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| 00:00:00 | Sound Effect | Transition | Three gavel bangs. |
| 00:00:02 | Jesse Thorn | Host | <p>Welcome to the <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> podcast. I'm bailiff Jesse Thorn. This week, "Meld in Contempt". Stacey brings the case against her friend Ellen. Stacey says that when they play cards, Ellen changes the rules midgame! Ellen says this isn't true; she's simply reporting what the rules have always been. Who's right? Who's wrong? Only one can decide.</p> <p><i>[The squeak of chairs followed by heavy footsteps and a door closing.]</i></p> <p>Please rise as Judge John Hodgman enters the courtroom and presents an obscure cultural reference.</p> |
| 00:00:37 | John Hodgman | Host | <p>The girl in the lobby of the Xanadu was waiting for one person and hoping to see another. It was Saturday morning, on the second day of the tournament. The girl's name was Victoria Summers. She had lived for 29 years and had not enjoyed any of them very much.</p> <p>Bailiff Jesse Thorn, please swear them in.</p> |
| 00:00:56 | Jesse | Host | <p>Stacey. Ellen. Please rise and raise your right hands.</p> <p><i>[Chair squeak.]</i></p> <p>Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God or whatever?</p> <p><i>[They confirm.]</i></p> <p>Do you swear to abide by Judge John Hodgman's ruling, despite the fact that he broke a bridge contract? I don't even know what bridge is.</p> |
| 00:01:16 | Stacey | Guest | Yeah! |
| 00:01:17 | Ellen | Guest | Maybe. |
| 00:01:19 | Stacey | Guest | <p>That's why we're here, Ellen.</p> <p><i>[Ellen laughs.]</i></p> |
| 00:01:21 | Jesse | Host | Ellen's already changing the rules. <i>[Chuckles.]</i> Judge Hodgman, you may proceed. |
| 00:01:26 | John | Host | <p>Ellen, I'm already holding you in contempt, by the way—in pre-contempt. Double secret contempt probation for some of the spicy comments that I've already heard, even from before we recorded. But you may redeem yourself now. First of all, you may be seated. Second of all, for an immediate summary judgement in one of yours favors, can either you, Stacey, or you, Ellen, name what piece of culture that I referenced as I entered the courtroom? Now, I didn't even reference it. This was a direct quotation from something. Uh, Stacey, why don't you go first?</p> |
| 00:01:58 | Stacey | Guest | Hm. I don't know. <i>[Sighs.]</i> It's like— |
| 00:01:59 | John | Host | You gotta guess. |
| 00:02:01 | Stacey | Guest | The movie <i>Xanadu</i> , starring Olivia Newton John? Maybe the book version? |
| 00:02:05 | John | Host | Stacey, I love that guess. I love that guess so much. Jesse Thorn, you ever see <i>Xanadu</i> , starring Olivia Newton John? |

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| 00:02:15 | Jesse | Host | That's a roller-skating musical? |
| 00:02:17 | John | Host | Yeah, and Gene Kelly's last movie is in a roller disco musical, called <i>Xanadu</i> . |
| 00:02:23 | Jesse | Host | Finally crossed that off the bucket list. |
| 00:02:26 | John | Host | I'm getting over a little illness, so I can't sing very well—not that I ever sang terrifically anyway. But it went a little something like this: <i>[singing]</i> "Xanadu, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. Xanadu, now we are here in Xan—" No, I can't hit the notes anymore. "In—" Nope, not even gonna try. "In—" No, I'll stop. <i>Xanadu</i> . Ellen, you got something as good as <i>Xanadu</i> ? |
| 00:02:50 | Ellen | Guest | Like that <i>Shangri-La</i> movie or— |
| 00:02:53 | John | Host | <i>Shangri-La</i> movie? One of the many, many <i>Shangri-La</i> movies. Sure. You ever see—Ellen, you ever see the movie <i>The Warriors</i> ? <i>[She confirms.]</i> Right. So, you remember who plays Swan in <i>The Warriors</i> , right? |
| 00:03:05 | Ellen | Guest | No. |
| 00:03:06 | John | Host | What? Michael Beck! You remember that Michael Beck—you remember that. Okay, now you remember. Alright. So, for all of the marbles—as they say in the card game Hand and Foot—Michael Beck played Swan in <i>The Warriors</i> , played the male lead in <i>Xanadu</i> , and then starred in what other movie, and then—I don't know if he really did anything after that. It's a third movie— |
| 00:03:30 | Ellen | Guest | <i>Transformers</i> . |
| 00:03:31 | John | Host | You know what?! I love that guess, Ellen. You're off double secret probation. It absolutely is not <i>Transformers</i> , but that's a pretty good guess, given that the movie I'm thinking of is the Barry Bostwick action vehicle <i>Megaforce</i> . <i>[Stacey sighs disappointedly.]</i> Stacey! Wow! That was a big sigh of frustration. Stacey, were you gonna guess <i>Megaforce</i> ? |
| 00:03:57 | Stacey | Guest | Yeah. That was my second guess. |
| 00:03:59 | John | Host | <i>[Skeptically.]</i> Was it really? |
| 00:04:00 | Stacey | Guest | <i>[With a chuckle.]</i> No. |
| 00:04:01 | John | Host | No. But we're—I feel like we're of the same age. Generation at least, Stacey. Right? <i>[Stacey confirms.]</i> If you're guessing <i>Xanadu</i> . And Ellen, you and me too, right? We're all in the same world. You don't—you remember <i>Megaforce</i> where Barry Bostwick wore a tight spandex suit and a blue headband and was the leader of an elite group of happy-go-lucky mercenaries in the desert and flew around on motorcycles? <i>Megaforce</i> ? Deeds not words? |
| 00:04:28 | Jesse | Host | Featuring Gene Kelly in his next to last role. |
| 00:04:30 | John | Host | That's right. Featuring Gene Kelly. <i>[Chuckles.]</i> Well, they used outtake footage from <i>Xanadu</i> to create a new role in <i>Megaforce</i> . Anyway, you're all wrong. I mean, all guesses are wrong. The answer, of course, was a page that I chose at random from a novel called <i>Tickets to the Devil</i> . I'm showing it to you now on teleconferencing. <i>Tickets to the Devil</i> by Richard Powell was a |

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| | | | <p>novel published in 1968—or at least, this edition was. And it’s a romantic soap opera surrounding a bridge tournament. <i>Tickets to the Devil</i>. And this was a gift to me—or at least what has now turned out to be an extremely long-term loan from Adam Will Dobski, who was a very prominent championship bridge player that I profiled back in 2004. Really wonderfully interesting dude who, as a Ayn Rand libertarian, had a lot of ideas that we had debates over, but overall was a very nice guy.</p> <p>And chose to play a game—bridge—in which you are reliant entirely upon another person, which seemed like the most anti-Ayn Randian thing you could do. You are entirely reliant upon the skills of another person. He didn’t see it that way. He just thought it was a fun game. Anyway, the point is, this is about a card game. And the card game hand and foot, based on what limited—very limited—research I was able to do and which you’re gonna help fill me in on, is an offshoot of canasta, which is a Uruguayan card game, which was developed as a faster form of bridge. Does any of this comport with your historical knowledge, Stacey or Ellen, yes or no?</p> |
| 00:06:13 | Ellen | Guest | Well, hand and feet was created in the northeast in the 1950s. So, it’s an American version of canasta. |
| 00:06:22 | John | Host | Right. But canasta was created in Uruguay. And my understanding was that it was like, “Bridge takes too long. Let’s play canasta instead, because it’s faster to play.” And it swept through South America. Che Guevara was a huge canasta player, mentions in <i>Motorcycle Diaries</i> . Became a huge hit in the United States in the 1950s, ‘cause everyone was Che-crazy. I suppose that must have been it. And now, has dropped off such to the point that there is a phrase findable on the internet and used at least at some point: dead as canasta. But you play—hand and feet or hand and foot? Is that—which is it? |
| 00:07:07 | Ellen | Guest | Hands and feet. |
| 00:07:09 | John | Host | Hands and feet, says Ellen. And which of you seeks justice before my court? |
| 00:07:14 | Stacey | Guest | I do! |
| 00:07:15 | John | Host | Stacey, what is the nature of the dispute? |
| 00:07:18 | Stacey | Guest | Ellen and I have been best friends for about 30 years, and she taught me canasta 20 years ago, and we play it with both our families. So, her three kids, my two kids, there’s a whole extended family that always plays this game. It’s the holidays right now, so for sure we’ll be playing it. And every time we play the game—‘cause there’s usually—I live on the west coast. She lives on the east coast. There was a span of time—maybe six months or a year—the rules are completely different. And that doesn’t bother me as much as the gaslighting. |
| 00:08:04 | John | Host | Mm! [<i>Sing-song.</i>] Every time you play this game, Ellen lies a little. Right? That’s a song that I made up. [<i>Laughs.</i>] |
| 00:08:10 | Stacey | Guest | She is the sweetest, nicest person, best friend you could ever have. Besides her mother. But both of them turn into monsters when they play cards. |
| 00:08:25 | John | Host | Ellen, this is not unheard of that people turn into monsters when they play cards. And there are no more acrimonious divorces than bridge partnership divorces. |

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| 00:08:35 | Jesse | Host | That's my favorite <i>Dungeons & Dragons</i> mechanic, where somebody turns into a monster, 'cause they're playing cards. <i>[Chuckles.]</i> Usually NPCs. |
| 00:08:44 | John | Host | So, describe what you each mean to each other. You're colleagues? You're acquaintances? Arch-rivals? What is your relationships? |
| 00:08:55 | Ellen | Guest | Stacey is more fun than a barrel of monkeys. And we have just gone through so much together, with our kids as babies and our careers and our families, marriage, everything. And we just have the best time together. She makes me laugh nonstop. So. |
| 00:09:20 | Jesse | Host | Now, Stacey, you disagree? <i>[They chuckle.]</i> |
| 00:09:25 | Stacey | Guest | Um, I don't think I would be here if it wasn't for Ellen. I just went through so much over the past few years. And even before that, she's just always been my rock. And I had a ridiculous childhood, and this is my family now. I mean, you can't—you know, you can't choose your family, but you can—and I chose Ellen and her family. And our kids act like cousins. And I'm the luckiest woman in the world to have Ellen and the Martz-es in my family. |
| 00:10:03 | John | Host | Okay, I'm gonna put down "fond acquaintances" then, 'cause that sounds pretty strong. |
| 00:10:06 | Jesse | Host | I don't know. Work friends? |
| 00:10:08 | John | Host | No, you're best frieends! Best friends! That's wonderful. Ellen, can you explain to the audience—first of all, what is canasta? |
| 00:10:18 | Ellen | Guest | Canasta—you can play with two people, three people, or four people. And the number of cards you're dealt depends on how many people are playing. And you always have an extra deck. So, if you have two people, you have three decks. You have three people, you have four. You have four people; you have five decks. |
| 00:10:41 | John | Host | So, a deck per person, plus one. |
| 00:10:44 | Ellen | Guest | Yes. And the goal of the game is to get a clean canasta, which would be seven of the same card, and then two dirty canastas, which are seven cards that are a mix of the cards you started and up to three wild cards. |
| 00:11:05 | John | Host | So, unlike bridge where you need four people, you can play with just two people or three or four. And you're making your melds. And this is a lot of fun. How long does it take to play a round of canasta, would you say, Ellen? |
| 00:11:17 | Ellen | Guest | Well, there are four rounds in a game—like a full game. And it could take you an hour, hour and a half to play all four rounds. |
| 00:11:29 | John | Host | Okay, so an hour, an hour and a half for a whole game. And you taught this to Stacey 20 years ago, is what she contends. <i>[Ellen confirms.]</i> Okay. So, what was going on in your lives then? You now live in different places, right? |
| 00:11:43 | Stacey | Guest | I was living on Martha's Vineyard, and I was moving to Portland, Oregon. And she and her husband and her kids were at this house we were renting, and that was the first time I learned how to play hands and feet. It was about two weeks before we were getting ready to leave. |
| 00:12:01 | John | Host | And what were you doing on Martha's Vineyard? |
| 00:12:03 | Stacey | Guest | I lived there for ten years. |

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| 00:12:05 | John | Host | What were you doing living—I mean, not a lot of people live there year-round. |
| 00:12:10 | Stacey | Guest | At first, I was doing website design for companies that weren't on Martha's Vineyard. So, it was—you know, I had a studio and then I would just travel with the kids. Later I opened a store. |
| 00:12:23 | John | Host | Wonderful! |
| 00:12:24 | Jesse | Host | Clam store? |
| 00:12:25 | John | Host | Yeah, was it a clam store? |
| 00:12:26 | Stacey | Guest | Yes, it was a clam store. |
| 00:12:28 | John | Host | Clam store. Put in the record: clam store. |
| 00:12:31 | Jesse | Host | So noted. |
| 00:12:32 | John | Host | Okay, so Ellen and her family are visiting you in Martha's Vineyard. And she says, "I've got this great game." And was that canasta? Or was that hands and feet? |
| 00:12:42 | Stacey | Guest | Hands and feet. |
| 00:12:43 | John | Host | Hands and feet is a variation of canasta. And Ellen, since you're the expert, how would you explain hands and feet to the non hands and feet expert? A lot of babies, they don't even—they haven't even discovered their hands and feet. So, talk to me like I'm a dumb baby. |
| 00:13:00 | Ellen | Guest | So, you're going to divide up—you have a deck that you need to create two piles of cards. One set, you're going to hold onto. That's your hand. And the other set you're going to pass to the person on your left. And that's their foot. They're doing the same thing—dividing up their deck in two and keeping the deck on the right as their hand and passing you the deck on the left to you, and that's your foot. And you first start playing with your hand. And you have to get rid of all your cards in your hand, with canastas and things like that, before you can pick up your foot. You get into your foot—you play all your cards. And whoever goes out first, the other player has to—you know, any cards in their hand that they're holding are against them. And so, that's how you beat them. |
| 00:14:07 | Jesse | Host | Now, Stacey, you disagreed vehemently with the rules as Ellen stated them. |
| 00:14:10 | Stacey | Guest | Oh, I can't believe she's telling the whole world these completely inaccurate rules. |
| 00:14:16 | John | Host | What's inaccurate about what Ellen just said? |
| 00:14:19 | Stacey | Guest | It's 11 cards. It's always been 11 cards. |
| 00:14:22 | Ellen | Guest | For two people, it's more! |
| 00:14:25 | Stacey | Guest | I stayed up 'til 2:30 in the morning last night researching all different people's versions of hands and feet. And the Bicycle website, the Pagat website with Steve Simpson, Brian Boulet, Roger Demit, GamesRules.com, Randy Rash, all 11 cards. |
| 00:14:47 | Jesse | Host | Steve Simpson <u>and</u> Randy Rash?! |
| 00:14:49 | Stacey | Guest | Yeah! Both of them. |
| 00:14:50 | Jesse | Host | Wow. And Demit? <i>[Stacey confirms.]</i> |
| 00:14:53 | John | Host | All the card nerds seem to agree 11 cards, Ellen. |
| 00:14:56 | Ellen | Guest | You know what, my 90-year-old mother taught me how to play canasta and how to play hands and feet. I've been playing canasta since I was 12 years old. That's 50 years. These are the rules my mother taught me. |
| 00:15:12 | Stacey | Guest | That's the crux. |

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| 00:15:14 | John | Host | <i>[Playfully testy.]</i> I think I'll find the crux, thank you, Stacey, very much! |
| 00:15:18 | Jesse | Host | Stacey, shut your piehole, please. |
| 00:15:20 | John | Host | <p>What I'm hearing so far is this: first of all, the variation hands and feet, the way it is described by Ellen to me, is that—is what we used to call, in my weekly poker game that lasted for years and years and years and years among me and some of my friends, until we all got tired, was the equivalent of pass the trash. Where you are building your hand in part—there's a round of passing cards to your left to get rid of cards in your hand that you don't want. Meanwhile, you're collecting cards from your right—the other person's trash—that they don't want. And hopefully, you're getting a combination of stuff that you can then use to make a poker hand.</p> <p>In canasta, it's different, obviously. You're trying to make these melds and go out—which is to say, use your cards before—and go out and make these melds before other people can. So, that sounds fun and devious and seems like a great way to mess with your friends. The dispute that you're talking—do you have a dispute with that aspect of Ellen's rules, Stacey?</p> |
| 00:16:31 | Stacey | Guest | Well, now I do. I was just gonna ask her to stop gaslighting me, but these rules are like completely wrong. |
| 00:16:38 | John | Host | So, in all of your research just on this one aspect—we're talking about Bicycle. We're talking about—what's his name? Rash? We're talking about—what was the other card nerds? |
| 00:16:49 | Jesse | Host | <p>I'm talking about Jim Rash from <i>Community</i>.</p> <p><i>[John echoes the name.]</i></p> |
| 00:16:51 | Stacey | Guest | Randy Rash. |
| 00:16:52 | John | Host | Randy Rash. We're talking about Jim Rash. We're talking about Nat Faxon. We're talking—right? All of the—all the cards experts. |
| 00:16:59 | Jesse | Host | The Washington Nationals. |
| 00:17:00 | John | Host | We're talking about—yeah, the Nats. They're all saying—is passing the trash not part of hands and feet? Yes or no, Stacey? |
| 00:17:07 | Stacey | Guest | No, it's not passing the trash. It's how many cards we deal. |
| 00:17:10 | John | Host | But I'm just asking you, is this aspect of play in hands and feet consistent with what you looked up online? |
| 00:17:18 | Stacey | Guest | Yes. In fact, I couldn't find evidence at all of Ellen's new rule about how many cards are dealt. And she won't even acknowledge that it's a new rule. |
| 00:17:31 | Jesse | Host | Ellen, do you even have a mother? |
| 00:17:33 | Ellen | Guest | Yeah, I just celebrated my mother's 90 th birthday on December 2 nd . |
| 00:17:39 | John | Host | <p>Aww, happy birthday. Thank you for giving her the gift of not bothering her to be on a podcast.</p> <p><i>[Jesse chuckles.]</i></p> |
| 00:17:46 | Ellen | Guest | I will tell you this. |
| 00:17:47 | John | Host | Please. |
| 00:17:48 | Ellen | Guest | Stacey would not be messing with my mother if she was on this podcast. My mother has been playing it for probably 60 years. |
| 00:18:02 | John | Host | I hear she learned it from Che Guevara himself—she rode around on a motorcycle all around Bolivia. |
| 00:18:07 | Jesse | Host | Ellen, what would happen if Stacey messed with your mother? |

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| 00:18:09 | Ellen | Guest | My mother would not—she would just stick to her guns with what the rules are that she played. I guess that’s the role model for me. And she would just tell Stacey she’s mixed up and confused. <i>[John laughs.]</i> And she’s sorry. |
| 00:18:31 | Stacey | Guest | So, this is evidence of trickledown gaslighting from a 90-year-old woman. |
| 00:18:38 | Ellen | Guest | My mother doesn’t gaslight. If she doesn’t agree with what you’re saying, she’ll usually just not say anything. She’s from that kind of southern Baptist be nice and polite, don’t lie. And if you don’t like what somebody’s saying, keep your mouth shut. |
| 00:18:59 | Stacey | Guest | Except when she’s playing canasta. |
| 00:19:01 | Ellen | Guest | Then she wants to skunk you. <i>[John and Jesse laugh.]</i> |
| 00:19:04 | Stacey | Guest | But I have evidence, especially about this 11 cards, that proves that you’re lying. |
| 00:19:12 | Ellen | Guest | I’m not lying. I wish you wouldn’t use that word. |
| 00:19:13 | John | Host | Alright, I wanna hear the—I wanna hear the— |
| 00:19:15 | Stacey | Guest | Okay, I’m sorry. |
| 00:19:16 | John | Host | Order in this court, please! <i>[Two gavel bangs.]</i> I wanna hear the evidence. Thank you for introducing the trickledown gaslight theory. The dispute specifically, so that humans can understand, is around the question of 11 cards. Ellen, you maintain—you maintain what? That you pass 11 cards to your—to your opponent to your left? |
| 00:19:42 | Ellen | Guest | So, if you’re playing with two people, you have 15 cards in each pile. If you’re playing with three people, you have 13 cards in each pile. And if you’re playing with four, you get 11 in each pile. |
| 00:19:59 | John | Host | And you maintain that this is what you taught to Stacey 20 years ago. Correct? <i>[Ellen confirms.]</i> Stacey just opened her mouth in complete astonishment and disbelief. |
| 00:20:13 | Jesse | Host | The international symbol for agog. |
| 00:20:15 | John | Host | She is agog. |
| 00:20:16 | Jesse | Host | Stacey, is your dispute that Ellen is playing it wrong or that Ellen changed the rules? |
| 00:20:22 | Stacey | Guest | Ellen is changing that rule. There are many other examples, and she refuses to acknowledge that she’s changing the rules. |
| 00:20:31 | John | Host | What other rules has she changed? |
| 00:20:35 | Stacey | Guest | How many cleans, how many dirties. Whether we can discard wildcards. The value of a clean, the value of a dirty. Passing to the left is a whole new thing. We used to do across the table to the right. And the value of red threes. She is completely wrong about that, as it stands today. |
| 00:21:05 | Ellen | Guest | You know what? I acknowledge when I taught her, I didn’t remember the exact value of like a clean and a dirty. And I have |

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| | | | <p>consistently played—when I play with her, we use the count that I taught her. When I play with my mom, I use the count that my mom uses. I think she’s mixed up about the passing, because what we used to do at the beginning—when you’re shuffling all the decks, you shuffle—you wanna make sure they’re really shuffled and mixed up. So, you would shuffle and shuffle and shuffle, and then you would pass to your—if there’s, say, three or four people, you would pass half your deck, and you would—you’d get half. And you would shuffle, shuffle, shuffle. And then, you might pass crisscross, and you would shuffle, shuffle, shuffle.</p> <p>And that’s how we used to play, and that took too much time. And then, we just cut back. I think she’s confusing that part with being able to pass the foot any which way you want, which is not how you play.</p> |
| 00:22:19 | Jesse | Host | <p>Ellen, Stacey, is there some resource you could acquire if you wanted to play these games according to Hoyle?</p> <p><i>[John snorts a laugh.]</i></p> |
| 00:22:28 | Stacey | Guest | <p>So, last night at—up ‘til 2:30 in the morning, I decided to actually like create a chart of all these different disputes and see what every different website said. And that’s—the nature of this game is that there’s about 100,000 different versions of it. But we’re playing the version created by a 90-year-old woman from the last time she played.</p> |
| 00:22:53 | Jesse | Host | <p>This is a version of the game from before the second World War. This is a version of the game that was created during the Depression, when they couldn’t afford 15 cards.</p> |
| 00:23:03 | Stacey | Guest | <p>No. The newest version is from October 13th, because Ellen came to visit. And she went down to her mom’s, and then she got covid, and she was sick for 12 days, where she played hands and feet with her mom and her sister. And then, she comes back up to my house. We play hands and feet for two days, and suddenly there’s all these new rules. And then, when I look at her, she looks at me like, “Yeah. What—?” It’s like she came back from camp and she suddenly smokes.</p> <p><i>[John and Jesse laugh.]</i></p> <p>And like, “Yeah, we’ve been doing that all the time!”</p> |
| 00:23:39 | John | Host | <p>You’re saying—you’re saying Ellen went down and between her mom and her sister, they established some new covid rules.</p> |
| 00:23:47 | Jesse | Host | <p>Ellen, tell me about your Canadian boyfriend!</p> |
| 00:23:50 | Ellen | Guest | <p>His name was covid.</p> <p><i>[They laugh.]</i></p> <p>He was very sexy. And I couldn’t—</p> |
| 00:23:55 | Stacey | Guest | <p>He was terrible in bed?</p> |
| 00:23:56 | Ellen | Guest | <p>I could not get rid of him.</p> <p><i>[John laughs.]</i></p> <p>And I shared him with my mother and my sister.</p> |
| 00:24:02 | John | Host | <p>Woow!</p> |

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| | | | <p><i>[Stacey cackles.]</i></p> <p>Here I am about to say, “Well, Jesse’s just making a pretty routine joke about people having fake boyfriends at camp.” But before I can get a word out, you picked up the prompt and you ran with it all the way to Second City! That was incredible.</p> |
| 00:24:19 | 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. |
| 00:24:26 | Sound Effect | Transition | Three gavel bangs. |
| 00:24:29 | Sound Effect | Transition | Three gavel bangs. |
| 00:24:31 | Jesse | Host | You know what I’m thinking, Judge Hodgman? |
| 00:24:33 | John | Host | I don’t! |
| 00:24:34 | Jesse | Host | I had never played hands and feet before. But it reminds me a lot of a game that I know. Ellen, have you ever played the game tegwar? |
| 00:24:42 | Ellen | Guest | No. |
| 00:24:43 | Jesse | Host | T-E-G-W-A-R. Have you, Stacey, ever played tegwar? |
| | | | <p><i>[Stacey makes an “uh-uh” sound.]</i></p> <p>Judge Hodgman, you ever played that?</p> |
| 00:24:49 | John | Host | I don’t know what you’re talking about. And I urge counsel to move to what’s relevant in this comment, please. |
| 00:24:51 | Jesse | Host | I learned this game from the novel <i>Bang the Drum Slowly</i> . Basically, what you do is you get some of your buddies from the baseball team. You set up in the lobby of the hotel. And when people recognize you playing cards there in the lobby of the hotel, you invite them to play with you. In fact, you guys should all come play with me later. And when somebody sits down, you put in the anti, and then you play the game. I mean, what’s really important here is that you get the person who sat down with you to continue betting. It’s best if they’re embarrassed that they don’t know the rules of the game. And whatever rules you need to make up, you just go ahead and make those up until the person who sat down is out of money. |
| 00:25:36 | Stacey | Guest | That’s what Ellen does. |
| | | | <i>[John laughs.]</i> |
| 00:25:39 | Jesse | Host | Stands for The Excellent Game Without Any Rules. |
| 00:25:42 | Stacey | Guest | I do know that game. |
| 00:25:44 | John | Host | The Excellent Game Without Any Rules. Tegwar. Anyway, Stacey. You’re saying that this is a swindle of some kind, which suggests motive. If Ellen is changing the rules as you claim—and I don’t wanna get tied up in the esoterica of the rules that she’s changing, ‘cause it’s just gonna make me more confused than I already am—what is her motive for doing this? |
| 00:26:05 | Stacey | Guest | I think, just like her mother who’s like out of central casting for “sweet little old lady”, she just turns into like Jekyll and Hyde. It’s just—I don’t know. |
| 00:26:19 | John | Host | But you’re—okay, you’re saying she’s just a pure—that the very nice, collected woman that I see sitting next to you— |
| 00:26:27 | Stacey | Guest | Yeah. The greatest woman on Earth. |

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| 00:26:29 | John | Host | <p>And Ellen, that's your husband behind you, who's manning the audio operation?</p> <p><i>[Ellen confirms.]</i></p> <p>The stevedore or lighthouse keeper that you're married to, behind you?</p> <p><i>[They laugh.]</i></p> <p>Yeah, wearing a watch cap and some fingerless gloves as he cranks the wax cylinder recording that this is going to—that this nice, old couple just are agents of chaos? That Ellen is just some sort of Loki-like trickster, who's doing it for fun? Do you think she wants to win? Do you think she wants—she enjoys playing mind games with you? What do you think is going on here, Stacey? 'Cause without a motive, I don't know that there's a crime.</p> |
| 00:27:05 | Stacey | Guest | I polled the whole family to try to figure this out. I called her daughter in London and her other daughter. |
| 00:27:12 | John | Host | That's a long-distance call! |
| 00:27:14 | Stacey | Guest | They were like, "Oh! You think she's competitive? You need to play with my grandma." Yeah, the two of them are—it's genetic. |
| 00:27:24 | John | Host | She doesn't wanna lose. |
| 00:27:25 | Ellen | Guest | We—yeah. I mean, my mom is the sweetest grandmother ever. But the minute my kids learned how to play cards with grandma, they knew. She didn't—she would just—and again, the word, skunk them! She just delights in beating everybody. And I guess I'm like that too? |
| 00:27:49 | John | Host | You like skunking Stacey? |
| 00:27:51 | Ellen | Guest | Yeah. Who doesn't?! It's fun! And you do try to... not do it all the time, because it's demoralizing. And I get skunked! I get skunked. |
| 00:28:04 | Jesse | Host | So, once in a while you let Stacey win? |
| 00:28:07 | Ellen | Guest | You know what? I don't let—Stacey wins on her own ability. And sometimes, I'll just stay in the game longer so that I don't catch her with— |
| 00:28:22 | Stacey | Guest | So, you—you patronize me. |
| 00:28:25 | Ellen | Guest | No, I'm being kind! |
| 00:28:26 | Stacey | Guest | <p><i>[Under her breath.]</i> Oh my god.</p> <p><i>[Jesse laughs.]</i></p> |
| 00:28:28 | Ellen | Guest | 'Cause it's—I'm—it's no fun to get skunked every round! |
| 00:28:35 | Stacey | Guest | <p>Can I just say, you kind of—you kind of turn into a sociopath when we talk about cards.</p> <p><i>[They laugh.]</i></p> |
| 00:28:43 | Ellen | Guest | Welp... |
| 00:28:44 | John | Host | Yeah. |
| 00:28:45 | Jesse | Host | She transforms into a monster! A bugbear! |
| 00:28:49 | John | Host | <p>Let the record show that on the teleconference, not only did—not only did Ellen say the word "welp" but made a look on her face that was like, "Welp!"</p> <p><i>[They laugh.]</i></p> |
| 00:29:01 | Ellen | Guest | Who wants to lose? |

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| 00:29:02 | John | Host | Who wants to lose? Are you saying that you— |
| 00:29:05 | Ellen | Guest | The point of the game isn't losing! |
| 00:29:06 | John | Host | You don't—Ellen, you don't throw games to let Stacey win. |
| 00:29:10 | Ellen | Guest | No, no. But you just give somebody maybe one or two extra turns to try to get into their foot. |
| 00:29:18 | Jesse | Host | A little bit of rope-a-dope. |
| 00:29:19 | John | Host | Right, you get into their foot, but you're also getting into their head. Because if you skunk them too fast, maybe they'll stop playing with you and you won't get that sweet skunking that you crave so bad. |
| 00:29:30 | Jesse | Host | Stacey, again, is agog. |
| 00:29:32 | John | Host | Stacey, you've been agog a lot. |
| 00:29:34 | Stacey | Guest | I just... this is actually making me even more confused and like freaked out about this hands and feet! And that's our favorite game! And everybody feels this way in the family. |
| 00:29:49 | John | Host | What does everyone feel? That Ellen makes up and changes rules in order to win and then acts as though those rules always existed? <i>[Stacey confirms.]</i> And that you're bananas for even ever thinking that they were otherwise? Everyone in the family agrees with you. |
| 00:30:04 | Stacey | Guest | Yeah. Well, my kids would never say anything against Ellen. So, I called her kids, because they would. And my kids'll just say, "Oh, we just defer to her," 'cause they love her so much, and they would never wanna upset her. |
| 00:30:18 | Ellen | Guest | One could think it could be the same—my kids would do the same for you. |
| 00:30:23 | Stacey | Guest | Oh no. <i>[Blows a raspberry.]</i> No, no, no. One of them was like, "You gotta shut that down." <i>[Jesse laughs.]</i> |
| 00:30:30 | John | Host | You're saying that one of Ellen's own children said, "You gotta shut that down"? |
| 00:30:34 | Stacey | Guest | Yeah! 'Cause I sent a google poll to everybody about all the different rules. Nobody agreed on anything, 'cause we've all been gaslighted. And Sienna called me, and she was like, "What's this about?" And I said, "I'm gonna sue your mom." And she said, "Why?" And I said, "'Cause she's always changing the rules." And Sienna goes, "Oh yeah, you gotta shut that down!" <i>[They laugh.]</i> And Teele's husband won't even play with them anymore. 'Cause they are like sweet little grandmas. And he goes, <i>[in an English accent]</i> "Oh, they're really sweet until you start playing hands and feet with them." And then, he won't play with them at all anymore. |
| 00:31:16 | Ellen | Guest | No, you don't—that's not—the reason he won't play with us is he finally skunked my mother and me, and he wanted to go out on a high note. |

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| 00:31:24 | Stacey | Guest | No. |
| 00:31:26 | John | Host | What was the accent you were just doing? |
| 00:31:28 | Stacey | Guest | English. |
| 00:31:29 | John | Host | Oh, so Teele is Ellen's daughter, who's married to a British person? <i>[Stacey confirms.]</i> Got it. Ellen, there's a difference between playing aggressively and bending the rules or breaking them. Do you contend that, in the years of playing with Stacey, you have never fudged the rules ever, not once? |
| 00:31:54 | Ellen | Guest | I would admit that I have never intentionally fudged the rules so that I could win. I think what's happened is I have gotten mixed up on the rules, and then I go, and I visit my mom and she just plays it every day. So, she's got the rules. And then, I'll have a refresher course. And I'll like, "Oh yeah, yeah!" And then, unfortunately, I go and play with Stacey, and I tell her the latest—you know—little thing, and it really upsets her. |
| 00:32:32 | Stacey | Guest | I have proof that—although what she's saying is true—the point of contention about how many cards are dealt, that did not come from her mother. |
| 00:32:42 | John | Host | Alright. I was willing to accept that you felt frustrated that Ellen had access to this weird oracle of canasta who was constantly shifting her prophesies over there in—where does your mom live, Ellen? |
| 00:32:56 | Ellen | Guest | Halsey, Oregon. |
| 00:32:58 | John | Host | Halsey, Oregon. The oracle of Halsey. But you're saying you have proof that this does—that at least one rule change does not originate with grandma. What is your statement and what is your proof, Stacey? |
| 00:33:10 | Stacey | Guest | Well, she just tried to pull this like, "Oh, maybe I get mixed up!" And so, I called her daughter in London. And I was like, "I'm suing your mom." And Teele said, "Oh, you know Mom! She's just a—she's just a dingbat. She doesn't even know she's changing the rules." And I'm like, "Teele, your mother is the most competent person I've ever met in my entire life. She's not a dingbat. She knows that she's doing it." And then I said, "Teele, this time she changed the rules to 15/14 cards!" And Teele goes, "Oh yeah, I told her that." |
| 00:33:50 | John | Host | But did Teele tell her that in good faith or bad faith? |
| 00:33:53 | Stacey | Guest | Teele told Ellen that there were these different number of cards based on how many people were playing, and she's the one who told Ellen that rule. And I found no evidence of that rule last night. So, it wasn't from grandma. And it was only two years old—it was a rule change from two years ago. So, this is isn't one of those leaky pipes. |
| 00:34:18 | John | Host | So, you're contending that Ellen is acting the dingbat as a cover for a very insidious, long-term, multi-decade cheating scheme. She's pretending she doesn't remember. She's getting influenced by her mom and her daughter. But really—and she's just like, "Oooh! You know me! Just a dingbat playing canasta? Which are the dirties |

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| | | | again?” But in fact, she’s a shark! She’s a canasta shark! Yes or no? Is that your accusation, Stacey? |
| 00:34:50 | Stacey | Guest | That is exactly my accusation. |
| 00:34:52 | Jesse | Host | Is Ellen tegwar-ing you? |
| 00:34:54 | Stacey | Guest | Yes. |
| 00:34:55 | John | Host | Ellen. |
| 00:34:56 | Ellen | Guest | I just wanna say, there’s <u>no</u> money involved in this. Okay? |
| 00:35:01 | Stacey | Guest | Humility and confidence is more valuable than money. |
| 00:35:07 | John | Host | Yes, it’s emotions. How do you feel, Stacey, when you get skunked? |
| 00:35:12 | Stacey | Guest | <p>You know, Ellen beats me in a lot of games. That’s fine. We—she’s wicked smart. But it’s the changing the rules part and pretending that she doesn’t know that she changed the rules part. That’s—at some point, I’m—like the last time it happened, she was like, “Are you mad at me? Are you really mad at me?”</p> <p>And I was like <i>[through gritted teeth]</i>, “No, I’m not mad at you.” But I really was! And if she—I just feel like at some point, I am gonna burst into tears and run up into my room.</p> |
| 00:35:45 | John | Host | Ellen, are you enjoying watching your friend crumble in front of you? |
| 00:35:49 | Ellen | Guest | <p>No! I don’t like this at all! I don’t like this, and I just feel like I don’t know what to do. ‘Cause I’ve—you know, we—if you don’t see each other for a long time, there can be slight nuances that come into how you play. And it comes up, and then—I mean, it made—I will tell you that last time, when I—when she was like, “You change the rules every tiiiime. That’s not how you taught me!” I—she was getting upset. I got mad! And so, I did what I do. I just went out immediately and skunked her.</p> <p><i>[John snorts a laugh.]</i></p> <p>And I don’t wanna skunk somebody ‘cause I’m mad!</p> |
| 00:36:37 | Stacey | Guest | I don’t care about losing! |
| 00:36:39 | John | Host | You don’t wanna skunk out of madness? |
| 00:36:41 | Ellen | Guest | Yeah, you skunk from a purity of heart! Of intention. |
| 00:36:45 | Stacey | Guest | I don’t care—she beat me in—what was it, a rummy thing last night. |
| 00:36:48 | Ellen | Guest | You beat me <u>all</u> the time! |
| 00:36:50 | Stacey | Guest | I don’t care if she wins. She went to college. The most important thing is that, um, she doesn’t pretend that, “Oh, this isn’t a new rule!” Like, that is saying to me that I’m crazy! |
| 00:37:07 | Ellen | Guest | Yeah, now I feel like I’m crazy. |
| 00:37:10 | Stacey | Guest | Well, we did a Google poll, and I also found these notes from my son, when he was teaching his girlfriend how to play canasta. And it’s clear that like everybody’s—everybody in the family is kind of like, “Is it one or twooo—you know—cleans and dirties to get out?” Or how many cards do you deal? And what the value of things are. And I did a lot of research last night, and actually, the way we all—even things that we agree on aren’t accurate. |
| 00:37:42 | John | Host | Are not accurate. |
| 00:37:43 | Stacey | Guest | But I just think because there’s so many different versions of hands and feet in the United States—it’s only been around for 50 years—that we’re just playing Beula’s version of hands and feet. And Beula’s a 90-year-old woman, who’s also playing hands and feet with other 90-year-old women, and you keep coming back with |

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| | | | these bizarre new rules. But we could laugh about it! You could be like, "Oh, now my mom's playing this way." But you—but you act like, "No, this is the way it's always been." And that's the part that really is hurting me. |
| 00:38:16 | Ellen | Guest | Okay. I hear you, Stacey. |
| 00:38:18 | Jesse | Host | Beula's a gaslighter from the age of gaslight. |
| 00:38:22 | Ellen | Guest | If you only knew. |
| 00:38:23 | John | Host | Oh-ho-ho-ho! I saw that the temperature just dropped 35 degrees in that lighthouse that your husband is keeping over there, where— |
| 00:38:31 | Ellen | Guest | I mean, my mom is like the sweetest—you know, little Christian lady. She reads the Bible every year, through from beginning to end. She—you know—is generous of spirit until it's canasta. |
| 00:38:49 | Stacey | Guest | So, if you know that your mother's that way, can't you see that maybe like you get a little Jekyll and Hyde when we play? |
| 00:38:57 | Ellen | Guest | <i>[Softly.]</i> Yeah, I <u>know</u> I do. But I don't intend— |
| 00:38:59 | Stacey | Guest | But this is our favorite game. Like, all our families play it together. And if you keep doing this— |
| 00:39:07 | Ellen | Guest | No one's gonna wanna play. |
| 00:39:08 | Stacey | Guest | Yeah. |
| 00:39:09 | John | Host | Clearly, there has been <u>so</u> much conflict around this game that's felt so keenly by Stacey and sort of icily ignored by Ellen all these years. Why is this your favorite game?! Why hasn't this come up—? Why haven't you gotten rid of this game before? Why don't you just throw it in the fire and have a new year? |
| 00:39:27 | Stacey | Guest | It's really fun. |
| 00:39:29 | Jesse | Host | Stacey, why do you think you're losing? |
| 00:39:32 | Stacey | Guest | I'd say I'm losing 50% because I'm not the competitor that Ellen is at cards. And the other 50% is probably me just stewing in my head about that last rule change. So, yeah! It is gaslighting. I'm like—the other half of my brain is fuming! |
| 00:39:52 | Jesse | Host | Are you upset because you're losing or are you upset because you don't recognize your friend? |
| 00:39:58 | Stacey | Guest | Oh. The latter, the second. For sure. |
| 00:40:01 | John | Host | Hm. |
| 00:40:03 | Stacey | Guest | I don't care about the losing. And actually, I do win. I do win. |
| 00:40:08 | John | Host | Even when all the rules have changed? |
| 00:40:11 | Stacey | Guest | Well, like last time we played—it's four rounds; so, I won the first round, because she didn't have time to change the rules during the game yet. <i>[John and Jesse laugh.]</i> |
| 00:40:21 | Jesse | Host | You gotta strike fast like a cobra. |
| 00:40:23 | Ellen | Guest | I wanna understand. If I said a rule is that you pass the foot to the left instead of willy-nilly any which way you want, how would that cause a person to lose a game? 'Cause you still just get whatever cards somebody else is getting rid of. |
| 00:40:44 | Stacey | Guest | But it's not just the passing to the left. There's at least six rules that are consistently inconsistent. |
| 00:40:53 | Ellen | Guest | <i>[Softly.]</i> Okay. |
| 00:40:54 | John | Host | Run them down. |
| 00:40:55 | Stacey | Guest | How many cards are dealt, whether you pass the foot to the left, whether you can discard wildcards, and the usage of the top seven cards. So, sometimes—like in rummy or gin—you can grab from the discard pile, and you have to grab seven cards. And Ellen made up |

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| | | | this rule last time we played that if you went for the discard pile and there wasn't actually seven cards there, then you would lose your turn. I've never seen evidence of that. And then, what's always ambiguous is how many canastas you need to go out, how many points you need to go down for each round, and then the value of the canastas. |
| 00:41:40 | Jesse | Host | Ellen, this is not numb. This is canasta. There are rules. |
| 00:41:45 | Ellen | Guest | You know what? You're absolutely right. And we've been playing a long time, and the first round, you have to have 60 points to go down. The second round, you have to have 90 points. The third round, you have to have 120. And the fourth, you have to have 150. |
| 00:42:03 | Jesse | Host | I can see Ellen transforming into a monster right before my eyes, Judge Hodgman. |
| 00:42:08 | John | Host | <i>[Snorts.]</i> Ellen, how important to you is it that you're using the rules that your mom taught you? Tell me about that. |
| 00:42:15 | Ellen | Guest | I'm more of a—I'm not a rule-breaker by nature. Doesn't mean I don't. I wanna do things properly and right, and to the best of my ability. |
| 00:42:34 | John | Host | But a long time ago, the two of you could've sat down and opened a Nat Faxon and Jim Rash's <i>Big Book of Card Games</i> and looked up hands and feet and said, "Okay, these are the rules." Why would that not be proper? There are any number of third-party collections of rules that you could go to with Stacey and establish the new rules for you, that are not Beula's rules. How would you feel about that? Would that feel inappropriate to you? |
| 00:43:11 | Ellen | Guest | No. I would do that to just resolve this, so it doesn't keep coming up and ruin the game for us. I will still play the rules when I play with my mom, 'cause that's how she plays— |
| 00:43:28 | Stacey | Guest | Good luck with that. |
| 00:43:30 | John | Host | Now, I notice that you mentioned you live in different parts of the country. Ellen, you're in New York. <i>[She confirms.]</i> And Stacey, you're in Oregon. Correct? <i>[She confirms.]</i> But you're now in the same room together. What brings you together in the lighthouse with Willem Dafoe, back there? |
| 00:43:49 | Jesse | Host | <i>[Chuckling.]</i> The scrimshaw mermaid. |
| 00:43:52 | Ellen | Guest | <i>[To her husband.]</i> You gotta—he can't hear you— |
| 00:43:54 | John | Host | That's fine! That makes it even better. <i>[Ellen and Stacey laugh.]</i> |
| 00:44:00 | Jesse | Host | What brings the two of you together? |
| 00:44:03 | Ellen | Guest | Two things. Christmas and Stacey hasn't met my granddaughter yet—little Luna, who's coming for Christmas. <i>[John "aww"s.]</i> |
| 00:44:15 | Stacey | Guest | 'Cause of covid, I couldn't meet the baby for the past 18 months, and I feel like I'm gonna be meeting my surrogate granddaughter. I'm so excited. |
| 00:44:23 | John | Host | So, this is the first time you get—little Luna's gonna get to see her auntie Stacey get skunked! |

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| | | | <i>[Jesse laughs.]</i> That's a wonderful... |
| 00:44:33 | Jesse | Host | We're playing by Luna's rules, now. |
| 00:44:37 | John | Host | I know that it is inappropriate for the court to ask a spouse to testify against their own spouse. |
| 00:44:46 | Stacey | Guest | He doesn't play. |
| 00:44:47 | John | Host | But I just need—I just need you, Ellen, to turn—what is your husband's name? |
| 00:44:53 | Ellen | Guest | Jasun. |
| 00:44:54 | John | Host | Turn to Jasun and just say, "Do I ever change the rules of canasta and pretend they were always the same? Yes or no." And tell me what his reply is. |
| 00:45:04 | Ellen | Guest | Okay. <i>[Slightly off mic.]</i> I have to ask you. So, do I ever change the rules of canasta and say that's how it's always been? |
| 00:45:17 | Jasun | Guest | John, first let me say, I love my wife! Beyond belief! She's an amazing woman! But the answer is yes, she does. |
| 00:45:25 | John | Host | Wooooow! Wooow! |
| 00:45:28 | Jesse | Host | Wow, straight from Willem Dafoe's mouth to our ears. |
| 00:45:31 | Ellen | Guest | From the man who has never played canasta with me. |
| 00:45:37 | Stacey | Guest | He's heard all of us complain about it! It's not just me. I'm the only one that has the nerve to do this! |
| 00:45:43 | Ellen | Guest | Yeah, you have the cojones to do this. |
| 00:45:46 | John | Host | Stacey, your ideal ruling is to write down what you think are the rules and don't change anything without voting on it? |
| 00:45:52 | Stacey | Guest | We can vote on it. Like, we could make—write the rules down, and—we're gonna have a lot of the family here in a couple of days, and we can all just agree! |
| 00:46:01 | John | Host | It would also be nice if Ellen admitted that she's changing the rules. |
| 00:46:04 | Stacey | Guest | That's the part that hurts me the most. |
| 00:46:05 | Ellen | Guest | Yeah, you guys, I'm sorry. I don't... I honestly do not realize that I am changing the rules. I know a few times I got—had got them wrong, when I first taught them. But— |
| 00:46:25 | Stacey | Guest | That's like when people file their taxes and they say, "Oh, I didn't know that wasn't allowed." |
| 00:46:30 | John | Host | Yeah, well, that happens. Why do you think I got my yacht confiscated? <i>[They laugh.]</i> Ellen, your ideal ruling is to play cards and have fun? Maybe go through the rules one more time and decide what you wanna do in the future. |
| 00:46:44 | Ellen | Guest | Yeah, I would like Stacey and I to agree on a set of rules. We'll write them up. We'll take a picture and put it in our cell phones, and then it's always there. It's the bible. |
| 00:46:59 | John | Host | Before I go away into my own haunted lighthouse to make my decision, there's one question that I didn't get a chance to ask. How did you both meet? |
| 00:47:07 | Stacey | Guest | I worked for the lumberjack—her husband. And then, he came—this was like 30 years ago. And then, he came over to my house. We were doing some project together, and he had a little baby on his hip and his little four-year-old girl. And the little four-year-old girl |

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| | | | hopped on my lap, and I taught her photoshop for an hour. And then I said, “Hey, I wanna babysit your kids.” And after that, they made another child, I made two children, and we just became this giant family. |
| 00:47:39 | Ellen | Guest | Her daughter and my youngest daughter have the same name. They’re both Pipers. |
| 00:47:44 | John | Host | Wow! Seven lords a-leaping, that’s incredible! <i>[Jesse laughs.]</i> Well— |
| 00:47:48 | Stacey | Guest | I couldn’t think of another name I liked. And I just gave up and called her and I was like, “Can I name my child Piper as well?” And she was like oh yeah! Sure! She is the nicest person on earth when she’s not playing cards! |
| 00:47:03 | Jesse | Host | Stacey, are you jealous of Ellen’s best friend at camp, Beula? |
| 00:47:08 | Stacey | Guest | You know, I was a little jealous, because she was supposed to spend a week with me—a week with her mom and sister, and then a week with me. Because I get—I live by her family, and she lives by my family—out here in New York. And she had 12 days of covid, and then I only got two days. And then, yeah! Showed up with all these news rules. And for the first time in my life, I was jealous of her sister. And I was a little PO’ed at her mom. And yeah! |
| 00:48:38 | John | Host | Great. That’s everything that I need to hear. I’m going to go into my own haunted lighthouse. I shall go atop to polish the Fresnel lens of my verdict. I’ll be back in a moment with my decision. |
| 00:48:47 | 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> Ellen, spill the beans. How do you feel about your chances in this case? |
| 00:49:00 | Ellen | Guest | I don’t think they’re very good! <i>[Jesse laughs.]</i> My husband! My kids! The only person who would support me would be my mother. |
| 00:49:12 | Jesse | Host | <i>[Whispering.]</i> Beula, the original gaslighter. |
| 00:49:15 | Ellen | Guest | Stacey, you are the only person on the planet who would use that word with my mother. I think I have a bigger problem with that than anything. |
| 00:49:28 | Stacey | Guest | Oh god! Well, I haven’t played with your mother. |
| 00:49:31 | Ellen | Guest | You haven’t? |
| 00:49:32 | Stacey | Guest | No! Never! <i>[Ellen crescendos into a devious laugh.]</i> And Tom was like, “Don’t play with them! Oh no, you’re not gonna wanna play the game ever again.” |
| 00:49:40 | Ellen | Guest | Well, I think we know what needs to happen. |
| 00:49:42 | Jesse | Host | You need to get skunked, Stacey! |
| 00:49:45 | Ellen | Guest | By Beulaaaa! |
| 00:49:47 | Stacey | Guest | I might be the one person who could stand up to Beula. |

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| 00:49:50 | Jesse | Host | I think Stacey could skunk Beula. |
| 00:49:52 | Stacey | Guest | Well, I probably couldn't skunk her, but I could probably call her on her BS. Like, the stuff that Ellen does. |
| 00:50:00 | Jesse | Host | Beula, you're listening right now. You know you are. Prepare to get skunked. And you know what, Stacey? If it looks like you're not skunking Beula? Just go ahead and change the rules a little. <i>[Stacey snorts a laugh.]</i> She deserves a good skunking, 90 years on this earth without getting skunked. Stacey, how do you feel about your chances? |
| 00:50:18 | Stacey | Guest | I feel validated, because even her husband—who doesn't even play the game—knows that she changes the rules. And you know, I did all my research. I researched the internet. I researched our own families. So, yeah, at least—you know—she's been trying to make me think I'm crazy, and I know I'm not crazy. |
| 00:50:41 | Jesse | Host | We'll see what Judge Hodgman has to say about all this when we come back in just a second. |
| 00:50:45 | Sound Effect | Transition | Three gavel bangs. |
| 00:50:47 | Sound Effect | Transition | Three gavel bangs. |
| 00:50:50 | Jesse | Promo | We're headed out on tour, John! Our first tour in years! I don't know, 27 years? I lost count at some point. |
| 00:50:57 | John | Promo | Certainly, since the very beginning of 2020. |
| 00:51:00 | Jesse | Promo | We are headed up and down the west coast of the great United States, with one detour into the great Rocky Mountains. We will be in Seattle, Portland, Denver, San Francisco, and Los Angeles, as well as Port Townsend, Washington, John. But that show already sold out. |
| 00:51:18 | John | Promo | Oooh, bad news! Sold out! |
| 00:51:21 | Jesse | Promo | Yeah, we're real strong in Port Townsend. |
| 00:51:23 | John | Promo | Too sloooooow! Yeah, sorry, Port Townsendites who didn't get quick with the linkage by going to bit.ly/JJHOWEST . JJ Howest or JJ Ho West! You missed out on tickets in Port Townsend. But guess what? Port Townsend is pretty close to Seattle, Washington. Drive on down, see us at the Neptune in Seattle. People in Portland, Oregon, look—you're always great about coming out. Revolution Hall, that's a heck of a hall. It's a revolution in our performing space size, in Portland, Oregon. So, I hope you come out there and support us. Never been to Denver, Colorado, before—for <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> . I don't know that I've done a comedy event there since I almost strangled on my own breath at the Aspen Comedy Festival in 2005! |
| 00:52:12 | Jesse | Promo | I went to a Rocky's game, once. That's as close as I've gotten to performing there. |
| 00:52:15 | John | Promo | I got to talk to Jeff Tweedy onstage there recently, and I enjoy Denver a lot. And I said, "You know what I'd like to do? Come back with <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> ." And guess what? We're doing that at the Gothic Theater in Denver. And then of course, Sketch Fest. We're coming back to San Francisco Sketch Fest, to see our friends at Sketch Fest—and our friends are yoouu! At the beautiful Sydney Goldstein Theater, in San Francisco. That's gonna be a great event. That's a beautiful theater. It has a lot of seats in it, so please come support us there if you can. |

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| | | | I'm also gonna be doing an event the next day with Adam Savage, a little brunch event in which we spin a wheel of conversation. Jesse, I'm sure you're gonna be doing side missions as well, while you're at Sketch Fest. |
| 00:52:53 | Jesse | Promo | Doing <i>Jordan, Jesse, Go!</i> that evening, that Sunday evening at Sketch Fest. Gonna be a lot of fun. Gonna have some awesome celebrity guests. Gonna be a blast. And we're coming back to Los Angeles! And this is something I'm really excited about, John. <i>[John agrees.]</i> Because we couldn't announce our Los Angeles show before, until we had this confirmed, but we will be performing at the Masonic Lodge at Hollywood Forever Cemetery. |
| 00:53:15 | John | Promo | Pew, pew, pew! Laser sounds! |
| 00:53:17 | Jesse | Promo | A lot of people have fond feelings about going to Hollywood Forever 'cause of the great moving screenings. If you've never been in the Masonic Lodge, it is one of the coolest performance rooms in all of Los Angeles. In fact, I'm gonna upgrade. It's definitely the coolest I've ever been in. It is an incredible spot. And! How's this for a Los Angeles plug, John? Unlimited free parking! |
| 00:53:38 | John | Promo | <i>[Chuckling.]</i> I was gonna ask if it was gonna be sold out parking. |
| 00:53:39 | Jesse | Promo | Unlimited free parking, there! |
| 00:53:41 | John | Promo | Un-lim-i-ted free par-king! I've never performed a bad show in a masonic hall, and I've done more than my share of shows in masonic lodges before. I'm really excited to add this one to my masonic belt. It's gonna be a really, really fun tour. We're gonna have a great time. Get yourself boosted and inoculated and safely tucked away until you can come out and see us. We would love to see you on the road, because it is better when you're there. Tickets are on sale now! And the link, as I mentioned before, is bit.ly/JJHOWEST . That's J-J-H-O-W-E-S-T. It's all capital letters. JJ Ho West, all capital letters with bit dot ly slash in front of it. And we need your disputes for these cities. We're gonna mention it later on, as well. But you know, to make the shows, we need disputes. So, let's say you're in Port Townsend and you did not get a ticket, but you got a great dispute. Send it in! We'll consider it. And if it's for us, we'll sneak you in the back! |
| 00:54:45 | Jesse | Promo | <i>[Laughs.]</i> John, I wanna meet the person who listens to this show and didn't get a ticket in time. |
| 00:54:52 | John | Promo | I think—I bet you there are Port Townsendites who feel totally skunked, to borrow a phrase from this episode. And I feel bad for them. If you have a dispute with someone that you'd like us to hear live onstage with you, on the stage alive, please let us know. Go to MaximumFun.org/ijho . We will consider all cases for live adjudication. Just please make sure that you say which city you want to be adjudicated in. Make sure that you and the other party are gonna be there and you're all okay with the possibility of going onstage. Can't have everyone onstage, obviously! And if we pick you to go onstage, you know—presuming that personal safety allows it, we'll get to say hello, and we'll have a nice time, and you'll get to—I don't know—grab an apple from our catering. MaximumFun.org/ijho . |

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| 00:55:43 | Jesse | Promo | Let's get back to the case! |
| 00:55:44 | Sound Effect | Transition | Three gavel bangs. |
| 00:55:46 | Jesse | Host | <p>Please rise as Judge John Hodgman reenters the court room and presents his verdict.</p> <p><i>[The squeak of chairs followed by heavy footsteps and a door closing.]</i></p> |
| 00:55:55 | John | Host | <p>You should all know that I've just decided to not attempt to sing some version of "The 12 Days of Covid", even though that has come up constantly. There's such a temptation there. <i>[Singing.]</i> "On the 12th day of co—" Nope. And there are two Pipers piping in this story, too! But let me just say, everyone: the pandemic is not over. I hope you're doing okay through this winter surge. You know. We're still living with this. I hope everyone is taking good care of everyone in their lives, both emotionally and physically, getting your booster shots and your flu shots, and all the other respiratory viruses that are going around these days. Be careful out there. It's not worth singing about.</p> <p>Meanwhile, back to the lighthouse. Stacey and Ellen, here's what I gotta say. I'm not convinced, Stacey, that Ellen is knowingly deceiving you, is knowingly changing the rules and pretending that they've always been that way in order to skunk you. I completely understand why you feel that way. I completely understand why it hurts. I completely understand why it is frustrating. And I completely understand why it is especially painful when this person who is obviously so dear to you has such a placid face, just looks at you and goes, "No, you're wrong. I'm right. Me and Beula, my best friend from camp." I think what's happening here is what has been represented by Ellen: that Ellen is going to see her mommy and her sister and getting all kinds of new rules and ideas put in her head, and singing camp songs, and going on adventures, and then when she comes back, she's got all new ideas. And she's working them into the game, and the past becomes the present, <i>Grey Gardens</i> style, and it's hard to sift through what she taught you 20 years ago versus what she was just reminded of last week, at Beula's, versus what she remembered five years ago, and that perhaps her memory selectively chooses rules to remember at certain times in order to skunk you. But she's not doing it on purpose.</p> <p>And I say this only because I really sensed real empathy and hurt coming—it's one of the few times that Ellen showed emotion was when you—and I say that with great—you know, look, I'm a New Englander. You know? Where emotional reticence is our greatest virtue. You know. But I mean, like you seemed really shaken by the moment that Stacey revealed just how hard this hit her—not the losing, but the feeling that the ground was being moved beneath her at all times, and then being told, "No, this is solid ground." That's a horrible feeling. And you apologized immediately! So, unless you are truly some kind of monster who's playing canasta at all times—this intense head canasta at all times, even as we were recording this podcast—and it's all an act that you're using to get to the next skunking? I have to conclude that Ellen is not doing this on</p> |

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| | | | <p>purpose. That said, the fact that Ellen is not doing it on purpose does not mean it's not a problem. It's a big problem.</p> <p>It's a problem that has been a problem for years, and it's a problem that you both—I think the onus is a little bit on you, Ellen, should've tended to a little earlier in your friendship, rather than let it come to this. Rather than to say, "I think she's a little mixed up." If you knew that your friend was hurting, you gotta—you gotta help your friend. It's just—you want your ideal ruling is to play cards and have fun. Sure. Go fish. This is canasta. This is real. The stakes are real. You taught it to her. It's meaningful to her that you taught her the game that you played with your mom and your sister. It's a gift from your family to hers. Like, there's no money involved, but it's hard to hear from someone that you trust and that you respect like, "Oh, that game I taught you, the rules are different now." You know? That would be hard even if it weren't this heirloom of competitive spite that you received from your mother that you're trying to give to Stacey, in the form of some good, old fashioned skunkings.</p> |
| 01:01:12 | John | Host | <p>But the fact is that you love each other. And the fact that Stacey loves you, this is a hard thing—should've been tended to before. Good thing we're gonna tend to it now, 'cause it's gonna stop. It's gonna stop. There's a simple answer that should've been enacted long ago, which is—you know, these are parlor games. There's a reason that there are a million different variations of hands and feet, which is a variation of canasta, of which there are a million different variations there, as well. Which is that they're played in homes and parlors. And in homes, house rules develop. You know? And then they get passed around, and people like this rule, they don't like that rule. You know, it's social. You know? It's like you change it up. You pass it along. I completely understand why things get confused! But just because Beula said it yesterday doesn't mean that it's been true since 2002. So, you gotta go to a separate authority.</p> <p>And one way I was thinking of suggesting this would be for you to sit down and teach each other the game of canasta. From scratch. Sit down, forget 20 years of history, not be one student and one learner, but be two students working through your memories of how you've played and create a set of rules that will be the Stacey-Allen family rules going forward. And write them down! And then, take a picture of that thing that's written down. And put that picture in the cloud, and let it be everywhere always so that a dispute will not come up. Will it be identical to what Beula is now playing with your sister, Ellen? I don't know. I don't know how many Beula variations there might be in the future. That's the beauty of the game. But it is perfectly acceptable for the two of you to create your variation that is the one that is played when you are together. And you take out those rules, and you review them before you play, and everyone's on the same playing table.</p> <p>Now, that's one way of doing it. There's another way of doing it, which is I think a little bit more complicated, but I think ultimately worth it. What I would like to order you to do—and only if this is feasible and for all the reasons I mentioned before, if it's safe for all parties involved—is that I want you, Ellen, and you, Stacey, to go to</p> |

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| | | | <p>Beula and I want Beula to teach Stacey how to play hands and feet. And Ellen is not allowed to speak. And I want Jasun to get his old timey daguerreotype film recording device, and I want you to—I want Jasun to film it. Now, Stacey now is covering her hands in grave dismay. And if this is not okay for whatever reason, you don't have to do this. But I think that whether it is you, Stacey, who is now going to Beula and being taught the rules—not to play a game and get skunked. I'm not ordering you to get skunked in this life. I'm saying go to the source and learn what Beula says. Capture that moment in time and have it forever. And Ellen's job is to observe and not to ask questions or butt in or to say, "But you taught me this way, but you taught me that way." Just to get a baseline rule of hands and feet on record, taught to you—Stacey.</p> <p>Then it becomes a gift that you both share from this obviously formidable personality, and it becomes a document of this person that you will want to have in the years going forward. You know? I had a great grandmother who was alive until I was 20, which is rather unusual. She was 108 or 9. And when she was in her 90s, my dad did a long video taped interview about her whole life. And we would have—there was stuff on there that we would have never known about had he not done it. No one knows where that video tape is. <i>[Laughs.]</i> But the point is, for a while we did. I think that that would be a really cool document to have, and it would also serve as our friend, Ronald Thomas Clontle, would say in our ska episode, it would be the ultimate argument settler.</p> |
| 01:06:07 | John | Host | <p>You can pick either version of this. I'm not trying to steer you into a complicated family situation, Stacey, if it really makes you so upset that you put your hands over your face! If you really don't need or want to be a part of that, I still would encourage Jasun to get out his old timey tape recorder and record Beula teaching someone the game hands and feet from soup to nuts. Because I think it would be interesting to have as a family document on your side, Ellen, at the very least. Stacey, you could be a part of it if you want. But either you two sit down together as a duo and create the new rules or—you know, the Stacey-Ellen rules—or you go to the source and you get the Beula rules, between Beula and Stacey. Either way. A, B, you decide. Flip a coin! That's sporting. This is the sound of a gavel.</p> |
| 01:06:59 | Sound Effect | Clip | <p>Music: Bright string music.</p> <p>Bugs Bunny: Do you mean I win again?</p> <p>Elmer Fudd: Yeah, you win. But now, we're gonna play another little game!</p> |
| 01:07:06 | John | Host | <p>Judge John Hodgman rules. That is all.</p> |
| 01:07:07 | Jesse | Host | <p>Please rise as Judge John Hodgman exits the courtroom.</p> <p><i>[The squeak of chairs followed by heavy footsteps and a door closing.]</i></p> <p>Stacey, how do you feel?</p> |
| 01:07:17 | Stacey | Guest | <p>Yeah. I feel like I'm gonna cry. This has been really cathartic! This has been like a really big, um—I don't know—bruise in our apple or... it would be really nice to settle the rules and stop the nonsense. But I love you <u>so</u> much.</p> |

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| 01:07:43 | Ellen | Guest | I know. |
| 01:07:44 | Jesse | Host | Ellen, how do you feel? |
| 01:07:47 | Ellen | Guest | I did not realize how big a problem this was. And I will defer to Stacey how she wants to proceed—either we decide on the rules together or if she wants to go see my mom and have my mom teach her—although, I don't know if that's what she wants. I will defer to her. |
| 01:08:12 | Stacey | Guest | I think we'll write the rules together after this, because the two families are gonna play together. And then, I live near her mom. And I adore her mom. And I've always wanted an excuse to spend time with Beula, so I think I'll go down to your mom's and just record her. And I'll have an excuse. I'll just say I was ordered to do it. |
| 01:08:36 | Jesse | Host | Ellen, do you love Stacey? Or no? |
| 01:08:39 | Ellen | Guest | I love Stacey so much. She's my best friend. We're there for each other, so it's so unusual to have this thing like this between us. |
| 01:08:53 | Jesse | Host | Stacey, Ellen, thanks for joining us on <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> . |
| 01:08:56 | Ellen | Guest | Thanks! Bye-bye! |
| 01:08:58 | Sound Effect | Transition | Three gavel bangs. |
| 01:09:00 | Jesse | Host | <p>Another <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> case is in the books. In a moment, we will have some Swift Justice. First, our thanks to @IronyMaiden for naming this week's episode, "Meld in Contempt". If you wanna name a future episode, join us on the Maximum Fun subreddit! MaximumFun.Reddit.com, where Jen will be asking for your suggestions!</p> <p>Evidence and photos from the show are on our Instagram account, at Instagram.com/judgejohnhodgman. Make sure to follow us there. We are also individually on Instagram, @JohnHodgman and @Put.This.On. This week's episode was recorded by Ellen's husband, Jasun Martz. You can find his work online, at JasunMartz.com. J-A-S-U-N M-A-R-T-Z dot com. Our producer is Jennifer Marmor. Our editor is Valerie Moffatt.</p> <p>Now, Swift Justice! Your small disputes answered with quick judgment. Robert says, "My wife wants a pig. I don't."</p> |
| 01:09:03 | John | Host | <p>Uuuh, no, you need 100% total partner agreement on a pig. Never mind a pig—a dog, cat, any kind of animal.</p> <p>But wh—what—Jasun Martz! I had no idea who I was talking to, there. This guy's an American record producer, composer, musician, fine artist, creative director, and sculptor! Do you know that he helped arrange "We Built This City" by Starship?!</p> |
| 01:10:29 | Jesse | Host | [<i>Laughing.</i>] No, I did not. |
| 01:10:31 | John | Host | That old lighthouse keeper is rock royalty. |
| 01:10:34 | Jesse | Host | [<i>Quietly.</i>] Holy mackerel. |
| 01:10:35 | John | Host | He's the featured harmonica soloist on "Streetwalker". A "Bad" outtake—Michael Jackson's "Bad" outtake that appeared on <i>Bad 25</i> as a bonus track! He's recorded with—toured with Frank Zappa! Oh my goodness. Jasun Martz, thank you very much for being part of the <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> family. I had no idea, and boy is David Rees gonna be so happy about your connection with "We Built This City on Rock and Roll". |

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| | | | <p>Anyway, yeah, pigs. Uh, you gotta—you gotta both be onboard to get a pig. Especially a pig.</p> <p>February is coming up, and I'm gonna say—are there some Groundhog Day disputes?</p> |
| 01:11:07 | Jesse | Host | <p>Hey, how about this? We're going on tour end of January, beginning of February. So, if you are in Port Townsend, Washington, Seattle, Portland, Denver, San Francisco, or here in Los Angeles, make sure to send us your disputes and let us know that you're in those places! MaximumFun.org/jjho. We're gonna have a great time with you out on the road, and we need your cases! MaximumFun.org/jjho. And if you're in one of those places, make sure to make mention of that fact.</p> |
| 01:11:36 | John | Host | <p>How about this? February's coming up, are there some Groundhog Day disputes? Woah! Déjà vu!</p> |
| 01:11:42 | Jesse | Host | <p><i>[Laughs.]</i> We'll talk to you next time on the <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> podcast.</p> |
| 01:11:45 | Sound Effect | Transition | <p>Three gavel bangs.</p> |
| 01:11:48 | Sound Effect | Transition | <p>Cheerful ukulele chord.</p> |
| 01:11:49 | Speaker 1 | Guest | <p>MaximumFun.org.</p> |
| 01:11:50 | Speaker 2 | Guest | <p>Comedy and culture.</p> |
| 01:11:52 | Speaker 3 | Guest | <p>Artist owned—</p> |
| 01:11:53 | Speaker 4 | Guest | <p>—audience supported.</p> |