

00:00:00	Sound Effect	Transition	Three gavel bangs.
00:00:02	Jesse Thorn	Host	Welcome to the <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> podcast. I'm bailiff Jesse Thorn. This week, "Case Sera, Sera". Gillian brings the case against her friend, Courtney. Sometimes Gillian will say that something was "meant to be". Courtney bristles at this idea. Gillian wants Courtney to just let her believe what she wants. Courtney doesn't think that Gillian truly believes in destiny. Who's right? Who's wrong? Only one can decide.
			<i>[The squeak of chairs being pushed back followed by heavy footsteps.]</i>
00:00:39	John Hodgman	Host	Please rise as Judge John Hodgman enters the courtroom and presents an obscure cultural reference.
00:00:47	Jesse	Host	What is, is. And what might have been could never have existed. Bailiff Jesse Thorn, swear them in.
			Gillian and Courtney, please rise and raise your right hands.
			<i>[The squeak of chairs.]</i>
			Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God or whatever?
			<i>[They agree.]</i>
			Do you swear to abide by Judge John Hodgman's ruling, despite the fact that he is destined to make a bad one?
			<i>[They chuckle and agree.]</i>
00:01:08	John	Host	You may proceed.
00:01:10	Jesse	Host	Destined to make a real one! That's for sure.
00:01:12	John	Host	You're destined to be a real one, Judge Hodgman.
00:01:17	Jesse	Host	Someday the prophesy will come true. Until then, I remain completely fake.
00:01:19	John	Host	False Hodgman!
			Fake Internet Judge Hodgman is in the court. You may be seated for an immediate summary judgement in one of yours favors.
			<i>[The squeak of chairs.]</i>
00:01:33	Courtney	Guest	Gillian, Courtney, can either of you name the piece of culture that I quoted directly as I entered this courtroom? Uuuh, let's see. Courtney, why don't you guess first.
00:01:44	John	Host	Okay, my guess is it is from the E. M. Forster novel, <i>Howard's End</i> . Specifically, the chapter where they're listening to Beethoven and talking about panic and emptiness.
			Very specific! Annnd absolutely correct.
			<i>[Courtney laughs.]</i>

Well, I don't know. We'll find out. That would be incredible. And I love a very specific guess. What was it? The Beethoven section?

*[Courtney confirms.]*

And that's the big dog, right? That's driving the family crazy?

*[They laugh.]*

00:02:04	Gillian	Guest	Yeah, that's what I figured. Gillian, what's your guess?
			Um, I have no idea. But I prepared a guess, so here's my guess: it's Rainer Maria Rilke's <i>Letters to a Young Poet</i> .
00:02:12	John	Host	Wheew. I love that specific guess too! Someone very special in my life gave me that book once, and I think I read it? And I hope they're not listening.

*[They chuckle.]*

Anyway! It was a very special gift. And because I don't think I actually ended up reading it—or it was very long ago—that is not a correct guess. As specific and as Grodeny as your E.M. Forster guess, Courtney, was, that is not a correct guess. That means all guesses are wrong. I think I've done this one before. I don't care, though, 'cause I love him, and I love this quote. And it's very meaningful to me, as this artist is. I was quoting the illustrator and author Edward Gorey. You know Edward Gorey, Gillian and Courtney?

*[Gillian confirms.]*

00:03:31	Jesse	Host	Yes. No, Courtney? Well, let me tell you something. Edward Gorey was this wonderfully weird, morbid, funny illustrator of books that kind of looked like they were for children. They were mostly for weird tweens and adults. And he was really one of my favorite—and continues to be one of my favorite artists in the world. You know. He wrote the uncategorizable, dreamlike illustrated books, like <i>The Doubtful Guest</i> and <i>The Curious Sofa</i> . Plus, a number—and I learned a new word. Abecedarium. Do you know what that is, Jesse Thorn?
00:03:32	John	Host	I don't! That is a book or a—it's—you spell out the alphabet in it. Like, A is for apple, B is for ball. C is for Charlie. D is for delta. E is for echo. Now, I'm moving into the NATO phonetic alphabet, but you see. That's an abecedarium. And I think he did about five abecedaria, with names like <i>The Fatal Lozenge</i> and <i>The Glorious Nosebleed</i> . But he's—maybe his most famous work, of course, is <i>The Gashlycrumb Teenies</i> —or tinies. I always said teenies, but I think it must be tinies. And it recounts the demise, alphabetically, of 26 Victorian children.
00:04:10	Gillian	Guest	N for Neville, who died of ennui.

*[Courtney laughs.]*

00:04:13 John Host Yes, of course! But I mean, I love Neville and I love all of them. You know. The way this thing starts is a true banger. “A is for Amy, who fell down the stairs. B is for Basil, assaulted by bears.”

*[They laugh.]*

00:04:27 Jesse Host I think the works of Edward Gorey really stand with *The Joy of Sex* and books that you find in your parent’s bookshelf that blow your mind.

00:04:35 John Host Yeah. I mean, and I would say that if you want your child of age ten and up, I would say—if you want your child to grow up to be smart and weird, get them *Amphigory*, which is—well, there are a couple of big collections of his work, *Amphigory* and *Amphigory 2*. And you know, his—it’s dark humor, but not darker or funnier than the world itself. And then, another quote that he gave was, “My mission in life is to make everyone as uneasy as possible. I think we should all be as uneasy as possible, because that is what the world is like.

And you know, both of those quotes come from a book—a collection of interviews called *Ascending Peculiarity: Edward Gorey on Edward Gorey*. Which I found one copy and I gave it to David Rees, and now it’s missing. Or, no, he has it somewhere. But it’s out of print. So, go get it. Go get that, too. ‘Cause it’s really, really smart and interesting. And of course, it speaks to our theme today, which is: is what is, is?! Or is you ain’t my baby? No. It’s that you, Gillian, believe that things happen for a reason. And you, Courtney, hate this.

*[They laugh and confirm.]*

00:05:52 Gillian Guest Gillian, you bring this case before me for justice. What is the justice that you seek?

00:05:59 John Host I just want to be able to sometimes say that some things happen for a reason and have Courtney not scoff.

00:06:05 Gillian Guest Okay! And what do you mean by things happen for a reason? Tell me what you mean when something is meant to be? Give me an example.

00:06:23 John Host So, generally this would be something that—like, something that went wrong, and I’ll later reflect and say like, “Oh, this good thing happened to me, so therefore—you know, this bad thing that happened in the past was so that this would all kind of lead to this—all roads would lead to this moment and this good thing could happen.

00:06:28 Gillian Guest Like, what was a bad thing that happened that turned out to lead to a good thing? If I may ask.

00:06:32 John Host Sure. Well, like for example—

For example, I accidentally locked myself in the closet with this microphone.

*[They laugh.]*

But luckily, I get to make a podcast!

*[Gillian affirms.]*

For listeners at home, I can see both Gillian and Courtney using televisual conferencing technology, and Courtney is in a studio in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Is that correct?

00:06:48 Courtney Guest  
00:06:51 John Host  
Roll tide! That is correct!  
Gillian, you are in Lawrence, Kansas, in a closet.

*[Gillian confirms.]*

And I have now given you as much time as I could for you come up with a specific example of something going wrong, but it turned out to be meant to be. Let's hear it.

00:07:03 Gillian Guest  
Yeah. So, you know, if I—I applied for a job in city A and didn't get it, and then—you know, here I was in city B, and like I met a great friend at work and said like, "Oh, if I had never—if I had gotten that other job in city A, I would have never met this person." And so, you know. It kind of all makes sense.

00:07:22 John Host  
What alternate universe are you in where these cities have names like A and B?

*[They laugh.]*

Did this actually happen or is this still a hypothetical?

00:07:31 Gillian Guest  
00:07:33 John Host  
00:07:34 Gillian Guest  
00:07:37 John Host  
00:07:39 Gillian Guest  
00:07:41 John Host  
No, that actually happened.  
Alright. What were the cities?  
One city was Baltimore. City A was Baltimore, yeah.  
Baltimore. City B?  
Kansas. Topeka.  
Topeka, Kansas?

*[Gillian confirms.]*

And who is the friend?

00:07:46 Gillian Guest  
00:07:47 John Host  
*[Laughs.]* Marsha.  
Oh, I thought it was gonna be Courtney! I thought this was gonna be cute. And that's why you hate this so much, because Courtney... Gillian loves Marsha, because they met by destiny, and you just met by chance.

00:07:57 Courtney Guest  
00:07:59 John Host  
00:08:01 Courtney Guest  
That's exactly right. *[Chuckles.]*  
How do you know each other, Courtney?  
So, first I would note that Gillian herself is an eccentric cartoonist, so maybe this is fate upon fate upon fate. But I know Gillian through what I would consider a happy coincidence, which is that one year, we overlapped in a legal fellowship that sort of vaulted us into the category of work soulmate/best friend.

00:08:27 John Host  
Oh, okay! So, are you both attorneys?

*[They confirm.]*

00:08:30 Courtney Guest  
We are both clinical law professors who run domestic violence clinics. So, we do the exact same thing, we just do it in different places.

00:08:39 John Host  
Well, thank you for doing those exact same things in both of those places. So, how does Courtney express her displeasure when you say something was meant to be, Gillian?

00:08:50 Gillian Guest Well, in one example that I sent—the text example—she said like, “I hate that.” *[Chuckles.]* But she’ll like scoff or say like, “Ugh,” or make fun of it or make a joke.

00:09:05 John Host You’re in Kansas and Tuscaloosa. Do I have permission to give one “y’all”?

00:09:09 Gillian Guest From Courtney, yes. I don’t have that liberty.

00:09:12 John Host *[Courtney laughs.]*  
You don’t. No, I know, and I shouldn’t have done it anyway. You all—you both mostly—your friendship is over text?

*[They confirm.]*

So, she scoffs at your texts when you say that something was meant to be.

00:09:23 Gillian Guest Yes. Or on the phone, she scoffs.

00:09:26 John Host Or on the phone. Do you cop to scoffing, Courtney?

00:09:29 Courtney Guest I do.

*[Gillian laughs.]*

I do. I would say that there’s sort of a spectrum of responses anywhere from “haha” to “I hate this”. But I would say I’m often in the middle and will say “haha”, and if she reads that scoffingly, so be it.

00:09:49 John Host Lots of people say “haha” when they mean “I hate this”.

*[Gillian agrees and Courtney laughs.]*

00:09:55 Courtney Guest So, what is it you hate?  
Oh, all of it. *[Laughs.]*

00:09:58 John Host Here, let’s get specific again. Can you remember the first time—or the first time you noticed—that Gillian had this predestination fetish?

00:10:09 Courtney Guest Yes! So, Gillian and I have been friends since 2014. And I think this first came up maybe two or three years ago. And to be honest, I thought it was a bit and I actually kind of still think it’s a bit that this is sort of a running gag that we have. And so, maybe I’m wrong, but I do try to be a pretty attentive and attuned friend. And so, when this sort of crept up into Gillian’s lexicon, I sort of thought it was a funny new thing. So, I would sort of scoff, but assuming that that was kind of the desired response. And only with sort of being served these pleadings for fake internet court has it come to light that maybe she means it. But I actually think the fact that she took me fake internet court kind of buttresses my opinion that this is still a gag!

00:11:05 John Host So, let me make sure I understand what you’re saying. For a long time, and maybe including now, you believed that Gillian’s faith in an ordered and ultimately benign universe is a joke that she’s playing?

*[Courtney confirms.]*

00:11:24 Gillian Guest Gillian, is it a joke?  
It’s—*[sighs]* it’s not a joke.

[They laugh and John affirms.]

00:11:31	John	Host	It's not a joke. You did—there was a hitch in your voice, though! There was a hitch in your voice.
00:11:34	Gillian	Guest	There are times when I believe it more than others. And mostly, I want to believe it. But it has a jokey vibe at times. So, I don't necessarily fault Courtney for thinking it was a joke. But I kind of just want her to come along with me to this land of pretend, where we actually believe this and we can kind of like—you know, make sense of the world retrospectively.
00:11:59	John	Host	This fun, slumberland dreamscape where we're not totally alone and there is something—and the universe cares about us.
00:12:07	Gillian	Guest	Yes, this aspirational stay against nihilism, I would say.
00:12:11	John	Host	Courtney, I'm receiving a message to ask you about starbook. What is starbook?
00:12:15	Courtney	Guest	Uh-huh! Yes. Okay. Fabulous. So, [chuckles] so, sort of as shorthand for all of this Gillian got in the habit of, instead of saying, "Oh, everything happened for a reason. It was meant to be," she will just send me an emoji of a star and a book. Sort of at the end of an anecdote, almost like a hashtag.
00:12:37	John	Host	Ooooh, I get it. I know. It was written in the stars!
00:12:41	Courtney	Guest	So, she actually read a book.

[Gillian laughs.]

00:12:44	John	Host	Gillian, what was—what was your book? Oh, okay. Sorry. I thought it—I thought it—[laughing] I thought it was a cool rebus for "it was written in the stars".
00:12:48	Courtney	Guest	No. Right, right.
00:12:50	Gillian	Guest	It's a book.
00:12:51	Courtney	Guest	But it's a book. And so, starbook as kind of become a heuristic or a hashtag that sort of encapsulates all of this. But admittedly, I think also contributes to me thinking that this is more for fun than for real.
00:13:09	John	Host	Now, Gillian, I don't mean to brag, but I have also read a book.

[They laugh.]

00:13:17	Gillian	Guest	What book are we talking about, specifically? So, this is kind of embarrassing, but it's Martha Beck's <i>Finding Your North Star</i> and related like self-help books that she's written.
00:13:29	John	Host	Who is Martha Beck and what is she all about?
00:13:32	Gillian	Guest	You know—
00:13:33	John	Host	Don't be embarrassed. It's not something to be embarrassed—I only mean to say—I only mean to say I'm grateful that you are willing to be vulnerable, and I am—even though I am the judge, I will not judge you for your reading habits. I read a lot of weird stuff. So. Yeah.
00:13:48	Gillian	Guest	Fair enough. So, I mean, it's essentially a self-help book that is hard to summarize, but it is analogous to like <i>The Secret</i> or kind of manifesting—like seeing your future and making it come true kind of like mystical sort of—I don't know, new age-y thing.

00:14:08 John Host Oh, she's nice. I've seen—she's got a nice face and a good haircut. I like it.

*[Courtney laughs and Gillian agrees.]*

Martha Beck. A Harvard trained sociologist, world-renowned coach, *New York Times* bestselling author. Well, we have that in common!

*[They laugh.]*

Surprised I haven't met her at the club! *[Chuckles.]* Uh, welcome way finders. Okay, so she's—basically, her vibe is you put out a vibe, you get back a vibe.

*[Gillian confirms.]*

Right? You put your intention in the universe, and it comes back. And has there been a time, Gillian, where this has felt really, really true to you, such that the hair stood up on your forearms—if you have hairs there? You know? That tingly neck feeling? I mean, it's happened to me for sure. It's hard to think of an example, but I'll try to think of one while you are telling me yours.

00:14:59 Gillian Guest *[Laughs.]* Um, I mean, no. Like, for me, it's more of making sense of things that happened to me that feel, at the time, like misfortune, and then later thinking like, “Oh, well if I hadn't had that misfortune, then my path wouldn't have led here.” So, it's not—like, it's not really an exact correlation to the starbook. The starbook is more a shorthand for like this thing that I know that annoys Courtney that I am just noting, that I am referring to. *[Chuckles.]*

00:15:26 John Host Oh, so it is a—it's a bit, after all!

00:15:30 Gillian Guest Nooo, I've just accepted my fate that she finds it annoying.

00:15:34 John Host Is it called *The Starbook*?

00:15:35 Gillian Guest No.

00:15:36 John Host Okay. You refer to it as the starbook in your private emoji language with your friend. Okay.

00:15:39 Gillian Guest Yeah. It's a vibe. Yeah.

00:15:42 John Host It's a vibe. I just wanna ask you one more time if you can think of an actual experience where you were like, “Oh, it's working!”

00:15:51 Gillian Guest It's—I really can't—it's nothing that would be memorable. It's like I'll text Courtney like the dumbest little things and say that it was because of the starbook. Like, “I—you know, like had a dream about someone I knew in high school, and then saw someone who looked like them. It was the starbook.”

00:16:07 John Host That does sound pretty starbooky, Courtney, I have to tell you.

*[Courtney laughs.]*

Gillian, have you ever encountered—this is gonna seem like a really strange question, but it's just a feeling I have. Have you ever come across a fossilized horse tooth?

*[They cackle.]*

00:16:24 Gillian Guest Oh, yes! Yes. What a great—yes. I did.

00:16:28 John Host You have! I was feeling—I was feeling that. Maybe you dug it up somewhere, I was feeling?

00:16:33 Gillian Guest The starbook must have told you this. Yes.

00:16:35 John Host Sorry to do a cold read, but it just—maybe a—like, I’m seeing like a backyard?

00:16:41 Gillian Guest Yes. I found a fossilized horse tooth in my backyard.

00:16:45 John Host Wow. #Starbook, there! That’s pretty incredible that I picked up on that. Don’t you think, Courtney?

00:16:51 Jesse Host Was it literally fossilized?

00:16:54 John Host *[Gillian confirms.]*  
Are you a horse fossil tooth expert?

00:16:57 Gillian Guest *[Courtney laughs.]*  
I’m not. But I am an academic, so I love a research jag.

00:17:02 John Host So, it’s a—you found a fossilized horse tooth, and you verified it through academia.

00:17:06 Gillian Guest *[Chuckling.]* I did. Through the internet.

00:17:08 John Host *[Courtney laughs.]*  
What did—I mean, I wanna hear about this horse tooth, of course, but now I need to know about like—what do you do? You just google “horse tooth fossilized, yes or no” and then do an image compare?

00:17:17 Gillian Guest No! I just—okay, I like different rocks. So, I thought it was a rock, and I picked it up.

00:17:32 Jesse Host *[Jesse cackles.]*  
And I thought what a cool rock! But maybe it’s not a rock. So, I reverse imaged searched it, and it came back with horse teeth. Fossilized horse teeth.  
Let’s put a pin on that, Gillian. Top three rocks.

00:17:37 Gillian Guest *[They laugh.]*  
Well, the horse tooth is up there. Yeah.

00:17:40 John Host But non-tooth rocks, what are your faves?

00:17:42 Gillian Guest Um, quartz—like rose quartz. Um.

00:17:45 John Host Yeah. Well, gotta love rose quartz.

00:17:47 Jesse Host Classic.

00:17:48 Gillian Guest Yeah. Oh, I have this black crystal that I can’t now remember the name of, but it’s supposed to be like protective of empathetic energy. So, I like that one.

00:17:56 John Host Mm. How are you feeling that, Courtney? You like that black crystal that is protective of empathetic energy? You mean people—it prevents people from empathizing with you?

00:18:15 Gillian Guest *[Gillian stammers to answer and Jesse laughs.]*  
Maybe that’s the problem in your relationship with Courtney! You’re wearing this crystal! And it’s blocking—it’s an anti-empathy spell that you cast on your friend!  
Maybe, yeah! *[Laughs.]* I think it’s supposed to protect me from like—as an empath, from like negative energies of other people.



00:18:22	John	Host	Oh, getting negative energy from Courtney. Although, it's not working, apparently.
00:18:26	Gillian	Guest	Never from Courtney. Never from her.
00:18:28	John	Host	Well, we're here because she's given you some—she's negging you pretty hard, in the chat.
00:18:33	Gillian	Guest	I guess that's true.
00:18:34	John	Host	With your starbooks.
00:18:36	Jesse	Host	What's your number one rock!? I need to know the top three rocks!
00:18:38	John	Host	We got quartz. We got rose quartz and the secret crystal.
00:18:41	Gillian	Guest	And the horse tooth.
00:18:42	Jesse	Host	Yeah, and I asked for three, Judge.
00:18:44	Gillian	Guest	Um, let's go with—I don't know. <i>[Laughs.]</i> Just the two.
00:18:50	Jesse	Host	<i>[Disappointed.]</i> Wow. Wow.
00:18:51	John	Host	Yeah, you know what? You put out those demands—you put out a demand for three rocks into the universe, Jesse. You know what you get?
00:18:57	Gillian	Guest	Two rocks.
00:18:58	Jesse	Host	What?
00:18:59	John	Host	A bag of coal in your stocking.
			<i>[Gillian chuckles.]</i>
00:19:02	Jesse	Host	So, it appears.
00:19:03	John	Host	The universe will send that back to you.
00:19:04	Jesse	Host	Let's take a quick recess and hear about this week's <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> sponsor. We'll be back in just a moment on the <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> podcast!
00:19:12	Sound Effect	Transition	Three gavel bangs.
00:19:15	Sound Effect	Transition	Three gavel bangs.
00:19:17	John	Host	So, why was the horse tooth meaningful to you, aside from the fact it's super cool?
00:19:22	Gillian	Guest	Yeah, so I thought it was super cool. I mean, it's super cool 'cause it's really, really old and it just makes me feel kind of like—I don't know, connected to a bigger picture of the universe. And also, at that time, my horse was really, really sick. And I really did feel like it was kind of like a memento mori for horses around the world.
			<i>[Chuckles.]</i> Including my own.
00:19:43	John	Host	And is your horse still with us?
00:19:46	Gillian	Guest	Tragically, no. Sorry to give bad news. But no.
00:19:49	John	Host	No, no. I kind of had a feeling that the story was going that way, and also it's already established that I'm psychic.
			<i>[Gillian chuckles.]</i>
			And what was your horse's name? Did it begin with an A or a B or a C or a D? I'm seeing, or an E?
00:20:03	Gillian	Guest	Close. Very, very close. It was—
00:20:05	John	Host	Or an F? G?
00:20:06	Gillian	Guest	JR.
00:20:07	John	Host	JR! J—was—G, 'cause I was saying—I had G, but obviously I got it confused with JR. JR.
00:20:14	Gillian	Guest	Yeah. Understandable mistake.
00:20:16	John	Host	Aw, poor JR. What a good horse. I bet he was a good horse.

00:20:20	Gillian	Guest	He was a great horse.
00:20:22	John	Host	So, Courtney, when Gillian came to you, via text or however she approached you, and she said—you know, “JR is really suffering, but the strangest thing happened. I picked up what I thought was a rock, and it turned out to be a fossilized horse tooth. And it made me feel connected to—you know, the life cycle of horses and the universe in a different way.” You just—you just said, “Scoff.” What did you—how did it make you feel?
00:20:48	Courtney	Guest	So, I would say that one of the things that Gillian and I have bonded a great deal over in our friendship has been sort of the tragic trajectory of many of our pets. So, I actually don’t think I would’ve scoffed at this. I think I’d have said something like, “Oh! Cool! That’s great. Love a fossilized horse tooth.” But I don’t think I would have scoffed.
00:21:15	John	Host	Not scoffed so much as, uh [ <i>chuckles</i> ] patronizing yes-ing along.
00:21:21	Courtney	Guest	Yeah. I hate that, because I do try to be such a supportive friend, but there is some possibility that I went with, “Oh, that’s cool.”
00:21:31	John	Host	Gillian, when you relayed the information about this fossilized horse tooth, #starbook, how did you feel about Courtney’s response? Did you feel scoffed?
00:21:40	Gillian	Guest	I actually remember like proactively making a joke, because I felt like if I didn’t make a joke, then she was going to scoff. So, I kind of headed it off with a mutual joke. But I think, had I not done that, she probably would’ve said like, “Uh, yeah, cool.” And yes, I would’ve felt like ugh, she doesn’t get it.
00:21:59	Jesse	Host	Is starbook a mutual joke?
00:22:02	Gillian	Guest	You know, that’s a great question!
			<i>[Courtney laughs.]</i>
00:22:08	Jesse	Host	At this point, it is.
00:22:09	Gillian	Guest	But at some point— Yeah, I think I’m suing her for—to take back starbook to no longer be a joke and be serious again.
00:22:16	John	Host	Ooh, okay! Let’s amend the brief.
			<i>[They laugh.]</i>
			Meanwhile, I can see—and you know, I can see you there in your closet, surrounded by all your clothes. Great sound insulation, thank you. And I saw, when I said—you know—she yesses you along, you nodded vigorously.
			<i>[Gillian confirms.]</i>
00:22:40	Gillian	Guest	Is that—? Yes. Tell me about your vigorous nodding. Is that the feeling that you have when she does this stuff to you? Yes. Originally, she would say flat out, “I hate that.” I mean, she literally said, “I hate that,” a couple of times. And then, I picked up on that. So, then I started sort of couching it with a joke. And then she’d be like, “Eh, yeah. You know.” And now, it’s kind of like the best I could get from her is a like, “Eh, that’s cool.”
00:22:57	John	Host	Do you believe, Gillian, that the universe is thinking about you?
00:23:02	Gillian	Guest	I want to believe that.

00:23:04	John	Host	You're Fox Muldering.
00:23:05	Gillian	Guest	<i>[Laughs.]</i> Yeah, I'm trying. I'm trying.
			<i>[Courtney laughs.]</i>
00:23:07	John	Host	Okay, I got it. What do you want it to be thinking about you? Obviously, good things.
00:23:14	Gillian	Guest	I just—I just want there to be some reason behind some of the bad things that happen. Or to have—you know, things that feel to me like disappointments in the moment can kind of make sense later and be part of a path to something better.
00:23:32	John	Host	Courtney, just a little question for you. What do you believe about the universe?
00:23:39	Courtney	Guest	<i>[Chuckles.]</i> So, what I would say is that I probably want that too. And that I can't allow myself to sort of entertain it, because of sort of the massive fallout when it sort of proves itself not to be true. So, I actually think Gillian and I are coming from sort of an almost identical sense of existential dread that is pushing ourselves in very different but also like completely against type reactions.
00:24:12	John	Host	As they say in season one of <i>Ted Lasso</i> —which is one of the most perfect seasons of television ever, go ahead and write me letters. "It's the hope that kills you," would be your point of view, perhaps. You're afraid to hope that the universe is thinking about you.
			<i>[Courtney confirms.]</i>
			Because if the universe is thinking about you, what—you know, and universe goes to a party with other universes, what's it gonna say about you? Maybe bad things.
			<i>[Gillian laughs.]</i>
00:24:33	Courtney	Guest	I think it's more that in the past five or six years—and Gillian knows this—somebody in my family has been constantly quite unwell. And who it is has rotated a bit, but through that process, I think the coping mechanism that I've developed is to just expect only chaos and coldness from the universe, which will allow yourself to be pleasantly delighted by anything that maybe sort of more than that. But—
00:25:05	John	Host	But doesn't simply destroy you.
			<i>[Courtney agrees emphatically.]</i>
00:25:11	Courtney	Guest	Yeah. I'm sorry, I didn't mean to put words in your mouth. But that's right. And I love, love a happy coincidence, a delightful little thing. But I have found sort of navigating this that it is much easier to stay thinking about the universe as sort of pure cosmic chaos than to even allow myself a glimpse of hope that maybe it will pull through. And every once in a while, one of these hard things has turned around and gone well, and that has been tremendous, but has made myself I think steel myself even more against sort of the expectation or even the hope that it will. So, I genuinely think we are—as with most things—on the exact same page! <i>[Laughs.]</i> But have just pushed off of each other almost magnetically into these very sort of different stances on these two emojis.

00:26:12	John	Host	One into a flirtation with faith, and the other into sheer nihilistic cynicism. I got you.
00:26:17	Courtney	Guest	Which is funny, because in our daily lives, we're the opposite. I'm sort of the happy-go-lucky optimist, and she is sort of the slightly more serious pessimist. So, it is funny that sort of at the core of it, we're sort of going to each other's corners.
00:26:36	John	Host	You said, Courtney, that you enjoy a delightful coincidence.  <i>[Courtney confirms.]</i>  And you have sent in as evidence, a photograph of a delightful coincidence.
00:26:43	Courtney	Guest	I do! Although, I also should've sent in a photograph of the rock that I found when I was <i>[laughing]</i> eight or nine years old that was also a delightful coincidence along the lines of the horse tooth. But more recently, Gillian and I were planning our Thanksgiving travel. And what you have to know is that in any given day, we're texting. We're sending Instagram stories. We're talking on the phone. She's sending me a slew of somewhat unhinged voice memos while she's driving.  <i>[Gillian laughs.]</i>  We have a loot of communication in any given day. And suddenly, we realized that both of us—in only a few days—were going to be in Nashville at the same time. And so, I thought, "What a wonderful coincidence! How delightful is that, that one of my favorite people on the planet and I will be in the same place? And our families can get dinner!" But that, I think, is a great example of me being pleasantly surprised and Gillian maybe thinking starbook.
00:27:42	John	Host	There's a photo of you in what I presume is the hotel room, based on the popcorn ceilings I see in there.  <i>[They laugh.]</i>  Being very happy, because you're meeting unexpectedly. And for all of the communication, neither of you had thought to say to the other, "I'm gonna be in Nashville sometime soon." And suddenly, you were there together.  <i>[Courtney confirms.]</i>  Right. Well, I hate to say that I organized this.  <i>[They laugh.]</i>  I've been pulling the strings behind your lives for the past two years.
00:28:14	Gillian	Guest	Thank god someone is.
00:28:15	Courtney	Guest	It would explain a lot.
00:28:16	John	Host	Is there anything to this rock that you mentioned that has anything to do with this case? Other than we were talking about rocks, and you wanted part of it?
00:28:22	Gillian	Guest	Just my own happy rock coincidence. Just another funny thing that Gillian and I have in common.

00:28:28 John Host Oh, that you also found a rock one time?

*[They laugh and Courtney confirms.]*

00:28:42 Courtney Guest It was not—but it was not intrinsic to the—it was not intrinsic to the experience of you finding that rock. It’s not like you found a fossilized giraffe tooth the same day you rode a giraffe or something. It’s just that you found—no.

00:29:06 John Host No! I was hiking in Sedona when I was nine. I kept talking to my parents about, “Oh my gosh, what if we find a crystal? What if we find a crystal?” And I am not the most coordinated person. I tripped, fell, and fell on top of a little crystal. And so, in my family, that little crystal has always been sort of a stand in for “what a delightful coincidence”.

00:29:15 Courtney Guest You—no wonder you hate this stuff! You tripped on a crystal!

00:29:16 John Host *[They laugh.]*

00:29:23 Courtney Guest These crystals are out to get you.

00:29:33 John Host That could be right.

00:29:37 Courtney Guest Gillian’s wearing a protective crystal. This other one tried to knock your teeth out!

00:29:42 John Host *[Courtney confirms.]*

00:29:43 Courtney Guest Where is that crystal, now?

00:30:01 John Host It is in an old beanie full of things that I thought were lucky when I was a child, in my parent’s house in southern California.

00:30:06 Courtney Guest *[Gasps.]* You put aside childish things.

00:30:16 John Host *[Courtney confirms with a strained laugh.]*

00:30:28 Courtney Guest What else is in that beanie?

*[Laughing.]* Honestly? It’s a lot of rocks! So.

Do they still have it?

They do. And we actually talk about it—I don’t know, maybe every year or so. Somebody’ll bring up how crazy it was that that crystal thing happened. Because my brother insisted that my parents planted it to pacify me. And so, it comes up all the time in that sense. But they maintain that they did not.

Wow! Your brother says they planted the crystal? Someone’s lying!

He at least did when we were kids in Sedona. But I think he has either come around or completely forgotten it by this point.

*[Laughs.]*

Courtney, when you talked about how you two became friends, you described each other as work soulmates. That’s pretty starbooky, I gotta say. Soulmates. That you were destined to know each other, that you have a special connection.

Yeah, I would say that it was glib. I was trying to come up with something less twee than best friends, and I don’t think I landed on it, in hindsight.

*[Gillian laughs.]*

But I do think it also is sort of—I like it, because it’s evocative. I would be happy to use starbook as a fun, evocative, heuristic that is sort of indicating, “Wow, can you believe it?” But it isn’t—I’m not a believer in soulmates, but I do think it’s sort of sufficiently emphatic to sort of explain our friendship.

00:31:06 John Host

I’m gonna ask you both some questions, and I just want you to answer right off—right from your gut, right? Without thinking. Gillian, do you believe in ghosts?

*[Gillian confirms on a laugh.]*

Mm-hm. Courtney, do you believe in ghosts?

*[Courtney denies it.]*

Gillian, do you believe in Bigfoot?

*[Gillian denies it.]*

Courtney, would you take that box of lucky rocks from your parents’ basement and throw it into the ocean, Titanic style?

*[Courtney denies it.]*

Right. I was tricking you into thinking that I was gonna ask about Bigfoot, but I wanted an honest reaction about your box of lucky rocks. How do you think about Bigfoot?

00:31:39 Courtney Guest

You know, when I was a kid, I loved sightings and the Bigsfeet and all of that. And at some point, I think I have become maybe a little too, mmm... against all of those things. And I’m realizing now what I think has maybe been true throughout our friendship, which is that Gillian is much more inclined towards them than I am. It just doesn’t usually come up in sort of the context that we’re relating to each other.

00:32:08 John Host

I’ll tell you what. “Bigsfeet” was great. I love that.

*[They chuckle.]*

I get a lot of letters about how pluralize Bigfoot. I feel like that’s a new one to me. I believe in Bigsfeet. ‘Cause you deserve my answer, too. So, I believe in Bigsfeet, at least the possibility of Bigsfeet. That’s why I’m friends with Loren Coleman, the proprietor of the International Cryptozoology Museum in Portland, Maine. And I’ll tell you how I feel about ghosts, too. But I’ll tell you when I get to my verdict.

Gillian, let me ask you this. If the universe has a certain order and it is more or less benign—I mean, obviously very hard things happen, but they open opportunities if not for other good outcomes, at least moments of profound self-reflection, let’s say. The universe has your back. That’s the whole universe on your side! What do you care what Courtney thinks?

00:32:57 Gillian Guest

Yeah, so I think what Courtney alluded to is that I’m kind of the morose one in our friendship, and she’s kind of the happy-go-lucky

one. And so, for me, I feel like I can kind of barely muster the sort of enthusiasm and positivity to be like—to like try to believe this thing. And then, when she's like, "Meh. Not really." Then, I feel like, "Well, I don't know if I even believe it either." So, you've kind of talked me out of it. So, I don't know. It's just—it's a very fragile sort of belief that I'm trying to kindle or cultivate. And so, it's—it is—it's fragile. It's vulnerable to sort of being scoffed at.

00:33:36 John Host

Courtney, when you—you know, Gillian's saying she needs a little starbook. And when you scoff at it, you're smashing that starbook, and it's hard for her. How does that make you feel?

00:33:48 Courtney Guest

Oh, totally horrified! I think that Gillian would stipulate to the fact that we're both sort of very caring, thoughtful, constant friends. And so, the idea that my rebuffing this thing that I had not taken seriously is harming her is horrifying to me. And so, if I understood sort of the nature of when she says starbook, where she's coming from, I actually would be willing to accommodate that with the caveat that I think she understands how profoundly I struggle with sort of the "things happening for a reason" logic, especially like right now, at this time in my life. So, I would flag I'm not necessarily doing it to scoff. I think we're *[chuckling]*—we're both engaging in these sort of self-protective measures that may be sort of coming at the cost of the other one more seriously than either of us had sort of stopped to recognize.

*[John affirms.]*

00:35:01 Jesse Host

Which I know neither of us would want.

It sounds like both of you might need one of those black crystals.

00:35:06 John Host

*[They laugh and Courtney agrees.]*

Yeah, but you can't let them—you can't let them touch, or else it rips a hole in spacetime.

*[Jesse agrees.]*

00:35:36 Courtney Guest

So, Courtney, maybe you can help put a name—so that Gillian understands—to why you need protection from starbook. Like, starbook is protective to Gillian. But when you see it, you have this reflex to scoff. If Gillian is right and there's no free will or whatever it is, how does that—why do you need protection from that?

I think it's hard for me—when my mom was so sick, but then she got better. And then my dog was so sick, and then he kind of got better. But now my dad is so sick that it's just easier for me to sort of live a life of sort of not expecting things to work out or things to turn around or sort of the universe to intervene in sort of a caring way, because it doesn't always. But then, I have to admit, sometimes it does. Because in most of my answers as to things that have sort of *[chuckles]* stripped me of my belief in a lot of things, many of them didn't turn out as badly as they could've. So, maybe a little bit more hope would be a good thing. It just feels like—you know, the downside is that they don't always work out.

And I don't know. I prefer having these sort of grounded expectations so that I don't end up sort of in that tremendous pitfall.

00:36:49	John	Host	I mean, you accuse yourself of being glib and sarcastic. But I could see how, if you're suffering, someone saying to you, "Everything happens for a reason," at the wrong time could make me wanna go, "Go jump in a lake." Or—to quote <i>Moonrise Kingdom</i> , a perfect film, write me letters, "I love you, but you don't know what you're talking about."
00:37:18	Courtney	Guest	I notice that you are nodding vigorously there, as I continue to talk. And I should've shut up and let you respond. So, now I will. Yeah! The caveat being that she does know. And so, it's not as though I feel—
00:37:25	John	Host	So, she should know better! <i>[Chuckles.]</i>
00:37:27	Courtney	Guest	Yes! She should know better! So, yeah. I don't know. I mean, starbook—I think it's funny. I'd love to be able to say starbook as sort of a funny thing. But I guess what we need a ruling on is <i>[laughing]</i> when somebody can say starbook. And if she tells me—which I think by bringing me to your courtroom, Judge, that this is the way that she has been able to tell me that she needs it. She can have it. But I also think that, you know, some recognition that—you know, it can be a little bit challenging for me to sort of be fully onboard for that mindset would be helpful. Which I know she knows.
00:38:17	John	Host	Right. Jesse Thorn, sometimes I'll text you and you'll use an emoji. A thumbs up or a smiling face with cool guy sunglasses or whatever. It's fun. I don't use emojis that much, so I'm gonna ask you, Jesse. Can you think of an appropriate emoji combo to respond to starbook that would validate Courtney's feelings? What are the good emojis out there that suggest chaos and disorder in this universe?  <i>[They chuckle.]</i>
00:38:51	Courtney	Guest	What was an emoji that just would quietly be "nothing matters"?
00:38:54	John	Host	What about a horse and a tooth? <i>[Laughs.]</i> A horse and a tooth. I like it! Okay. Gillian, would you remind me of the perfect ruling that you amended? You wanted a new ruling? Here, it says you want Courtney to stop making fun of you when you say something is meant to be, which I think is easy to order without even taking a moment to think of a verdict, because friends shouldn't make fun of friends. And then, also for her to go along with it—that she should go along with starbook, even if she doesn't believe it. Is that right?
00:39:24	Gillian	Guest	Yes. I mean, I want her to pretend that she believes it as I pretend I believe it. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:39:31	John	Host	'Kay. I mean— <i>[laughs]</i> —wasn't there another ruling or an amendment that you mentioned?
00:39:38	Courtney	Guest	I think it was that. No, it was about that you get to take starbook back.
00:39:44	Gillian	Guest	Oh, yes, yes, yes, yes. It's—because I've kind of conceded starbook. At this point, it is a bit. But what I would like is to take it back to sort of a magical thing that we can kind of pretend that we believe. And she has to pretend too! <i>[Laughs.]</i>



00:40:00	John	Host	I see. Okay, I think I've heard everything I need to in order to make my decision. I'm going to go through my beaded curtain. I did have a beaded curtain when I was a child.  <i>[Jesse chuckles.]</i>  Into my room full of crystals. Did not have that! I will scry my crystal ball, and I'll be back in a moment with my verdict.
00:40:17	Jesse	Host	Please rise as Judge John Hodgman exits the courtroom.  <i>[The squeak of chairs followed by heavy footsteps and a door closing.]</i>
00:40:28	Courtney	Guest	Courtney, how are you feeling about your chances right now? I don't care about my chances. Whatever the judge wants is fine. What I'm worried about is that if I have been sort of rebuffing this to the point that Gillian has felt made fun of—that has never been a goal or even anything that I would hope would be a byproduct of me sort of pushing away the logic. So, whatever happens, I would love—if Gillian is feeling made fun of, maybe there's an emoji there that she can throw out. Because I never want her to feel made fun of. I always want her to feel supported, even if we're sort of disagreeing about sort of the bookiness of it all.
00:41:13	Jesse	Host	Gillian, how do you feel?
00:41:15	Gillian	Guest	I feel good. I mean, I think my request to force Courtney to pretend she believes something she doesn't is possibly a bridge too far. <i>[Chuckles.]</i> And I understand that saying things happen for a reason is like annoying to anyone, and particularly maybe challenging for her, given what she talked about. So, I think—you know, I trust the judge's wisdom to give us a fair and workable ruling. And I look forward to hearing what he has to say.
00:41:45	Jesse	Host	Well, we'll see what he has to say when we come back in just a second on the <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> podcast.
00:41:49	Sound Effect	Transition	Three gavel bangs.
00:41:51	Sound Effect	Transition	Three gavel bangs.
00:41:53	Jesse	Promo	Judge Hodgman, we're taking a break from the case. And we wanna let everybody know that we are headed out on tour! Circuit court is in session! This is our first tour in years. Like, actual years. It is gonna be a great time. Starting at the end of January, we're gonna be in Seattle, Portland, Denver, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and—of course—the <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> capital of the word: Port Townsend, Washington.  Can I just say? If you live in or near Port Townsend, Washington, <u>please</u> come to our show! Because <i>[laughs]</i> look, the mayor is onboard. The mayor is coming.
00:42:36	John	Promo	Port Townsend, Washington, I demand—if not the key to the city, at least the combination to the lock.
00:42:41	Jesse	Promo	We'll see how we draw in Port Townsend, Washington. It's gonna be a fun show, one way or another. It might just be us and the mayor and his wife or something. But we'll find out. It's gonna be a hoot, one way or another. <a href="http://MaximumFun.org/events">MaximumFun.org/events</a> is where you

can find dates and locations and ticket details for all of those places. Seattle, Portland, Denver, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Port Townsend, Washington. It is gonna be a blast. And if you're in any of those places or within traveling distance, make sure to submit your cases at [MaximumFun.org/ijho](http://MaximumFun.org/ijho). Please! We need cases. It's a different show every night, so we need your cases at [MaximumFun.org/ijho](http://MaximumFun.org/ijho). And make sure to let us know that you're within access of one of those great cities and towns.

00:43:36	John	Promo	<p>Now, John, you also have a show coming up this month! It's a Hodgmonte Holiday Spectacle coming right up in just a couple of days. Monte Belmonte, your summertime fun-time guest bailiff, and I will be answering the ding-dong doorbell as multiple guests stop by for our Holiday Spectacle at the Shea Theater in Turners Falls, Massachusetts. My triumphant return to the pioneer valley? Can't wait to see all of my old friends there, including Perry Von Vicious. <i>[Groans.]</i> Can't wait to see you, Perry Von Vicious!</p> <p>We're gonna have all kinds of friends stopping by, including your friend and mine, the great Jean Grae. Your friend and mine, the great Jonathon Colton, and your friend and soon-to-be my friend—'cause I haven't met her yet, but I love her music—Heather Maloney and her band, High Tea.</p> <p>Tickets are on sale now, if they are not already sold out, at <a href="http://Bit.ly/HODGMONTE22">Bit.ly/HODGMONTE22</a>. You can just look up Hodgmonte and get it, but I did make a Bit.ly, finally. <a href="http://Bit.ly/HODGMONTE">Bit.ly/HODGMONTE</a> – H-O-D-G-M-O-N-T-E – 22. The numbers, 22. See, this is very complicated. <a href="http://Bit.ly/HODGMONTE22">Bit.ly/HODGMONTE22</a>, all capital letters. See you at the Shae, please! Can't wait to see you there.</p>
00:44:46	Jesse	Promo	<p>And before we get back to the case, if you happen to be in southern California, come out to the South Pasadena Vintage Flea Market on Saturday the 17<sup>th</sup>. We'll be there all afternoon. "We" being me and Horacio or Bucky from the <i>Put This On</i> shop. And there's gonna—there's food and lots of other vendors. It's a really nice—really nice show, right behind Mission in South Pasadena. So come out. Say hi. It's fun. I met some nice <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> listeners last time. It was a lot of fun.</p>
00:45:17	Sound Effect	Transition	<p>Okay, let's get back to the case. Three gavel bangs.</p>
00:45:19	Jesse	Host	<p>Please rise as Judge John Hodgman reenters the court room and presents his verdict.</p>
00:45:28	John	Host	<p><i>[The squeak of chairs followed by heavy footsteps and a door closing.]</i> "I disagree with the quotation about the saddest words of tongue or pen being "what might have been". I don't think anything might have been. What is, is. That's the whole idea. Any other idea is remote, such as, "Oh, if only it had been different, Jeanette and I would be gliding down the aisle on a gondola." Or "Harold and I would be in Antarctica together." Or "I would be a famous movie star." All of this</p>

is absolute nonsense. What is, is. And what might have been could never have existed.”

That’s the full quote from that Edward Gorey book, *Ascending Peculiarity*. And I said earlier on that, you know, I’ve definitely had moments of—you know, tingling on the back of my neck. Non-ASMR video related moments of sheer sense of serendipity or synchronicity. Or a sense that I was receiving something from the universe that was beyond just a kick in the pants and a breath of ill wind or whatever. And one of those moments was actually when I was in Los Angeles with David Rees, and we were pitching a TV show all over town. And we really had put a lot of work into this TV show. It was a TV show about Bigsfeet, actually. And it was a comedy. And you may have noticed, it never got made. You’ve never seen the David Rees, John Hodgman, Bigsfeet comedy show—a workplace comedy, among Bigsfeet hunters.

But we had put so much hope and faith into this happening, and we were staying in an Airbnb together in LA, and after we had done all of the pitches, we found this Edward Gorey book in this great used bookstore in Atwater Village. And I bought it, just ‘cause I wanted to have it. And then, I got up very, very early in the morning to go home the next morning and to wait for word about this TV show. And David did not have to wake up that early. And I just noticed this book, and I realized two things. I wanted David to have it, ‘cause he’s my friend and he loves Edward Gorey too. And also, my bag was heavy enough, and I didn’t wanna put it in my bag.

So, I was looking through this Gorey book at about five o’clock in the morning, and I came across this image of a dog that I’ve never seen in any other Gorey book ever collected. And it is this very, very old, wrinkly, beautiful dog. Massive dog draped in a blanket that says, “What might have been.” And it accompanied this quote from this interview that he gave. And the hair raised on my forearms—that very fine hair on my forearms. You know, I felt the tingle on the back of my neck. And I knew we weren’t gonna sell this show. *[Chuckles.]* We weren’t gonna sell this show, and it was okay. It was not a failure. We did our best. I just knew that we weren’t gonna sell it. A premonition? There was no way that it could be a self-fulfilling prophecy, because I never said it out loud. But more than that, this word—this phrase, “What is, is”—or as we shorten it here on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast, “it’s it”—was very, very reassuring that it’s not—for me—that everything happens for a reason. It’s just—it happens. It happens. We didn’t sell the show. One of the networks asked us if we would pitch another idea to them for an animated block, and we came up with the show *Dick Town*, available on Hulu: one of the greatest things to happen in my creative life. Was that because the universe was offering us consolation, ‘cause we didn’t get to do this Bigsfoot show? No, it’s because the Bigsfoot show wasn’t really great. *[Chuckles.]* And we put ourselves into the universe, which is true, but because we put ourselves in front of people who liked us, just not our dumb idea, we got another chance.

00:48:27 John Host

And if that had not happened, and if—let’s say we don’t ever get to make more *Dick Town* or whatever else that we’re working on doesn’t ever get to happen again, what is, is. I also resist believing in ghosts, because I’ll believe in a Bigfoot any old day. ‘Cause that could be an animal that just hasn’t been discovered yet, like a coelacanth or an *[struggling with the word]* okapi. Or an opapa, whatever that is. That’s the name of Starlee Kine’s dog. But a ghost really does suggest that there’s something else out there in the universe. Unless they are time travelers with bad wardrobe or some other unknown, which is possible. The idea that a ghost of a spirit that has lingered beyond death is uncomfortable to me, because it is too reassuring. It would suggest that there is at least some tortured form of life after death, and that is such—that is such—having, you know, gone through what we’ve—we’ve all—we’re all suffering. Right?

And having gone through loss of someone very close to me, it is not a—it is not really a comfort to—the idea that there’s just some happy place they go to feels so—I mean, glib. Right? That it undoes me worse than to imagine that we come to an end in our lives. Or what happens after we die is unknowable, and therefore let’s not talk about it. Let’s let what is, is and be and live in this life. Now, the only reason that I know this full quote—I thought this book was lost. I thought David left it in the Airbnb. But I texted him this morning. I’m like, “You don’t still have that book?” And as we were recording this, he sent me the photo of the page of this illustration that I didn’t think I could find. Coincidence?! Well, no, I asked him to do it. But still! It felt magical!

And I love the feeling of things feeling magical. It’s great! It’s a wonderful feeling, ‘cause there are truly things that you can’t quite explain. And part of being an agnostic—which is, I guess, what I am—is I don’t spend a lot of time or energy tisk-tisking other people’s faith ways, so long as they don’t get in my way, and they don’t dictate Supreme Court orders. And I also savor mystery, because not knowing—you know, is... sorry, Walker Percy, but it’s better to not know sometimes than to know. That one goes out from my old writing teacher, Lee Kay Abbott, who’s no longer with us. In any case, that’s where I’m coming from to this. So, what we have here is a collision of two people who really care about each other who are developing coping mechanisms that we are all—have been developing, especially over the past few years. Coping mechanisms to deal with randomness and misfortune and hard feelings. It’s not been an easy time for anyone. And for some people, it’s been truly, truly, truly rough. And for those people, for some people, starbook—that somehow there’s an explanation for what’s happening is not a consolation but an undermining of the very, very deep sorrow that they feel. For some people. For other people, the idea that there is something beyond what we know—which is a feeling that I have—that there is something beyond—there—we cannot say for certainty that there is nothing beyond our perception—is a great comfort! And they deserve that comfort as well.

00:52:06 John Host

Baseline, I would have to say, Gillian, is that if you are a person of a kind of faith in an ordered universe, that anyone who is of faith in an ordered universe kind of has to take it on the chin a little bit from those who don't get it. That's your choice, to believe in an ordered universe. It is your faith way. And if people say, "I'm sorry, I can't believe that" part of your obligation to your faith way is to say, "I feel you. I still feel the same way." You know? That said, it's not nice to hear it from your best friend all the time. *[Laughs.]* It's not so nice to hear it from your best friend all the time. There's an easy part of this ruling, of course—which is that Gillian, you know, of course Courtney should not make fun of you. And I think that Courtney was really horrified—and that was the word that Courtney used—to appreciate how some of her, what she considered to be good-natured scoffing or "yeah, whatever"s were making you feel.

I cannot order her to go along with it. You know. I can't order her to believe in your religion of the starbook emoji combo.

*[They laugh.]*

And join your church She's got her own way of coping and dealing with things. I can't allow Courtney to continue to scoff, either. And I think that whatever I might rule is moot. I'm not sure if either of you have ever heard that; you're actual attorneys. That's a law term that I'm possibly misusing.]

*[They chuckle.]*

Whatever I rule is kind of pointless, 'cause I don't think Courtney's ever gonna do it again. I don't think Courtney's ever gonna scoff again. But I do feel that it is your absolute right to #starbook anything that you say to your friend. I'm finding in your favor, Gillian, in the sense that like let's stop pretending that starbook is a joke to you, Gillian. Because you know that Courtney thinks it's a joke and you're trying to grease the friendship along by going along with her and pretending that it's a joke. It's a real thing. Starbook is a real thing, and that is your indicator like, "This is—this—what I am texting you is my indicator of hope in this world that things maybe aren't just random."

00:55:43 John Host

And Courtney, I'm gonna have to order you to take starbook emoji—and this is what's beautiful about emoji, right? Like, the church that somehow finds a way to convert people with emojis is gonna make the most money in the world. But it is just a little—it's just a little symbol. Like, this is part of my worldview. And it's not pushy like, "You have to admit this is the world operating the way I've always said it is." It's just like, "Yeah, starbook. Starbook!" I think that you deserve, Courtney, to have a response of your own in emoji form, that similarly situates where you are in this universe and your feelings about the universe, that is just—that Gillian has to sort of take in equal neutral mode and not respond to but appreciate that you have a different point of view in the universe.

I asked Jesse Thorn to, uh *[chuckles]*—to brainstorm some emojis. Jesse, what were the emojis that you came up with, please?

00:56:45 Jesse Host Well, one idea was the shaking finger emoji—the uh-uh. Yeah.  
00:56:52 John Host Uh-uh-uh! Yeah.  
00:56:54 Jesse Host And then a crab.

*[They laugh.]*

That like expresses “I’m not having it”.

One was sort of a tribute to our friend, Andy Daly, and his beautiful television show, *Review*. And that’s a stack of pancakes and then a person crying.

*[They laugh.]*

And it just means that like, sure, you think pancakes are gonna be great, but then it’s just too much. You know.

00:57:26 John Host  
00:57:29 Jesse Host

It’s just—yeah. Yeah, that’s right.

And then, one is the tornado emoji and—followed by the wind emoji. Which symbolizes that the world is just a fart hurricane.

*[They laugh.]*

00:57:41 John Host

Fart hurricane. Mm-hm. Uh-huh. Those are all very, very good! Do any of those resonate with you, Courtney, more than horse tooth?

00:57:52 Courtney Guest

*[Chuckles.]* You know, I think maybe—I mean, obviously fart hurricane resonates, especially the tornado emoji, as I’m in tornado alley—as is Gillian. But I think maybe also including a heart to let her know that this is not coming from a place of scoffing, but a place of sort of loving disagreement.

00:58:12 John Host

So, my order is this. I’m ruling in Gillian’s favor. Courtney can’t make fun of you. Gillian, you get starbook. Starbook is your thing. Starbook is your thing. I would add a heart to it. Hearts all around, just to remind each other. And then, Courtney, you get fart tornado as a response—with a heart, to remind Gillian as well that, you know, sometimes life is just a random, whirling collection of fart noises. And then, you can share horse tooth. And if I were you, I think—you know, deploy horse tooth more often than the others.

*[They laugh.]*

‘Cause here’s why. It’s the exact same emoji—for you, Gillian, it connects you to that horse tooth that you found that connected you to the universe of all the horses that have lived and died, that every horse has its time on earth. What is, is. And for you, Courtney, it connects you to your feelings like, yeah, horses die. That’s how it goes. Bleh. Fart. Heart.

*[They laugh.]*

And then, just like I think—especially during the holidays—it’s best not to talk about religion or politics, even with your closest friends. Let these emojis be the whole of your communication on the subject of faith and spirituality.

*[They laugh.]*

00:59:31	Sound Effect	Music	<p>Unless you wanna—unless you get someone else to media, ‘cause I’m outta here. This is the sound of a gavel.  “Whatever Will Be, Will Be (Que Sera, Sera)” by Doris Day.</p> <p><i>Que sera, sera</i></p> <p><i>[Song fades out.]</i></p>
00:59:34	John	Host	Judge John Hodgman rules. That is all.
00:59:36	Jesse	Host	Please rise as Judge John Hodgman exits the courtroom.
			<i>[The scrape of chairs followed by heavy footsteps and a door closing.]</i>
00:59:46	Courtney	Guest	Courtney, how are you? Good! You know, I think the horse tooth will be great, because I will send it from a place of, “Hey, cool! A horse tooth!” And I think that that is perfect.
00:59:55	Jesse	Host	I mean, you gotta admit—like, if I found a fossilized horse tooth, I’d be like, “Woah! Cool!”
01:00:00	Courtney	Guest	Awesome! <i>[Chuckling.]</i> What a great coincidence! A horse tooth!
01:00:04	Jesse	Host	Gillian, how do you feel?
01:00:06	Gillian	Guest	Good. I just have to find a crystal that I can trip Courtney with.
			<i>[They chuckle.]</i>
01:00:12	Jesse	Host	Gillian, Courtney, thanks for joining us on the <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> podcast.
			<i>[They thank him.]</i>
01:00:17	Sound Effect	Transition	Three gavel bangs.
01:00:19	Jesse	Host	Another <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> case is in the books. Before we dispense some Swift Justice, our thanks to Twitter user @WeHaveSnacks for naming this week’s episode, “Case Sera, Sera”. If you wanna name a future episode, follow us on Twitter. @JesseThorn and @Hodgman. You can also find us on Facebook, at <a href="https://www.facebook.com/judgejohnhodgman">Facebook.com/judgejohnhodgman</a> . On Twitter, use the hashtag #JJHo, and we’re on Reddit! <a href="https://www.reddit.com/r/MaximumFun">MaximumFun.Reddit.com</a> . Having a lot of fun there talking about cases and other Max Fun shows. Evidence and photos from the show are posted on our Instagram account, at <a href="https://www.instagram.com/judgejohnhodgman">Instagram.com/judgejohnhodgman</a> . Our engineer in Alabama was Nick Golden, at Seed Creative. And Gillian was recorded by her husband, Andrew. Thank you, Andrew and Nick. Our producer is Jennifer Marmor. Our editor is Valerie Moffatt.
			Now, Swift Justice: small disputes with quick judgments. Nick says, “My wife and I have a dispute about how to open an advent calendar. I say, you start at one and count up. She says you start at 24 and count down. Who’s right? Who’s wrong?”
01:01:37	John	Host	Um, no. It’s called a advent calendar, not an advent countdalendar—countdownlendar. You start at one! You start at one.

Hey, it's the cozy season and things are getting chilly, here in Brooklyn. It's finally below 50 degrees. What's happening to this Earth, I wonder? In any case, we are getting close to Winter Solstice. It's time to bundle up. We need those cozy disputes. *[Chuckling.]* I don't know what a cozy dispute is. You figure it out. A dispute over hot chocolate, the best way to make it. A dispute over whether it's acceptable ever to wear a blanket that zips up. I think you know what I mean. We call them Snuggies? I don't know what we call them.

Oh, I know! How about a dispute over the great Edward Gorey book, *The Haunted Tea Cozy*. Anything with cozy in the name, title, or idea, we would love to hear them. Also—by the way, a few weeks ago, we sent out a call for family feuds. Obviously, we have a lot of spousal feuds. What about sibling feuds? Uncle feuds? Cousin feuds? I specifically asked for avuncular disputes. Uncle feuds, which is a good name for your uncle. But I didn't know at the time what the aunt (ah-nt) or aunt (ant) equivalent to avuncular would be. Thank you to our listener, Margret, who wrote in with the answer.

From MedicineNet.com—I don't know why they know—quote, “The feminine equivalent of avuncular is materteral.” M-A-T-E-R-T-E-R-A-L. If that's wrong, you don't need to send me a letter. Just give me some of your aunt (ah-nt) disputes or aunt (ant) disputes, or whether it's aunt (ah-nt) or aunt (ant). Those are the kind of disputes we want for our family feud.

01:03:19 Jesse Host And if you have any dispute—cozy or otherwise—send it in, no case too small. It's [MaximumFun.org/ijho](http://MaximumFun.org/ijho). That's [MaximumFun.org/ijho](http://MaximumFun.org/ijho). And that goes double or triple if you're in one of the cities we are traveling to on tour. That's Seattle, Port Townsend, San Francisco, Denver, and Los Angeles. If you're in one of those places, make sure to let us know so that we can potentially invite you to be on one of our live shows. You're gonna have a great time on this tour. Circuit court!

Okay, we'll talk to you next time on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

01:03:56 Sound Effect Transition Three gavel bangs.

01:03:59 Sound Effect Transition Cheerful ukulele chord.

01:04:00 Speaker 1 Guest [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org).

01:04:01 Speaker 2 Guest Comedy and culture.

01:04:03 Speaker 3 Guest Artist owned—

01:04:04 Speaker 4 Guest —audience supported.