

[00:00:00] **Jesse Thorn:** Welcome to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. I am Bailiff Jesse Thorn. We're in chambers this week to clear the docket, and with me is the host with the most: Judge John Hodgman.

[00:00:13] **John Hodgman:** I'm the host with the most coconut water in this room!

(Jesse laughs.)

When I was feeling poorly over the winter, I thought I never get things like coconut water. I'm like I need to replenish. And I got some coconut water, and I put it in the fridge. It doesn't go bad for another five months, so don't worry.

[00:00:30] **Jesse Thorn:** When you say replenish, you mean you had lost all your coconuts?

[00:00:36] **John Hodgman:** *(Chuckling.)* I was the host with the most coconut water of the least coconuts. So, I got this coconut water and just before we started recording, I'm like, I gotta get a drink of water. And then I was like, "Or do I get a drink of coconut water?" And that's what I got, and it's delicious. This is not an advertisement, but Vita Coco, get in touch with us. 'Cause I will vouch for this product.

[00:00:54] **Jesse Thorn:** You have to balance your humors. That's blood, phlegm, coconut.

[00:01:00] **John Hodgman:** Chyme and coconut.

[00:01:03] **Jesse Thorn:** Judge Hodgman, I mentioned that you're the host with the most, because when I'm visiting New York City—Brooklyn, New York—I tend to stay at your office, where you are sitting right now as we record.

(John confirms.)

You are my host when we visit, and that's the subject of this week's *Judge John Hodgman!* House guests!

[00:01:24] **John Hodgman:** Yes. So, we had a great time expanding our brand recently.

[00:01:29] **Jesse Thorn:** Oh, love to expand the brand.

[00:01:31] **John Hodgman:** We went on the radio program, *All of It*, with Alison Stewart on WNYC, and it was a terrific time. And they suggested, "Have you ever done anything on house guest disputes?"

And we're like, "N-no! What are we thinking? Let's put out a call for some house guest disputes." And we got so many of them. And we only had time on the radio to deal with about three, but we decided we should have a whole show dedicated to house guest disputes. We got so many that we had to do a whole episode. And who better to join us than—not only you, Jesse, one of my favorite house guests; a perfect house, I may say.

(Jesse thanks him.)

But perhaps my very favorite house host, Ms. Janie Haddad Tompkins. Hi, Janie!

[00:02:14] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** Hello! Thank you.

[00:02:16] **John Hodgman:** Joining us from unspecified neighborhood in Los Angeles.

[00:02:22] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** *(Laughs.)* Yes, I am here. Thank you for having me in your virtual chambers.

[00:02:25] **John Hodgman:** And I see you—that you're joining us virtually from your guest room, AKA the John Hodgman suite.

[00:02:34] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** AKA your bedroom.

[00:02:35] **John Hodgman:** But we'll get to that in a moment. First, people don't know, Janie is an actor, writer, comedian, a picketer.

(Janie laughs.)

You know what I mean? She's picketing deep into the labor stuff.

[00:02:47] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** I'm into the—deep into the labor stuff.

[00:02:51] **John Hodgman:** A SAG member. Thank you, Screen Actors Guild and American Federation of Television and Radio Artists, for author—*(stammering)* well, explain why I'm thanking you.

[00:03:02] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** Oh! That we are about to renegotiate our contract terms for fair pay and lots of other things. And we just, in an overwhelming show of solidarity, had an almost 99% yes vote to authorize a strike, should it come to that.

[00:03:24] **John Hodgman:** I don't know when you're—when you're hearing this, but that strike authorization vote just happened yesterday.

[00:03:29] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** Historical.

[00:03:30] **John Hodgman:** It's historical, and it's a huge boon to this fight to get fair compensation in this industry, which is an important part of the fight to get fair compensation in every industry—

(Janie agrees)

—that is dominated by a few corporations that are addicted to impossible, exponential growth at the expense of the living wages of their employees. So, thank you for that. But—and beyond that, you are also the co-host of the great *Stay F. Homekins* podcast.

(Janie confirms with excitement.)

Which comes out wherever you get your podcast the second Friday of every month. And it's just an after-dinner podcast with you chatting with your very special friend and roommate, Paul F. Tompkins. I dare say your husband and a whole human being in his own right?

[00:04:13] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** Yes. He is a whole human being in his own right.

[00:04:15] **John Hodgman:** And the two of you also have a Substack now, which we'll talk about a little bit later in the program. But to the point at hand, to the matter at hand, during the middle of the last decade, from about 2014 to some years after that, I stayed in your home with you and your lovely friend and partner, Paul.

[00:04:41] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** And roommate, yeah.

(They chuckle.)

[00:04:43] **John Hodgman:** And roommate, and special buddy. I would guess probably over the course of four or five years, I probably stayed in the—between 8 and 35 times in your house. For varying lengths of stay.

[00:04:57] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** *(Laughs.)* Is that—is that even—even possible? Yes, probably.

[00:04:57] **John Hodgman:** I don't—I don't know. Well, I don't wanna put you on the spot. This episode is about house guest dilemmas, conundrums, horror stories, and others to get through here. So, Jesse Thorn, why don't we get into it?

[00:05:11] **Jesse Thorn:** Here's a case from Kate in South Burlington, Vermont.

“My partner, Joel, thinks going to stay with his family is a vacation. I disagree, because it means we are house guests. Who's right?”

[00:05:25] **John Hodgman:** So, Kate wrote in—and I know Kate, because she's a regular. She tunes in to *Get Your Pets*, my afternoon talk show with pets—cats and dogs and other pets from South Burlington.

So, thanks, Kate, for watching. Thanks, Kate, for listening. Thanks, Kate, for submitting. This is an interesting one—right?—'cause there are three kinds of house visits, or home invasions as I like to call them. There's the friend house visit, and then there's a family house visit, and then there's *(pitching his voice low)* the romantic house visit.

So, but this is family. And I understand that family is tricky, 'cause family is the most likely to feel entitled to stay in your home, whether you want it or not. And equally, on the other side, they're most likely to feel hurt if you don't stay in their home. If you come to their town and you get a hotel or whatever. Plus, the family are most likely to infantilize and alienate your spouse or partner, because you are not their child.

What do you think about visiting family members? Have you ever gone to Philadelphia and visited Paul's family and stayed in their home?

[00:06:32] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** We do not stay in their home. We stay in a hotel.

[00:06:36] **John Hodgman:** And why?

[00:06:37] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** Well, number one, we've never been invited.

(John laughs and affirms.)

And just because like we need like our own space or whatever. We have stayed at my brother's in Philadelphia a couple of times. But yeah, it's just better to be in a hotel there.

[00:06:54] **John Hodgman:** Jesse, is staying with family a vacation? Yes or no?

[00:07:00] **Jesse Thorn:** Staying with family in their home, their primary home?

(John confirms.)

Vacation isn't the word I would use. Trip.

[00:07:07] **John Hodgman:** Vacation isn't the word. What did you say? Trip?

(Jesse confirms.)

Trip. It's a trip. Yeah, I asked Kate for some more information, and she wrote that his family, her partner's family, live about 90 minutes from them in extreme northern Vermont. And there's no hotel to go to, but they—he wants to visit his family, and she tries to be a good house guest by helping with the dishes and the cooking and the groceries and sending a thank you card. And she points out, "I don't have to do any of that on vacation." It's true. This—yeah.

[00:07:43] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** It's not a vacation.

[00:07:45] **John Hodgman:** It's not a vacation. And you know, I would say that being a house guest in itself—you should—you should be wary of the house guest who thinks it's a vacation for them, 'cause they're not gonna be helpful around the house.

If your house—like, you know, if you're invited—if your mom and dad or mom and mom or dad and dad or, you know, the parental figures in your life invite you to visit their house on—I don't know; let's say Sullivan's Island, South Carolina?

[00:08:17] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** (*Chuckles.*) If only.

[00:08:18] **John Hodgman:** And they're the kind of parental figures who are just like—I can't—I'm not gonna do an accent, Janie,.

[00:08:23] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** (*Laughs and adds a twang to her speech.*) Just have a good time! Just relax! Don't worry.

[00:08:27] **Jesse Thorn:** (*Laying on the accent thick.*) How-dee, pardner!

[00:08:31] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** (*Laughs.*) That's when you visit on the ranch, I guess? On the ranch.

[00:08:34] **Jesse Thorn:** (*Still using a thick southern drawl.*) Come down to South Carolina and ride some... doggies!

[00:08:38] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** Cows or something? Uh, cows? (*Laughs.*)

[00:08:41] **John Hodgman:** Yeah. If you got—if you got a couple of—if you got a couple of really, really cool, you know, southern parental units, who are just gonna be like, (*specifically without a change in accent*) “Just come on in and help yourself to whatever's in the fridge. Do not clean a thing. Do not do a thing. Do not bother us, because we're just gonna be sipping mint juleps from dawn 'til dusk, on the lanai.” That could be a vacation. I could see that as a vacation. And if you've got kids and those family members are like, “We're gonna take care of those kids.” That's a vacation.

[00:09:13] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** Oh, that's a vacation for parents, that's for sure.

[00:09:15] **John Hodgman:** Yeah. But I think—I think that—I think that, Joel, you need to be respectful. And you know, when you're counting up your vacations—as I know you were doing—don't count the time that Kate drove you to Toronto, to visit your father and sister, and did all the work of driving and then cooking and cleaning and everything else while you were there. That wasn't a vacation for Kate. That might have been fun for you.

[00:09:39] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** Yeah, I feel like maybe he defines vacation differently than the way I define vacation. Because vacation, like I wanna be somewhere new, even.

[00:09:54] **John Hodgman:** That's a good point! And anything can be a vacation if someone else is doing the work for you, but that is not what is happening. Particularly in a—you know, in any house guest situation.

[00:10:03] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** In a family!

[00:10:06] **John Hodgman:** And in a family house guest situation, when it's not your family, but, you know, your in-laws—if the family situation is that you're visiting your parents and your partner is there, it's never gonna be as comfortable for your partner as it is for you.

(*Jesse “wow”s with a chuckle.*)

[00:10:20] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** But also, you should help your parents. Period.

[00:10:23] **John Hodgman:** What do you say—why you say, wow, Jesse? Why wow?

[00:10:26] **Jesse Thorn:** I just—I'm thinking back to all the challenges of—my family are very hard work, no matter what. I love them all very much, but they're—it's a lot of hard work. For everyone involved. My wife's family might be the easiest human beings to get along with in the history of the world.

But in the days when we had few enough children that when we went to the Bay Area, we would sometimes stay with my wife's family, the amount of work it was for me to live in someone else's home life situation... (*chuckling*) and it was the same, even on a trip that I would consider a vacation—which is my wife's grandfather and my wife's grandfather's brother co-owned a cabin in a national forest in the Northern Sierras. And their family would go there once a year. And I went a number of times and always had a wonderful time. But even that was a lot of hard work, given that it was not my family.

[00:11:26] **John Hodgman:** Yeah. If it's not your family, you're always gonna be walking on eggshells a little bit. So, here's the takeaway: vacation is when someone—when you are not doing the work, when you actually get to relax. And that should never be the case when you're visiting someone's home. You gotta be conscientious. They're there to make you comfortable, but you're there to make them comfortable as well.

[00:11:46] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:11:48] **John Hodgman:** I think we have another family visit conundrum. Is that right, Jesse?

[00:11:51] **Jesse Thorn:** This one comes from Redditor TaakoSalad—that's taco spelled in the *Adventure Zone* manner.

[00:11:58] **John Hodgman:** Oh, there might be some crossover listenership there.

[00:12:00] **Jesse Thorn:** “My wife and I have six children in our blended family. Three of them are adults, who live out of town. We have one guest bedroom. How do we decide who gets to use the guest bedroom when everyone visits for the holidays? The oldest is 30, married, and high-income lawyer.”

[00:12:22] **John Hodgman:** Hang on. I have to get my—get out my scratch paper for this logic problem. Okay, go ahead.

[00:12:27] **Jesse Thorn:** (*Laughing.*) Yeah, no. “The second is headed east from Kansas City, at 55 miles an hour.”

[00:12:33] **John Hodgman:** Understand. Okay. Got it. Mm-hmm. Right.

[00:12:34] **Jesse Thorn:** Okay, so, “The oldest is 30 and a high-income lawyer. The next oldest is 25 and low-income. The youngest of the three is 23 and a graduate student.”

[00:12:46] **John Hodgman:** Boy, TaakoSalad really threw the next oldest under the bus there. Low-income. There’s a nicer way of saying that, I feel like.

[00:12:57] **Jesse Thorn:** Pursuing their passions.

[00:12:58] **John Hodgman:** Pursuing their passions. The youngest gets grad student. We all know what that means! Pursuing their passions. Probably doesn't have a lot of money either. Well, okay. What do you think, Janie? This is the deal: there's one room. Three adult kids are coming to visit. Who gets that room? And what happens to the others?

[00:13:14] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** Well, I—here's my— My solution would be to— 100% the high income married lawyer has to stay somewhere else. I mean, that's just like— that's a given. Because—

[00:13:31] **Jesse Thorn:** Easy-peasy, lemon squeezy.

[00:13:33] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** And also, they're probably like, “Yeah! We want a hotel. Like, ugh!” And then—

[00:13:38] **Jesse Thorn:** Yeah! “I'm a married high-income lawyer. I love hotels.”

(John laughs.)

[00:13:42] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** Yeah! Like, “I don't need to be with the blended family!” And then the—

[00:13:46] **Jesse Thorn:** “Presidential suite, please.”

[00:13:48] **John Hodgman:** “Uh, is the high-income lawyer suite available tonight? Thank you. That's an outlook.”

[00:13:53] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** My suggestion would be for the younger two siblings that have difficulty—would be to—

(John snorts a laugh.)

Either one solution would be to share the room and put like an air mattress on the floor, and then another solution would be like, okay, one of you guys—one of y'all like, decide amongst yourselves, gets the guest room. And the other one, we're gonna help pay to stay like at the, you know, Holiday Inn Express. Because I don't think you should burden the family with the pay of coming to see you, like if they are having trouble financially.

[00:14:38] **John Hodgman:** I would say that, first of all, the siblings should all get together and just have a little meeting and say, “Does anyone wanna say in this guest room? Like anyone actually want to do it? Because if so, you get it. It's fine.”

(Janie affirms.)

And, uh, I—and I got a hat—I gotta give a hat tip to Redditor Greg, who—in the comments, when this was submitted—I think suggested a very good solution, which is the high-income lawyer should get an Airbnb in town, and all the siblings stay over there.

[00:15:09] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** Oh, I like—that's good too.

[00:15:10] **John Hodgman:** And have—and have a party. And have a party.

[00:15:10] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** You know what? That's good.

[00:15:13] **John Hodgman:** I think that's, I think that's the solution there. But would that hurt TaakoSalad's feelings?

[00:15:18] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** I think TaakoSalad doesn't get a say in their feelings.

(They chuckle.)

[00:15:25] **John Hodgman:** Everyone deserves their feelings, even TaakoSalad. That said, the point of visiting should be to have fun and be comfortable, but if your child is more comfortable in a hotel than in your own home, don't be too sensitive about it. If your adult child, I should say. If your nine-year-old is more comfortable in a hotel than in your home, obviously, that's a children's book—a very sad children's book about an abandoned girl, named Eloise.

But it's still—it's not legal. But if your adult child is more comfortable staying in a hotel than in your guest room, try not to take it personally. They're just in a different phase of life.

[00:16:08] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:16:10] **Jesse Thorn:** Is this anything? *(Singing uncertainly to the tune of the Brady Bunch theme song.)* Here's the story of a redditor named Taako...

[00:16:14] **John Hodgman:** *(Singing along.)* Who was...

[00:16:18] **Jesse Thorn:** (*Singing.*) Bringing up three adults who live out of town.

[00:16:20] **John Hodgman:** (*Singing.*) Plus, three others, who were unnamed. We don't know their income.

[00:16:28] **Jesse Thorn:** (*Trailing off.*) And two were passionate...

[00:16:31] **John Hodgman:** (*Singing.*) Then one day, the three adult children said, “We're coming to town, and one of us must sleep in your guest room.” We will not contribute to solving this problem. Go and ask a podcast.

(*Janie cackles.*)

Go ask a podcast. Go ask a podcast. That's the way that we solved TaakoSalad's problem, (*hurriedly tacking too many words into the tune*) except Greg did it first on Reddit—thanks, Greg, I appreciate it.

[00:16:59] **Jesse Thorn:** We're gonna take a quick break to hear from this week's partners. We'll be back with more cases to clear from the docket on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

[00:17:05] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:17:08] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:17:10] **Jesse Thorn:** Welcome back to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. We're clearing the docket this week, with our friend Janie Haddad Tompkins. Here's something from Vicky, who posted on our Instagram account. “Is it rude to bring your own towels when you're staying at someone else's home? I don't wanna risk leaving my own—to put it delicately—mess on my host's linens. I also have sensitivities to certain laundry products, but some argue this would insult the host's housekeeping habits.”

First of all, I'm just gonna put this out there, right up top, and you two can deal with it. But I have some concerns about what the mess is that is underlined in this question, because it is quite literally underlined.

[00:18:10] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** Um—

[00:18:12] **John Hodgman:** Go ahead, Janie. I noticed that you were having a strong reaction.

[00:18:16] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** (*Laughing.*) I was! Sorry. I feel—well, I don't think it's rude, because if you tend to have like allergic reactions to certain detergents or whatever, then what you're doing is taking care of your own medical needs. So, I don't see something rude there. Um, so yeah. I was laughing about the underlined mess. But you know, whatever.

[00:18:48] **Jesse Thorn:** What are they doing with their towels?!

[00:18:50] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** (*Chuckling.*) I think they might—

[00:18:53] **John Hodgman:** I don't—that may be a mystery that we never solve.

[00:18:58] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** Maybe they are worried that the host will provide white towels, which can be problematic.

[00:19:03] **John Hodgman:** Okay. Elaborate.

[00:19:06] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** I mean, if you are like—you know, like having bodily functions that could stain white towels like every 28 days or something, then you might be like, “Oh, not into that. Don't wanna explain.” If the person has an issue with towels, and their skin responds to like hypoallergenic materials or whatever, and detergents, then I don't think it's rude at all.

[00:19:33] **John Hodgman:** If that's the case, that's all you need to say, Vicky. And if that's not the case for any of you listeners but you prefer your own towels for whatever reasons, you can just—you can—well, your truth should be good enough, but you can always use the Vicky excuse.

[00:19:50] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** I also feel like it doesn't even have to be discussed unless you're like freaked out of like, “Oh my God, when I leave, they'll see I never used a towel and think that I never bathed.”

[00:20:01] **John Hodgman:** But you know that there are listeners who are screaming at their podcast-a-phones or whatever they're listening on right now—screaming at their earbuds, saying, “If I brought towels to my mom/dad/guardian's house or my Aunt Linda's house or whatever to stay over Thanksgiving or whatever, they would be so insulted, and they would be so angry.”

And do you know what? You are so right. There are just people out there who would be insulted by this, and they're wrong.

[00:20:37] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** I have a fix!

[00:20:38] **John Hodgman:** Well, I'm gonna hear it.

[00:20:39] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** So, take your own towel and do your thing, and then take the guest provided towel, and wipe the bottom of the bathtub, and leave it on the ground.

[00:20:51] **John Hodgman:** (*Snorts.*) You're talking about pretending? Pretending that you used it?

[00:20:54] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** Yeah. You do like a fake out. Like, no one needs to know your towel business. You know what I mean? But if you wanna avoid the conversation, just—you just do like a little fake out.

[00:21:07] **John Hodgman:** No one needs to know your towel business. It's true. It's true.

[00:21:11] **Jesse Thorn:** Where are you keeping your moist towels in this scenario? Do you put up a towel rack inside your car or something?

[00:21:17] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** No, you like hang it over the chair in your guest room, and then you close the damn door because your stuff is in there, and they don't need to be going through your stuff.

[00:21:24] **John Hodgman:** I need to say this to those people out there who are screaming at their earbuds: if you've got people in your life who would be insulted by this, that's their problem.

[00:21:34] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** 100% their problem.

[00:21:35] **John Hodgman:** They have a confusion around what a host's role is. And a host's role is to make the guest comfortable. And if there are things that make the guest comfortable, within—I mean, within reason. Like, you can't go to someone's house and go, “You know what helps me fall asleep is lighting a bunch of magazines on fire.”

Like, that's not okay. But if your guest is open enough to say, “To be comfortable, I need my own towels, I hope you're not insulted,” your job is to say, “Of course, I'm not insulted. I want you to be comfortable.” And let me say something as well to these parents out there. If you want your kids to visit you, make it a vacation. You know?

(They chuckle.)

Like, be those imaginary *Sullivan's Island* parental units. You know? Be the *Sullivan's Island* parental units you want to see in the world. Like, if you know, if you want—if you want family to visit you, make it fun for them and make them comfortable. And they'll come! And they'll come.

If you don't want people to visit you, then assign them a bunch of chores. Then they'll—then they'll stop coming.

[00:22:45] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:22:47] **John Hodgman:** Oh, one quick thing from Instagram. Someone wrote in after we closed the docket. But I think it's important. It's a bathroom issue. “Where should a plunger be stored in a bathroom that guests use?” This is InkyCats of Instagram. And Janie, you're raising your hand. You don't have to. It's not a classroom. You're here to school us.

[00:23:08] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** I feel very strongly that a plunger should be on the floor next to the toilet, just visible kind of right in the back area.

[00:23:22] **John Hodgman:** It should be. And you know, there are very decorative plungers out there now.

[00:23:27] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** 100%. Oh, I've even bought a plunger as a hostess gift.

(John snorts and Jesse claps.)

Like, when I stayed—like a cool looking plunger, like at my friend's house, in New York. I was like, “You don't have a plunger in your bathroom.” Like, I was like freaking out about it. And then, when I left, I bought—I was like, “I ordered you something.”

[00:23:43] **John Hodgman:** Okay! Okay. Okay. I like that.

[00:23:45] **Jesse Thorn:** That's an incredibly intense move, Janie, and I applaud you for it.

[00:23:48] **John Hodgman:** I love it. I love it.

[00:23:50] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** Well, she's my friend from college days, so it was—there was an intimacy there.

[00:23:56] **John Hodgman:** Put a pin—put a pin and plunge. I mean it, because I just wanna say that like I 100% agree with you. And InkyCats, in a separate letter to me, relayed a longer story that indicated there was a bad backstory to this.

[00:24:10] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** Of course, there was! Because there was not a plunger readily visible to a guest!

[00:24:14] **John Hodgman:** ‘Cause when you need one—when you need one, you really need one. You need it quick. And if you don't know where it is, then—yeah, then you're in trubs (*trouble*).

[00:24:20] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** And you don't wanna have to ask for one. Why would you ever put your guest in a position where they have to ask where your—?! You know, when your guest comes out and they say, “Where do you keep your plunger?” Things are not going well.

[00:24:33] **John Hodgman:** Plungers are ugly to have in the bathroom, but there are pretty ones out there. I just did a quick search for “pretty plunger”. And a lot of options came up. I would say—you know, here's what you don't necessarily wanna do as a host: don't say, “And this is the plunger in case you need it.”

[00:24:50] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** Right, you just leave—it's an unspoken—it's like an—it's there, existing, to comfort people.

[00:24:57] **John Hodgman:** So, you don't want—right. You don't want to be—you don't wanna be acknowledging like, “I know you're gonna wreck this bathroom, so here's the plunger.” But on the other hand, you don't wanna get a plunger that is so decorative that—that they can't find it.

[00:25:09] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** That it's invisible. It's like you put some googly eyes on it or something. Have a sense of humor. You know, like you can—there's lots of ways to handle this.

[00:25:17] **John Hodgman:** Have a sense of humor, everybody.

This is a big one that came in, in a lot of different forms and ways, over not only this call for cases, but over the years. And it's—and it comes from Marie. Right, Jesse?

[00:25:32] **Jesse Thorn:** “My sister-in-law lives out of state. When we visit her, she gives us her bedroom to sleep in. Are we obligated to give her and her husband our bedroom when she comes to visit us? Neither party has a guest room. We all set up air mattresses when guests come.”

[00:25:52] **John Hodgman:** So, you know, my theory: don't sleep in your host's bed. That's not a theory. It's an axiom. But this is not the first time it's come up on the podcast. When I first learned that some people were offering their own beds to their guests, I was aghast. But then a lot of people say, “That's what I've—that's what I was taught to do by my family.” What do you think about it?

[00:26:16] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** I think that it—I don't think she's obligated to do that. I think that if it's better for her to have—like it's the person's home, and they have all their stuff in there. Like, it seems like it would be more trouble than it's worth, because you'd be like, “Oh, I forgot my—whatever—toothbrush.” And you have to knock on the door and be like, (*saccharinely*) “Sorry, I just—you know, I need—you know.” I don't know.

Like, I think like maybe it's fine that the one sister does it, because maybe for them—maybe for them it's like, “Oh my gosh, we get to sleep on the floor. It's so fun, like we're camping out and having movie night,” or something like that. And like you really don't know what the true motivation is.

I would say that there are like exceptions. Like if it's someone that has had like recent back surgery or like an elderly—you know. You know, like a case-by-case thing. But in terms of like, because she does this, do we have to do this? I would say no. You get to dictate sort of the terms of like, “This is what we do.” What do you think?

[00:27:21] **John Hodgman:** I trust that the listeners who wrote in, in the past, about this issue were not lying when they said that they were brought up to offer the best bed in the house, as opposed to couching their guests on a sofa bed or whatever. To this, I would say, first of all, there are very, very comfortable sofa beds available now.

Janie Haddad is sitting on one of them right now. I have slept in that sofa bed many a time—from 8 to 39 times over a period of five years. I'd also say that the way you were brought up is wrong. That's the other thing that I would say. I'm not saying you don't ever do it, but I am saying that—you know, here's the thing about etiquette. We don't—we don't—we try not to just do etiquette stuff, but it comes up. Those are a lot of—because etiquette, the reason we don't do etiquette on the show often is that this is a show about disputes. And etiquette is designed to eliminate disputes, discomfort, and the conflict.

Etiquette is not about determining what is rude. “How rude of you to bring towels to my home? You should be messing up my towels!” Etiquette is supposed to give a ground rule for different kinds of behaviors that everyone has kind of agreed on, so that everyone feels at ease. Everyone feels comfortable, everyone feels okay. There is no more important rule—we discussed it already—about everyone feeling comfortable than, when it comes to being a host or a guest, and specifically where you sleep. You—when you are a guest or a host, your comfort matters. You should be able to speak to what your comfort is and what makes you comfortable, and you should be able to accept when your host or your guest says, “I wouldn't be comfortable sleeping in your room, thank you very much.”

Because I wouldn't be! It's the most intimate part of someone's home is where they choose to be unconscious—solo or with their partner. I would never feel comfortable. I would insist on sleeping on an air mattress. But on the other—on the other hand, if you have to make someone feel comfortable 'cause they've got a messed up back or whatever, or maybe your grandma or your grumpy grew up with this dumb rule and—you know, they're not around for much longer. You don't have to reteach them the rule. If they're gonna feel more comfortable following this rule and sleeping in your bed, then you should offer it to them. Make them feel comfortable. You know.

Everyone being comfortable doesn't mean no one makes a sacrifice. It just means everyone should be able to speak about what makes them comfortable, and everyone should be able to hear what the other person is saying. Agree or disagree? Anybody?

[00:30:02] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** I agree. And I also think there has been a lot of technological advances in air mattress technology. So. And if you feel guilty, put some chocolates on the pillow or something, you know?

[00:30:15] **John Hodgman:** Yeah. People don't understand that like Janie and Paul are such tremendous hosts that not only is this mattress and this sofa bed really, really comfortable, but they don't fill it with water. They fill it with gin, for me.

[00:30:30] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** Your favorite gin.

[00:30:32] **John Hodgman:** Yeah. It's a gin bed. It's a gin bed. My favorite gin. It's very kind. One quick thing from—I just wanna speak to the wisdom of StuffStalker on Instagram, who wrote in quickly, “If you have two grown adults coming to stay in your home overnight, you better have at least a queen size bed.” Absolutely true.

(Janie agrees.)

In fact, I would dare say—you know that my policy is if there are two people sleeping together, they should get the largest bed that they can fit in the room and is within their means. But generally speaking, I would say double beds? Cut 'em up, and throw 'em on a fire. All of them in the United States and elsewhere. No one wants them. They don't work. Too small for two people, too big for one person. It should be twin, queen, king, California king. And then of course, for certain married couples, separate villas in Greece. You visit each other once—

[00:31:28] **Jesse Thorn:** You've often said with a path connecting them, and possibly a fountain in the middle.

[00:31:33] **John Hodgman:** A reflecting pool between them, yeah.

[00:31:34] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** Like in the in *The Crown* or at the White House or whatever.

[00:31:37] **John Hodgman:** (*Chuckling.*) In *The Crown* or at the White House. Exactly.

[00:31:39] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** If you have that kind of space, why not? You know?

[00:31:42] **John Hodgman:** Spread out.

[00:31:45] **Jesse Thorn:** Joe and Jill share a double.

[00:31:45] **John Hodgman:** I bet they do. I bet they love to cuddle, right?

[00:31:48] **Jesse Thorn:** They do not! You think they do?

[00:31:49] **Jesse Thorn:** They share a double on the Amtrak to Delaware. *Amtrak to Delaware*, by the way, one of the better Hold Steady albums. I like that record.

(*John laughs.*)

The lyrics are transporting.

Okay, uh, let's take a quick break. When we come back, we will solve more of your house guest challenges.

[00:32:09] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:32:11] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:32:13] **Jesse Thorn:** Judge Hodgman, we are taking a quick break to discuss what we have going on. Of course, first and foremost, we have labor actions going on. The Writer's Guild of America Strike.

[00:32:26] **John Hodgman:** And we may soon be joined by the Screen Actors Guild/AFTRA. That's the American Federation of Television and Radio Actors.

One terrific member—look, all of our siblings in labor over there at SAG/AFTRA, I'm a SAG/AFTRA member. They're all wonderful, but there's one that I really like. And that's Janie Haddad Tompkins.

[00:32:46] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** Hello.

[00:32:48] **John Hodgman:** And Janie, I know you're out there on the picket lines, but you've got some other stuff going. Obviously, we've talked about the *Stay F. Homekins* podcast.

[00:32:54] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** Yes. Wherever you get your podcasts.

[00:32:55] **John Hodgman:** Second Friday of every month.

(Janie confirms.)

That's where you and Paul F. Tompkins just have a little chitchat after dinner. There's always a cameo by that cuckoo clock that lives in your living room.

[00:33:07] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** And we have invited our listening community to subscribe to our weekend water Substack, where we have a lot of conversations about things we talk about, and we offer extra content. And there's a free tier to subscribe, so it costs you nothing. And if you want more of the bonus content, you can always upgrade your subscription at any time. That's at Weekend Water, over on Substack.

[00:33:30] **John Hodgman:** Weekend—look, don't listen to the tiers, everybody. You know what I mean? Doesn't—tiers don't matter. When you're talking about Janie Haddad Tompkins and Paul F. Tompkins, you're getting top quality, entertaining, charming content at every tier, at every level.

(Janie agrees.)

So, just get over there.

[00:33:47] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** Get over there.

[00:33:48] **John Hodgman:** What's the—what's the URL again?

[00:33:51] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** It's Weekend Water. Well, I don't know the URL. Should I have looked that up first?

[00:33:55] **John Hodgman:** No, no, no, no, no, no. So, just get over there. Navigate your browser to Substack. Weekend Water is the name of the Substack. This is a—it comes to you

in your mailbox. It lives on the web. It's a delightful thing that you get whenever Paul and Janie wanna send something to you. It's WeekendWater.Substack.com. That's WeekendWater.Substack.com.

And I'm here to tell you—I'm not just a pitchman for this Substack; I'm also a client. I'm a proud and very pleased subscriber, to get that weekend water email from you and Paul. I'm a subscriber, and I love it, and everyone else should do it too. And also, listen to the podcast, and then you'll know everything that's happening with Paul and Janie all the time, and that's worth it!

But Jesse, you also have a radio show!

[00:34:42] **Jesse Thorn:** The NPR show, *Bullseye*, also available by podcast. This week, we've got Tony Shalhoub and Anna Fabrega, who is the co-creator of my favorite show, *Los Espookys*. And next week, we have Dapper Dan: the legendary uptown New York Taylor, who is totally fascinating! And the great Jon Hamm. All of those coming up on *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn*. And guess what? Tomorrow I'm going to Ann-Margret's house to interview her. So.

[00:35:16] **John Hodgman:** Bye-Bye, Birdie! Get out of town! Wowie-zowie. That's a heck of a lineup on *Bullseye*. Check it out.

[00:35:24] **Jesse Thorn:** Let's get back into that docket.

[00:35:25] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:35:27] **Jesse Thorn:** Welcome back to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast, with special guest this week, Janie Haddad Tompkins from the *Stay F. Homekins* podcast. Did I say every syllable correctly, Janie?

[00:35:43] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** Sounds like you did. Yes. (*Chuckles.*)

[00:35:44] **Jesse Thorn:** Thank you. We are solving house guest challenges with my regular host, John Hodgman, and John's regular host, Janie. Here's a case from Jeff.

“I'm tired of people ignoring my explicit instruction not to bring anything. I understand the social convention, but bringing a big tin of mixed nuts or a tray of peanut butter fudge cookies when I've told you repeatedly that those things will literally kill me in minutes seems rude to me. Please order them to stop.”

There is a jump in this question!

(*John laughs.*)

[00:36:27] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** Wait a minute.

[00:36:29] **Jesse Thorn:** There is a leap over a chasm.

[00:36:33] **John Hodgman:** I feel like I just watched Evil Knievel jump the Grand Canyon. Tell me, what's the jump, Jesse?

[00:36:39] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** There's two issues here.

[00:36:41] **Jesse Thorn:** Yeah. So, issue number one is bringing something. Issue number two is bringing something your host has repeatedly warned you is deathly—

[00:36:53] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** Poison!

[00:36:54] **Jesse Thorn:** —is something to which they are deathly allergic.

(Janie agrees and chuckles.)

[00:37:01] **John Hodgman:** Now, I have made the error of dedicating too much time to reading Reddit. So, I have learned or have been taught that the world is actually full of monster humans who don't believe in their family members' allergies and are constantly trying to prove that the person is not actually allergic.

It's bananas. And I'm sorry to all of our listeners who are allergic to hearing the word banana that I said it. So, I don't know if this is a true thing, but it seems to be true in Jeff's life. And you know that this has got to be family, right? This kind of steamrolling over another person's reality, it happens mostly in families, right?

(Janie agrees with a laugh.)

So, obviously Jeff's family member who's doing this—or members—don't bring nuts to Jeff.

[00:38:01] **Jesse Thorn:** But what's going on with Jeff, here?

[00:38:02] **John Hodgman:** What do you mean what's going on?! You're pinning this on Jeff?!

[00:38:04] **Jesse Thorn:** I believe that Jeff—I'm not—I would never question Jeff's suggestion that he is allergic to nuts. Lots of people are deathly allergic to nuts.

(John agrees.)

No question in my mind. There's no reason Jeff would say that were he not. But what is it about Jeff that is causing this weird disjuncture—Jeff or Jeff's guests—where Jeff is saying both that he is allergic to these nuts—I'm presuming it's the nuts, since it's mixed nuts and peanut butter cookies. But Jeff is saying he's allergic to these nuts, and is thus saying don't bring nuts, but is also saying don't bring anything. Is Jeff allergic to a bottle of wine, the normal thing to bring? I don't even drink! I know you're supposed to bring a bottle of wine.

[00:39:03] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** I have—I have a controversial stance.

[00:39:06] **John Hodgman:** Okay, let's hear it. You know how much I love controversial stances, 'cause they help us get the clicks. Jesse, how are the clicks?

[00:39:13] **Jesse Thorn:** The clicks are doing fair but could use improvement.

[00:39:14] **John Hodgman:** Okay. This is a great time for—

[00:39:17] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** This feels like a *Succession* episode.

[00:39:19] **John Hodgman:** That's right.

[00:39:21] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** (*Chuckles.*) Alright. I—

[00:39:24] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, sure. Yeah, yeah, for sure.

[00:39:26] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** —am about to drop a truth bomb on you and everyone listening.

[00:39:31] **John Hodgman:** Okay. I'm getting—I'm getting into my truth-bomb bunker.

[00:39:36] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** If the host says, “Don't bring anything,” I believe you should show up empty handed.

(*John “wow”s.*)

And I know there is this societal—

[00:39:49] **John Hodgman:** Claxon! Claxon, claxon! Truth-bomb detected. Claxon, truth-bomb, incoming. (*Slide whistles.*) TRUTH!

[00:39:55] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** There's like some societal acceptance of being on autopilot, of showing up with a thing when it's like—I feel like it has rendered it somewhat meaningless.

[00:40:13] **Jesse Thorn:** Janie, I think there are two situations here that I would like to tease apart and get your perspective on. I'm very clear on your position on don't bring anything. What if a host says, “You needn't bring anything?”

[00:40:32] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** I say don't bring anything.

[00:40:35] **John Hodgman:** Hm. Yeah, I think that you need to take people at their word.

[00:40:39] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** There are some exceptions.

[00:40:40] **John Hodgman:** In dialectical behavioral therapy, there is something that has really affected my perception of the world around me in the positive, which is simple common sense, but it's easy to forget. You don't know what people are thinking. The only way that you can know what people are thinking is for them to say to you what they're thinking, and everything else that you're—you might be guessing right, but you should act upon what they say and not what you think they are thinking.

[00:41:16] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** Which is hard in the south.

[00:41:18] **John Hodgman:** Which is hard in—(*dropping into a well-to-do southern accent*) you know, it's hard in the south.

[00:41:21] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** (*Mimicking the dialect.*) 'Cause, none of us say it directly.

[00:41:24] **Jesse Thorn:** (*Slipping into a sort of Foghorn Leghorn.*) It's hard to do it when we're out here roping doggies!

[00:41:29] **John Hodgman:** That's right.

(*They chuckle.*)

And you know, yeah, that's definitely—and that's—there are lots of different cultures where you are expected to read minds. You know what I mean?

(*Janie agrees.*)

And that's hard, right?

(*Janie agrees.*)

And it's not fair. But I think that—so, you know, that's why I would always say, “If nothing is said, don't show up empty handed.” Is it—someone is opening their door to you; they're giving you a great gift. It is appropriate to acknowledge that gift with some—with a generous gesture.

[00:42:08] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** And there are all ways to go about a gesture like that.

[00:42:11] **John Hodgman:** That's right. You could show up with a bottle of wine. Sorry, Jeff. Or—and I think that probably that's the smartest, easiest way to go unless they're sober. But, you know, you can bring them something—

[00:42:23] **Jesse Thorn:** Flowers.

[00:42:24] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** Flowers.

[00:42:25] **John Hodgman:** A consumable or a flowers, that isn't gonna junk up their house forever and also isn't going to kill them in minutes. Those are two rules of thumb, in terms of giving a host/hostess/host—

[00:42:36] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** A candle. Like, a nice candle. That's a hostess gift. A cookbook or something. Yeah. Those are all things that won't kill people.

[00:42:43] **John Hodgman:** But if your—if your host says, “Please, don't bring anything,” or “Feel no need to bring anything,” I think you are obliged to take them at their word at that point. You can't—because it's—you don't wanna reverse gaslight. If someone says, “Don't bring anything,” and then you do, you're like, “Well, you didn't really mean that. Here's a toaster oven.”

[00:43:05] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** And you might have a deeper relationship with your host, where if you're bringing like, “Oh my gosh, I saw this book. I thought of you.”

That, to me, is not even a hostess gift. That's like a friend gift.

(John agrees.)

And it doesn't have to be presented in that moment either, but it could be. Yeah.

[00:43:20] **John Hodgman:** Well, I mean, that's another issue is like, so there's an—there are two opportunities, three actually, for gifting or a generous gesture. One is upon arrival; one is during the stay. Do you offer to—as Jesse has done—offer to make the most delicious macaroni and cheese I've ever had in my life while wearing the most adorable apron. I remember it to this day. Anything you remember fondly is an act of generosity. The best gift is a nice memory. Right?

And then of course, there's a thank you gift—and here's where I'm going to unpin the plunger, because that is the greatest thank you gift I've ever heard of in my life.

(Janie laughs.)

Obviously, you gotta—with all of these things, you gotta know the person and know what's gonna make them happy. If you don't know what's gonna make them happy, maybe you shouldn't be visiting their house. You know? Maybe you don't have that kind of relationship, and it's important to be thoughtful when you're there. Keep an eye out for stuff that maybe they don't have or that, you know, like if your host or hostess or whatever says, “Oh, I gotta remember to get olive oil, we're almost out.” Like, log that! Go get them a nice olive oil!

[00:44:31] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** Get a nice olive oil. Or if—they might be into really good coffee or something, and you know of a good coffee place and send them a bag of coffee or something.

[00:44:43] **John Hodgman:** Yeah! Because if you do that, then that's the sort of thing where they'll realize like, you're not just giving them something, you're also saying, "Hey, I'm thinking about you."

[00:44:50] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** I've seen you. I see you.

[00:44:52] **John Hodgman:** Yeah. I'm thinking about you, and I'm constantly surveilling your every word. And I'm probably watching you while you sleep. Thank you.

[00:44:59] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** (*Laughs.*) And I've left cameras behind that you'll never find.

[00:45:02] **John Hodgman:** (*Chuckling.*) Yeah. By the way, I came to this house with a bag full of Apple air tags and I'm leaving without them. So, I'm looking—have fun trying to find them. But I think like that plunge gift, like if your friend has a sense of humor—and also, you know, that's a great gift. You noticed that they needed it, and you gave it to them.

(Janie laughs and agrees.)

And now they know Janie—if we invite Janie over, she's gonna use that plunger. She needs to have a plunger around at all times. But when it comes to those gestures, you know, again, you have to take people at their word in this life. And if they say to you—and I'm sorry if you grow up in a culture where people say, "Don't bother doing that," when they really want you to do it. You know what I mean? That's not—that's not acceptable. And you don't have to take that from your relations.

[00:45:57] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** But you can also—like, if you really are wanting to do—bring a thing and you're like, "Oh, should we bring anything? Do you need anything?" And they're like, you needn't bring anything, like you said, you can get specific and say, "Well, I—there's this really great dessert place. Is that covered? Or do you have enough wine? I have this really nice red wine here that I'm happy to share." Like kind of have, you know.

[00:46:23] **John Hodgman:** Yeah. Alright. So, you're talking—like a—if they say, "Well, you needn't," then you can go in for something a little bit more specific. And if they still say no, then drop it. You'll know if they're—if you're bullying them into bringing a gift.

[00:46:38] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** At some point, the gift becomes about your own pleasing tendencies than the host's convenience.

[00:46:47] **John Hodgman:** Yes. A gesture of generosity should never be about you, and it should never be a burden to the person.

[00:46:52] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** Or kill the host.

[00:46:54] **John Hodgman:** Or kill the host. It should never be a burden or certain death to the recipient.

[00:47:01] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** I feel like if Jeff—Jeff, if someone shows up with a tray of—whatever, nuts stuff or whatever—he can say, “Oh, thank you so much, can you leave it on the bottom of the porch stairs? Because they're deadly to me, and I'll make sure that, um, I'll get someone to handle those nuts and put them somewhere proper. Thank you so much.”

[00:47:19] **John Hodgman:** Yeah. Here's the thing, Jeff. Just get a decorative shovel, something nice. Like, google “pretty shovel”. Have it by the door, and when they come in with—try to come into your house with those nuts, just say, “Oh, that's wonderful. Here, could you take this decorative shovel, and go dig a hole in the woods, and bury those God-or-whatever darn nuts.

[00:47:41] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** You know what my gift to Jeff would be if I stayed at his house?

[00:47:44] **John Hodgman:** What?

[00:47:45] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** I would send him a sign for his door that said, “You are now entering a nut free zone.”

[00:47:53] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, I think that's a good idea. I think we should make that and send it to Jeff. That's our gift.

[00:47:58] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:48:00] **Jesse Thorn:** Here is a case from Andrew.

“A few years ago, a friend let me and my friend, Tony, stay in their vacation house. Our host stocked the pantry with some snacks and drinks before Tony and I even arrived. When we left, Tony said we should take the food with us, because it was purchased for us. I said that would be rude. Should we have taken the extra cans of soda, half open box of crackers, and other leftovers?”

[00:48:34] **John Hodgman:** Mm! Before we get into this, I'm just gonna—can I drop a truth bomb?

[00:48:39] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** I'm ready. I'm listening.

[00:48:41] **Jesse Thorn:** Please. Battening down the truth hatches.

[00:48:42] **John Hodgman:** This isn't the same vein as Janie's. It's from the same stockpile of metaphoric weapons.

(*Janie chuckles.*)

If you are staying at someone's house for a night or two, then you should bring a gift upon arrival. If for whatever reason—and it's prearranged. Don't—you know, like you have been invited to spend five nights, and they're your good friends, you don't have to arrive with a gift, because you have extra time to offer them other, you know—you wanna up your thank you gift maybe or up your generosity during the week. But if they're like offering you lodging for a week—I'm just trying to excuse the fact that I never brought you guys a bottle of wine or anything. I feel like I always gave you a gift on the backend. I gave you points, participation points.

[00:49:36] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** Yes. I have a strong stance on this specific thing.

[00:49:41] **John Hodgman:** Are we getting into a fight?

[00:49:42] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** Well, this is about leaving—about like leaving the—whether you take the snacks bought for you or not.

[00:49:49] **John Hodgman:** Oh, oh! Oh, you actually wanna talk about this case? Okay. Yeah, let's do that. I'm sorry.

[00:49:55] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** Here's exactly—

[00:49:56] **John Hodgman:** (*Interrupting.*) Alright. First of all—I do need to say this. First of all, I made up the name Tony. Andrew didn't name his friend. There were two friends: the friend who was loaning them the second home, and then the friend that was staying there. And it was just too complicated. So, I gave—I gave one friend the name Tony, to make it clear. Tony.

[00:50:14] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** Tony, okay. Here's exactly how this entire thing should have gone down, according to my personal etiquette that people can take or leave. But you know, I feel strongly about it. What—I think you should have taken everything with you. I think it would've been rude to leave the stuff there, like even like three unopened cokes or whatever. Just like take it, because then like if this is a vacation home—first of all, they don't know if you drank all the Cokes while you were there or not.

But second of all, I think it looks better if you're leaving this space in a neutral state of readiness for the next people. Now, I'm not saying you should take like the packets of sugar for the coffee or, you know, whatever. Like that can stay, 'cause that's like condiments or whatever. But like whatever they bought for you, which was so nice and thoughtful, and I wish I had a friend that would loan me their vacation home and stock the fridge or whatever. But here's how the gift should have worked on the backend was when they left—first of all, leave it very neutral and ready for the next—

[00:51:26] **John Hodgman:** Leave it like you found it.

[00:51:27] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** Without the snacks.

[00:51:28] **John Hodgman:** Just like a campsite at a national park.

[00:51:30] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** Yeah, but taking the snacks with you, I say.

[00:51:32] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, but—okay, I see what you mean. Right, yeah. I gotcha.

[00:51:33] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** And then—and then, they should have sent a gift specific to the vacation home. I've done this before. You go, and you find like soaps or something, and you can have like the address like etched on—like very like high end like powder room soaps that you can etch like the address that's on the soap.

[00:51:56] **John Hodgman:** That's very nice!

[00:51:57] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** They come in like a box that looked like a box of candies or whatever, but they're like high—and it's sort of like specific to the vacation home, Or like tea towels with like the house on it or something like that.

[00:52:08] **John Hodgman:** That's a very generous gesture, and I couldn't disagree with you more strongly. You ready—?

[00:52:14] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** Interesting. It was a vacation home though.

[00:52:18] **John Hodgman:** Yeah. You know what? I don't know if you can see this on the teleconference, but I got a poster on my wall for a weird Turkish science fiction film called *Badi*. B-A-D-I. Got a weird E.T. looking guy staring down a USS Enterprise. I don't know what this thing is. It's psychedelic; it's bizarre. Did I put it up there? No, Ken Plume did. You know, because I have this office, and I have a fold-out sofa in it, and it's a wonderful feeling when you can be generous and offer people places to stay.

And Ken, you're welcome to come back. Just please don't redecorate my personal space with this weird poster that you left. I mean, I just came in one day and there it was. And this poster is so outrageous, and I'll send a pic, and we'll put it up on the Instagram and the *Judge John Hodgman* show page on, as well. But I've really come to love it. I've really come to love this poster. I haven't taken it down, but I don't think you should—I mean, I don't think that you should leave a—unless they have said or intimated, “Sure do wish I had some new tea towels,” then, yes. But I don't think you should be redecorating even someone's second home if they're lucky enough to have one.

[00:53:28] **Jesse Thorn:** I have a third perspective on this.

[00:53:31] **John Hodgman:** I love it.

[00:53:32] **Jesse Thorn:** We're all on board for don't leave half a box of crackers. 100%, don't leave half a box of crackers. Don't leave anything that's open or perishable in someone's vacation home, because you don't know when it will next be used. Do restock the larder.

[00:53:52] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** Interesting.

(John agrees.)

[00:53:53] **Jesse Thorn:** Now, it's possible that these things that were left were specific gifts for Andrew, because Andrew specifically wants to drink a particular brand of soda. Or you know, Andrew loves Malbec, and so there was a bottle of Malbec there. I think more likely this is a vacation home that has a certain amount of shelf stable food that is kept in it and that is restocked by people who leave. I don't mean that there is a full home completely with eggs in the fridge and milk delivery every day or whatever. But I know—like I have a cabin in the mountains. And I keep dried pasta there.

[00:54:47] **John Hodgman:** Oh, can Janie—can Janie borrow it? I know she was looking for one.

[00:54:52] **Jesse Thorn:** Janie, you and Paul are welcome to use my cabin in the southern Sierras.

[00:54:53] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** Thank you. I appreciate it.

[00:54:57] **Jesse Thorn:** It's a long drive, and there's been a lot of catastrophic weather lately. So, it's—

[00:55:01] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** I was looking for like a beach situation, so I might hold up.

[00:55:04] **Jesse Thorn:** Well, we have a giant Sequoia: the beach of trees. And I think—I think it is possible that—

[00:55:14] **John Hodgman:** Technically, beech—a beech tree is the beach of trees, though.

[00:55:16] **Jesse Thorn:** Yeah. I think it is possible that the neutral state of this house is an empty larder. That is very possible, Janie. And I agree with your principle of returning it to neutral. However, I would suggest that it's very possible—especially in a vacation home—that the neutral state of this house is there's a couple boxes of dried pasta, some cans of soda and beer, some liquor in the liquor cabinet, and you know, of course, your—you know, there's a little thing of olive oil and salt and pepper and so on and so forth.

And I think that it's important in those situations that you are not just leaving it neutral, but I would also suggest think about leaving something completely shelf stable behind that is nice, like a nice bottle of liquor or a nice bottle of wine. I would say it's appropriate to leave literally anything that you purchased at the ladies' auxiliary of literally anything.

(They laugh.)

[00:56:23] **John Hodgman:** Alright, lemme see if I can get to a grand unifying theory that we can all get to unanimity on here, with regard to this half a box of crackers. Here's what you—here's what you take with you. Half a box of crackers, any unfinished package of chips or food or whatever. You don't wanna be leaving that around to attract pests.

Butter and eggs, leave it in the fridge. You're not gonna be bringing, you know, four eggs in a Ziploc baggie for your road trip. They just stick around. That's neutral. Eggs and butter in the fridge is neutral. Half a box of crackers, non-neutral. Take with you anything that was left in a gift basket for you. All that stuff is yours.

[00:57:02] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** I'm taking the chips, even if they're unopened. 'Cause on my drive home—

[00:57:06] **John Hodgman:** If they're in that gift basket or in a sort of—in a welcome display of any kind, that's your stuff. But if you hit that pantry, you gotta restock the pantry. No one is leaving a can of Amy's split pea soup as a welcome gift for you.

(Janie chuckles.)

That's just something they have in their cupboard. Return to neutral means replacing that Amy's split pea soup. And by the way, Amy's? I love your split pea soup. Sponsor *Judge John Hodgman*. Return it to neutral.

[00:57:37] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:57:39] **John Hodgman:** And now here's the—here's something, before we move on to the end of this program. We have one more case.

[00:57:45] **Jesse Thorn:** This one's from Hannah in Boston.

“When I have guests, my cats always sleep with them and not with me. I request the judge issue an injunction against my cats to prevent them from snuggling with my guests because I miss my cats.”

[00:58:04] **John Hodgman:** Wooow. Hannah, bring your cats over to the speaker. Bring your cats over to the speaker or put little—you know what would be really cute is to put little Air Pods into the cat's ears. That would be good too, right? One in each ear.

(Janie agrees.)

And Valerie, do you have your cat with you?

[00:58:22] **Valerie Moffat:** He is currently bouncing off the walls like a God-or-whatever darn Looney Toon.

[00:58:27] **Jesse Thorn:** I was looking at your Zoom and (*imitating Tweety Bird*) I tought I taw a puttytat. (*I thought I saw a pussycat.*)

[00:58:30] **John Hodgman:** I'm sorry that I'm missing that. I'm sorry you're missing it. But please relay this message to Bigby and—Hannah, I don't know the names of your cats. So, Janie, what's a good—what's a good name for one of these cats?

[00:58:42] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** Um, Scratchy.

[00:58:43] **John Hodgman:** Scratchy? And, uh, Jesse, what do you got?

[00:58:46] **Jesse Thorn:** Oh! Gonna go with uh—well, it can't be Hambone. That's a dog name.

[00:58:50] **John Hodgman:** (*Chuckling.*) Can't be Hambone.

[00:58:52] **Jesse Thorn:** I'm gonna say Furball.

[00:58:53] **John Hodgman:** Furball, Scratchy, Bigby: listen to me. Sleep with the ones what feed you.

[00:58:58] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:59:01] **John Hodgman:** Right?! (*Chuckles.*)

(*Janie agrees.*)

I know you're not gonna listen to me, cats, 'cause you probably don't understand English. And probably those Air Pods fell out of your little ears a long time ago. But yes, you are right to be insulted by your cats sleeping with your guests, Hannah. And they're probably doing it on purpose. Alright. That's all I got to say about house guesting.

[00:59:20] **Jesse Thorn:** Janie, thank you so much for joining us on the Judge John Hodgman podcast.

[00:59:26] **Janie Haddad Tompkins:** Thank you for having me. I enjoyed it. Thank you so much.

[00:59:29] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:59:32] **Jesse Thorn:** Our docket is clear. *Judge John Hodgman* was created by Jesse Thorn and John Hodgman. Our producer is Valerie Moffat. We are on Instagram [@JudgeJohnHodgman](#). Follow us there and join us on the Maximum Fun subreddit at [MaximumFun.Reddit.com](#).

Judge Hodgman, we got so many incredible house guest disputes. Folks who went to MaximumFun.org/jjho. Folks who tweeted at us, folks who shared them on Instagram, folks who shared them on Facebook. We have a new topic.

[01:00:05] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, so one thing that's happening very swiftly is our docket involving card game disputes is filling up very quickly. Seats at the poker table are filling up very quickly, so if you've got a dispute about, spit, hearts, poker, whist. I know there's some bridge disputes out there.

Magic the Gathering is especially encouraged, and the more complicated and granular your dispute is, the better. Send that in to MaximumFun.org/jjho. And also, what about weddings? There gotta be a lot of disputes surrounding weddings and wedding etiquette. And people, if there's one thing I've learned while reading Reddit, it's that stuff is popping off all the time at weddings. People are always doing the wrong thing at weddings and getting mad.

[01:00:53] **Jesse Thorn:** Action packed weddings!

[01:00:55] **John Hodgman:** Action packed weddings. Pack 'em all in, to MaximumFun.org/jjho.

[01:01:02] **Jesse Thorn:** And of course, no matter what the subject of your dispute, please send it in to us. MaximumFun.org/jjho. This is this serious business, John! This show lives and dies by your disputes. So, if you're out there in the audience listening to this, I think you probably have a dispute with somebody that you could submit at MaximumFun.org/jjho. If you're worried it's not big enough or it's not right, don't worry! We'll worry about that. Just send it to us at MaximumFun.org/jjho.

[01:01:34] **John Hodgman:** We'll make it work so you don't have to. We'll talk to you next time on the Judge John Hodgman podcast!

[01:01:39] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[01:01:42] **Sound Effect:** Cheerful ukulele chord.

[01:01:43] **Speaker 1:** MaximumFun.org.

[01:01:45] **Speaker 2:** Comedy and culture.

[01:01:46] **Speaker 3:** Artist owned.

[01:01:47] **Speaker 4:** Audience supported.