

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. We're in chambers this week clearing the docket. And with me is the judge who judges them all, Judge John Hodgman. Hi, John.
00:00:13	John Hodgman	Host	Jesse Thorn, it's good to be here. This week, a very special docket long promised—or at least the last couple of months promised—grudge match. Some weeks ago, we put out a call for your ooold grudges. Grade school rivalries, summer camp nemeses. I'm looking at you, Camp Robin Hood. Crummy cousins stealing your stuff when you were little kids. And wow, did you come back with some amazing letters and some serious beefs. Not many of these cases, Jesse, are debatable.
			<i>[They chuckle.]</i>
			They're not—they're all—there aren't a lot of sides to these stories. But there are definitely wrongs to be righted, and we're going to lay down some harsh sentences.
00:00:56	Jesse	Host	John, you know what my top summer camp nemesis was?
00:01:01	John	Host	No.
00:01:02	Jesse	Host	Canoes. I just don't—they're too tippy.
00:01:04	John	Host	Too tippy.
00:01:05	Jesse	Host	Why am I in a lake anyway? I'm a land animal.
00:01:10	John	Host	Right. And lakes are—lakes are junk. Lakes are garbage.
00:01:13	Jesse	Host	They're full of gross seaweeds and big mouth bass.
00:01:18	John	Host	If only they were seaweeds! They're lakeweeds.
			<i>[Jesse agrees unenthusiastically.]</i>
			The worst weeds! And as I have pointed out, sometimes giant freshwater clams are down there in the muck.
			<i>[Jesse shudders.]</i>
			And yeah, you're up there on the canoe and it's tipping all over the place.
00:01:32	Jesse	Host	I'm a city kid.
00:01:33	John	Host	Tippy Canoe and Jesse Too—what was that famous political motto? From the past?
00:01:39	Jesse	Host	Archery is one thing. Archery might come in handy when I'm walking past Valencia Garden's house at the projects by my house.
			<i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:01:47	John	Host	Holy Moley. I wish it were true that you were walking around your neighborhood in San Francisco like Hawkeye with a quiver of—with a quiver of arrows over your—and a bow strung over your shoulder.
00:02:00	Jesse	Host	What's that you say? Pocket check? How about this? Arrow check. Is what I would say.
			<i>[Makes arrow firing noises.]</i>
00:02:05	John	Host	Yeah, exactly. I'll tell you about Camp Robin Hood later in the episode, 'cause we got a lot of old beef to settle here.
00:02:13	Jesse	Host	Okay, here's a case from Crystal in Seattle. "I'm 34 years old, and I'm still mad about an injustice from the first grade. I had a gold hairclip that was so big you had to have thick, long hair just to use

it. Like my hair, which was extremely thick and down to my waist. One day, my classmate Brittany stole the clip from my desk. I saw her with it and told our teacher. The teacher asked Brittany if she took my clip and Brittany said no! She said she'd had that clip for a long time."

00:02:54 John Host

*[Laughs.]* That line really brought back so many memories of kids lying.

*[Jesse laughs.]*

Kids like, "Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. No, no. I've had that for a long time. That's been mine forever." *[Chuckling.]* Just about stuff. Yeah.

00:03:08 Jesse Host

"Brittany had short, fine hair. There was no way the clip would even work in her hair. But our teacher believed Brittany and told me I shouldn't accuse people of stealing. I was furious. I stayed after school, snuck into the classroom, and took it back. I still can't believe that teacher looked at that clip and believed that little thief."

00:03:35 John Host

*[Laughs.]* Oh, I don't know, I'm not—there's no work for me here. You did—you took care of it, Crystal. You took care of it. When you snuck—I never would—I never would've done that, Jesse Thorn.

00:03:45 Jesse Host

Possession is 9/10<sup>th</sup>s of the law, and guess who possesses it now? You do! *[Laughs.]* You win again!

00:03:50 John Host

Yeah, but it's like if the—if I had to give back something that was stolen to me, I was never gonna sneak into the classroom after school. I didn't have what it took.

00:03:58 Jesse Host

Rule follower.

00:03:59 John Host

Yeah, I was a rule follower. That's for sure. You ever have something stolen from you in school?

00:04:04 Jesse Host

That's a great question. I think the main thing that would get stolen from you would be a turbo football. That was a type of foam football that was neon colored—half neon colored—and spirally shaped. And it was relatively expensive, because it was made by the Nerf company. Like, that was like the \$14 playground football rather than the \$9 or \$6 foam playground football. It was expensive because it was better. Whoever had one, highly prestigious. So, if you had one and you didn't write your name on it in permanent marker, it became someone else's because they found it somewhere, wrote their name on it in permanent marker, and it was theirs.

00:04:50 John Host

Permanent marker is the proof. But even so. I love Crystal's detective work. No, that's not what it is though.

00:04:59 Jesse Host

Crystal here is like one of those private detectives. Not the kind that is in a hardboiled noir story of the 1940s. The contemporary kind that like a corporation or a billionaire hires to ruin someone's life.

*[John laughs.]*

00:05:20 John Host

Like the kind that is just exclusively—  
A fixer!

00:05:22 Jesse Host

Yeah. Like a belligerent, life-ruining—

00:05:25 John Host

Well, no, but on the one hand she's got a little Sherlock Holmes consulting detective. You know, because the quality of Brittany's hair made it clear that she would never own that clip. But then, when it became clear that the system was not gonna respond—because this is what always bothered me about *Encyclopedia Brown* and inspired *Dicktown* was that *Encyclopedia Brown* was

always being paid a quarter to go get back a stolen thing that Bugs Meany had taken. They were all in middle school, and they were all in Idabel, which I think was supposed to be in Florida.

If you don't know what *Encyclopedia Brown* is, it's a series of books about a teenage or preteen detective named Encyclopedia Brown. And kids would come up to him in his backyard—or I should say in his garage/office. He was an early work-from-homer—and put a quarter down on the gas can and hire him like, “Bugs Meany stole my bow and arrow set,” or whatever. And then Encyclopedia would go around talk to Bugs Meany, who was both a big meanie and a pest. He was the leader of the Tigers, a bad kid's club. And Bugs Meany would say, “Neeh! I don't have that bow and arrow! I've never—I've never used a bow and arrow in my life!”

And then Encyclopedia Brown was like, “Bup-bup-buh! I didn't say it was a bow and arrow. I just said it was a bow,” or something. You know, something like that. And then, Bugs—*[chuckling]* and then the conclusion would always be: then, caught in the lie, Bugs Meany confessed his guilt and gave it back to him. When it should have been caught in a lie, Bugs Meany punched him in the nose and walked away.

00:06:58 Jesse Host

Yeah. 100%.

00:06:59 John Host

*[Chuckling.]* It's like caught in the lie, Bugs Meany doubled down on the lie and the teacher believed him because the teacher didn't have time to deal with this hairclip dilemma.

00:07:08 Jesse Host

I'm trying to imagine myself walking down 15<sup>th</sup> Street. I don't have my bow with me. Somebody comes up to me and says, “Pocket check, Expletive.”

00:07:26 John Host

And then, I say, “Well, I would empty my pockets for you, but—ah, ah, ah!” And that going well.

*[Laughing.]* Yeah, exactly. Exactly.

But these pants don't have any pockets! I've sewed them closed! Something like that.

*[Jesse agrees.]*

00:07:37 Jesse Host

Yeah.

“Is that right, White boy?”

00:07:39 John Host

*[They laugh.]*

Crystal tried using smarts, but when it came down to it, you had to put Sherlock Holmes out the door and become Liev Schreiber in that show—*Ray Donovan*. Isn't that about a fixer?

00:07:49 Jesse Host

Yeah, I think that is about a fixer.

00:07:51 John Host

She snuck in and fixed it.

00:07:52 Sound Effect Transition

Three gavel bangs.

00:07:54 Jesse Host

Loretta writes in from Sommerville, Massachusetts: “30 years ago, our science teacher wore a shirt that allowed a slight glimpse of a tattoo. I thought nothing of it! But at recess, some other kids tip toed over to me like cartoon spies. In a whisper, they asked if I had seen that Mr. Science Teacher had a tattoo. I said, ‘I guess.’ They huffed away, annoyed that I didn't think it was a big deal. After recess, the

principal asked to see me in his office. He asked what the kids had said to me. When I told him, he just said, ‘Hmmm.’ And ordered me to write an essay about the incident.

“I still have no idea what he thought we were up to or why I was the only one who had to sit in his little, ugly office until I wrote a quote ‘acceptable’ unquote essay. I demand justice! I have no issue with Mr. Science Teacher. He was cool! But all other parties involved owe me an explanation and an apology essay.”

00:09:10 John Host

Totally Mr. Science Teacher was cool. He had a tattoo 30 years ago, going in to teach science. Who was your coolest teacher in school?

00:09:17 Jesse Host

Mr. Crawford.

00:09:18 John Host

Yeah, right?! You knew it immediately.

00:09:20 Jesse Host

Mr. Crawford was super chill. He was a bear who was a women’s studies major and dressed like a rockabilly. He always wore a black leather double-rider motorcycle jacket and blue jeans with the cuffs turned up and creepers. But he was very gentle and just wanted to talk to us about the cultural implications of the book and film *Carrie* and the girl group The Shirelles.

*[John reacts with surprise.]*

“Will You Love Me Tomorrow”. My wife had a crush on me because Mr. Crawford let me swear in class. And I would say most of all, basically the only teacher I ever had who never told me I was a disappointment to them.

00:10:06 John Host

Let’s hear it for Mr. Crawford. Any tattoos? Did you mention already?

00:10:10 Jesse Host

I bet he—I bet he had some tattoos. I never saw them. But you know, I bet that he had like—on his bicep, above his t-shirt, he probably had like a tattoo of like a Tom of Finland picture.

*[John laughs.]*

He was a great guy.

00:10:27 John Host

We had some pretty coool teachers. I mean, so—but they were never my direct teachers. Like, there was Joe McClellan, who was the permanent French substitute in our high school. And he—he was a big guy. He had a—like, he was a little bald on top. He had long, frizzy hair. And he covered up his bald spot with a black beret, and he wore a black leather jacket and rode a motorcycle to school and was the biggest nerd of all time.

*[They laugh.]*

And you know, in his spare time he would motorcycle out to Medford, Massachusetts, to play world music on WMFO, which was the *[inaudible]* University radio station. And I’m like how’d you get that job? He said, “Well, they hold spots open for members of the community.” And he helped me get a slot when I was a junior in high school.

00:11:13 Jesse Host

Aw, that’s so cool.

00:11:14 John Host

Playing Bill Bragg songs every day—all day, every day. Well, it was only two hours a week. But you know. And then, he gave me a ride on his motorcycle. It was fun! And then, Ted Pine was an

afterschool teacher. I went to this afterschool program with Tim McGonigle and some other kids. And Ted Pine was one of the instructors? I mean, they were more like camp counselors. Do you know what I mean? And only later did I put it together that he was in a really cool Boston band called The Sex Execs.

00:11:45 Jesse Host  
00:11:48 John Host

[Chuckles.] Cool.

Whose hit song was “My Ex”. It was a really catchy tune. And he brought his bandmate in, Sean Slade, to play songs. Like, he—in his area of the afterschool program, he had like all these DEVO posters up. And he and Sean Slade played a set—Sean Slade later went on to produce Radiohead—produce the song “Creep” by Radiohead and stuff. This was Boston music—this was when Boston had a music scene that was so cool. And then, Sex Execs went into the—WBCN’s Battle of the Bands. And they went all the way, but they lost at the last minute. To guess who?

00:12:21 Jesse Host  
00:12:22 John Host

Ben Affleck?

No. [Laughs.] Ben and Casey Affleck. The original founders of the Dropkick Murphy’s. No! ‘Til Tuesday, starring Aimee Mann. It was their big break. Those were the cool teachers.

To get back to Loretta, some teachers are not cool. And this principal is not cool! Well, there’s—there’s a lot going on here. It’s a mystery. Right? Why did the principal feel the need to speak to Loretta? Why did—? What drew his attention to Loretta and why did he ask Loretta to describe what had happened? And when what she described was this nothing burger of a conversation, why write an essay about it? What was the interest that the principal had in Mr. Science Teacher’s tattoo? They’re all mysteries here.

What we need is a detective. Because Loretta, you do deserve justice. And I am very curious, ‘cause it seems like there’s a lot more story here. And luckily, I happen to know one of the best podcast detectives around, Starlee Kine.

00:13:22 Jesse Host  
00:13:23 John Host

Oh, wow.

And I asked Starlee Kine, “Would you look into this with me?” Starlee Kine hosted the great podcast *Mystery Show*, and she and I are going to—we’re gonna look into this enigma. I’ve already—  
One of the greatest podcasts of all time, I think it could be argued.  
One of the greatest podcasts of all time.

00:13:34 Jesse Host  
00:13:36 John Host  
00:13:37 Jesse Host  
00:13:40 John Host

All three of them or however many she made. [Chuckles.]

Right. And maybe they’re available somewhere. I don’t even know anymore. But she’s been out of the mystery game for a while and then writing on the mystery show *Search Party*.

00:13:51 Jesse Host  
00:13:52 John Host

Legendary show.

Legendary show. And Starlee and I—we’re already in contact with Loretta and we’re already digging in. One thing I’ve already put together is that though Loretta is writing from Somerville, Massachusetts, this actually happened when she was going to IS/PS 217 on Roosevelt Island, a part of Manhattan that I have never, ever been to in the 29 years of my living in this city. It’s a little slip of an island in the middle of the East River accessible by tram, Jesse. There’s a tram that goes there, and I’ve never been. So, I’m gonna be gumshoeing it on the ground in Roosevelt Island, trying to learn a little bit more about what happened here so that maybe, maybe you can get the explanation and—Loretta, I agree—the essay of apology that you are deserved.

And in the meantime, yeah. You're absolutely right. This is wrong. You're a cool kid, Loretta. You still are.

00:14:45 Sound Effect Transition Three gavel bangs.

00:14:47 Jesse Host We're gonna take a quick break to hear from this week's partners. When we come back, grudges against some truly crummy cousins.

00:14:55 Sound Effect Transition Three gavel bangs.

00:14:57 Sound Effect Transition Three gavel bangs.

00:14:59 Jesse Host Welcome back to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. We're clearing the docket of old grudges. Here's something from Tobias in Durham, New Hampshire. "When I was young, my cousin once kicked me down a flight of carpeted stairs."

*[They chuckle.]*

"I was lying—" *[Laughing.]* That's horrible. "I was lying on the upstairs landing, eavesdropping on my siblings below me. To this day, my cousin claims that she mistook me for a laundry basket." *[Laughs.]* "And that's why she kicked me. Please order her to apologize and admit that she did, in fact, recognize me. Indeed, she said, 'Hi,' right before she kicked me."

*[They laugh.]*

00:15:48 John Host Oh, wow. You know, first of all, I'm glad you're okay, Tobias.

00:15:54 Jesse Host Yeah, I think this whole thing—let's just start by stipulating that it's never okay to kick someone down the stairs.

00:16:01 John Host Don't kick your cousin. Don't kick anyone down the stairs. And don't pull out a hank of your cousin's hair without asking. *[Chuckles.]* And then, burn it with your weird lighter right in front of him saying, "I wanted to see if it burned."

00:16:14 Jesse Host Woah!

00:16:15 John Host That's my cousin, Jason. *[Chuckles.]*

00:16:17 Jesse Host Holy mackerel! Is your cousin Jason like a character in the *Saw* movies?

00:16:24 John Host *[Chuckles.]* Jason's like a—truly like a villain from a Stephen King book. Crummy, crummy cousin. I doubt very much that he listens to this podcast. But you know, *[sighs]*... what I love about this one is—because again, it's like no one says hi to a laundry basket. All the lies are embedded in this one. Right? No one says hi to a laundry basket. No one kicks a laundry basket down the stairs for no reason. It was obvious that Tobias's cousin kicked Tobias down the stairs. And what's interesting about it is like, you know, the way some of these—like, we haven't heard Tobias's cousin's point of view from her own mouth.

00:17:04 Jesse Host Yeah, how she felt about laundry baskets.

00:17:06 John Host *[Chuckles.]* Exactly. But we do receive a lot of grudge letters about people being picked on and sometimes like shoved on a playground, that kind of thing. Spat on. That kind of stuff, from grade school. Right? And there's so much going on in these stories because a lot of times the bully in this situation—now it's 30 years later—doesn't remember doing that stuff. So, like I believe that probably Tobias's cousin has told herself a story that she thought it was a laundry basket probably immediately after she did it in order

to get out of trouble at home and then locked that into her brain. Because when you do something that is just so unequivocally mean and you succumb to the imp of the perverse and do something that is unthinkable and wrong and embarrassing and humiliating to yourself in its cruelty, you wanna erase it as quickly as possible.

And I know from a lot of—a lot of experience that bullies and picker-on-ers and that sort of thing, when they grow up they don't realize how bad they were to some of the kids that they were mean to. And even if—even if it was a—I mean, there's—you know, you kick someone down the stairs, they can get really hurt. Even if it's a nonphysical thing like a tease or a nickname or whatever else, they'll convince themselves—because everyone—no one is the villain of their own story. They'll convince themselves that they were friends. And I've heard stories about this all the time; later on, they'll come to a get together or reunion or whatever and they'll say, "Hey, how are you doing?"

And the other person's like, "Why are you talking to me? You were a jerk to me in high school," or whatever.

And they're like, "I had no idea! I thought we were having fun." Weird, right?

We had one letter—really kind of touching—from someone named Cameron saying, "I was visiting my parents in my hometown and ran into a friend from grade school. We chatted briefly about old times, and she finally said, 'You know, Cameron, I've never forgiven you.' Taken aback, I asked forgiven me for what? And she explained that it had happened in third grade. I was hanging upside-down from the monkey bars. She came up to me and she said she had a crush on me, and my response was to spit on her from on high. I had no memory of this, and I was mortified. And I apologized profusely, and we said goodbye on good terms. But I'm still amazed and saddened that she had carried that with her all her life."

00:19:40 John Host

And yeah, you should be! You should be saddened! I mean, I know you were in third grade. Our judgement is not well-formed. But all of this is to say that if you become aware that you did wrong by someone, it is appropriate to offer to apologize. And I hope, by the way Tobias, that your cousin apologizes to you and owns up to what she did. She kicked you down the stairs. They were carpeted. I don't know how long ago this was, but maybe it was that plush—you know—wall-to-wall carpet stairs type of thing. Maybe it cushioned the blow a little bit. I hope you get that apology if that's what you want. But if you were someone who was picked on and your picker-on-er comes to you years later at a reunion and says that they wanna apologize, you have zero obligation to accept that apology. Zero! Zero obligation to.

One of the bravest things I ever heard about was at one of our high school reunions. You know, my wife—who's a whole human being in her own right—and I went to high school together. And so, we went to—it was her high school reunion, actually. And she saw this happen and reported it to me that there were two women, now adults, and one of them went up to the other. And one of them was kind of from the cool clique, and one of them was from the less cool

clique—traditionally. Now, we’re all adults and—you know—struggling and failures. You know. That’s how it goes. But the cool—the originally cool woman—the originally—the cool teen goes over to the less cool teen and says, “Look, I’ve really been haunted by how me and my friends treated you. And I really just wanted to say I’m sorry.”

And the less cool kid looked her in the eye and said, “You should be sorry. You made my life really, really, really hard. Bye.”

And I think that’s perfectly fair. And I think that’s perfectly great. All of which is to say—I wanted to just say the letter that you wrote, Destiny, about Mark proposing to you in kindergarten and then you getting dressed up for the *[inaudible]* marriage the next day and him refusing you in a cruel way—you don’t have to accept his friend request now, 30 years later or whatever. *[Chuckles.]* You don’t have to. And I admire you for saying that you wouldn’t be his friend, and I don’t admire him for not apologizing at that point. And you have nothing to think about again. That person is just a thought and is gone. So, there you go. Anyway, Tobias’s cousin, apologize to Tobias.

00:22:20	Sound Effect	Transition	Three gavel bangs.
00:22:21	Jesse	Host	Did you watch that television show <i>30 Rock</i> ?
00:22:24	John	Host	<i>30 Rock</i> , the comedy show?
00:22:27	Jesse	Host	Television comedy program.
00:22:28	John	Host	Yeah, I love it.
00:22:29	Jesse	Host	One of the funniest shows of all time. Not a sensitive or insightful show, generally speaking. Sometimes an actively insensitive show. But also, just more about 10,000 perfect jokes than it is any kind of social insight. But there is an episode of <i>30 Rock</i> where Liz Lemon, the perpetually put upon nerd character goes to her high school reunion and has the realization that she had been a bully in high school.

*[John affirms.]*

And I think that the central insight of that there is not that bullies don’t realize that they’re bullies. It is that in those situations, before we develop full social awareness, most to all of us did things to other people that we may not have even realized were consequentially cruel.

*[John agrees.]*

And I think it is easy to think of going to your high school reunion, meeting a person who bullied you, and not accepting that person’s apology being a heroic act. And that, in turn, that heroic act or that experience validates your own memories of high school as ethically pure on your part and purely a—you know, a matter of your own victimization. Right? And my experience is that most of us look back on our childhoods—and especially adolescences—as times when we were victimized and don’t grapple with the times that we victimized others. And I think that it is important, especially for those of us who were more the pocket-checked than the pocket-checker, to take responsibility for having inflicted pain on others in our



00:24:41 John Host childhood as well as grapple as adults with what it meant to have had pain inflicted upon us as children. Well, you know, it's what they say. You know, the axe forgets but the tree remembers. And you're right that we're always a little bit of an axe and probably we don't remember. And that's what I mean. Be mindful of those times when you hurt people without meaning to. I realized I was a bully at the *Daily Show*. I wrote about it. I used to tease Elliott Kalan. I thought it was a really fun form of meta bullying where one nerd bullied another nerd about comic books. But it took me a while to appreciate that I wasn't just another nerd. I happened to be on camera talent. He happened to be a writer, and there was a power differential. And there was no way that he could defend himself. And you know—and I realized this at the moment that the shoe that I was throwing at him hit is apex in midair. And I'm like, oh. I can't throw a shoe at Elliott. I love him. What is going on?

00:25:53 Jesse Host And I had to apologize. And I hope that he accepts it. But he's not—but he's not obligated to. Anyway. Here's a case from Penny in Silver Spring, Maryland. "When I was seven, my dad's stepbrother and my dad's stepbrother's family visited us in rural Indiana. I was lying on the pink carpet pretending my mom's calculator was my computer. My older cousin scoffed. 'That's not a computer,' he said. 'When I grow up, I'll get you a real computer.' End quote. Later, my cousin went into computer science. He is now quite wealthy. Although we lost touch, I think he still owes me a computer. Thanks for listening to my 30-year-old grudge."

00:26:33 John Host Well, first of all, I read this letter right after the previous one. Two crummy cousins in a row. I mean, literally when they came in. And when I got to the detail about the pink carpet—just 'cause the carryover: carpeted stairs, pink carpet. I was dying for this to turn out to be, "I was lying on the pink carpet when my cousin, Tobias, fell on me as he fell down the stairs."

*[Jesse laughs.]*

00:27:26 Jesse Host I wanted these to be part of the same expanded universe. But I appreciate—I appreciate the detail. Rural Indiana, pink carpet, specificity is the soul of narrative. You really painted me a good word picture there, Penny, such that I really felt that scoff when that older cousin scoffed at you. *[Snottily.]* "That's not a computer. I'll buy you a real computer." Jesse, you—did anyone ever make you a promise to get you something that they never owned up on? Never paid off? You owed anything?

00:28:02 John Host My father for Christmas one year got me my dream gift. And this was not common when I was a kid. I really joined the middle class in my mid to late teens. So, when I was—when I was this age, it was—you know, second-hand toys kind of situation. But one Christmas, my father got me the thing I wanted most, which was a scooter. I wanted a scooter so bad.

00:28:07 Jesse Host Yeah! You wanted to scoot around! You know, your favorite Muppet: Scooter.

*[Chuckles.]* Yes. Your favorite Muppet, Scooter. And he got me the—he got me the kind with sort of like inflatable BMX-y tires. This is pre-razor scooter. And like a cool kind of textured kickboard, like the top of a skateboard. And you know, handle breaks and all that

kind of stuff. And I was so thrilled. And my dad started putting it together, then got confused, stopped, and never finished.

*[John “aw”s sympathetically.]*

*[Snorts.]* For whatever—I just don’t know. I think at some point he was gonna ask Rich Lubin for help. I don’t know what was—what Lube de Rube had to offer. Family nickname for Rich Lubin. I’m gonna get you—I’m gonna get you a scooter, Jesse. I’m gonna get you a good scooter.

00:28:59 John Host

00:29:03 Jesse Host

00:29:04 John Host

00:29:06 Jesse Host

00:29:10 John Host

00:29:14 Jesse Host

00:29:15 John Host

Thank you, John.

You know why? ‘Cause I know you love scooters.

How could I not love scooters when Scooter is your favorite Muppet?

You know who your favorite former chief of staff to the vice president of the United States is?

Gotta be Scooter Libby!

Scooter Libby, of course. *[Muttering.]* Even though he’s a jerk. Man, how come I didn’t get a WASP-y nickname like this? I went to Yale, too. Why don’t they call me Scooter Hodgman? Oh well, I guess I didn’t belong to the right secret society.

00:29:28 Jesse Host

00:29:31 John Host

I could call you like the Chipper or something.

Speaking of chipper—computer chips. Let’s get back to Penny and her crummy cousin. Penny, do me a favor. Send me the LinkedIn link for your crummy cousin at his big ol’ company or whatever. I’m gonna reactivate my LinkedIn account for the first time in a decade, ‘cause I’m gonna write him a letter saying that he owes you a computer. I’m gonna make it happen, and it’s gonna be a good computer too—not an Acer computer.

*[Jesse laughs.]*

Favorite of *The New York Times* crossword. A different computer of your choice.

00:30:02 Jesse Host

00:30:05 John Host

This is gonna be a Gateway 2000, the best of the best.

Maybe Acers are great, I don’t know. It’s just every time I see them in *The New York Times* crossword, I’m just like, “What are you doing?! Famous computer. I’m a Mac!” Alright. We’re gonna get you a computer, Penny. We’re gonna make it right. I’m gonna write a letter. I’ll let you know what I find out.

00:30:17 Sound Effect Transition

Three gavel bangs.

00:30:19 Jesse Host

John, from now on I’m calling you Birdie ‘cause you’re so good at golf. What do you think?

00:30:24 John Host

*[Stammering.]* Sc-scamp.

*[Jesse laughs.]*

Is Scamp a thing?

00:30:29 Jesse Host

00:30:32 John Host

00:30:34 Jesse Host

00:30:37 John Host

00:30:40 Jesse Host

00:30:41 John Host

00:30:43 Jesse Host

No, these are just—this is just dog names now.

Dog names. Yeah, it’s just—there’s—

What are the parts of a boat? That seems important, right?

Hull. Front. *[Laughs.]*

Coccyx.

Port. Portie.

Bow swain.

00:30:44	John	Host	Coxswain.
00:30:46	Valerie Moffat	Producer	Prow.
00:30:47	Jesse	Host	Prow.
00:30:48	John	Host	Prow. Prow Hodgman. Awooga horn. Foghorn. That's what you can call me. Foghorn.
00:30:54	Jesse	Host	Jai Alai. I'm gonna call you Jai Alai.
00:30:56	John	Host	Jai Alai! There we go! Jai Alai. I love it. Okay, that's good. There used to be Jai Alai in Bridgeport, Connecticut. I'd see it on the train as I was taking the train to school. Alright. That's good. I like it. Jai Alai. You got it.
00:31:08	Jesse	Host	Let's take a quick break. When we come back, banana pranks. And of course, straw scolding.
00:31:13	Sound Effect	Transition	Three gavel bangs.
00:31:16	Sound Effect	Transition	Three gavel bangs.
00:31:18	Jesse	Host	Judge Hodgman, we're taking a break from clearing the docket. I have been enjoying <i>Up Here</i> . I watched <i>Up Here</i> .

*[John thanks him.]*

00:31:28	John	Host	You sing in the—at the—like, the top of the first episode! <i>[Singing.]</i> "Gee, it's nice to really know someone." You wanna hear the rest of the song, go to Hulu, <i>Up Here</i> . Eight episodes. They're a lot of fun. It's a real toe-tapper. It's a real heart-warmer. And the whole cast album has been released wherever you get your streaming music. And presumably, your physical music. It's called <i>Up Here</i> . All the songs were composed by Bobby Lopez and Kristen Anderson-Lopez: two geniuses who are friends of this show and put me in their show. <i>Up Here</i> is available on Hulu.
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I also wanna tell you quickly about a podcast I discovered. Because at Sketch Fest I met very, very funny and nice performer, Greg Hess. He was part of the improvised Shakespeare company. And he's got a podcast with Holly Laurent, who's a brilliant improvisational comedian, called *Mega*. M-E-G-A. And it's *[chuckles]*—it's dispatches from a fictional megachurch somewhere in megachurch land. And they play two extremely funny characters, and they interview a different member of the church each week. It's obviously all live, character-based improve comedy. And it was really, really, really funny. Not live in front of an audience but live in the moment improvised. Funny and incredible. So, check that out.

And finally, I just wanna very quickly say get your pets. Thanks to you, the supporting members of Maximum Fun who stepped up and supported us during the Max Fun Drive—we hit our goal. I'm coming back with *Get Your Pets*, and we're gonna get right into it starting the 17<sup>th</sup> of April. That's Monday at 3PM, ten whole days, two whole work weeks, 3PM every day. You can find me wherever you get your streams. I'll be posting about it on my socials. My YouTube channel, the JJHO Facebook page, Twitter, YouTube. I said that one already, but you know what I'm talking about. Get your pets and get on over to wherever you get your streams on Monday, 3PM, and we're gonna interview some wonderful cats and dogs and other pets.

00:33:23	Jesse	Host	And hey, while you're on Instagram, follow me on Instagram. I've been—you know how I go to the flea market every weekend?
00:33:30	John	Host	I do know, and I envy you. I wish I could be there with you.
00:33:32	Jesse	Host	Well, John, I'm shopping for the <i>Put This On</i> shop. But lately, much of the stuff has been selling before it even hits the store. It's been selling when I post pictures of it on Instagram. So, follow me. You might find something you love. <a href="#">@Put.This.On</a> .
00:33:48	John	Host	<a href="#">@Put.This.On</a> is an account that I follow, and it's great. If you're on Instagram, follow me <a href="#">@JohnHodgman</a> . Follow <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> <a href="#">@JudgeJohnHodgman</a> . Follow Jesse <a href="#">@Put.This.On</a> .
00:34:02	Jesse	Host	And! Follow all of Max Fun <a href="#">@MaxFunHQ</a> . Let's get back to the docket.
00:34:06	Sound Effect	Transition	Three gavel bangs.
00:34:08	Jesse	Host	Welcome back to the <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> podcast. We're handling old grudges week, and here is a case from Sarah in Boston.
00:34:16	John	Host	Well, hang on. Hang on, hang on one second. Sarah, you just hang on one second. Speaking of rich kids with fancy nicknames. Robin Hood Camp. This is a story about someone who was not believed, just like Crystal wasn't believed by her teacher when Brittany stole that hairclip.

Our son came back from his main day camp one day, and he said it was a big day. He was probably ten. It was a big day at the camp. Someone almost got hit by a jet ski. And I said, "Hit by a jet ski?! You have jet skis at that camp?!"

He said, "No, it was a jet ski from Robin Hood Camp."

I'm like, "What's that?"

He said, "That's the rich snob camp across the lake."

Like, "What are you talking about rich snob camp across the lake?! That's a—that's a cliché! Who's telling you about the rich snob camp?"

"The counselors talk about it all the time."

I'm like, "I don't know, son. I think that that's just a story they're telling you. That's such a—that's such a cliché of camp life that across the lake, there's a mythical rich snob school. No one got hit by a jet ski today. Come on. That's just—that's just a game of telephone that went the wrong way."

He said, "No, it's real."

I said, "Alright. I guess I believe you, then." And I'm glad I said that, because [*chuckles*] the next time I was in town, a tour bus pulls up, a golden tour bus.

[*Jesse cackles in disbelief.*]

With the words "Robin Hood Camp" on it. And it was like the shiniest, fanciest, like rock band tour bus that I've ever seen in my

life. And the door opens, *[mimics the sound]* and out start walking the Robin Hood campers in matching maroon track suits! Snobs! Holy mackerel!

00:35:55 Jesse Host

00:35:56 John Host Rich snobs! Scamp and Scooter and Boat-shoe and all of them just marching out there.

00:36:02 Jesse Host *[Chuckles.]* Sperry.

00:36:03 John Host Sperry and Topsider.

00:36:05 Jesse Host Sperry, Lacoste. *[Laughs.]* Izod.

00:36:10 John Host It was all true! It was all true.

00:36:12 Jesse Host Neck-sweater.

00:36:13 Valerie Producer Tag Heuer.

00:36:14 Jesse Host *[Laughing.]* Tag Heuer!

00:36:17 John Host Tag Heuer.

00:36:18 Jesse Host Val said tag Heuer!

00:36:20 John Host Valerie Moffat, chiming in for the win. That was great. Anyway, I apologized to my son for disbelieving him for a moment. There. And Robin Hood Camp is real. And if you went there, I dare you to write me and tell me how it's really not that fancy. I saw your bus!

00:36:38 Jesse Host I'll see if Tag Heuer is available, Mr. Movado.

*[John chuckles.]*

Okay, from Sarah in Boston. "This is a grudge!" Love that opening. "A few years ago, I took my one-year-old to our local public library. The baby was getting fussy in his stroller, so I handed him the straw from my iced coffee to play with as we walked around. An older woman looked down at my baby and said to my baby, 'You know, straws are bad for the environment.' I knew this comment was aimed at me, but I didn't know what to say. After a moment, the woman—still looking at my son—said, 'Did you hear me, baby?'"

*[John laughs.]*

00:37:36 John Host "I was speechless. I wish I had told her off. Then, I saw her walk behind the circulation desk, and I realized she was a librarian." For shame. Talk about clichés. How dare you do the noble work of being a librarian, madam? But then, dishonor your colleagues by living up to the stock cliché of the librarian as a scold and a villain when what librarians are are heroes. How dare you? This one alarmed me a little bit, Jesse. 'Cause given the timing of a couple of years ago, Boston, librarian—there was a—there was a non-zero chance that this was my mother-in-law.

*[They laugh.]*

But then I thought about it. I was like, "No, impossible." Because my mother-in-law would never publicly shame someone for using a straw, never mind using their baby as a shame-proxy to get at them in the most passive aggressive way. And by the way! You know what? Don't talk to that baby. That baby is not ruining this earth. We have ruined this earth. And by the way? Yeah, plastic straws are no good, and I might argue might even do a little damage to your one-year-old's upper palate if he or she or they are chewing on it. But that baby is not ruining the earth with that straw. The earth is being—has been ruined by decades and decades of policy inaction and industrial malfeasance.

00:39:04	Jesse	Host	That baby didn't ruin the earth with that straw! He ruined the earth when he decided to live too far from his workplace because he wanted to live in single family housing.
00:39:16	John	Host	<i>[Laughs.]</i> Yeah, that baby ruined the earth with baby sprawl. No, look. We all do our own part. That's fine. We all have accountability. We all have some work to do to try to turn this—what is it again? Prow? Prow of this giant, giant ship away from this iceberg. We're gonna be taking it on the prow of some berg, for sure, for a long time. It's gonna be very, very disruptive. And it's not a baby's fault for chewing on a straw, nor is it your neighbor's fault for not recycling properly. There are massive, massive governmental, industrial bad actors at play here. So, if you're a librarian and you wanna direct your ire somewhere for climate change and other ecological disaster, go take your shushing finger and go shush someone else.
			That really T'ed me off. It takes a lot to get Jai Alai to lose his cool here, Sarah. But this really did it.
00:40:07	Jesse	Host	When you T off Birdie...
00:40:10	John	Host	When you T off Birdie, ooooh, swing batta-batta.
00:40:13	Jesse	Host	Yeah, you catch the driver.
00:40:15	John	Host	You're gonna find yourself in the water feature. That's what's gonna happen. You're gonna find yourself in the sand pit.
00:40:21	Jesse	Host	No puts about it!
00:40:24	John	Host	<i>[Laughs.]</i> I'll tell you what. This librarian? She's a putz! You know what I mean?
00:40:28	Jesse	Host	Wow. Wooooow.
00:40:30	Valerie	Producer	Guys, I'm gonna have to limit these puns to four (fore).
			<i>[They laugh.]</i>
00:40:33	Jesse	Host	Thank you, Valerie.
00:40:34	John	Host	Oh, woow! Wooooow.
00:40:37	Jesse	Host	Valerie knows comedy's rule of fours.
00:40:39	John	Host	No, you—what are you—she was referring to what you say before you hit a golf ball.
00:40:43	Jesse	Host	Oooh, okay, thank you.
00:40:46	John	Host	Yeah. It was good. That was a good one. That's what they call—that's two in a row. Two in a row right there. Two strikes in a row. What's that, a turkey? Not three strikes in a row. Now I'm talking about bowling strikes. Never mind. Anyway, I hope, Sarah, that my telling off this librarian has provided you with some catharsis. And I hope that if you're this—'cause, you know, a librarian—a librarian in Boston could very well be one of our listeners. I'm pretty confident that my cousin Jason doesn't listen to this podcast, because it's not pro-Trump enough. But it could be that the Boston librarian is listening. And ma'am, if you are listening, may I say: thank you for the work that you do. Don't talk to other people's babies. Don't scold other people's babies. Ever. Ever.
00:41:36	Jesse	Host	Never side-scol. Sideways scolding is not appropriate.
00:41:40	John	Host	Not appropriate. Okay. Hope we settled that grudge for you.
00:41:43	Sound Effect	Transition	Three gavel bangs.
00:41:45	Jesse	Host	This one comes from Mark in Gaston, Oregon. "I have a grudge. I don't like bananas. I never have. When I was six, I had an allergic reaction to a weird weed in our yard that caused my eyes to swell shut."

00:42:01	John	Host	I love that detail, “weird weed”.
00:42:04	Jesse	Host	I know. Alliterative and everything.
00:42:06	John	Host	Everyone’s writing good letters, today.
00:42:07	Jesse	Host	Probably Jonathan Lethem writing to us. “It was very scary, but the next morning my parents were there to help me get up and get dressed. My dad led me to the kitchen and poured me a bowl of cereal. He failed to mention he had covered the bowl of cereal with sliced bananas. I was expecting the satisfying crunch of a Cheerio. All I got? A mouthful of disgusting mush. I remember vividly spitting it out and hearing my dad chuckle. To this day, my dad says he was trying to expand my palette. He also says he didn’t know I hated bananas.”
00:42:49	John	Host	Two contradictory statements!
00:42:51	Jesse	Host	“This is all bull feces. He pranked me. To be clear, I love my father, I have a wonderful relationship with him. I’d love for him to admit this was a lapse in an otherwise stellar career in the field of dadding. But he’s 82, and I’m 42. So, it feels dumb to take him to task at this point. Putting aside your bias toward weird dads, was this as bad as I think it was?”
00:43:19	John	Host	Look, Mark in Oregon. I don’t wanna yell at your 82-year-old dad any more than you do. But I’m gonna! Don’t prank your kids! Don’t do it! I told a story on this podcast not long ago about how, when she was younger, my wife—a whole human being—was taking a walk at night with her cousins in Maine, and the parents jumped out of the cemetery to scare them. And it was the worst—the worst <i>[chuckles]</i> —the worst fright they’d ever had. I think that there was a time when it was considered kind of funny and par for the course to prank your kids. And I’d like that time to be over. I’d like that time for when late-night talk shows are showing videos of parents telling their kids that they, the parents, have eaten all the Halloween candy to record the horror on their children’s faces—that time will be over. That’s stuff sticks.

This is the whole thing about grudges, right?! When you get hurt—and this is an evolutionary issue. It’s like, when you touch something hot and it burns, you remember it. When you’re a tree and you get axed, you remember it. The axe doesn’t remember. The tree does. Pain, emotional or otherwise, sticks with us. It sticks in our craw. Arguably, that’s what the craw is for—for holding that grudge. So, Mark’s dad, let me tell you something. Stop playing games. Stop playing pranks. Stop teasing your son. This letter was a lot longer in its original incarnation, Jesse. This is a lot going on, here. They still go—they go out to dinner and the dad will still recommend bananas to his son. Anything with bananas on the menu, he’d say, “Do you wanna try this?” It’s not funnyyy.

Did you ever see that internet video? The dad was videoing a little kid. And the little kid’s little brother had like cut his finger. And the little kid was screaming to his dad, “Byood! Byood!” Trying to say, “Blood! Blood!” And the dad couldn’t stop laughing. He thought it was really funny the way the kid was saying blood and how upset he was. And finally, the kid says, “Byood! It’s not funny!” It’s not funny! It’s not funny. Distress is not funny. Confusing people by being a weird dad and asking, “I’ll have the kung pow chicken,” in an Italian restaurant. It’s not funny. Pain isn’t funny. I know there’s a long history in slapstick comedy of people falling down some

carpeted stairs, but you know what else is not funny? Honestly, when you come down to it: *Three Stooges*. It's not funny. It's not funny!

I just remember that as a kid, watching that on channel 38, just all the bonks and the binks and the bonks. It's not funny! It's not funny to me. And it stays. So, if you hurt someone, say I'm sorry. If they're ready to hear that apology, grand. If they're not? You've done what you can. Be mindful as you go forward. Byood, it's not funny. It's not funny; it's byood.

00:46:15 Sound Effect Transition

Three gavel bangs.

00:46:17 John Host

Alright. That grudge is settled. You can play this for your dad. And by the way, Mark's dad, I love you. I'm sure you're a great dad. 82 years old doesn't get you off. Justice may be delayed, but it will not be denied.

00:46:29 Sound Effect Transition

Three gavel bangs.

00:46:30 Jesse Host

The docket's clear. That's it for another episode of *Judge John Hodgman*. *Judge John Hodgman* was created by Jesse Thorn and John Hodgman. Our producer is Valerie Moffat. We're on Instagram [@JudgeJohnHodgman](#). Follow us there for evidence and photos from the show. You can also find those photos on this episode's page at [MaximumFun.org](#). If you wanna chat about the show, [MaximumFun.Reddit.com](#) is a great place to do it.

I have, John, here a quick correction that was submitted by my conscience. I said that it was never okay to kick someone down the stairs. And then, I remembered that my stepmother who grew up Catholic in Belfast, northern Ireland, during the troubles once had a police officer, uh—let's charitably say bother her. And she kicked him in the jewels and then kicked him down the stairs. That guy earned it. So, I'm making an exception for evil agents of the state.

*[John agrees.]*

Evil agents of the state, you may be kicked down the stairs. Watch your back and watch your jewels.

00:47:37 John Host

I agree with that, Jesse. So ordered.

00:47:39 Sound Effect Transition

Three gavel bangs.

00:47:40 John Host

Jesse, we've got a great docket of naming disputes coming together. I asked for some naming disputes a couple weeks ago. We could use a few more. So, just to remind you what we're looking for are things that need to be named that aren't named yet. A cat. A dog. A bearded dragon. A child, definitely. A boat, a novel, or what if you're founding a new country? Yes. If you're gonna name something, come to me with two alternatives. Something you like and something someone else prefers. And I, in discussion with Bailiff Jesse Thorn, will determine the best name. It shall be binding. I will name your child. So, keep those coming at [MaximumFun.org/ijho](#) as well as what, Jesse? All the other cases they might have?

00:48:31 Jesse Host

Big ones, little ones. Gen 'em up and email 'em over. That's what I say. [MaximumFun.org/ijho](#). Submit them there. The honest truth is if you right now sit down at your web mail, log into your web mail,



then in that “to” field, put your email address, then in that “BCC” field, you put in the top 25 or 30 people you can think of who you know, and then you put in the subject line “What’s your problem?”

*[John laughs.]*

00:49:14	John	Host	And then, in the body say, “I wanna be on <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> . What problem do you have with me?” Right! Wow! This is some <i>Atonement</i> business going on here. You might find out about a couple of times when you were the axe and didn’t know it! And a tree might write back to you and say, “Hey, you shouldn’t have let your dog chew up my sunglasses! You should’ve paid me back for that.” And then, <i>[claps]</i> bingo-bango-bongo, you’ve got a case for <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> . Go to <a href="http://MaximumFun.org/jiho">MaximumFun.org/jiho</a> . That’s <a href="http://MaximumFun.org/jiho">MaximumFun.org/jiho</a> to submit your disputes and communicate with me directly. No dispute is too small, and none is too large, either! And some are too medium, but it’s fine. I’ll write back to you.
00:49:57	Jesse	Host	We’ll talk to you next time on the <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> podcast.
00:50:00	Sound Effect	Transition	Three gavel bangs.
00:50:03	Sound Effect	Transition	Cheerful ukulele chord.
00:50:04	Speaker 1	Guest	<a href="http://MaximumFun.org">MaximumFun.org</a> .
00:50:06	Speaker 2	Guest	Comedy and culture.
00:50:07	Speaker 3	Guest	Artist owned—
00:50:08	Speaker 4	Guest	—audience supported.