for the most unbelievable wish in the world. Which sadly, uh, in this day and age, is the down payment on a house.

[Stifles laughter.]

The most unimaginable, unattainable thing that you could possibly have is simply a down payment on a place to live. Late stage capitalism is messed up. Even I can acknowledge that. Fifty-year-old man.

00:53:32 John Host It is a highly charged idea. It does not surprise me, sadly, to learn

that Grimes beat you to the punch there. Although Grimes is just selling a—a handmade certificate. Not a blockch—there's no blockchain element to it. There is no eternal proof of ownership. And it has to be eternal, 'cause we are talking about the eternal soul.

And even though I have to say that your presentation in the *Shark Tank* was rather lackluster, Jason, I find you very charming indeed. Very likable. I can see why anyone would wanna marry you, and be in a relationship with you, and be a co-parent with you. You're terrific.

I have no business... commenting on business. But whatever business opportunity you ever seek to seize, I think you gotta work on your presentation skills. Make it short, snappy, convincing. Particularly if you wanna go on, uh—on Kochie's show. He's not gonna allow you to dither about talking about your friends who mess around with potions on the exotic crypto-web, or whatever it is. He's gonna get confused and move on. This is my—this is my business advice to you, my friend. Tighten it up a little bit.

00:54:43 John Host

But that said... it's a great idea! It was the first time I had ever heard of it. And even after chatting with you and saying, like, "Okay, well, you know, he's—he's not a very natural salesperson for his own soul, but who would be? Does he even really wanna sell it? Isn't that part of the charge of it?"

And you said, "I have no promotional budget. I have no marketing budget. I have no this."

I was beginning to feel like maybe I should be one of these sharks on the *Shark Tank*, and like, "Okay. I'll invest, uh, X amount of dollars, and I'll take—I'll take 5% of every soul share you sell."

Because on the one hand, I was thinking, uh, "That's a funny joke." And on the other hand I was like, "Well, look. If he's really first to market with this thing, I don't know—he could probably—" You know, Jesse Thorn, we could probably help him get booked on some Australian morning shows, right?

00:55:36 Jesse Host

I'll call Yahoo Serious.

00:55:37 John Host

Yeah, thank you! Direct line to Yahoo Serious over there!

So—and I was like, "As a joke, it's sort of funny. It's got a certain charge, a little charge to it."

And then there was a part of me that's like, "You know what? But this thing might go—" 'Cause I'm seeing these NFTs go through the roof! I didn't know the bottom had dropped out of the market. Sorry. I don't read NFT Daily or whatever.

But you know, Jonathan Coulton's over there messing around with NFTs and talking about 'em all the time. I'm like, "What if I could say to my friend Jonathan, 'Yeah, guess what? I'm into souls now. Trading souls on the market.'"

[Someone laughs quietly.]

"I just have a piece of a piece of a soul." That'd be pretty cool to say

around town. And maybe it would sell a lot, and maybe we'd both get rich!

00:56:20 John Host

And then Elena, you—you would be happy. Until the devil came to claim what is theirs.

But even if all of those conditions were met—even if I had money to give you, even if I loved your presentation, even if no one had ever thought of this idea, you were the first person in the world and it was guaranteed to get you on Kochie first thing in the morning five days a week, five appearances—I don't think I could do it. Because though I am an agnostic, there's just something too scheme-y about it. You know what I mean? Seedy. Unseemly. It's your soul! It's your soul. It's who you are! Even as a metaphor, that's critical. You don't wanna sell yourself, you wanna sell a product! Like a—a casket made out of a mattress box, or whatever it is.

I don't think I could get behind it. So I can't rule in your favor. But! But. But. I have a counter-offer for you. Are you willing to hear it?

00:57:13 Jason Guest

I am.

00:57:14 John Host

Here in the *Judge John Hodgman* organization, we pride ourselves in fine podcasts, fine live shows. And also... from time to time, custom—what we call T-shirts in America. We've had some very famous ones. I'm sure you've seen them around, legendary T-shirts like [Canadian House of Pizza & Garbage](#). Uh, [Kung Pao Finance Factory](#). Um, [I'm With Claudius](#). They're based on things that come up in the show, and we'll make them from time to time.

Now. Jesse, Jennifer and I—the whole J-Squad—have been talking lately about rebooting our T-shirt biz. Such that if a really great T-shirt idea pops up on the show, that we'll note it right then, get the word immediately to [Adam](#) Koford, who's designed quite a few T-shirts in our past, and has agreed to be on retainer for emergency T-shirt club, work up a design for that T-shirt, and then we get it out to market, and it's available only for how long, Jennifer Marmor? How long is it available for? I don't remember what we said. A week?

00:58:12 Jennifer Marmor Producer

I think two weeks. I think two weeks is fair.

00:58:13 John Host

Two weeks. Two weeks! Artificial scarcity. Ooh! A T-shirt comes in, special edition. Kids line up around the block to get into the store one after another. We got pop-up shops going, of course. Not really. We just sell 'em on [MaxFunStore.com](#).

And I have a T-shirt idea, but it's inspired by you. And in fact, as much as I love Adam Koford, there's not a lot for him to do in this. Because I think we should be selling Cash Goat T-shirts for sure. I mean, this is an incredible image. This is an incredible logo.

00:58:48 Jesse Host

Yeah.

00:58:50 John Host

It's evocative. It's mysterious. It's got the words "cash" and "goat" in it, in what I consider to be the right order. "Goat Cash" would never have worked. I mean, it's a solid name of a company.

Now, Jason, you would retain all ownership of the company. Elena, you would retain all ownership of the logo. This would be a license

situation. And Jason, uh, you can still make that company go, if you can get anyone to ever understand what it is.

[Elena chuckles.]

I am talking about we'll come to some terms, we'll get a [Cash Goat T-shirt](#) up using this image as the design, get that up on the [MaxFunStore.com](#). Two-week exclusive. And we'll give you a percentage. Let's start negotiating. Come to the table. What do you say?

00:59:33 Jason Guest

I think we're in.

00:59:34 Elena Guest

Absolutely.

00:59:35 John Host

Oh, well! That's a great—great negotiating tactic.

[The litigants laugh.]

I thought we were gonna talk about a percentage. I'm just gonna put it down. You're in for anything! Got it.

[The litigants laugh.]

Fantastic. And we'll all be cash goats together. It was really great talking to you. I'm glad that you get to keep your soul. This is the sound of a gavel.

00:59:52 Sound Effect Sound Effect

[A goat bleats.]

00:59:53 Sound Effect Sound Effect

[Cash register goes "Ding!"]

00:59:54 John Host

Judge John Hodgman rules; that is all.

00:59:56 Sound Effect Sound Effect

[As Jesse speaks below: Door opens, chairs scrape, footsteps.]

00:59:57 Jesse Host

Please rise as Judge John Hodgman exits the courtroom.

01:00:02 Sound Effect Sound Effect

[Door shuts.]

01:00:03 Jesse Host

Elena, how do you feel about getting rich?

01:00:04 Elena Guest

Elated.

01:00:05 Jesse Host

Yeah. How about you, Jason?

01:00:08 Jason Guest

A bit disappointed. It means I don't have to come up with new schemes.

[Elena laughs.]

01:00:12 Jesse Host

Well, you know. We'll see how it ends up.

01:00:16 Elena Guest

I don't think you could not come up with new schemes if you tried.

01:00:18 Jesse Host

Jason, Elena, thanks for joining us on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

01:00:21 Sound Effect Transition

[Three gavel bangs.]

01:00:24 Jesse Host

Another *Judge John Hodgman* case is in the books! You know what else is in the books? The brand new *Judge John Hodgman* scheme—

[John laughs quietly.]

Cash Goat T-shirt at MaxFunStore.com!

01:00:38 John Host I can't wait. I'm gonna create an incredible Bitly for this Cash Goat T-shirt.

01:00:41 Jesse Host Oh, god. Can't people just go to MaxFunStore.com for once, John?

01:00:44 John Host Yeah. You know what, everybody? Go to Max—you know what? Yeah, that's right. Save me a step. I'll pass the savings along to you. Go to MaxFunStore.com. T-Shirt club starts in earnest. Reboots with a kick, like a kick from a goat! Cash Goat T-shirts available any minute now at MaxFunStore.com. Help Jason fulfill his dream, and retain his soul. And help Elena, uh—help say thanks to Elena for this incredible design!

Cash Goat at MaxFunStore.com.

01:01:16 Jesse Host We've got Swift Justice in just a moment. First, our thanks to Twitter users [@AmeliaEHelmfor](https://twitter.com/AmeliaEHelmfor) and [@PaulSieger4](https://twitter.com/PaulSieger4) for naming this week's episode, "Suing for Soul Custody." If you wanna name a future episode, follow us on Twitter for naming opportunities at [@JesseThorn](https://twitter.com/JesseThorn) and [@hodgman](https://twitter.com/hodgman). While you're there, you can also hashtag your *Judge John Hodgman* Tweets [#JJHo](https://twitter.com/hashtag/JJHo).

01:01:41 John Host Jesse, I just wanna—I just wanna say. "Suing for Soul Custody"? Very funny name. Reserve the right to re-use it, "Suing for Sole Custody," S-O-L-E, for any disputes around Dover sole. Or any fillet of sole.

01:01:56 Jesse Host *[Laughing]* Okay. Thank you, John, I'm glad.

[Stifles laughter.]

Glad we clarified that. What if there are bottom-of-a-shoe disputes?

01:02:01 John Host Think that's a little on the nose.

01:02:03 Jesse Host Okay. Fair enough. Uh, hashtag your *Judge John Hodgman* Tweets [#JJHo](https://twitter.com/hashtag/JJHo). Uh, we're on Reddit, [MaximumFun.Reddit.com](https://www.reddit.com/MaximumFun). Evidence and photos from the show posted on our Instagram account at [Instagram.com/judgejohnhodgman](https://www.instagram.com/judgejohnhodgman). I'm gonna send this picture that, uh, Oscar—my son who was on the show recently—drew of me podcasting. And I'm pretty sure it's me doing the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

01:02:28 John Host Yeah. You mean the *Judge Oscar Thorn* podcast, as it is now known?

01:02:32 Jesse Host Yeah. He pretty much stole the show.

01:02:34 John Host Yeah.

01:02:35 Jesse Host Um, I'm gonna send that over to you, John, and Jennifer. We'll put that up on the Instagram, um—

01:02:40 John Host I'd like to see it.

01:02:41 Jesse Host I'm saying "Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah," and you're saying "Okay, okay, okay."

01:02:47 John Host *[Laughs.]* Okay!

01:02:50 Jesse Host Our producer is Jennifer Marmor. Our editor is Valerie Moffat.

Now, Swift Justice, where we answer small disputes with quick

judgment. James says:

"My friend doesn't like that I almost always back into parking spaces."

01:03:03	John	Host	Mm. Backing into parking spaces is a real skill! My guess is your friend is jealous and lazy. And you, James... are the cash goat!
			<i>[Jesse laughs.]</i>
			Cash goat of the week! Good for you, backing into parking spaces!
01:03:18	Jesse	Host	Cha-chiiiing! <i>[Laughs.]</i>
01:03:21	John	Host	<i>[Bleats like a goat.]</i>
			<i>[Laughs.]</i>
01:03:24	Jesse	Host	And hey! Speaking of backing into parking spaces, if you've got a dispute about vehicles and transportation—you got a driving dispute, you got a car dispute, you got a truck dispute, train dispute—hit us up! MaximumFun.org/jjho .
01:03:37	John	Host	I would really love some airship disputes, would be terrific.
01:03:40	Jesse	Host	Dirigible, or...?
01:03:43	John	Host	Dirigible <u>or</u> blimp.
01:03:44	Jesse	Host	Do you require a frame? Yeah.
01:03:45	John	Host	I—it's any airship. That's why I said, any airship. Any submarines. Vehicle disputes, send them to MaximumFun.org/jjho . Also take a goat dispute if you got one. And any—any dispute! The whole engine of the show are your, uh, disputes—personal, philosophical, with your friends, partners, loved ones, <u>liked</u> ones. No case is too small, so please remember to submit your cases at MaximumFun.org/jjho .
01:04:14	Jesse	Host	We'll talk to you next time on the <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> podcast.
01:04:17	Sound Effect	Transition	<i>[Three gavel bangs.]</i>
01:04:20	Music	Transition	A cheerful ukulele chord.
01:04:21	Speaker 1	Guest	MaximumFun.org .
01:04:22	Speaker 2	Guest	Comedy and culture.
01:04:24	Speaker 3	Guest	Artist owned—
01:04:25	Speaker 4	Guest	—audience supported.