

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

[00:00:02] **Jesse Thorn:** Welcome to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. I'm Bailiff Jesse Thorn. This week, "The Bicycle Grief". Clare brings the case against her mother, Suzanne, and her stepdad, David. Every summer, Clare spends a month visiting Suzanne and David at their house. Her visit always overlaps with the Tour de France.

Suzanne and David watch every minute of the tour, because they don't want to miss any of it. Clare says that's getting in the way of them spending time with her. Who's right? Who's wrong? Only one can decide. Please rise, as Judge John Hodgman enters the courtroom and presents an obscure cultural reference.

(Chairs squeak, followed by heavy footsteps and a door closing.)

[00:00:45] **John Hodgman:** 19 liters of hot chocolate, 7 liters of tea, 8 cooked eggs, a mix of coffee and champagne, 45 cutlets, 5 liters of tapioca, 2 kilos of rice, and oysters.

Bailiff Jesse Thorn, please swear the litigants in.

[00:01:02] **Jesse Thorn:** Clare, David, and Suzanne, please rise and raise your right hands.

(Chairs squeak.)

Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God or whatever?

(They swear.)

[00:01:14] **Jesse Thorn:** Do you swear to abide by Judge John Hodgman's ruling, despite the fact that he probably wears one of those normal, round, bicycle helmets instead of those long, skinny ones? (Chuckles.) You know those long, skinny ones?

[00:01:26] **John Hodgman:** Those Tron helmets?

(They swear.)

[00:01:31] **Jesse Thorn:** Judge Hodgman, you may proceed.

[00:01:33] **John Hodgman:** Dave, Suzanne, and Clare, you may be seated for an immediate summary judgment in one of yours favors.

(Chairs squeak.)

Can either of you—and I'm gonna make you, David and Suzanne, a team, 'cause you are codefendants. Not fair, Clare, is it?

(Clare agrees.)

I already—I could tell. I can see you at the top of my screen. Clare is like not enjoying that at all.

[00:01:52] **Clare:** (Chuckles.) It's okay.

[00:01:53] **John Hodgman:** Don't worry. Don't worry, Clare. Everything's gonna be fair. I made a note for this morning. I said, "Make it fair for Clare." That was the note I made.

[00:02:01] **Clare:** Much obliged.

[00:02:01] **John Hodgman:** You're welcome. Clare, do you want to guess first?

[00:02:07] **Clare:** Sure. Uh, well it sounds like the meal list of the things that were eaten by a member of the Tour de France in like 1912 or something like that. But—

[00:02:22] **John Hodgman:** 1912 is the year you want to go for? 1912?

[00:02:24] **Clare:** Sure. Uh—

[00:02:28] **John Hodgman:** Not earlier.

[00:02:30] **Clare:** No. I'm gonna stick with 1912. I feel confident about that year.

[00:02:34] **John Hodgman:** Remember how it was gonna be fair for Clare day?

(They chuckle.)

[00:02:37] **Clare:** Okay. Uh, I'll go with 1911.

[00:02:41] **John Hodgman:** It's not *Price is Right*. Okay. 1911, Tour de France. Something that was a menu that was enjoyed by a bicyclist for Tour de France.

[00:02:51] **Clare:** Yes. I don't know any of their names, but I suspect that the other team will, so I'll leave it up to them.

[00:02:58] **John Hodgman:** Probably Jean. Probably Jean Pierre or something. Right. Okay. Suzanne and David, which one of you is going to be—how do they do it? Someone rides in front of someone else to cut down on wind resistance.

[00:03:11] **David:** Draft behind.

[00:03:12] **John Hodgman:** Who's gonna lead and who's gonna draft behind?

[00:03:14] **David:** I will lead and—

[00:03:16] **John Hodgman:** I could see—and by the way, I saw you nodding along when I was reading this off, David. I think you know this one.

[00:03:22] **David:** (Laughs.) I wish I did, but I think it's actually a French to English translation from *The Triplets of Belleville*, the animated French classic from—mm, 15 years ago. So, you did a really good job translating.

[00:03:38] **John Hodgman:** You sure you don't wanna say 16 years ago, David? 16 years ago?

(David confirms.)

Okay. I don't know, but I do know that *Triplets of Belleville* does feature the Tour de France in it. It's not a film that I've seen, I'm embarrassed to say.

[00:03:50] **David:** It's a good one.

[00:03:50] **John Hodgman:** So, it's unlikely that I would've quoted it. Since I know that you got it wrong, David—Suzanne, you want to—you wanna give it a try?

[00:03:58] **Suzanne:** Sure. I think it's a menu for a team's celebration, because there were oysters and champagne in there. So, you only do the champagne on the last stage of the tour. The cyclists, you know, ride along and they drink champagne. So, I think it's maybe a menu from the last day of the tour in Paris, and I have no idea what year it would be from.

[00:04:27] **John Hodgman:** Well, let me—let me say this. Do you want to—I'm sorry. Did you want to take a guess?

[00:04:31] **Suzanne:** No.

[00:04:32] **John Hodgman:** Okay. You wanna say 1910?

[00:04:35] **Suzanne:** I think it was probably around 1910. That's what I'm guessing.

[00:04:40] **John Hodgman:** So, none of—none of you win. What's the—what do you get when you—when you win the Tour de France? A plate of stew?

[00:04:46] **Suzanne:** No, you get this massive trophy, this massive plate—glass plate. Yeah.

[00:04:51] **John Hodgman:** A plate. None of you get the plaque de glace. I think that means plate of ice. Anyway, none of you get it, but I'll tell you, in order of furthest away from correct. Coming in third, was David. Coming in second? Suzanne. Coming in first, closest to most correct: Clare. It was fair for Clare, right?

[00:05:17] **David:** Absolutely.

[00:05:17] **John Hodgman:** But all guesses were wrong. The diet—this was the diet followed over—I think over the course of the race by the winner of a 24-hour bicycle race in Paris, not the Tour de France. It was a precursor to the Tour de France, and it was held in 1893. The winner traveled 701 kilometers. I didn't have time this morning to figure this out in miles, so you're gonna get it in kilometers.

David, I know you're—you'll know what I'm talking about. The winner traveled 701 kilometers in 24 hours, racing around the (exaggerating the French consonants) Champ de Mars, The site of the Tour Eiffel, now. The winner was only one of two to actually finish the race—that is bicycled all 24 hours, because most of them were drinking red wine the whole time.

And, uh, spoiler alerts, it's a he/him person. He beat his closest competition by 49 kilometers. In other words, he traveled almost 50 kilometers more in 24 hours than number two. David, do you know the—you like bicycle races, right?

[00:06:19] **David:** Absolutely.

[00:06:20] **John Hodgman:** You like to ride a bicycle. You like to ride your bike, Freddie Mercury style.

[00:06:23] **David:** Many miles.

[00:06:25] **John Hodgman:** Right. I can see you're wearing your bicycle jersey right now. Do you know the name of the winner of that race?

[00:06:31] **David:** I think I might. Ritte—

[00:06:33] **John Hodgman:** You're not gonna win the case now, but I'd like to know.

[00:06:36] **David:** Ritte Vlaanderen.

[00:06:38] **John Hodgman:** No sir, Maurice Garin.

[00:06:41] **David:** Oh! Oh, darn. It was a guess.

[00:06:44] **John Hodgman:** I'm sorry about that. You know who Maurice Garin is!

[00:06:47] **David:** Of course.

[00:06:49] **John Hodgman:** Who? Quién?

[00:06:50] **David:** I don't know. That's him.

[00:06:52] **Jesse Thorn:** Just like the other one, it's a made-up name.

[00:06:56] **John Hodgman:** Who? Qui, qui? That's what I meant to say, not quién. I always—my French and Spanish just live—fight each other in my brain all the time. Maurice Garin. (Struggling with the French R.) Garin. Garin! (With a heavy French accent.) Maurice Garin was the winner of the first Tour de France in 1903! Did you wanna say something about this guy?

[00:07:14] **David:** Well, these are things we should know since we're mega-fans.

[00:07:18] **John Hodgman:** No! No, look, you're—look, you live in this century. You know, there's no—there's no reason that you would go read a Wikipedia page to try to stump me. My job is to read a Wikipedia page to stump you. You're doing your job fine. Maurice Garin won the first tour to France in 1903, and he described the race—which is 2,500 kilometers—right, David? Over days—19 days? How many days?

[00:07:45] **David:** 21. With two rest days.

[00:07:47] **John Hodgman:** 21 days! Vingt-et-un! Right. But he described it as miserable! And he wrote—he wrote to the organizer, “I see myself, from the start of the Tour de France, like a bull pierced by banderillas.” Those are the swords that they stick in the bull. “A bull pierced by banderillas who pulls the banderillas with him, never able to rid himself of them.” That's what it felt like. He also won the second Tour de France, but he was stripped of his title for cheating. The rumor was that he took a train for part of the way, but it was not particularly shameful that he was stripped of his title. All four finishers were stripped of their title and disqualified, because the Tour de France—

(They laugh.)

Look, there's been some doping scandals—correct?—in the Tour de France?

[00:08:34] **David:** Many.

[00:08:35] **John Hodgman:** But I don't think—I don't follow this race particularly closely, but I don't think that you have like fans of one team tearing down trees to block the road for members of another team, which is what happened in 1904.

Bicyclists—also, people were cheating everywhere. They were throwing tacks over the road. (Chuckling.) They were throwing tacks over their shoulders, and they were hanging onto motorcycles. Someone would bring a car in, and a bicyclist would hold onto the car, and the bicyclists were poisoning each other and pulling guns on each other during the race. This is the sport that you love, David.

[00:09:11] **David:** Absolutely. Well, you know, some of those things you described still happen. The tacks. Yeah.

[00:09:18] **John Hodgman:** Okay, well, we'll get into that in a moment. Clare, you bring this case before my court? Correct?

[00:09:23] **Clare:** Yes, your Honor.

[00:09:24] **John Hodgman:** What is the justice that you seek? What's the problem? What's the beef?

[00:09:27] **Clare:** Uh, so the beef is that for most of my life, as long as I can remember, every July, my mom and David have watched the Tour de France and uh—

[00:09:44] **John Hodgman:** That's when it happens, I presume?

[00:09:45] **Clare:** Yes, that's when it happens, in July. And now that I'm an adult and I no longer live with them, I come and visit every summer, because I am on an academic calendar, and I live in the deep south. So, being where I live in the summer is not particularly enjoyable. So, I come up here to beautiful western Massachusetts, and I—while I'm here, they watch approximately five hours of cycling every day.

[00:10:14] **John Hodgman:** Wowie-zowie.

[00:10:15] **Clare:** And that's a lot.

[00:10:17] **John Hodgman:** Now, you are an adult. You live on an academic calendar.

(Clare confirms.)

Which by the way, that's the way everyone should live.

[00:10:24] **Clare:** Agreed.

[00:10:25] **John Hodgman:** That's what—that's what Joe McClellan told me in high school. He was the permanent substitute in the French department. He was like, "I'm gonna be in academia all my life. This is how people should live: two months off, at least, in the summer." Or just move to France, and then you get two months off.

[00:10:38] **Clare:** Yeah, I've done that too, but not anymore.

[00:10:40] **John Hodgman:** It tells me—yeah, but you don't live in France now. It says here you live in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

[00:10:45] **Clare:** That is correct.

[00:10:46] **John Hodgman:** You're saying that every July you go and visit your mom and stepdad, David, in Western Massachusetts. And it says here, David and Suzanne, that you live in Sunderland, Massachusetts?

[00:10:57] **David:** Correct.

[00:10:58] **John Hodgman:** I'm not gonna get you to say anything so that—so the listeners can triangulate where you live. I just needed to say something about Sunderland,

[00:11:06] **David:** Please do.

[00:11:07] **John Hodgman:** That route 47? Very pretty road. Did I ever drive you down Route 47, Jesse, when you were visiting me in Western Mass that time?

[00:11:16] **Jesse Thorn:** We may well have. I mean—

[00:11:19] **John Hodgman:** What a—what a pretty road.

[00:11:20] **Jesse Thorn:** It's not the kind of road name I would remember.

(They chuckle.)

[00:11:26] **John Hodgman:** Well, they've renamed it. Did you know that?

[00:11:27] **Jesse Thorn:** You know what? Now that I think about it, John, I think we went down Road 53.

[00:11:34] **John Hodgman:** Then I made a mistake.

[00:11:35] **Jesse Thorn:** Maybe it was 19. I don't know. I don't know!

[00:11:39] **John Hodgman:** Route 47. That's how you drive down from Leyden, Massachusetts, down into Hadley. It's right along the river, the Connecticut River, and you drive by a bunch of tobacco farms, 'cause that's where they grow that beautiful Connecticut River, sandy loam, shade tobacco that they use for cigar wrappers. And then you cut over onto Cemetery Road once you get into Hadley and go take the back roads over by the oxbow. I love—everybody in those top two frames is nodding along with my reverie right now.

(They laugh.)

Poor Jesse Thorn is bored out of his mind. So, let's get back to this case. David, you're wearing a cycling jersey. Suzanne, you're wearing a wonderful green bucket hat. I'm not sure if there's significance to that. Is it—is that a cycling thing?

[00:12:25] **Suzanne:** It is. It's the hat that I got—it's some of the swag that I got when we actually went to visit Clare when she was living in France, and we went to an actual stage of the Tour de France—you know, live and in person. And there's a whole caravan that happens before the race, and they throw out, you know, stuff. And I got this really cute hat with the sponsor—one of the sponsor's names on it.

[00:12:48] **John Hodgman:** What is Škoda? Is that what says? What is that a brand of?

[00:12:50] **Suzanne:** Yeah. I have no—I have no idea what it—what it signifies, what It's a brand of. Sorry!

[00:12:55] **John Hodgman:** (Singsong.) There's no way for us to find out.

[00:12:56] **Suzanne:** David knows. David knows.

[00:12:57] **John Hodgman:** Makes cars. What is it?

[00:12:59] **David:** It's a car company.

[00:13:00] **Suzanne:** Oh, cars, okay.

[00:13:03] **John Hodgman:** Clare, you were living in France? You were—you mentioned?

[00:13:05] **Clare:** Yes.

[00:13:07] **John Hodgman:** What were you—when were you living in France?

[00:13:09] **Clare:** Um, I've lived there a few times. I think on that trip, I was—this was probably about five or six years ago, and I was working at the European Court of Human Rights, in Strasburg.

[00:13:19] **John Hodgman:** Well, merci beaucoup for your work.

[00:13:22] **Clare:** De rien.

[00:13:23] **John Hodgman:** Did you invite David and Suzanne over, or did they just say we're coming, 'cause the bicycle race is happening?

[00:13:30] **Clare:** No, I invited them, but I did not invite them to go to the tour, exactly. I invited them to go to the beach, and we made a detour.

[00:13:43] **John Hodgman:** A detour de France?

(They laugh and “ooh”.)

[00:13:46] **John Hodgman:** How far a detour? I know, sorry. I'm a dad too. How far a detour was it? How far—how wildly did they derange your plans?

[00:13:54] **Clare:** I think it was probably about a day.

[00:14:01] **John Hodgman:** (Snorts into a laugh.) A day out of your way?

[00:14:02] **Clare:** Yeah. Something like that.

[00:14:03] **John Hodgman:** Yeah. Alright. I don't need the metric for that. I understand. Alright, David, you're wearing your cycling jersey. What is—what does bicycle racing mean to you? You do it right?

[00:14:13] **David:** Well! I do, yes. I have been a competitive cyclist since my kids were young teenagers. And in fact, Suzanne and I have been together for 26 years, and I did my very first bike race that first year that we were together. And this—

[00:14:31] **John Hodgman:** Was it the Sunderland Classic?

[00:14:33] **David:** (Laughs.) It wasn't; it was the Northampton Cycling Club Tour of the Hill Towns, which we run every year. And it's a brutal race. It's—for someone of my age, it was 62 miles and it—my goal was to not finish last, and I wasn't. So, that was good.

[00:14:49] **John Hodgman:** So, you love bicycling. And when did you start watching the Tour de France?

[00:14:52] **David:** Well, I was thinking about that, and it was actually before I even met Suzanne. My kids would like to watch it with me. And this was—this was during the really early years of Lance Armstrong's comeback. And it was at the time when there weren't phone apps to watch bicycle racing. It was—you're all at the mercy of whatever the networks wanted to show you.

And back in those olden days of the tour, they would show like, oh, a half an hour summary every day of what that stage was like, even though the stage was six or seven hours long. My kids got into it. My son's a cyclist as well. He lives in Portland, Oregon. My daughter just was absolutely enthralled by the whole—the whole spectacle of the tour.

And I tried to get her into cycling in that way. And one of the things with the tour, you'll notice if you watch it, people paint people's names in the roadway to cheer their favorite riders on. And so, when Hannah really got into it, I went out in front of our house. We were living in Amherst at the time. And in latex paint, which I thought would last about a week or two, I painted across the entire roadway, "Go, Hannah." That is still there (giggling), 25 years later. You can still see it on the satellite or the aerial photography for Google Maps. So, it has withstood the test of time. (Laughs.)

[00:16:25] **John Hodgman:** Jesse—this was in Amherst, did you say? Amherst, Massachusetts? (Quietly.) Jesse, could you get the, uh, Amherst Police Department on the phone for me please?

(The others laugh.)

Tell 'em we got a cold case that we can solve.

[00:16:37] **David:** Yeah, very cold!

[00:16:40] **John Hodgman:** Cold—you're gonna crack a cold case today. Hmm. So, you mentioned stages. Let me give the listeners who maybe don't know this, including myself—'cause I'll read a Wikipedia page all day long about Maurice Garin cheating and his sad later life. He died basically in anonymity, in 1957.

Anyway! I'll read that all day, but I—you know I didn't read the rules of the bicycle race. So, there are—it takes 21 days with two days of rest. We got that down. It is literally a tour of France. It goes all through different parts of France. And there are stages. Now what is a stage?

[00:17:21] **David:** A stage is the race of that day. It might be a time trial. It might be a flat sprinter stage that goes actually into Switzerland or into Belgium or into Spain. If it goes through the Pyrenees, there's climbing stages. There's all sorts of different types of stages. But yeah, it's, it's got maybe—maybe a third of the stages are really hard mountain stages. A third are kind of flat sprinter stages, and a third are somewhere in between.

[00:17:50] **John Hodgman:** Okay, I just wanna wrap this up, 'cause I can see that Clare is falling asleep while you were talking there. Right, Clare? A little bit boring?

(Clare agrees.)

No, it's not. I mean, it's your—it's your passion, David. Correct? It's your passion?

[00:18:02] **David:** And Suzanne's.

[00:18:04] **John Hodgman:** And Suzanne's as well. So—oh! Let the record show Suzanne made one of these like head back and forth motions like, (uncertainly) “Yeeeah.” Mezza-mezza, as they say in Paris. What were you gonna say, Clare?

[00:18:17] **Clare:** I am 100% on David's side on this one. My mom has become, by far, the biggest tour fan of the family.

(John “woah”s.)

She's gonna deny it, but she's the one. Yep. David and I are in agreement about this.

[00:18:31] **John Hodgman:** (Stammering.) Is Suzanne—why do you think your mom is going like, “Not really.” Why? Wh-why?

[00:18:37] **Clare:** ‘Cause she doesn't wanna—she doesn't want me and David to gang up on her. And so, she's trying to minimize her responsibility in the situation.

[00:18:46] **John Hodgman:** Why would you and David be ganging up on her? Your dispute is with the two of them.

[00:18:51] **Clare:** Yes. But you know, there are—sometimes, there are just traditions in a family that are hard to break, regardless of the situation. And that is the customary way.

[00:19:01] **John Hodgman:** Is there some history behind you and David ganging up on Suzanne over issues?

(Clare confirms.)

Okay. I see that Škoda hat nodding. What's—Suzanne, what do they tease you about? What do they get—hat do they—what do they team up on you about?

[00:19:15] **Suzanne:** Oh, it can be just about anything. Um, you know, sometimes I will reveal my ignorance in certain ways, and then they just have a field day with that. Like saying the other day, “Well, judge John Hodgman is a real judge, right? He's like an actual judge.” And you know, hopefully, anyone listening who didn't know that already—I'm hoping I'm not bursting their bubble like mine was burst. But, um—so, they took me to task on that one. Really, it can be just about anything.

[00:19:47] **John Hodgman:** Oh, my sweet, Škoda-hatted, summer child. No, I'm totally fake.

(They laugh.)

But shame on you, Clare and David, for laughing at Suzanne.

[00:19:58] **Suzanne:** Well, you know, I've learned to take it, and I know they do it out of love, and sometimes I even like plant little things that I don't really believe or think just to see them go to town on me. But the reason I was mezza-mezza about the—about the passion is because I'm not a cyclist. I'm a Tour de France, um, passionate watcher, but I'm not a cyclist. So, I would say cycling is David's passion, but it's not my passion.

[00:20:33] **John Hodgman:** You like to watch David cycle?

[00:20:35] **Suzanne:** I do! I do. Yeah, I watch him cycle as much as I can when he is competing. Yeah.

[00:20:41] **Jesse Thorn:** He kind of goes past pretty fast though, I imagine.

[00:20:44] **John Hodgman:** He goes past quick. Zzzoom!

(They laugh.)

[00:20:47] **Jesse Thorn:** Let's take a quick recess and hear about this week's *Judge John Hodgman* sponsor. We'll be back in just a moment on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

[00:20:54] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:20:57] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:21:00] **John Hodgman:** Suzanne, so you love the Tour de France. What does it mean to you?

[00:21:04] **Suzanne:** Well, it was something that grew on me very gradually. And the first thing that sucked me in was seeing them going through the landscape of France. 'Cause as David said, it was always on in our house. He'd watch it with his kids, and I'd walk through the TV room and think, "God, this is boring. How could anyone spend hours watching this?" And I would say—

[00:21:26] **John Hodgman:** (Snorts a laugh.) Let the record show Clare is nodding along.

[00:21:27] **Suzanne:** (Chuckles.) And so, I understand where Clare's coming from. But I started to watch like the scenery, the little villages. I started writing down the names of the towns that I, you know, wanted to go to when we went to France the next time. And you know, then I started—you know, if I wanted to hang out with David, you know, I would have to hang out with him watching the tour. And I started to, you know, learn about the different riders, their habits, their nicknames, their families, what they ate, you know, like all of that sort of stuff that didn't relate to the cycling as much. And then over—you know, over—

[00:22:04] **John Hodgman:** I think they eat mostly cutlets. Right? That's what I've read.

[00:22:07] **Suzanne:** Lots of cutlets of—

[00:22:09] **John Hodgman:** Mostly, they eat 40-45 cutlets per 24-hour period.

[00:22:12] **Suzanne:** Yeah. Per day. (Laughs.)

[00:22:15] **John Hodgman:** What's your favorite nickname of a cyclist?

[00:22:17] **Suzanne:** Oh, gee.

[00:22:19] **John Hodgman:** Le Petit Prince?

[00:22:19] **Suzanne:** There is—there is Le Petit Prince.

[00:22:22] **John Hodgman:** Really?

[00:22:23] **Suzanne:** Yeah! Who is the Le Petit Prince?

[00:22:25] **David:** Marco Pantani.

[00:22:26] **Suzanne:** Marco Pantani. I like the—

[00:22:28] **John Hodgman:** Bailiff Jesse, I bet he—I bet he's a—I bet he's pretentious. Le Petit Prince. Don't you think, Jesse?

[00:22:34] **Jesse Thorn:** Oui.

(They laugh.)

[00:22:36] **John Hodgman:** Does he wear a little coat and stand on a tiny little planet and help middle aged men with their midlife crises?

[00:22:43] **Suzanne:** Maybe he does!

[00:22:44] **Jesse Thorn:** Do you keep waiting for him to get better, but he never does?

[00:22:49] **Suzanne:** He may do that when he is off the bike. I don't really know, but I like—I like the Shark of Messina as a nickname. That's Vincenzo Nibali. The Shark of Messina.

[00:22:58] **John Hodgman:** Ooh! The Shark of Messina?

[00:23:01] **David:** Il Pistolero.

[00:23:02] **Suzanne:** And Il Pistolero. That's Alberto Contador, who Clare calls Albert the Counter. See, despite herself, Clare has learned a lot about cycling, kind of the way that I have.

[00:23:12] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, but it doesn't sound like she's had a lot of choice.

(Clare and Suzanne agree.)

So, Clare, tell me about—when you come home to Sunderland, (dreamily) you take that drive up Route 47. Finally get—finally get to the house that Suzanne and David share. How much are they watching? Is this like World Cup type thing? Like all those World Cup weirdos in Brooklyn who get up at 7AM and go to bars because the games are later on? Or what's happening? Paint me a picture.

[00:23:43] **Clare:** No. So, it has changed a lot over the years because, as David mentioned, the way that the tour is recorded and how much it's available in the US has changed. But

basically, the way it is now is that the—essentially, the entire race is filmed. And that could be six or seven hours per day. And then they record—they have it on demand, so they don't watch it at 6AM or 7AM. They don't watch it live. They watch that day's stage from like dinner time until—including while dinner is being consumed, until whenever they fall asleep. And sometimes during the day, also.

[00:24:30] **John Hodgman:** So, we're talking like five to seven hours of Tour de France watching per day.

[00:24:36] **Clare:** Yes.

[00:24:37] **John Hodgman:** Except for those two rest days. Aren't you grateful for two rest days, Clare?

[00:24:42] **Clare:** Well, usually what happens is that they will either fall asleep or there will be some really long stage and they'll say, "Oh, we'll save part of that for the rest day." So, although the cyclists are resting, we are not resting.

[00:24:58] **John Hodgman:** (Laughs.) And when you say that you're—that the Tour de France is on during the dinner hour. Like, do you have a—do they have a TV in the kitchen? Or the dining room? Or does everyone gather in the living room? What's going on?

[00:25:14] **Clare:** Yes. So, the TV is in the living room. They both have recliners that they've had for the last 25 years that they sit in with their dinners in their laps. And I sit in another chair that is not as good of a view of the TV.

[00:25:30] **John Hodgman:** (Snorts.) On a small, hard stool.

[00:25:34] **Clare:** Yeah, I mean, the chair itself is fine, but it's just—it's sort of in a corner, and you can only sort of halfway see the TV from there anyway. Which actually is okay, because I'm not really paying attention. But, then we'll eat dinner there, and sometimes I'm allowed to talk, and sometimes I'm not. And it's a little unclear. Like I can't—part of the problem is I can't tell when something exciting is happening, because—

[00:25:58] **John Hodgman:** Well, it has to be when one of the bicyclists is going faster than another one.

[00:26:01] **Clare:** Well... yeah.

[00:26:04] **John Hodgman:** Right?

(Clare confirms.)

It would seem that that's part of the race. What would you—has there ever been a case where you have made dinner for them, and they just shove it in their mouths mutely while watching the Tour de France?

[00:26:18] **Clare:** Yes. In fact, one summer, they were living in Shrewsbury, and they were living on a dirt road in Shrewsbury. And I was studying for the bar exam, and I was staying there while I studied for the bar exam. And I did not leave the house all day. And I didn't talk to any other humans. And I would—this is before they were retired—and I would make dinner, and they would get home from work and take the dinner that I had made and say hi to me, and that was the only human contact I had for the entire day. And then, they would take their dinners up to the TV room and watch the tour.

[00:26:50] **John Hodgman:** Wow. How did that make you feel?

[00:26:52] **Clare:** I mean, the whole experience was bad, but I mostly would blame studying for the bar exam. I would say it made me feel like I was starting to lose my mind a little bit, like being in this remote house on a dirt road. And then, that my own only human contact during that time was choosing a activity that was fascinating to them in a way that I just could not understand.

[00:27:27] **John Hodgman:** You mentioned earlier that you come north to escape the heat of Tuscaloosa, AKA Dreamland, Alabama.

(Clare confirms.)

Now, you're trying to tell me that you're not just visiting to escape the heat, that you might actually like to see and spend time with your mother and stepdad.

[00:27:46] **Clare:** Yes. I love them very much and I—it's very sad that I live so far away, and it's hard to come up here. So, when I come up, I like to come for a long time so that we can spend a good chunk of time together and hang out.

[00:28:00] **John Hodgman:** And it says here that you—that you travel with your dog, Gemma. Is that correct?

(Clare confirms.)

Does Gemma like the Tour de France?

[00:28:07] **Clare:** She loves it.

[00:28:09] **John Hodgman:** What?!

(John and Jesse laugh.)

[00:28:11] **Clare:** I can't deny it. She's obsessed.

[00:28:14] **John Hodgman:** How do you know?

[00:28:16] **Clare:** Because she doesn't watch anything else on TV, but when the tour is on, she gets on David's lap, and she will just sit there with rapt attention for the whole time.

[00:28:23] **John Hodgman:** I believe that you did sub submit evidence or someone did.

(Clare confirms.)

Of Gemma—sorry, go ahead.

[00:28:30] **Clare:** Oh, I was just gonna say it's not exactly evidence in my favor, but uh, yes.

[00:28:34] **John Hodgman:** Well, you know, it's a wonderful photograph of David on this recliner, in a very comfortable wood-paneled den situation.

(Jesse giggles in delight at the photo.)

With Gemma on his lap. I don't see Gemma watching the TV, though. I see Gemma just snoozing out.

[00:28:53] **Jesse Thorn:** Gemma's legs look like little drumsticks.

(They laugh.)

[00:28:57] **John Hodgman:** It's true. What kind of dog is a little Gemma?

[00:28:59] **Clare:** She's mix of Chihuahua and Pomeranian and Beagle and Shih tzu and a bunch of other stuff.

[00:29:07] **John Hodgman:** A true lap dog.

[00:29:08] **Jesse Thorn:** She's a funny little dog.

[00:29:09] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, this is just Gemma like hanging out.

[00:29:13] **Clare:** Well, this was before. So, the TV you can kind of see in the picture in the background there is not on yet. This is—David had just gotten his martini, and they were just sitting—this was like preparation for tour watching. So, this picture was before the tour, because when the tour comes on, I usually try to leave the room. So, this was preparation.

[00:29:35] **John Hodgman:** Jesse, look at this guy sitting in this chair with his dog in his lap and his martini, waiting for the Tour de France to come on.

[00:29:43] **Jesse Thorn:** I love everything about this, John. I know it speaks to your love of mixed drinks.

[00:29:49] **John Hodgman:** I love a lap dog, too. I love a comfy chair. I love a wood panel den. But go on.

[00:29:55] **Jesse Thorn:** I can understand it from the dog's perspective as well, because in the absence of a Tour de France Garbage Truck Edition, watching bikes race is about as good as it gets for a dog.

[00:30:08] **John Hodgman:** (Laughs.) Yeah, maybe you're right. I hadn't thought about that. (Softly.) Boy, oh boy. Uh, David, you mentioned that you have at least two children from a prior relationship, it sounds like. And they're older than Clare?

[00:30:19] **David:** They are the same age as Suzanne's two children, opposite gender. My son, Taylor, lives in Portland, Oregon. And my daughter, Hannah, lives in Alaska. And she is actually arriving this evening for a visit. Yeah, very excited. With her husband.

[00:30:33] **John Hodgman:** Oh, very nice! Well, it's interesting, she's chosen to visit before the Tour de France starts.

(They chuckle and David confirms.)

But the point is, your nest is as empty as it gets. This raises a question. Clare, why don't you visit in August? Then, you don't have to deal with this.

[00:30:51] **Clare:** Well! Yes. Uh, actually this year I am here. I am at their house right now, and it is June. But the reason for that maybe we can get into. But the short answer is July is usually the month when I have the fewest other obligations. So, the semester starts in mid-August, and I usually have conferences and other things in June. July is kind of the biggest stretch. It's also the least pleasant time to be in Tuscaloosa.

[00:31:21] **John Hodgman:** That's perfectly reasonable. Yeah. I mean, August, it gets hot in Sunderland too. It's the Tuscaloosa of Western Massachusetts in some ways. During all this time watching the Tour de France in this house, is there something you'd like to be watching Clare?

[00:31:40] **Clare:** Well, I would be happy for us to be doing something that doesn't involve watching television.

[00:31:46] **John Hodgman:** What would you like to be doing instead of Tour de France?

[00:31:50] **Clare:** I would like to be talking to each other and going outside and going for a walk in the evening, going down to the Sugarloaf Frosty, maybe, and getting a soft serve. (Chuckles.)

[00:32:05] **John Hodgman:** Oh, my—boy, you are just—(stammering) you ever read any Marcel Proust?

(Clare laughs and confirms.)

Jesse, you ever read any Marcel Proust?

[00:32:15] **Jesse Thorn:** I've read about Marcel Proust.

[00:32:17] **John Hodgman:** He wrote that book. He wrote that children's picture book—

[00:32:19] **Jesse Thorn:** I went to UC Santa Cruz, John.

(They laugh.)

[00:32:22] **John Hodgman:** He wrote that children's picture book, *Madeline*, all about how when you remember stuff that's good.

[00:32:28] **Jesse Thorn:** I remember that one smelled really good.

(They chuckle.)

[00:32:31] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, that was one of the best smelling picture books of all time. It's pretty well known.

[00:32:35] **Jesse Thorn:** I think Clare is pandering to me specifically here by pitting bicycle racing against ice cream.

[00:32:41] **John Hodgman:** They have pretty good ice—pretty good ice cream at the Sugarloaf—creamy, do they call it? They call it a creamy, right? Or a frosty?

[00:32:47] **Clare:** Creamy is in Vermont.

[00:32:49] **John Hodgman:** Creamy is in Vermont. The Sugarloaf Frosty. Yeah, I used to go there. Well, but see, it seems to me that that's incompatible with the Tour de France watching schedule.

(Clare agrees.)

What do you suggest should be done? That they not watch it or that they watch it at a—I mean, you're already watching it asynchronously, David and Suzanne. Why not take a night off to go for a walk in town or see and speak to and enjoy the presence and company of your daughter and stepdaughter?

[00:33:25] **Suzanne:** That's a good question. And now that we're—now that we're retired, we can do that. We could do that. She won't—she won't be with us. Actually, this year I'm gonna be at her house during the Tour de France. So, that's gonna be interesting. I don't think we'll be watching it at her house.

[00:33:44] **John Hodgman:** (Chuckles.) Oh wait, it's a reverse Uno card? You're going down to Tuscaloosa this year?

[00:33:49] **Suzanne:** I am, yes. Yes, because I love my dear little grand-dog, Gemma, so much. And Clare's gonna be traipsing around Europe doing conferences and things. So, I'm gonna hang out and be there with Gemma.

[00:34:05] **John Hodgman:** Oh, you're dog sitting in Tuscaloosa. Did you ever see—Jesse, you ever see that independent film *Dog Sitting in Tuscaloosa*?

(They chuckle.)

[00:34:13] **Jesse Thorn:** That was one of the lesser Zach Braff movies.

[00:34:17] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, I think it was nominated for a Firecracker Award. Yeah.

[00:34:22] **Clare:** For the record—I just wanna put on the record that I did not request that my mother come to Alabama in July to dog sit for me. She suggested it. So, just in case everyone thinks that I'm just being incredibly entitled here.

[00:34:38] **John Hodgman:** Or punitive!

[00:34:40] **Clare:** Oh, good point! Yes. I also didn't schedule my conference in Belgium to overlap with the tour intentionally either. It just happened to coincide.

[00:34:49] **John Hodgman:** Why don't you send Gemma on a little dog bus up to Massachusetts? They have those right? It's a Greyhound bus for dogs. Little Greyhounds? I'm making this up. It's a service that I wish existed though.

[00:35:02] **Clare:** That would be great. I did take her up with me this time. She's here; she's with me now.

[00:35:08] **John Hodgman:** Seems to me like you could just leave. Well, you don't wanna leave her there. Why do you wanna go to Tuscaloosa, Suzanne? Keep Gemma there.

[00:35:16] **Suzanne:** I suggested that to Clare this morning, actually. But I actually love going to Tuscaloosa. I've been several times to dog sit and also to Baton Rouge, where Clare used to live, to dog sit. And I love my alone time there with Gemma, because usually it's, you know, when Clare is going off to do something else. And you know, I'll see her at the beginning and at the end, and then Gemma and I just hang out. And you know, this year's gonna be hard, because I won't be watching the tour. But David said he would wait 'til I got back and—(stammers into a laugh) he would wait 'til I got back. Um.

[00:35:55] **John Hodgman:** I just have to say, Clare made a pretty interesting gesture there. I don't wanna interpret it for you, Clare. It was like open hands, like, “See?!” What was—but I don't wanna put words in your gesture. What are you trying to say with that gesture?

[00:36:10] **Clare:** Well, just that when they choose to, they can watch it later. Like it's—they're—the whole time they've said, “We can't wait. We can't watch it later. We have to watch it while it's going on.” But this isn't the first year that they've waited. They went to Alaska two years ago, I believe, during the tour and postponed at least a week of watching it. And they are capable of doing this. The access to the tour is not what it once was. And it is entirely possible to spread it out over a shorter period. Like, you know, couple hours a day for a longer period of time. All those things are possible.

[00:36:51] **John Hodgman:** But if you put off a whole week of watching the tour, David and Suzanne, that means you have to be on like pretty heavy-duty lockdown if you're trying to keep it fresh for yourself.

[00:37:01] **David:** Right. So, I do a lot of group rides with the North Hampton Cycling Club. Two, three times a week.

[00:37:06] **John Hodgman:** Oh, I bet they're talking about the Tour de France a bunch.

[00:37:07] **David:** Yeah. And I always have to see—when I roll up to the start, it's like, “Nobody say anything. I'm three stages behind!” And I almost always hear who has won that stage somehow, either through social media or someone who knows I'm a cyclist saying, “Oh, what about such and such? Wasn't that a great win today?” So, it's really hard for me. If I get more than a few days behind, I generally will find out who has won certain stages.

[00:37:35] **John Hodgman:** The North Hamptons Cycle Racing Club? What's it called?

[00:37:38] **David:** Cycling Club, yeah. Northampton CC. Northampton Cycling Club.

[00:37:41] **John Hodgman:** Oh, the NCC? Yeah. I've been in touch with them. They love doing that to you.

(They laugh.)

They told me. They looove spoiling the Tour de France and they come up with new ways to do it.

(David agrees with a chuckle.)

Clare, do you feel that you catch the brunt of Tour de France more than your siblings and stepsiblings—sibling and stepsiblings?

[00:38:03] **Clare:** Absolutely, yes. None of the rest of them will watch it ever.

[00:38:07] **John Hodgman:** Why do you feel you bear the brunt of it?

[00:38:10] **Clare:** Because I stay with them in their house and nobody else does that.

[00:38:14] **John Hodgman:** Right. And how does it affect your boundaries when you're visiting them? Do you feel chased out of the house? Do you feel ignored? How do—like what's going on?

[00:38:24] **Clare:** Yeah, I mean, it is just—it's like this is—this very elaborate, long ritual has to happen every single day. And during it, if I want to be in a room with other people, or eat my dinner, or be in the only room in the house that has air conditioning during the times in July when that is necessary, I must be in that room.

And even when I just go into the other room or go say, “Oh, I can stay with a friend,” or something like that, my mom really wants me to be there. She really—my presence is requested for this. So, it's not just that. And then also, like this time, even though it wasn't during the tour, I got here and within five minutes they started telling me about what had happened in the Giro d'Italia, which just ended.

So, I know that there was a time trial that ended on a mountain, which is really unusual. You know, I don't need that information to be in my brain.

[00:39:23] **John Hodgman:** So, you feel like you are being invited, but the moment you get there, you're being ignored in a way, in favor of this other—this other sibling that you have, called the Tour de France.

(Clare confirms.)

This golden child of July. This Petit Prince de—I don't remember what the French word for July is.

[00:39:46] **Clare:** Juillet.

[00:39:47] **John Hodgman:** Juillet! Merci beaucoup. Oh yeah! You must speak a lot of French.

(Clare confirms.)

Do they speak any French?

[00:39:54] **Clare:** My mom does.

[00:39:55] **John Hodgman:** Un petit peu?

[00:39:56] **Suzanne:** Un petit peu. Sous le monde. Oui.

[00:39:58] **John Hodgman:** Yeah. Arguably, you can probably follow more of the Tour de France than they can, 'cause they're just watching the cycling. But you're—you've been to France. You've lived in France. You know the culture—you know the culture of Europe.

You're going to Belgium! The capital of Europe! You know the—you know, all the ins and the outs and the cultural stuff behind it, arguably. Wouldn't you say?

[00:40:22] **Clare:** Sure. I know—I have the same feeling about the Tour de France as many French people do, which is that it's kind of annoying.

(John laughs.)

And whenever I live there, I don't actually go when it's, you know, coming through my town.

[00:40:34] **John Hodgman:** Do you have any hobbies or favorite shows or anything else that Suzanne and David don't like?

[00:40:40] **Clare:** Well, not that—not that my mom doesn't. My mom and I have very similar taste, actually. And so, what we have been watching—there's not a—there's not any sort of cycling on at the moment. So, my mom and I share a real love of international dating shows, and we have tried to get David on board with that. And he's not about it.

[00:41:01] **John Hodgman:** Well, people like what they like. And dogs like what they like too. That's what we're learning, I suppose. What's your favorite international dating show? I could probably watch that.

[00:41:09] **Clare:** Our current favorite is *Love Village*.

[00:41:16] **John Hodgman:** (Snorts.) *Love Village*. I was really hoping you were gonna say *Love Island*, 'cause that's—the *Love Island UK*, I have a very fraught relationship with that show. But *Love Village*—

[00:41:24] **Clare:** Yes. No, *Love Village* is much stranger.

[00:41:28] **John Hodgman:** Okay, I'm gonna check it out. David, what time do they start riding the bicycles in France?

[00:41:33] **David:** Uh, six in the morning.

[00:41:35] **John Hodgman:** Six in the morning.

[00:41:36] **David:** Well, six in the morning our time, but usually a stage will—a stage will start in France, like noonish.

[00:41:44] **John Hodgman:** No, I'm talking about—I'm talking about Eastern Standard Time.

[00:41:47] **David:** 6AM.

[00:41:48] **John Hodgman:** Or daylight time, whatever it is. 6AM. You ever get up and watch?

[00:41:52] **David:** No. (Laughs.) No, we—

[00:41:54] **John Hodgman:** Pourquoi? Pourquoi non?

[00:41:56] **David:** Because we record it, and I can watch it on my—either my phone app or on one of the cable stations that we get that covers it. And I record it that way. So, there's all sorts of different ways to watch it. We can watch it on our phones, on our TV.

[00:42:11] **John Hodgman:** You put off Tour de France for a week to go to Alaska. You've made accommodations in the past. It sounds as though you don't make accommodations, particularly for Clare when she comes and visits you. Is it because—why not?

[00:42:25] **David:** Well, that's—(laughs) that's a good question. Actually, I met my daughter and son on the west coast last July as well, so Suzanne and I had to—had to delay our tour watching last summer as well. I guess—

[00:42:41] **John Hodgman:** Right. But is it because—well, you go. You take a guess, and then I'll tell you what I think it is.

[00:42:45] **David:** Okay. I—my guess would be that I was under the impression that Clare kind of liked it. A little bit, maybe.

(John “wow”s.)

And maybe she just liked to tease us a little bit.

[00:42:56] **John Hodgman:** This must be a real eyeopener for you.

[00:43:02] **David:** (Laughing.) Yeah, it's—well, it is!

[00:43:03] **John Hodgman:** A real—this is not correct usage, but a real trompe-l'œil.

[00:43:07] **David:** Yeah! That is true. So, yeah, I didn't think that this was that big of a problem for Clare.

[00:43:17] **John Hodgman:** Is it plausible, Clare, that David and perhaps your mom as well, quote/unquote, “didn't realize” that this was a problem for you?

[00:43:28] **Clare:** I think it's possible, but I think it's probably required a certain amount of delusion or a certain amount of, you know, wishful thinking maybe is a better way to put it. I mean, I do sit with them and watch it, and I think part of what it is is that the names, as you heard, are like, really—they get stuck in your head. Their names are these really, you know, wild-sounding, complicated—

[00:44:00] **John Hodgman:** The Shark of Messina!

[00:44:02] **Clare:** Exactly! Um, so I—

[00:44:03] **John Hodgman:** The Drapes of London.

(They chuckle.)

[00:44:04] **Clare:** I will—I will repeat things, you know. I'll mimic it. I'll talk—you know, because it's like better than nothing. So, I think I've—maybe I've made the best of it, more or less. I do want—

[00:44:19] **John Hodgman:** Have you gone along to get along?

[00:44:21] **Clare:** Yes, I would say—I would say overall.

[00:44:25] **John Hodgman:** Prior to inviting your mom and stepdad onto a podcast, did you ever sit them down and say, “Hey, could we not do this so much?” Or express your feeling of like you wanted to take it down 1000, when it comes to Tour de France time?

[00:44:43] **Clare:** I don't know how clear I've been about that in the past. I think because I am a guest in their home, I had sort of figured, well—anyone would know that a guest in your home doesn't want to watch five hours of cycling every day. So, if they're insisting on doing it anyway, it must be so important that I shouldn't—you know.

[00:45:07] **John Hodgman:** Anyone would know but—except for retired people. A little more on that later. Uh, okay. Now that you've heard Clare's point of view, clearly, David and Suzanne, do you—does that change how you're gonna watch the tour? This year is obviously different, because Suzanne's gonna go down to dog sit Gemma. They'll probably watch the Tour de France together. You gonna watch it alone up there, David?

[00:45:36] **David:** No, we have—we have an agreement. Suzanne and I have an agreement that I will refrain from watching while she's gone, and we will—when she comes back, we'll catch up and, you know, it might take us till September or October, but that's when the Volta starts! So—

[00:45:53] **John Hodgman:** Just in time—just in time for Clare's visit? You'll wait until—? Yeah, okay.

[00:45:57] **Suzanne:** No, there's no fun—it's not fun watching it without David. I wouldn't watch it by myself, even with Gemma. And I feel—I feel—

[00:46:05] **John Hodgman:** I get it. You love each other. But all I'm gonna say is this: do you hear what Clare is saying? Would you make an accommodation in future? Let's say next July, if she were to spend July with you in Sunderland?

[00:46:16] **Suzanne:** Well, I certainly would!

[00:46:17] **John Hodgman:** Now that you know? Yeah, you would.

[00:46:19] **Suzanne:** I would, because, you know, I'm her mother. And of course, this—you know—makes me feel like—you know, I'm prioritizing this bike race over my very own flesh and blood, whom I love dearly. So, yeah, I think that I did think it—'cause Clare—because Clare has this history of kind of teasing me and, you know, getting on my case about various things, I didn't really think that it was that big a deal for her that, you know—she's a very independent, mature woman, and she comes and goes as she pleases.

And you know, she could always make plans to go out with friends. She has a lot of friends who still live around here. I've given her my car to take when she's here. So, you know, she could have made other choices.

[00:47:02] **John Hodgman:** She could just leave the house. She could just leave the house.

[00:47:06] **Suzanne:** And—yeah. And she and I do spend a lot of time together when she's here. You know, but in answer to your question, yes, I think that I would feel horribly guilty if, you know, I just continued on with my ways of watching the Tour de France.

But if David decided that he was just gonna keep watching no matter what, then I would be in a dilemma. Because then I—you know, if he said, "Okay, you know, tonight we're gonna take the night off, and we're gonna go do something together as a family or just talk or whatever," that would be one thing. But if he said, "No, I'm gonna watch the tour. You know, you two can go do whatever you want," then that would be a—that would be a dilemma for me. I would be torn.

But I think I would have to fall—you know, to come down on the side of my daughter, if given that choice. Sorry, David.

[00:47:54] **Music:** (Chuckling.) No, I get it!

[00:47:56] **John Hodgman:** It says here that, Clare, your ideal ruling would be that Suzanne and David limit their tour watching to fewer hours while you're visiting or, at the very least, not watching the tour until after dinner, without the tour. David, you say your ideal ruling is keep everything the same. And Suzanne, you say your ideal ruling is Clare forgives you. Clare, do you forgive Suzanne?

[00:48:24] **Clare:** Yes.

(Suzanne "aw"s.)

[00:48:25] **John Hodgman:** Let's see if we can get this out of the way.

[00:48:26] **Clare:** Absolutely. I harbor no ill will about this at all. It's more that this seems like—like, anytime I explain how many hours of cycling I'm watching when I'm visiting to anyone else, they seem shocked by this. And I feel like I've sort of gotten worn down over the years. So.

[00:48:47] **John Hodgman:** (Chuckles.) No. How many years are we talking about this happening, would you say? This pattern of going to visit in the summertime and having a fourth person in the home, the Tour de France—the scene of the shark or whatever?

[00:49:00] **Clare:** Oh, probably 10 years with some variation within that time. 10 or 15 years, something like that.

[00:49:07] **John Hodgman:** Right, right. Okay, I think I have heard everything I need to in order to come to a decision. I'm going to go into my private velodrome. Jesse, that's a bicycle racing stadium, right? Velodrome?

[00:49:21] **Jesse Thorn:** That's my favorite David Cronenberg movie.

[00:49:24] **John Hodgman:** Oh, yeah, right. Forgot about that. Uh, anyway, I'm gonna ride my green machine around in a circle for a while, while I puzzle this out. I'll be back in a moment with my decision.

[00:49:33] **Jesse Thorn:** Please rise as Judge John Hodgman exits the courtroom.

(Chairs squeak, followed by heavy footsteps and a door closing.)

Clare, how do you feel about your chances?

[00:49:44] **Clare:** Uh, I mean, they're very charming. And so, I understand why anyone would be sympathetic, especially if you could see them in their cycling outfits that they're currently wearing. But I also feel like, you know, my requests are reasonable. So, optimistic.

[00:50:05] **Jesse Thorn:** David and Suzanne, how do you feel?

[00:50:08] **Suzanne:** I think—I think that David is—he's, he's not gonna get his way in this one. Because, you know, I'm the mom, so I'm kind of the—like the tiebreaker. And I feel like I'm somewhere in the middle here. You know, I'm the Tour de France fan, big time fan, but I'm a bigger fan of my daughter than I am even of the Tour de France. So, I think this is gonna be a harder one for David than it will be for me.

[00:50:42] **Jesse Thorn:** Well, we'll see what Judge Hodgman has to say about all this, when we come back in just a minute.

[00:50:46] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:50:48] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:50:50] **Jesse Thorn:** It's the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. John, what's going on with you?

[00:50:56] **John Hodgman:** Well, as you know, nothing's going on with me, because I am on strike, along with the Writer's Guild of America. I'm also a member of the Screen Actors Guild and American Federation of Television and Radio Artists, AKA AFTRA, who may go on strike as well, soon. So, I'll be double striking. Thanks for all your support on the picket line and on social media.

If you wanna find out more about why we're on strike and what it means to even you, you can always go to my Linktree, linktr.ee/hodgman. It's also in my bio on my Instagram account. Another—but I was gonna say, since I didn't have anything going on, there are a couple of things I wanted to mention.

I did my research for the cultural reference, and I came up with that incredible one about the first winner of the Tour de France. But there are a couple of things that I—a couple of holes that I went down, a couple of paths that I trod in search of a good cultural reference. And I was reminded of a couple of great things, including, I was looking for a good quote about the Tour de France from *Breaking Away*.

Have you ever seen *Breaking Away*? The movie *Breaking Away*, Jesse Thorn?

[00:52:02] **Jesse Thorn:** That movie rules.

[00:52:04] **John Hodgman:** That movie rules so hard.

[00:52:06] **Jesse Thorn:** What a great movie. It's—a short list of dramedies are that good. *Diner*, *Breaking Away*, *Broadcast News*.

[00:52:16] **John Hodgman:** I was gonna say *Broadcast News*, and I feel like *Breaking Away* is one that has disappeared from a lot of people's consciousness. And it's about four 19-year-old high school graduates in Bloomington, Indiana, who are not going to college and are facing a 19-year-old midlife crisis, as a result. One of them's really into bicycle racing.

It's got Dennis Quaid. It's got, uh, Jackie Earle Haley. It's got Daniel Stern. And of course, the bicycle guy, Dennis Christopher, plus Barbara Barry, Paul Dooley. It's a wonderful, wonderful movie, and it's just so funny and great and watchable and very bicycle-y. And it had a little quote about the Tour de France in it, but it was not meaningful enough.

I also was reminded of the song by Kraftwerk, “Tour de France”, one of the early synthesizer music songs—hits of the early 1980s by Kraftwerk—and learned that that song is the song that Michael “Boogaloo Shrimp” Chambers does the Broom Dance to in the movie *Breakin'*. Everyone talks about *Breakin' 2: Electric Boogaloo*, and maybe that's a good movie. But *Breakin'* is a really, genuinely good movie. And that scene where he dances to Kraftwerk's “Tour de France” is bananas good. And he's a really good dancer. Michael “Boogaloo Shrimp” Chambers, if you're listening: good job. And rest in power Shabba Doo.

Jesse Thorn, what do you have got going on? (Realizing his grammatical mistake.) What do you have got going on?

[00:53:50] **Jesse Thorn:** Well, I watched *Style Wars* on Canopy recently. That's the best early hip-hop movie by a wide margin. No offense to *Breakin'* or *Beat Street* or any of the other great early hip-hop movies. But the clear winner is *Style Wars*. So, I recommend watching *Style Wars* if you can find it anywhere, including free on Canopy, if your library system provides Canopy to you. The movie is so good. *Style Wars* is an incredible, incredible—

[00:54:17] **John Hodgman:** I'm putting it on my list.

[00:54:18] **Jesse Thorn:** And of course, I still have the Put This On Shop. So go to PutThisOnShop.com.

[00:54:23] **John Hodgman:** Speaking of style—not even style wars, style triumphs, style victories. Put This On Shop.

[00:54:30] **Jesse Thorn:** I'm gonna—I wasn't planning on this. You know, we have pocket squares in the Put This On Shop? This is an experiment.

[00:54:36] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, I do know about it.

[00:54:37] **Jesse Thorn:** Okay, so the pocket squares, I take vintage—mostly vintage textiles. They are hand cut, hand rolled, hand sewn. They're very special. And I'm going to make a code. I'm gonna use the code “breaking away”, and half price on pocket squares.

[00:55:01] **John Hodgman:** Half price on pocket squares with code “breaking away”.

[00:55:06] **Jesse Thorn:** It's only gonna go to the end of the month. ‘Til the end of the month, half price on pocket squares with the code “breaking away”. It's an experiment. I don't know. Are people listening to this? Probably. Who knows? “Breaking away”.

[00:55:18] **John Hodgman:** And don't forget to check out the \$6 a pack tops, *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* trading cards, \$6 a pack.

[00:55:26] **Jesse Thorn:** Those are gonna be full freight. You're gonna have to pay full freight for those.

[00:55:29] **John Hodgman:** Full freight. And a big sale on a Mallory Pope Fedora, 7 1/8 size. Go check it out. PutThisOnShop.com. Shall we get back to the case?

[00:55:38] **Jesse Thorn:** Let's get back to the case.

[00:55:39] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:55:42] **Jesse Thorn:** Please rise as Judge John Hodgman re-enters the courtroom and presents his verdict.

(Chairs squeak, followed by heavy footsteps and a door closing.)

[00:55:51] **John Hodgman:** David, you said that bicycle races—stages. Stages, étage, I believe they say. Stages. You know what else has stages—Clare, Suzanne and David? Life. Life has stages. And this is partially a life-stage dispute here because, Clare, what you need to understand is that your mom and stepdad watch an inordinate amount of bicycle racing.

And when you—and I need you to hear and understand this. When you go to say to your friends, “This is how much Tour de France is going on in this house,” and your friends go, “That’s too much!” They’re right. Your friends are right. Your instincts are correct. It is an unusual amount. Five to seven hours of cycling content per day is an unusual amount, unless you’re a retired couple whose children are grown and out in the world, and now you can do whatever the Français you want.

This is a thing about growing older that, you know—I am—we are incipient empty nesters ourselves. My wife, who’s a whole human being in our own right, and I. And we’ve gotten into a moment in our lives where we’re starting to think, “What is the pattern going to be once there are no other adult humans living in our house, and it’s just the two of us?”

And I can see myself on a chair, with a dog in my lap and a martini, very easily. And one of the things that I didn’t even mention about this piece of evidence that you sent in—which you can see, obviously, on our Instagram page, [@JudgeJohnHodgman](#), as well as our show page, [MaximumFun.org](#)—one of the things I didn’t mention about this “sitting with dog and lap and martini” portrait is the amount of sunshine shining in the window. This is a mid-afternoon, dogs sit with drink moment, and I think it’s wonderful. My wife, (hurriedly) who’s a whole human being in her own right, and I are thinking about what our patterns are gonna be, and we’re gonna—we’re gonna go into some quiet patterns. It’s gonna be involve a lot of *Antiques Roadshow*, I can tell you that right now.

(Jesse laughs.)

And a lot of going to bed at 8:30PM. And we’re getting into that moment of our lives where it’s just, for the first time in 22/23 years, it’s just us again, choosing what we do with our time. And it’s a very liberating moment. The trick is to not get so far down into that comfort zone of empty nest retirement that you can’t come out again, say if an adult daughter is coming to visit you. So, for example, our ages are different, but I think this is a fair analogy. You know, we still have an a soon to be adult son living with us, but our adult daughter doesn’t live with us anymore.

And she came back, and the whole pattern of my life changed. Which is to say, I was being held—forced to stay awake until midnight every night, watching *Yellowjackets*. And this was later than I wanted to stay up. I enjoyed *Yellowjackets* a lot. This is definitely later than I wanted to stay up. And it definitely was frustrating, because I still haven’t finished season three of *Love Island* that she was making me watch! She’s been making me watch it for three years. We still haven’t finished it yet. And I’m like, “Can’t we do this?”

She's like, "No, we're doing this." And I say, yes, okay. Okay, okay. And then the other night—she's left again, but the other night she was like, "Are you ready to watch another *Yellowjackets*?"

I'm like, "It's 12:30 in the morning!"

She's like, "I know! But uh, I'm only here for another day.: I'm like, (softly) okay, you win. Because soon enough, she was gonna go back to her life. And then, I can go back to my life of joining my spouse in bed at 9:30. Where, by the way, she gets to go to sleep. I don't understand why my wife, who is a whole human being in her own right, gets to go to sleep whenever she wants. I have to stay up! I have to stay up and watch *Yellowjackets*?! That's how it goes. That's just the way it is, because when your adult child comes back and wants to share and spend time with you, that's what you do. That's what you do. You interrupt your pattern. So, what I'm charged with is how to, you know—the reason and the other life stage thing here, Clare, is that you're an adult, but what's complicating this is that unlike your adult siblings who don't come for a big stretch of time, because they don't get to enjoy the academic lifestyle, you're a mature adult doing a kind of young adult thing.

It's just like coming home for the summer and spending it with your mom and stepdad for a big chunk, like you're entwining in their lives in a way that is sort of like reminiscent of when you were much younger than you were, you know, maybe coming home from college, for example, as opposed to coming home from (chuckling) the international court of human rights.

And so, it's hard to—it's hard. Like, you know, you've done your bit of kind of like go along to get along like, "Yeah, my mom and stepdad watch a lot of this thing, but who am I to say I wanna watch *Love Village* now or whatever. It's like their house, their rules, that kind of thing." No, you're a grownup invading their retirement.

So, what we need to do is find some way to honor both your actual, mature adulthood and the fact that David and Suzanne have obviously earned the right to be as weird as they want to be. Now, I know what the solution is. And it's really, really, really obvious. Because I know that I go to bed at 9:30, but I no longer sleep past 5AM.

Just get up, David. Just get up and watch this thing. Watch it live! I'm just saying, you should consider it a couple of days. Get the head of your—you know, win the race for once with your cycling team. Get the scoop, make them look like dopes. Know all the stuff that's happening. You get that thing, you knock that thing out from 6AM—7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 1—1PM. Then, you take a two-hour nap, then go to Frosty.

What? Time out? Why? Go ahead. You object?

[01:02:23] **David:** Yeah, I just have to say that we don't really watch during daylight hours, except in the morning, because I'm usually out cycling in the afternoon. So, we don't really start watching—I mean, seven hours sounds like an amazing amount of time, and it is, but we don't really start until 5—no, 6 or 7 at night.

[01:02:40] **John Hodgman:** Look, I don't know—I don't know the details of your schedule.

[01:02:43] **David:** Now you do!

[01:02:44] **John Hodgman:** I'm just saying. I'm just saying this. This is one proposed solution, which is you get up, you watch at least some of it, you go about your day, you go on your bicycle race or whatever. You come back, you fix dinner, and then you watch what you missed. You finish up that evening; you get the whole day in that one day.

[01:03:05] **Suzanne:** That's a really good idea actually, because Clare's dog, Gemma, wakes up very early. And you know, speaking of not being able to—

[01:03:14] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, 'cause she wants to watch the bicycle race.

[01:03:15] **Suzanne:** Yeah! So, she and David and me could sit and have our coffee and watch cycling, and Clare could go back to sleep for a little while. Because nobody wants to get up at 5:30 with Gemma. But if Gemma's up, she—the first thing she has to do is come and find David and I and wake us up. So.

[01:03:35] **John Hodgman:** Maybe that's a—maybe that's a solution that you could look into. I think there are a lot of solutions that you could look into that would allow Clare to feel seen, heard, and valued when she travels from Tuscaloosa to spend time with you. Now, look, we both know that she's just trying to get out of the heat, but I think she also loves you.

(They chuckle.)

So, whatever you work out, the adjustment—and I'm finding in Clare's favor here—the adjustment is: don't watch Tour de France with dinner. Like, after dinner? Terrific. Before dinner? Great. Take a break. Go to the Frosty, get a hamburger, get outside, get some fresh air. Like that's the last thing you need, David. All you have ever had is fresh air your whole life, but you know what I mean. Spend some time with your adult daughter/stepdaughter around the dinner hour. That's a good idea. Maybe play a game. Maybe play a game of Mille Bornes.

[01:04:30] **David:** Oh, my favorite!

(They laugh.)

[01:04:32] **Clare:** Oh, no, no, no!

[01:04:34] **John Hodgman:** I don't know why that just struck me that that might—I don't even remember—that's a French card game about car racing, isn't it? Car racing? Or is it bicycle racing?

[01:04:43] **David:** No, it's cars. Yeah.

[01:04:46] **John Hodgman:** Anyway, the dinner hour is out. But I also need you to respect, Clare, that anything outside of the dinner hour is fair game for cycling. This is their whole world, it's—look at these two. Like, I understand why it's like—you know, like—you know, David came along and stole your mom from you and turned her into a Tour de France addict.

(Clare agrees.)

But, uh, she deserves happiness. And that bucket hat. She loves it. But I think if you're visiting—if someone's taking the time to visit you, and they love you, and they're not just there to get some of that sweet, Sunderland cool breeze, set aside dinner time, at least. This is the sound of a gavel.

[01:05:32] **Sound Effect:** A bike chain spinning.

[01:05:36] **John Hodgman:** Judge John Hodgman rules. That is all.

[01:05:38] **Jesse Thorn:** Please rise as Judge John Hodgman exits the courtroom.

(Chairs squeak, followed by heavy footsteps and a door closing.)

Suzanne, David, how do you feel?

[01:05:50] **Suzanne:** Oh, I feel that that's fair. I got a little alarmed thinking about game playing, 'cause I absolutely hate to play games, but maybe this is—

[01:05:59] **John Hodgman:** No, then that's off the table. That's off. Never mind. I'm sorry I said that.

[01:06:01] **Suzanne:** Okay. (Laughs.) I thought maybe that was my penance.

(A door closes.)

No, I feel—I feel guilty for having put Clare through this torment for all this time, and I apologize, Clare, sincerely. And I think that the points that were made were very fair. And you know, that our retired lives, you know, are quirky in the way that they are and different from other people's. And—but that when you're here, we should definitely prioritize spending time with you and hanging out with you and being available to you.

[01:06:40] **Jesse Thorn:** Clare, how do you feel?

[01:06:42] **Clare:** I feel delighted that this went in my favor, although I'm sorry that my mom feels bad because, I certainly wouldn't want her to feel as though—feel guilty about this. It's—you know, it's just one of those things that you start doing and it starts out being one hour and then it's seven hours a day for three weeks. And you know, where did the time go?

(Door opens.)

[01:07:10] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, and I'm just gonna jump in to just join you in joining your mom from feeling guilty. Like, you are doing what you love with a person that you—that you love, and it's fine. Like, as Clare pointed out, it's easy to get caught up in habits and in passions and in hobbies. And you don't even see it, even when a third party comes into the house and goes, “Hmm, that's weird.”

Sometimes it's hard to see, but it's just fine. You're just—you're just having fun. You guys are having fun. I completely support it. You shouldn't feel guilty. We're making the adjustment now. Guilt is a pointless emotion unless there is adjustment of behavior to go with it, and that's gonna happen. So it's great. Don't worry about it.

[01:07:55] **Suzanne:** Easy for you to say, but you're not a mom. You know, mom guilt. But I hear you. I hear you.

[01:08:01] **John Hodgman:** Both my parents were Catholic! I know a little bit about it!

[01:08:03] **Suzanne:** Oh, okay, never mind! Okay, alright. Fair enough, fair enough.

[01:08:06] **John Hodgman:** I know a little bit about it!

[01:08:08] **David:** I think this is great. I'm perfectly supportive of that decision. And you were right, your Honor. It was an obvious decision in the grand scheme of this dispute, so I think we could easily tone it back and accommodate Clare's visiting and do more things together that's not sitting in our comfy chairs watching the Tour de France.

[01:08:32] **John Hodgman:** Just that's for after dinner. That's all I'm saying. Dinner time!

[01:08:35] **Jesse Thorn:** You gotta walk down and get some soft serve.

[01:08:38] **John Hodgman:** (Whispering.) Soft serve, yeeeah.

(Door closes.)

[01:08:40] **Jesse Thorn:** David, Suzanne, Clare, thanks for joining us on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

[01:08:44] **David:** Thank you too. That was awesome.

[01:08:46] **Clare:** Thank you.

[01:08:47] **Suzanne:** Thank you.

[01:08:48] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[01:08:50] **Jesse Thorn:** Another *Judge John Hodgman* case is in the books. We'll have Swift Justice in just a second. Our thanks first to Redditor to ProblemBearBruno for naming this week's episode "The Bicycle Grief". John, we had on *Jordan, Jesse, Go!* the other day, a fiction writer and standup comic named Amy Silverberg. Very cool, very funny lady. She joined the ranks of *Jordan, Jesse, Go!* guests who have been published in the *Paris Review*, which after careful consideration turned out to be way more than I expected! (Laughs.) It's like I remember that John was in the *Paris Review*, and it was—he was really proud of that.

[01:09:29] **John Hodgman:** My first meaningful publication, it's true.

[01:09:31] **Jesse Thorn:** I had no idea about all the other—anyway. My point here is that all Reddit usernames are goofy. And Amy Silverberg, who literally is—she sold a novel; she's a professor at USC; she has a PhD, and (laughing) her Reddit handle is his CeeDoo69.

(John laughs.)

Anyway, join the conversation with us over at [MaximumFun.Reddit.com](https://www.reddit.com/r/MaximumFun). That is also where we are asking for title suggestions for cases. So, make sure to submit them there. *Judge John Hodgman*, of course, created by Jesse Thorn and John Hodgman. Our producer is Valerie Moffat. Now Swift Justice, where we answer small disputes with quick judgment.

Julie writes, "My husband, Corbin, says water doesn't have a flavor. I say it does. Otherwise, how would I know I like the taste of tap water better than filtered water? He argues it's the minerals in the water that have flavor. I count those minerals as an ingredient of the water. Please order my husband to admit water has a flavor."

[01:10:48] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. Water has flavor. Come on, Corbin. I mean, you know, the first time humans tasted water, it wasn't—it wasn't in a Britta. It was coming out of a stream, having run over rocks and bugs. It's got all kinds of flavors in it! You know, it came out of a—you go to Saratoga Springs, why do they call it Saratoga Springs? 'Cause they got these natural springs popping up all over the place. And believe me, if you go to the Union Motel and go to their natural spring in their courtyard and you fill up your plastic picture that they give you with the nourishing mineral water that's coming out of the earth, and you put it in your hotel bedside table, and by 2AM it's turned brown, and your room smells like farts then you know. It's the flavor of that water. So, yes, obviously.

I just wanna go back to the *Paris Review* for one thing, 'cause I gotta give—I've just remembered one of my very, very favorite jokes regarding the *Paris Review*. And lots of people—it's a very famous tweet by a very funny person, named Patricia Lockwood. I can see that Valerie Moffat knows this one. Legendary tweet. Here it comes: "@ParisReview so, is Paris any good or not".

(They laugh.)

And she doesn't even put a question mark on it; that's just so spectacular. Patricia Lockwood, the author of *Priest Daddy* and other books, and the winner of the Thurber Prize for Humor. Anyway. Hey, everybody! Thanks for all of your case suggestions. We need some more.

Obviously, it's how we make the show. This week, you know, we're heading into the summertime. I've already put out a call for summertime disputes in the past. Maybe you've got some place else in Saratoga Springs that you like to visit, and you think I'm wrong. Maybe you prefer—maybe you don't like a road trip. Maybe you like an airplane trip.

How about this? What about camping disputes? Surely you and your partner, who is a whole human being in their own right, or your kids or your friends have gone on a hike or gone camping. Have you ever been caught in the bottom of a ravine and had to cut your own arm off to get out of it? Any camping disputes that you have? Disputes, camping etiquette, camping horror stories, let us know. Just go to MaximumFun.org/jjho. And of course, Jesse, we don't just want camping disputes, right?

[01:12:59] **Jesse Thorn:** We'll take any kind of dispute. You know what's a camping horror story for me, John? Real life camping horror story?

[01:13:03] **John Hodgman:** What? Uh, all of camping.

[01:13:07] **Jesse Thorn:** Yeah. I go camping. That's the— (Laughs.)

[01:13:11] **John Hodgman:** That's the horror?

[01:13:12] **Jesse Thorn:** That's the horror.

[01:13:13] **John Hodgman:** Okay, the premise is I go camping. That's it.

[01:13:18] **Jesse Thorn:** But we truly will take disputes on any subject. In fact, if you are listening to this right now, I would challenge you to go into your brain, rack it a little bit, and think about who you've got a problem with. Think about it right now. It's probably someone you love: your romantic partner, your kids Little League coach who's a really nice, good coach that you're on like a—

[01:13:40] **John Hodgman:** Except for that one thing.

[01:13:41] **Jesse Thorn:** —first name basis with. Yeah, except for that one thing. Exactly.

[01:13:44] **John Hodgman:** That one thing. That's what we want to hear about is that one thing!

[01:13:46] **Jesse Thorn:** We wanna hear about that one thing! MaximumFun.org/jjho is where you can submit it. And you know what? I'm gonna go one step further, John.

[01:13:55] **John Hodgman:** Alright.

[01:13:56] **Jesse Thorn:** When you hear your friend complain about that one thing? Push 'em to MaximumFun.org/jjho.

[01:14:03] **John Hodgman:** No, don't physically shove them. But just encourage them.

[01:14:05] **Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, no, do not physically shove them.

[01:14:07] **John Hodgman:** MaximumFun.org/jjho.

[01:14:10] **Jesse Thorn:** We will talk to you next time on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

[01:14:13] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[01:14:16] **Sound Effect:** Cheerful ukulele chord.

[01:14:17] **Speaker 1:** MaximumFun.org.

[01:14:18] **Speaker 2:** Comedy and culture.

[01:14:20] **Speaker 3:** Artist owned.

[01:14:21] **Speaker 4:** Audience supported.