

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

[00:00:01] **Jesse Thorn:** Welcome to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. I'm Bailiff Jesse Thorn. This week, "Diss Bard". Howie brings the case against Mark. Years ago, Howie and Mark were counselors at rival summer camps. When the camps came together for a sports festival at Howie's camp, it was Howie's job to sing a sit-down song to help corral the campers. When they heard the song, Mark's campers sat down, but Mark didn't. Howie called out Mark in song, embarrassing him in front of everyone. Howie and Mark have since become friends, but they say this incident has colored their relationship since. Mark says he shouldn't have been embarrassed by a fellow adult. Howie says he was just helping Mark lead by example.

Who's right? Who's wrong? Only one can decide.

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

Please rise as Judge John Hodgman enters the courtroom and presents an obscure cultural reference.

[00:01:05] **John Hodgman:** "Just like you would to your IZOD shirt, be true to four winds, now."

Baillif Jesse Thorn, please swear the litigants in.

[00:01:14] **Jesse Thorn:** Howie and Mark, 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?

[00:01:23] **Howie:** I do.

[00:01:24] **Mark:** I do.

[00:01:25] **Jesse Thorn:** Do you swear to abide by Judge John Hodgman's ruling despite the fact that he probably went to the bad kids' camp across the lake?

[00:01:34] **Howie:** I do.

[00:01:35] **Mark:** I do too.

[00:01:36] **Jesse Thorn:** Judge Hodgman, you may proceed.

[00:01:38] **John Hodgman:** Howie and Mark, you may be seated. Or as I have heard it said, (*singing*) “Sit down. Sit on down. Everybody, let's sit down.” Sit down you two for an immediate summary judgment on one of yours favors.

(*Chairs squeak.*)

Can either of you name the piece of culture I referenced when I entered the courtroom? Howie, let's start with you. What is your guess?

[00:01:57] **Howie:** I am gonna guess, uh, *Wet Hot American Summer*.

[00:02:00] **John Hodgman:** *Wet Hot American Summer*. A very, very funny movie about summer camp. If you haven't watched it, everyone watch it, and then watch the sequel that came out—what?—20 years later or something. Right, Jesse?

[00:02:12] **Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, something like that.

[00:02:13] **John Hodgman:** Really funny stuff. Really funny stuff. Great guess, Howie. Great summer camp themed guest. What about you, Mark?

[00:02:19] **Mark:** Boy, I'm really stumped. I'm trying to place four wins. And I don't know, it must be like an '80s camp movie, like *Meatballs* or something like that.

[00:02:32] **John Hodgman:** “Just like you would to your IZOD shirt, be true to four winds, now.” *Meatballs* is a good guess. That's a good summer camp movie. I'll put both of those guesses in. Any other guesses? No, because both guesses are wrong. All guesses are wrong! Between the two of you, Mark was the least wrong, because it is a reference to a particular summer camp. But where you got tripped up—and for Heaven or whatever's sake, why wouldn't you be?—you presume that I was quoting a piece of popular culture from a movie, when in fact I was actually quoting a camp song. So, only people who had ever gone to this camp, this specific camp, Four Winds Camp, would know this song. And they're not you, because this is a defunct all girls camp that used to grace the shores of Walker Pond in Sargentville, Maine.

Now, I did not go to this camp either, and neither did either of you, obviously. But one listener of ours, Mary, did. And some time ago she sent a letter that I'll read after the credits describing her time at Four Winds Camp, as well as her larcenous encounter with the actual bad kids' camp across the lake, the rich kids camp! The notorious and incredibly ironically named Robin Hood Camp, which we have discussed before on the program.

But now, let's proceed to this case, the case of your two summer camps at feud. Who seeks justice in this fake internet court?

[00:03:58] **Howie:** I do, your honor.

[00:04:00] **John Hodgman:** That would be Howie.

[00:04:01] **Howie:** That's right.

[00:04:01] **John Hodgman:** Howie, please state the nature of your complaint—or sing it, if you will!

[00:04:07] **Howie:** (*Chuckles.*) Um, so, Mark and I have known each other for 20+ years now. And it feels to me like our very first interaction, which he experienced negatively, has remained in the background of all of our subsequent interactions. And so, I'm here today to clear it up.

[00:04:27] **John Hodgman:** What happened?

[00:04:28] **Howie:** It was during a time when I was the song leader at my summer camp, which was a Jewish summer camp in the Laurentian Mountains of Quebec. And there are a surprising number of Jewish summer camps in that area. Enough so that every summer one camp would host a sports festival with all of the other Jewish summer camps in the area, and each camp would send a delegation, and they'd have a day of sports among the campers.

[00:04:58] **John Hodgman:** Would this be outside of Montreal?

[00:05:01] **Howie:** That's right. Yes.

[00:05:02] **John Hodgman:** Yeah. Well, there's a very big—a very historic Jewish population in Montreal.

[00:05:06] **Howie:** That's right.

[00:05:06] **John Hodgman:** So, did your camp have a name, Howie?

[00:05:09] **Howie:** My camp was called Y Country Camp.

[00:05:11] **John Hodgman:** Y Country camp? It's very existential.

(*Howie laughs.*)

Why? Why Country camp? You'll—by the end of the session you'll have an answer. It won't be the same answer as anyone else.

[00:05:25] **Howie:** (*Chuckling.*) We called it YCC. That was how we nor we normally referred to it, and it was named for the, for the Jewish Community Center in Montreal, 'cause that's where it was based out of.

[00:05:33] **John Hodgman:** Got it. Got it. So, you're having a sports fest and, and YCC is hosting the sports fest?

[00:05:39] **Howie:** That's right.

[00:05:40] **John Hodgman:** And another camp is joining, and that's Mark's camp. Correct?

[00:05:43] **Howie:** Mark's camp and probably three other camps from the region each sent a delegation.

[00:05:49] **John Hodgman:** Got it. And so, Mark was visiting in the capacity of a counselor at this other camp. Is that right, Mark?

[00:05:55] **Mark:** Um, yes, that's right. I was the program director of the other camp. So, the peer is sort of questionable, technically.

(Howie laughs.)

You know, perhaps I was—do a little more, respective—

[00:06:09] **John Hodgman:** You outranked Howie.

[00:06:11] **Mark:** It's immaterial, but probably, yes.

[00:06:13] **John Hodgman:** I don't know. It sounds pretty material to me.

[00:06:15] **Jesse Thorn:** It sounds like the first thing you brought up, so it must be important.

[00:06:19] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, I mean, I'd like to get the hierarchy clear here.

[00:06:23] **Jesse Thorn:** Where does a song leader stand relative to a program director?

[00:06:26] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, exactly. So, who stays on the boat longer when it's sinking?

[00:06:30] **Mark:** Well, somebody has to play while it goes down.

(Howie laughs.)

[00:06:33] **John Hodgman:** Right. Okay. So, Mark comes over as a program director of—what is the name of your camp, Mark?

[00:06:40] **Mark:** Uh, it was called Camp Kinneret.

[00:06:42] **John Hodgman:** Camp Kinneret. Okay. And Howie, you noticed that Mark doesn't like to sit down and follow the rules when the song master's singing?

[00:06:51] **Howie:** Well, so for some reason, every camp activity in my experience at a Jewish summer camp ends with singing. And so, even if you've gathered all of the most athletic campers from the various camps, they will be forced to sing together at the end of the day in some kind of group song—often for points, so that the judges can adjust the scores so that everything is a lot closer than it might've been (*chuckles*) beforehand.

[00:07:23] **John Hodgman:** Singing. Oh, so singing becomes a competition to even out the obvious athletic advantage that say, Camp Kinneret had over YCC, I'm presuming.

[00:07:33] **Howie:** Uh, that's right, except that—as Mark will tell you—in his view, his campers were outmatched at every turn, during the sports festival. Mark's camp was much smaller than my camp. So, the delegation that he sent was effectively the entire camp.

[00:07:52] **John Hodgman:** I see. Okay, so let's get to the actual complaint. What I understand is you're wrapping up the day. You as song master in the host camp, Howie, are singing a little song, which we're gonna hear in a minute. Don't worry about it. Everyone's gonna be excited. And the song is encouraging people to sit down, and Mark isn't sitting down.

[00:08:10] **Howie:** That's right. So, somehow in that summer, in the weeks leading up to that day, the sit-down song had become that summer's tradition. And it was totally by accident. I was sound checking to make sure the sound equipment worked one day, and I was trying to get everybody seated, and it just slipped out of my mouth. But as sometimes things do in these small communities of people, the campers got very excited about this song, and they would ask for it every time we would get together as a group. And I think part of what was fun about it—

[00:08:40] **John Hodgman:** You don't have to justify singing to me, Howie.

(They laugh.)

I'm pro-singing. You're evading the, the point of contention here. You're giving a lot of background.

[00:08:49] **Howie:** Okay, so I didn't know Mark's name, but I knew he was the program director at Camp Kinneret, and I knew he wasn't sitting. So, in the context of my sit-down song, I called him out. And I said, (*singing*) “Captain Kinneret, sit on down. Sit on down on the ground,” or words to that effect.

[00:09:08] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, no, we have the song and we're gonna listen to it right now.

[00:09:12] **Music:** “The Sit-Down Song” from Y Country Camp; upbeat acoustic guitar.

Sit down, sit on down, everybody, let's sit down

Sit down, sit on down, everybody, let's sit down

Grab a seat on the floor, or else I'm going to sing some more

Let's sit down, sit on down, everybody, let's sit down

Take a seat on your butt, then I'm gonna tell you what

You gotta sit down, sit on down, everybody, let's sit down

Captain Kinneret, sit on down

You sit right down upon the ground

You gotta sit down, sit on down, everybody, let's sit down

(Music ends.)

[00:09:56] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, Howie!

[00:09:56] **Jesse Thorn:** Now, Judge Hodgman, before we continue, we should credit the producer of that recording: legendary ethnomusicologist Alan Lomax.

(They laugh.)

[00:10:06] **John Hodgman:** I'm not sure Jesse, 'cause I don't think that that's an archival recording. Is it Howie? That's something that you worked up in your studio today or recently? Yeah.

[00:10:13] **Howie:** Yeah, recorded on wax cylinder.

[00:10:17] **John Hodgman:** Okay. *(Chuckles.)* It was beautiful. But that's not a—that's not taped from the camp. That's a dramatic recreation of the song that you sang, 10 these many years ago.

[00:10:26] **Howie:** Yeah, that's right. I don't remember the exact words I used, but this was something I would do regularly when we didn't have visitors. I would call people out by name if they weren't sitting to sit with their campers, because that was the leadership philosophy at the camp.

[00:10:40] **John Hodgman:** Sure. No, I mean, every camp has its own sort of vibe and style and YCC was the camp of musical bullies.

(They laugh.)

[00:10:50] **Mark:** Finally!

[00:10:52] **Jesse Thorn:** I think in all situations the man with the acoustic guitar is king.

[00:10:58] **Mark:** Especially with a microphone on top of it.

[00:11:00] **John Hodgman:** Yeah. You had a PA system. You sent in, along with that song, some evidence—including a photo of you, Howie, really rocking out at YCC camp. This is archival footage. Is it not? This is a photo from around this time.

[00:11:14] **Howie:** That's right.

[00:11:15] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, and we'll share this obviously on our show page at MaximumFun.org as well as our Instagram account, [@JudgeJohnHodgman](https://www.instagram.com/JudgeJohnHodgman) on Instagram. I quote, "This is me, Howie, performing song leader duties and displaying my questionable late '90s facial hair." Goatee aside, how could anyone deny that punim? Howie, you're hot in this photo.

[00:11:36] **Howie:** (*Laughs.*) It was a good moment for me.

[00:11:37] **John Hodgman:** Mark, wouldn't you agree? Hot.

[00:11:39] **Mark:** Yes. Look at those guns!

[00:11:41] **John Hodgman:** Look at those guns. You've really—everyone seems to be wearing a white t-shirt in this photo, including the campers or counselors in the background behind you. Was this a theme night? White t-shirt night?

[00:11:50] **Howie:** On Friday nights, we all would wear a white t-shirt to welcome the Sabbath.

[00:11:55] **John Hodgman:** You rolled up your sleeve, and we can see your arm.

[00:11:58] **Jesse Thorn:** You rolled up your sleeves to welcome your biceps.

(*They laugh.*)

[00:12:02] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, exactly.

[00:12:03] **Mark:** Everybody sits down at the gun show.

(*They laugh.*)

[00:12:06] **John Hodgman:** Yeah. But while this is evidence that you submitted, Howie, of your incredible style and song leading charisma, it also is evidence for Mark's contention that

you were obviously amplified and had the power of amplification when you called out Mark, Captain Kinneret, sit on down. Captain Kinneret's a pretty cool name, Mark! Is that something that you went by or is that just an improvisation on Howie's part?

[00:12:39] **Mark:** Uh, no, that's not something I went by. It was definitely an improvisation on Howie's part and was obviously intended as a bit of a slight.

[00:12:50] **John Hodgman:** As a bit of a slight? Oh, okay.

[00:12:51] **Howie:** Objection. Uh, objection, your honor.

[00:12:54] **John Hodgman:** I'll allow it. What's your objection?

[00:12:57] **Howie:** I don't think—I don't think Mark can know my intention. He may argue that was my intention, but really my intention was to lovingly, jokingly, ask him to sit so that we could proceed in the way that we were accustomed to at the host camp.

[00:13:17] **John Hodgman:** Right, because here at YCC when I'm singing, you sit down.

[00:13:22] **Howie:** Well—

[00:13:23] **Mark:** Or I'm gonna roast you musically!

[00:13:26] **Howie:** (*Laughs.*) More that it's my job to get everybody seated, and this was the way that had worked all summer. So, to me, I was just—and—

[00:13:35] **John Hodgman:** Had you roasted anyone else in this way?

[00:13:38] **Howie:** Yes. Yes. It was a common—

[00:13:40] **John Hodgman:** Fellow counselors?

(*Howie confirms.*)

Or campers? Fellow counselors as well.

[00:13:44] **Howie:** I would only roast the counselors. I wouldn't roast the campers. And all of the counselors understood that it was meant as a loving joke and reminder that this is what's expected of them when we're trying to the camp—

[00:13:57] **John Hodgman:** Yeah. But I need not point out to you, song leader Howie, that Captain Kinneret was a guest from a far-off land!

[00:14:03] **Howie:** That's right.

[00:14:04] **John Hodgman:** Mark, how far away is Kinneret Camp?

[00:14:07] **Mark:** Well, there's two types of far away. There's the distance—

(Howie and Jesse giggle.)

[00:14:12] **John Hodgman:** Why are all these summer camps in Montreal existential?

[00:14:16] **Mark:** Well, I think it's worth mentioning—like, I would say perhaps Mary and I would see really eye to eye, in some ways. And so, yeah, it wasn't—they weren't far away from each other in terms of a drive. It was about 45 minutes or something like that. But they were far—they were far away from each other in that—

[00:14:36] **John Hodgman:** In my spirit.

[00:14:38] **Mark:** In the—in size. And like, you know, camps like Howie's hosted the sports festival. Our camp couldn't host the sports festival, because like there was basically like a road running through our sports field, and we didn't really have, you know, those types of facilities or that kind of space to host a camp like that. And so—

[00:14:59] **John Hodgman:** So, in the—you were the one who brought up *Meatballs*. In the *Meatballs* scenario, your camp is the small, rickety underdog camp, and YCC is the rich kids camp—the Robin Hood camp across the lake. The ones that have the matching tracksuits and the—they travel around Maine in a luxury bus and so forth. That's Camp Robin Hood.

[00:15:22] **Jesse Thorn:** Wearing white t-shirts and shaming counselors across the state—in this case, province.

(They chuckle.)

[00:15:29] **Mark:** You know, we didn't have a budget for a song leader or a PA system, for that matter. *(Chuckles.)* So, you know, it was all feeling, you know, foreign. And so, that basically—what the other camps would do to prepare for the sports festivals, they would have tryouts where their best athletes would try to make the teams that would compete in the sports festival. We didn't have tryouts, because we didn't really even have enough kids, you know, for all the teams. And so, that year, basically, if you were that age, you played on that team. And so, that year, I advocated to try something different. Which was instead of taking, you know, the majority of the camp to the sports festival, we'll just take everybody, because nobody's trying out anyway. So, we're gonna take the entire camp to the sports festival.

And so, it was a bit of a—it was a bit of a conversation with the director to convince him that that was reasonable and that I'd be able to keep track of everybody and, and, and that it wouldn't, you know—it wouldn't get chaotic and—you know, all that kind of stuff. And so that was weighing sort of heavily on me, I guess, as we were arriving and in the sit-down situation.

[00:16:51] **John Hodgman:** Tell me how you felt in that moment when you realized you were being sung about by Howie.

[00:16:57] **Mark:** In that exact moment, it was—it was humiliating. Humiliation, right? And embarrassment. I was trying to set an example for my kids who were intimidated. And they're discovering things at this camp that we would never—you know, indoor basketball and all these things, right? And they're all sitting there—

[00:17:19] **John Hodgman:** Woah, woah, woah. Indoor basketball?!

[00:17:21] **Jesse Thorn:** Wait, they were discovering indoor basketball? (*Laughs.*)

[00:17:24] **Mark:** No, no! Look—

[00:17:25] **Jesse Thorn:** This is—they think—they thought it was chutzpah when Columbus suggested he discovered America. But—(*laughing*)

[00:17:33] **Mark:** What I'm trying to get at—

[00:17:34] **Jesse Thorn:** For your kids to have discovered indoor basketball!

[00:17:37] **Mark:** This is a level of facilities that we were just not familiar with. And so, they're all walking in nervous, 'cause they're about to have their—

[00:17:46] **John Hodgman:** They're like, "What's that? What's—? Hey, hey, hey, Mr. Mark. What's that?" It's like, oh, that's a swimming pool that's full of water, not rocks.

[00:17:54] **Mark:** (*Chuckling.*) That's right. That's right. This is a rollerblading hockey rink, and they have instructors to show you—you know, those types of things.

(*John "wow"s.*)

[00:18:04] **Jesse Thorn:** Did they—wait, hold on. Did they—Howie, did your camp have a rollerblading hockey rink?!

[00:18:11] **Howie:** We had a paved asphalt hockey rink. It was not really well suited to rollerblading, because it didn't get repaved that often. So, we mostly played ball hockey in the hockey rink.

[00:18:23] **John Hodgman:** You have to understand. I mean, I know that—I felt the same way, Jesse, but then I remembered this is Canada. There's gotta be some form of hockey.

[00:18:31] **Jesse Thorn:** Got it.

[00:18:32] **John Hodgman:** But they had fancier—they had fancier facilities. You were feeling like a real country mouse at Y Country Camp. Mm-hm.

[00:18:40] **Mark:** That's right. And I was feeling that same thing from the kids, who are all wide-eyed, and they're ushered into this giant, you know, rec hall with more—you know.

[00:18:52] **John Hodgman:** Now, did they have white t-shirts too, or were they just dressed in rags?

(They laugh.)

[00:18:55] **Mark:** That's right. No, we sprung for fresh camp t-shirts, you know, because we had to represent, because I had sold this thing to the director as, "This is gonna be—it's gonna be great. It's gonna be a bonding thing. It's gonna be a character-building experience. We're gonna go there. We're gonna be proud of who we are. We're gonna show our spirit." Right? And I'm seeing the kids now, you know, eyes like saucers, you know, looking around, knowing that they're all about to get their asses handed to them—their butts handed to them—you know, in whatever sport they're about to play. They're feeling overmatched. They're feeling intimidated. And so, I'm standing up. And I'm trying to catch their eyes, and I'm trying also to make sure that I don't lose any of them and, you know, make sure that I have a count of them. But I'm trying to catch their eyes and, you know, roll my eyes or, you know, show them like, "This is no big deal. Don't worry about this, guys. It's not—it's nothing."

And then, so as I'm doing this, you know—imagine I am, you know—I've caught the eyes of one of the Newcomb ball players, right? And what I'm doing is trying to show, "Yeah, yeah. You got nothing to worry about. Yes, they got tons of people. Sure. There's 500 people here. Yeah. This is—you know, this is no big deal. We got it." Right? And I'm trying to, you know, make that connection—

[00:20:17] **John Hodgman:** *(Singing.)* "Captain Kinneret, sit on down! Captain Kinneret, sit on down. Hey, you big dummy, sit on down. We're gonna whoop your butts in Newcomb ball!" That's how it felt.

[00:20:27] **Mark:** Exactly. Right. So, now the looks of the faces of the kids are mouths covered, oh my god, mouths agape. Did that just happen? And I was—*(chuckles)* I kind of like wheeled around and like, looking at this guy—you could see obviously what Howie looked like at the time. And—

[00:20:48] **John Hodgman:** Yeah. Hot as hell.

[00:20:50] **Mark:** Right? Hot as hell in an amplified way. And I was just like, "How is this—how is this possibly happening right now?" And so, I guess the other—

[00:21:04] **John Hodgman:** Not even how is this happening, Howie-s it happening?

[00:21:09] **Mark:** Howie-is it happening? Who does that? From the stage! From the stage!

[00:21:15] **John Hodgman:** Because you didn't—you didn't know—you guys didn't know each other at the time.

[00:21:19] **Howie:** We knew of each other.

[00:21:20] **Mark:** I only knew Howie—that's right.

(They laugh.)

I knew Howie a bit. I knew of Howie because he played—

[00:21:26] **John Hodgman:** The long—the long-bubbling rivalry of the Laurentian Mountains, Howie v. Mark.

[00:21:33] **Mark:** That's right. Howie—we both also—we went to college together. We both went to McGill University of Montreal. And I knew Howie in a kind of like a bit of a removed way. He played in a band, you know, that I would see sometimes, you know, at the famous Yellow Door coffee house. And so, I guess that added, you know, to my level of—I don't know—pre-judgment of who I thought, you know, he was. Like, what was this guy—

[00:22:01] **John Hodgman:** You mean to say he was kind of—he was like a—he was like a rock star of a kind.

[00:22:06] **Mark:** Exactly. Has a very high opinion of himself and his talents.

(Howie laughs.)

[00:22:12] **John Hodgman:** And Howie, what was the name of your band?

[00:22:14] **Howie:** The name of the band at the time was Bear Left.

[00:22:17] **John Hodgman:** Bear Left. I like it.

[00:22:19] **Jesse Thorn:** Right Frog.

(Howie laughs.)

[00:22:21] **John Hodgman:** Wowie zowie!

[00:22:24] **Jesse Thorn:** Howie zowie.

(They laugh.)

[00:22:26] **John Hodgman:** Wowie Howie zowie! It's true.

[00:22:29] **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.

[00:22:37] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:22:40] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:22:42] **John Hodgman:** So, Howie was kind of a rock star to you when he calls you out from the stage. And was there a stage, Howie? Was there a stage? Mark is nodding.

[00:22:49] **Howie:** Uh, it's possible. It's possible there was a stage. My memory is that this was outside, and there wasn't a stage. But it's possible. So, the indoor basketball courts that Mark is talking about—

[00:23:06] **John Hodgman:** Brag, brag, brag about this indoor basketball!

(Howie laughs.)

[00:23:10] **Jesse Thorn:** Like, "It's possible there was a stage. I remember we were at the Grand Coliseum."

(They laugh.)

[00:23:16] **John Hodgman:** "Because it was something of an amphitheater and the stage—"

[00:23:21] **Mark:** "I was in the green room at the time. I can't recall."

(Howie laughs.)

[00:23:24] **John Hodgman:** Yeah. Yeah. "I don't know whether that was before we had the new lighting rig put in or not. And we had the—"

[00:23:31] **Jesse Thorn:** "I remember, the night before, Stevie Nicks had asked to perform in the round."

(They laugh.)

[00:23:34] **John Hodgman:** "Yeah. It was a revolving—was that when we had the revolving stage or the stage within the stage?"

[00:23:39] **Jesse Thorn:** "We set the turntable up."

[00:23:40] **John Hodgman:** Yeah. Right. Your memory is hazy. I'll defer to Mark. Mark, was there a stage? Yes or no?

[00:23:49] **Mark:** There was a stage, yes. Howie was in an elevated position.

(Howie wheezes a laugh.)

[00:23:56] **John Hodgman:** That's right. Playing guitar, also known as an ax. And as they say, the tree remembers, the ax forgets.

(They chuckle.)

If Mark remembers being humiliated by a guy named Howie on stage, I believe him. So, did the—you say the kids covered their mouths, Mark. Were they laughing at you or were they just astonished?

[00:24:16] **Mark:** They were astonished. They weren't laughing at me, but they were maybe embarrassed for me.

[00:24:23] **John Hodgman:** But they were sitting down.

[00:24:25] **Mark:** They were sitting down. Of course. All the kids sit down.

[00:24:28] **John Hodgman:** What happened after “Captain Kinneret, sit on down” was issued from the microphone? Did you sit down then?

[00:24:36] **Mark:** Uh, yeah. I mean, faced with the choice—right?—I could've continued to stand in protest and risk another perhaps escalated, you know, shoutout from the stage. Or—

[00:24:50] **John Hodgman:** Well, why were people sitting down in the first place, Howie? What was gonna happen?

[00:24:55] **Howie:** So, this was gonna be the—my memory is this was gonna be the musical presentation portion. And so, we were trying to get all of the attendees seated so that each delegation could come to the stage and share their song.

[00:25:08] **John Hodgman:** Got it. And they were sitting in like—was it an amphitheater or was it like—were they sitting on logs or were they sitting on, you know, like picnic tables or what?

[00:25:16] **Howie:** Well, if it's as Mark—if it's as Mark remembers, they were sitting on the floor of the basketball court.

[00:25:23] **John Hodgman:** Oh, what kind of basketball court was it? Like, could you see the stars or no?

(They chuckle.)

[00:25:30] **Howie:** No.

[00:25:31] **John Hodgman:** Like, if it rained, what would happen in the basketball court? Would you get wet?

[00:25:35] **Howie:** No, it was an indoor basketball court, John.

[00:25:37] **John Hodgman:** Oh, oh, oh, indoor. Wow! Sorry, I forgot about that detail. Pretty fancy. (*Chuckles.*) Did you express your frustration to Howie after this happened?

[00:25:48] **Mark:** We have never really talked about it like this. I told you that I don't think I ever owned up to having actually been embarrassed about it. It's something that was—I just sort of at first passive aggressively dealt with, and then we swept it under the rug.

[00:26:10] **John Hodgman:** But you're friends now, right? Yes or no?

[00:26:13] **Mark:** Yes.

[00:26:14] **John Hodgman:** How did you become friends after Howie humiliated you in this way?

[00:26:18] **Mark:** Well, Howie was friendly with a lot of the people that I was friendly with. And our paths would, you know, continue to cross and continue to cross. He actually was roommates—following that summer, he was roommates with a friend of ours, somebody who one of my roommates was also in a band with. And then so, you know, we found ourselves spending time there. And you know, the edge sort of began to wear off a little bit, and then there was this kind of moment, I guess. I found myself over there and—

[00:26:59] **John Hodgman:** Over there at camp now are we talking? Or—?

[00:27:01] **Mark:** Excuse me, I'm sorry. Over at Howie and Zach's apartment with people.

[00:27:06] **John Hodgman:** Okay, (*inaudible*) names.

[00:27:08] **Mark:** Yeah. Zach will—you know, he'll be fine. You know, a bunch of people connected with us we're all sort of over there and there some—

[00:27:18] **John Hodgman:** Let me understand. You're all hanging around in Montreal or where are you living at this point?

[00:27:22] **Mark:** That's right. We're in Montreal, in what is affectionately—

[00:27:25] **John Hodgman:** So, you're all in the Yellow Door scene. Friends of friends. Your age is like, what? Early 20s at this point?

(Mark confirms.)

You're not doing the camp thing anymore. Maybe you are. But it's adult life now, and you're over at Zach's. 'Cause Zach's is—

[00:27:42] **Jesse Thorn:** You're drinking beers, you're playing roller hockey, you're eating bagels, you're making out with Youppi.

(They laugh.)

[00:27:52] **Mark:** Great reference!

[00:27:53] **Jesse Thorn:** Just Montreal, young adult Montreal stuff. Everybody's made a mistake.

[00:27:55] **John Hodgman:** Just young adult Montreal stuff. Yeah. Just some—just a classic fete of some kind. A house fete.

[00:28:04] **Mark:** Exactly. Yeah, exactly.

[00:28:06] **John Hodgman:** 'Cause Zach's got the cool apartment or whatever, and there's Howie across the room. And tell me what happened.

[00:28:11] **Mark:** Right. So, Zach and Howie were sharing this apartment. They live in this apartment, and I can't remember exactly what the details were, but it—you know, in Montreal, in what was affectionately at that time known as the student ghetto, you know, there was some kind of sketchy landlord, you know, behavior or whatever. So, there was some—there was an appliance. It was like a fridge, or the freezer stopped working. And instead of fixing it, the landlord just left it there, and then like brought in like a chest freezer basically into this little apartment to be like, “Yeah, yeah, no, no, no, you still have a freezer.”

And then, so the Zach and Howie started using the surface of this freezer, you know, with a whiteboard marker to record the results of this contest that Howie would run for people. Which was—

[00:29:00] **John Hodgman:** Is this the Premium Plus challenge?

[00:29:03] **Mark:** It is.

(Jesse laughs.)

Is it appropriate to continue into the, uh, Premium Plus challenge?

[00:29:10] **Jesse Thorn:** I insist.

[00:29:11] **John Hodgman:** No, I've been told to be on alert for any mention of a Premium Plus challenge, so I'm very curious to know what it is.

[00:29:17] **Mark:** Premium Plus was the brand of saltine crackers. I think they have them in the US, but I but they're not called Plus.

[00:29:24] **John Hodgman:** We just call them Premium.

[00:29:26] **Mark:** Ah, right. Yeah, exactly. And so, in Montreal, it would've been Plus (*ploos*). Um, and so—

[00:29:31] **John Hodgman:** (*Accented.*) Premium Plus. Okay.

[00:29:34] **Mark:** Uh, and so, you know, the contest was simple. How quickly can a person eat 10 Premium Plus saltine crackers? And that, you know, you would be timed, and then your score and name would be immortalized in whiteboard marker on the side of this freezer.

[00:29:54] **John Hodgman:** So, yes, this is a classic young dudes in their 20s hanging around with each other, don't want to talk about feelings or more past recrimination. Instead, they're just gonna shove their mouths full of saltines.

(*They laugh.*)

And that's how they—that's how they bond. I'm with you.

[00:30:12] **Mark:** Kind of! Kind of. You know, there was a lot of people, mixed company. And Howie introduces the game or the contest. And he's—you know, he's cleverly talking about it and offering, you know, tips for new people on how you might be able to come close to his record with his name in big letters at the top.

[00:30:32] **John Hodgman:** (*Groans.*) Howie was not only killing at the Yellow Door, he was also killing at Premium Plus?

[00:30:37] **Jesse Thorn:** What I'm hearing is that Howie was not only an acoustic guitar bully, he was also a saltine bully!

[00:30:43] **Mark:** Yeah. You might say—look, you know, I didn't necessarily feel bullied, but it was triggering. It had the familiar hallmarks of what had transpired, you know, a summer ago.

[00:30:55] **John Hodgman:** Let me just—alright, let's pause for a second. So, this was like a year later is what you're saying, that this happened. Let me go back a year then, Howie, to that fateful evening in the indoor basketball court. You said that when you sang-told Mark to sit down, you didn't know his name. So, you sang Captain Kinneret. Whereas Mark says, from the floor of the in indoor basketball court, that he already knew you from the Montreal

music scene. From Mark's point of view, there's a power differential there. Did you really not know at all who Mark was?

[00:31:37] **Howie:** I knew who he was, but I didn't know his name. I knew he was a friend of a friend, but we hadn't yet been introduced. Now, I also felt the power differential. So, Mark said earlier that he was a program director at his camp, and I was unaware of the relative size of his camp. I hadn't yet visited it. And when Mark got off the bus from Camp Kinneret, he was carrying a walkie-talkie, a clipboard, and a set of keys.

[00:32:06] **John Hodgman:** Wow! Those are some pretty big power signifiers, Mark.

[00:32:12] **Howie:** In the summer camp universe, there is no more powerful trio of symbols. So, to my mind, Mark—who was my age, or seemed about my age, but had attained this high rank of program director in some speedy fashion—he wasn't sitting down, because he didn't feel like he had to sit down. He was too good to sit down.

[00:32:36] **John Hodgman:** That was your—that was your read on Mark.

[00:32:40] **Howie:** That was my read of the situation. And from my perspective, I have a job to do, which is to get everybody who's in this beautiful indoor basketball court sitting on the dirty basketball floor. And the way that I do that, instead of yelling at them, is singing at them.

[00:32:58] **John Hodgman:** Yeah. You gently noodge them down with song. I understand. I understand. But now that you know Mark is your assessment of him as a high status, walkie talkie carrying power figure the same or different?

[00:33:14] **Howie:** No, it's different.

[00:33:15] **John Hodgman:** How would you describe your friend, Mark?

[00:33:17] **Howie:** I would describe Mark as a kind, generous, and funny friend.

[00:33:21] **John Hodgman:** Mark, when did you reveal that you still had feelings about being told to sit down?

[00:33:26] **Mark:** I think it was—when I actually verbalized it, it was actually at Howie's bachelor party. (*Chuckles.*)

[00:33:36] **John Hodgman:** Oh, really?

[00:33:37] **Mark:** Right. Like, so that's probably even—what?—10 years even after that fact, where I actually said—I think I sort of half-jokingly said, “You know, you were my nemesis for a long time. And I—you know, I'm happy to, you know, be standing here with you.” And so, that was the first time that I had ever outwardly, you know, mentioned that I had been thinking about it or have continued to think about it.

[00:33:59] **John Hodgman:** So, you had become close enough friends via the Premium Plus challenge—which we'll talk about in a second—that you'd be invited to his bachelor party roughly a decade later. And now, here it is. How long has it been since you went to that bachelor party, Howie? Roughly speaking.

[00:34:18] **Howie:** About 15 years.

[00:34:19] **John Hodgman:** About 15 years. So, when Mark said to you, “I feel—you know, you were my nemesis; you told me to sit down and made me feel bad,” how did you feel at your bachelor party?

[00:34:29] **Howie:** Well, I said, “You know, I have still carried around the time that you destroyed my record in the Premium Plus challenge, and I still feel a little bit ashamed about that.”

[00:34:39] **John Hodgman:** Oooh! Turnabout was fair play. So, now in the saga of Mark and Howie, we roll back another nine years or so to Zach's apartment when Howie is describing the Premium Plus challenge. And he was given some tips, because he was the Premium Plus challenge champ. How many Premium Plus saltines were you able to eat, Howie? What was the record?

[00:35:07] **Howie:** Well, it was—you had to eat ten crackers as fast as possible.

[00:35:11] **John Hodgman:** As quickly as possible. Okay. So, what was your time record?

[00:35:14] **Howie:** I feel like it was like a minute and a half.

[00:35:16] **John Hodgman:** A minute and a half. And what were your tips that you were bragging on when you were introducing these noobs to this incredible Zach's kitchen game?

[00:35:25] **Howie:** I think it was—you know, don't take it slow, because your mouth is gonna dry up. So, you gotta get as much in as you can right away.

[00:35:33] **John Hodgman:** And so, what would that mean? Like, you preload five?

[00:35:38] **Howie:** (*Laughs.*) You just don't take a break between crackers, like don't—

[00:35:40] **John Hodgman:** Do you have to eat them one at a time or can you do like 2, 4, 6, 8?

[00:35:44] **Howie:** Yeah, I think there were no rules beyond you have to eat 10.

[00:35:47] **John Hodgman:** Okay. 10. So, it was in a minute and change, right? Is that what you said?

[00:35:51] **Howie:** Yeah. Maybe 90 seconds.

[00:35:53] **John Hodgman:** Alright. And then Mark stood up and said, “I shall take the challenge.”

[00:35:58] **Howie:** Yeah. And he did it in like 26 seconds. It was not—it was not close.

[00:36:03] **John Hodgman:** Mark, do you remember that time when you ate all those crackers in 26 seconds?

[00:36:07] **Mark:** Sort of, because I feel like—I feel like I kind of blacked out when I was doing it.

(Howie laughs.)

I felt—I'm not competitive like at all, but I felt—I just felt like I saw red, basically, and I was, “I'm gonna destroy this guy. And his—”

(They laugh.)

I don't know! I didn't even think about it. I just decided that I was—my name was gonna be on the fridge.

[00:36:39] **John Hodgman:** You hadn't been training for the Premium Plus challenge or anything. You had no background in fast cracker eating. It was just a moment where you saw Howie again. You felt that wound from Camp YCC, and you're like, “I'm gonna go—I'm gonna do this. I'm gonna get this guy now.”

[00:36:54] **Mark:** Not so much in a vindictive way, but I, yeah. I basically said, you know, “Who's Captain Kinneret now? I'm gonna eat these—gonna eat these crackers.”

(They laugh.)

[00:37:07] **John Hodgman:** Did that—I mean, obviously you became friends after that, such that a decade later you'd be at his bachelor party. Correct?

[00:37:15] **Mark:** Yes. And he was incredibly gracious about having, you know, been destroyed in the challenge. He shook my hand and congratulated me and said how amazing—you know, how he couldn't believe the time. And you know, it sort of—I saw a side of him which was, you know, he was happy to put somebody else on the stage or the spotlight. And so, I felt a warmth from him that I hadn't. And I guess that was sort of a—that was—now we had a shared thing, because we were both very good Premium Plus eaters, and we were both former champions. We had never really had a shared thing before other than being humiliated.

[00:38:02] **John Hodgman:** It evened the polished indoor basketball playing surface.

[00:38:10] **Mark:** In a matter of speaking.

[00:38:11] **John Hodgman:** Yeah. And it set the stage—it set the stage for a stage that you could share and be friends, at that point. Okay. So, why were you still dwelling on it nine years later? Why are we still talking about it today, Mark? I mean, it seems like—why didn't eating 10 saltines as quickly as possible heal your wound?

[00:38:39] **Mark:** Do you know sometimes when—let's say you're going to sleep or you're going to bed, and you close your eyes. Sometimes—right?—it flashes into your mind, or it flashes into your mind something really embarrassing that you've done or a moment that you have that just makes you cringe. And so like, that's a thing. *(Laughs.)*

I have that, right? You know, being called out in front of 500 people and then, you know, meekly having to, you know, decide, “Should I, you know—should I protest this or make a scene about it? Or do I sit down?” So, there are all these kids looking at me as an example and then I, you know, have to prostrate myself in front of the rock star and sit down.

[00:39:25] **John Hodgman:** Do you think that I can give you what you want? If the saltines and the bachelor party conversation and the 25 years of friendship hasn't been able to heal this wound, how can I help?

[00:39:41] **Mark:** Well, I think Howie really, truly in a genuine way, believes that he was right. He was right to do that, and that was—that was the right way. And so, we've never addressed or talked about how that was actually super embarrassing! And so, that's where I feel like the judgment is important. Like, was it in fact—was he—?

[00:40:04] **John Hodgman:** But there's a culture—there's a cultural thing here, Mark, because you're both Canadian right? By birth.?

(They confirm.)

So, Mark, you should know how difficult it is for a Canadian to say *(with a Canadian accent)* sorry.

(They laugh.)

It's the hardest thing—it's just from birth they're trained: never say *(accented)* sorry. Never, ever say *(accented)* sorry. Howie, you're hearing what Mark is saying. Do you still think you were right? And even if you do think you were right in the moment, now that he's explained his feelings, why not say *(accented)* sorry?

[00:40:40] **Howie:** Uh, I am happy to say sorry, and I accept that his feelings are real and legitimate, and I can understand now that he's told the story in this way, why he might have had those feelings. But what sits with me is that he still thinks that I intended to humiliate him, that it was my goal to make him feel that way when it wasn't. And I feel like that characterization of, you know, who I am and who I was being in that moment has made it so that I don't think he can fully trust me, and I can't fully trust him because we still have this thing—this, you know—this pebble in the shoe of our friendship.

[00:41:25] **John Hodgman:** Hmm. Hmm. And Mark, do you maintain that you think that Howie set out to humiliate you? That it wasn't a misunderstanding?

[00:41:34] **Mark:** I don't think it was a misunderstanding. I don't think he set out to like, you know, grievously humiliate me, but the aim of it was to sort of—right?—you are naming someone in front of the whole group and essentially shaming them to comply with the rest of—what the rest of the group is doing. So—right? I don't know how else you would describe that.

[00:41:59] **John Hodgman:** Was there a rivalry between the two camps such that you could presume sort of aggression—good-hearted or not?

[00:42:08] **Mark:** Yeah. I mean, yeah, we were literally rolling in so that we could participate in a sports festival against each other.

[00:42:16] **John Hodgman:** Right. So, you felt like there—by definition, there had to be a little bit of knife twisting, even if it was good natured and not meant to truly harm. But like you're the opposition in that case.

[00:42:31] **Mark:** That's right. Competitive edge. And despite seeing my walkie talkie and my clipboard, he still saw fit to call me out in front of the group, which was not a small group! That's a five or 600 people. Um, and so, yes, I maintain that.

[00:42:49] **John Hodgman:** Did anyone refer to you as Captain Kinneret after that?

[00:42:53] **Mark:** I squashed that pretty quickly.

(They laugh.)

[00:42:57] **John Hodgman:** Ah! So, people did. So, the answer is yes.

[00:42:59] **Mark:** Um, on the bus ride home, some of the kids were trying that out.

[00:43:03] **John Hodgman:** That's a very catchy tune. *(Singing.)* “Captain Kinneret, sit on down. Captain Kinneret, sit on down.” How do you feel when I sing it? “Captain Kinneret, sit on down. How do you feel when I roast you?”

[00:43:14] **Mark:** To be honest, when you played it earlier in the show, I haven't heard that song since the day, but when you played it earlier in the show, I knew every word of it. I would—I sang it in my head along. So, it's with me.

[00:43:31] **John Hodgman:** It's with you. Howie, you covered your mouth when Mark revealed that he had not heard it since then, and it's still—and he remembers every word. Were you covering your mouth to yawn because, “Ugh, this boring dude,” or were you stifling a different emotion?

[00:43:50] **Howie:** Uh, I was—I think I had a set of mixed emotions. The first is a bit of shame on my part that I've wounded my friend so badly, but also a bit of pride on my part that as a songwriter, I wrote a song that's still in his head 20 years later.

[00:44:09] **John Hodgman:** Oh, it's a very catchy tune!

[00:44:11] **Jesse Thorn:** You're saying you're proud that your bullying is living in his head, rent free.

[00:44:16] **John Hodgman:** Mark, it says here that if I were to rule in your favor, you would like me to compel Howie to acknowledge that you were leading by example. That you did not deserve or need to be singled out and embarrassed musically in front of 500 kids. And though he has not used those precise words, it does sound like he acknowledges now that he realizes that he hurt your feelings. Is that not sufficient?

[00:44:41] **Mark:** Uh, yeah, I suppose it's sufficient. I think it just—I don't know. It seems like when—after you've done something, you should own it.

[00:44:53] **John Hodgman:** But by contrast, Howie, in his request for a ruling, wants me to order every member of your friend group to call you Captain Kinneret once per year in the group chat, in the name of quote/unquote “humility”. So, he's asking for something pretty specific if I were to find in his favor. So, is there—if I were to find in your favor and adjudicate that you were harmed, is there some concrete damages that I could award you?

[00:45:23] **Mark:** Uh, perhaps via that same group chat and that same friend group, Howie could issue a sincere apology, instead of trying to get people to continue to do what he did (*laughing*) in the first place.

[00:45:45] **John Hodgman:** Howie, when you ask that I order every member of the friend group to call Mark Captain Kinneret once per year in the quote “name of humility”, end quote, Mark seems pretty humble! Do you mean in the name of humility or in the name of re-humiliation?

(*Mark laughs.*)

[00:46:03] **Howie:** I guess what I meant was, I would like him now—all these years later—to recognize the spirit in which the song was intended. Not as bullying, but as just a gentle, “Hey, we're all friends here. We can all laugh together at ourselves.”

[00:46:19] **John Hodgman:** I see. Okay. I think I've heard everything I need to. I am going to go sneak into the tuck shop of my chambers and eat a lot of Whatchamacallit bars and have some Bug Juice. And I'll be back in a moment with my verdict.

[00:46:36] **Jesse Thorn:** Please rise as Judge John Hodgman exits the courtroom.

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

Mark, how are you feeling about your chances?

[00:46:44] **Mark:** Truthfully, pretty good. I think you could see where the judge was naturally leaning when he asked about humility versus re-humiliation.

[00:46:54] **Jesse Thorn:** Howie, how do you feel?

[00:46:57] **Howie:** You know, I've never been called a bully before, so I'm feeling a little put in my place.

[00:47:02] **Jesse Thorn:** We'll see What Judge Hodgman has to say about all this when we come back in just a moment.

[00:47:06] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:47:10] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:47:12] **Jesse Thorn:** The Van Freaks Roadshow is about to get in gear!

[00:47:19] **John Hodgman:** H-hey! (*Chuckles.*) How many gears does a Mitsubishi Delica, Japanese, market-only adventure van have? Six? Five?

[00:47:28] **Jesse Thorn:** I'm going to—I'm gonna put it up to eight. Why not eight?

[00:47:30] **John Hodgman:** Yeah. Eight, probably. They probably have some extra gears.

[00:47:33] **Jesse Thorn:** I've only ever driven a Subaru Sambar, which is what I have, but I'm imagining myself. I've got my left hand on the gear knob right now, right-hand drive vehicle, and I'm putting the Delica up to... eight! Because we're cruising on the freeway to Belfast, Northern Ireland. (*Chuckles.*)

[00:47:52] **John Hodgman:** That's right. We're taking that transatlantic freeway straight to Belfast, Northern Ireland, and following up with Dublin, Edinburgh, London, Copenhagen, then back over to the United States for a whole bunch of wonderful cities in the United States, some of which we've been to before—like Chicago and St. Paul. Austin, Texas. Some we've never been to, like Lexington, Kentucky, and Charlottesville, Virginia! Plus, our nation's capital, Washington, DC. And of course! The State Theater here in Portland, Maine, as well as of course our triumphant return to my hometown, sort of, of Boston, Massachusetts at the Wilbur Theater and our double triumphant return to Brooklyn at the Murmrr Opera House, where not only will we be performing live for you, but also live streaming the show to the entire world.

We love *Antiques Roadshow*. We love Mitsubishi Delica vans. We love shows. We love the road. We love you. We wanna see you in all of these places and online. You can get all the details at—

[00:48:52] **Jesse Thorn:** VanFreaksRoadshow.com. We have registered the domain!

[00:48:56] **John Hodgman:** VanFreaksRoadshow.com for all your tickets and your information. Go there now. You can also submit cases for all these places. We do need cases in places! MaximumFun.org/jjho. You'll find the link there over at Van Freaks Roadshow as well. Let us know if you're in any of these cities and you've got a dispute with anybody. We might hear your case live on stage! And finally, justice will be yours, VanFreaksRoadshow.com. Tickets are going! Why don't you go get them?

[00:49:26] **Jesse Thorn:** Let's get back to the case!

[00:49:27] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:49:29] **Jesse Thorn:** Please rise as Judge John Hodgman reenters the courtroom and presents his verdict.

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

[00:49:33] **John Hodgman:** I think for two summers I did go to Camp Burgess in Cape Cod for two weeks, one time with Damon, one time I think with John Wolf—maybe both times with Damon. Anyway, with my friends. And I did nooot see the point, and I did not like it. I did not care for it. I saw through that pretty quickly that this is a kind of constant low-level trauma. Now, no one—no one ever bullied me. I'm just talking about like having to shower in public. No, thank you! For an only child, this was the worst.

[00:50:07] **Jesse Thorn:** Wait, the showers at your summer camp were public?!

[00:50:11] **John Hodgman:** Well, I mean, there were stalls. Do you know what I mean?

[00:50:13] **Jesse Thorn:** Like, down at the town square? *(Laughs.)*

[00:50:15] **John Hodgman:** You had to walk through the woods. You had to walk through the woods in flip-flops and a towel.

(Jesse "wow"s.)

This was not for a sensitive child of Brookline, Massachusetts. And I'm talking about, you know, Brookline is suburban, but it ain't the woods. And you know, tests of strength and physical conflict. The only thing that I—*(chuckles)* we had a tick problem in our camp too. There was just—nature was just constantly trying to crawl up and into you. So, when we did our capture the flag event, our team was called the Ticks, the Fighting Ticks. That was my idea. This is my one happy memory. What I remember a lot was—*(chuckles)* what I remember a lot was spending, you know, nights listening to other kids in my bunk just like cry themselves to sleep, because they were so homesick. And I was too! No number of *Bloom County* comic strips can ease the homesickness of an only child.

And yet for all of this, we sent our kids to a classic summer camp too! And I understand that people have a looooot of fondness for camp that goes beyond mere Stockholm syndrome, because I know that our daughter loved her experience of that camp and went on to become a counselor in training. She really lived it up. Whereas our son sent home a letter, which was, I mean, truly magnificent in taking the pain and homesickness he was feeling and forging it into a weapon to hurt us, insofar as he wrote us a letter saying, “Camp is fine. I have two friends. Their names are Clown and Opera. Those aren't real people. Those are—”

(They laugh.)

“Those are the knots in the Pinewood ceiling above my bunk that I talk to at night, because I have no actual friends. Signed, your son.” I mean, I'm—

[00:52:25] **Mark:** Boy.

[00:52:27] **John Hodgman:** mean, I'm Hell

[00:52:29] **Jesse Thorn:** “Hello, Mudduh, hello, Fadduh.”

(They laugh.)

[00:52:29] **John Hodgman:** Yeah. Yeah. Uh, and you know, it was like I don't know that he's ever gonna forgive us for the—going to that camp the second time. We're like, “You came to like it at the end.”

He's like, “No, I didn't.” Well, you know, people have different experiences. There is something about summer camp and the collision of people at those ages, right? Ages like let's say, you know, 8 to 12 or even 15 for campers. And then, like 16 to 18 or 19 for counselors. Like, two groups that are at very, very big emotional moments of transition and change in their lives. And those collisions can be very memorable and very, very fun. And yet also, traumatic—or at least let's say memorable in a less fun way, right? And in particular, you know, when you have kids in charge of other kids—you know, counselors in charge, who are themselves children in charge of children—the understanding of the roles of authority and the responsibilities of authority... It gets very—it gets very blurry.

Now, I believe Howie. I believe that Howie did not understand that Mark felt so vulnerable already. And I believe Howie when he says, “I saw the walkie talkie. I saw the clipboard. I saw the signifiers of authority, and I saw the title. And I felt here was a figure of authority. And who am I, if not a goateed bard? A jester, if you will, whose job—nay, responsibility—is to upset authority at every turn if possible and speak truth to the King. King Captain Kinneret, sit on down! ‘Tis, I! Howie the bard.” And plus, I mean, Howie is a natural performer and rock star. He played at the Yellow Door. As a musician and as a performer—and I can say this because I am also the same—Howie probably had, mmm, difficulty understanding that people in the audience are human beings, that he is not the main character of the universe, that people have feelings besides him, including Mark.

(They chuckle.)

You know, when we are on stage, it is power. You know, even though Howie misunderstood the power differential and thought he was kind of, you know, thumbing his nose at the man to some degree, still, he was on stage, and he was amplified. And that's the power that you have to wield responsibly. When you do crowd work in comedy or whatever, you have to be careful that you are roasting responsibly the people in the audience and that they're enjoying it. And I think that, you know, despite the fact that Howie I think in good faith thought that he was just poking at another counselor, the truth is that he made an error of judgment. He didn't appreciate that being on stage gave him a visibility and a kind of power of his own that necessarily made it a little bit more of a punch down than a punch up.

Equally so, I think Howie—and this is a perfectly reasonable error of judgment. Like, I'm not saying that Howie's a bad person. Like, Howie, how old were you at this time?

[00:56:20] **Howie:** 21/22.

[00:56:22] **John Hodgman:** Oh, you should have known better. Never mind then. I take it back.

(They laugh.)

But I would say it's perfectly reasonable even then, 'cause you're just still—you're, you know, your brain's still developing and you—you know, you don't know all of the context of what's going on here. And you know, roasting and teasing fellow counselors within your own camp environment, your own camp ecosystem of light hazing and torture—you know where to push and where not to push. You know? You know how far to poke until you hit bone. But because this was a guest from a far-off land, you didn't necessarily know what their conventions were, right? I don't think you intended to hurt him. And I'm gonna say something, Mark, that you might not like. If I were in your shoes and someone called me Captain Kinneret, and they were roasting me from the stage, I'd be so happy!

I remember the first time I ever saw the video on *Yo! MTV Raps* of Hammer's "They Put Me in the Mix". And that's the one that goes, "Hammer, Hammer. I am Hammer!" And then he goes, "They put me in the mix!" Like, yeah, dude, you're in the song! You're the one—of course they put you in the mix! It's still thrilling for a Hammer to hear his own name. But you know, that's because Howie and I are emotionally stunted performers who want recognition at all times. Howie didn't know that you weren't gonna be flattered by the fact that you got this cool name, Captain Kinneret—which really sounds like a cool Elton John album, actually. Like, I think that you have to acknowledge that Howie acted in good faith, given the information that he had and given the level of judgment that he had. One thing that Howie has not said in this—really, in this conversation. He said, "I would be happy to say (*accented*) sorry," but I haven't heard him say (*accented*) sorry.

(They laugh.)

You know what I'm saying? So, looking back at your ideal rulings for a moment, I'm definitely not going to order your entire friend group to continue to re-haze Mark by calling him Captain Kinneret at once a year in the group chat in the name of humility. Mark is plenty humble. So, I am going to rule in Mark's favor in this case, even though I feel that what you

did, Howie, was not that bad—right?—that you did it with good intentions and in a way that, if Mark had been a more extroverted person who liked to get some attention thrown at him, he might have even enjoyed. But in this case, your little barb went awry, and it lodged in his heart, and it's still working its way out. You're asking to be taken at face value. Take at face value what Mark has told you, that he was not standing to flout your authority. He was trying to be empathetic towards his kids, and your little song-dart was misguided and hit him too hard! I think—I do order you to acknowledge that he was in fact leading by example. Do you acknowledge that?

[00:59:29] **Howie:** I do.

[00:59:30] **John Hodgman:** So acknowledged.

[00:59:31] **Sound Effect:** A single gavel bang.

[00:59:32] **John Hodgman:** And I do order you to say I'm (*accented*) sorry, but in a song. So, producer Jennifer Marmor, how long do we have until this podcast hits the air? Just under a month, Howie! So, yeah. So, Howie, just write the song in whatever, you know, mode or tone you want it to be. Keep it about 30 seconds, and send it to us, and we'll play it next week.

[00:59:56] **Howie:** I love it.

[00:59:57] **John Hodgman:** This is the sound of a gavel.

[00:59:58] **Music:** “The Sit-Down Song” by Howie.

Sit down, sit on down, everybody, let's sit down

[01:00:03] **John Hodgman:** Judge John Hodgman rules. That is all.

[01:00:06] **Jesse Thorn:** Please rise as Judge John Hodgman exits the courtroom.

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

Mark, how do you feel?

[01:00:12] **Mark:** I can't wait.

(Howie chuckles.)

I can't wait. Howie, I hope you get some other musicians in on it. Make it big.

[01:00:21] **Jesse Thorn:** Howie, how do you feel?

[01:00:23] **Howie:** Uh, I feel good. I feel like I've got a project now, and I can channel my regret into music, and hopefully going forward, Mark and I will have smoother seas to sail.

[01:00:38] **Jesse Thorn:** Howie, Mark, thanks for joining us on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

[01:00:42] **Mark:** Thank you.

[01:00:43] **Howie:** Thank you.

[01:00:44] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[01:00:45] **Jesse Thorn:** Another *Judge John Hodgman* case is in the books. We'll have Swift Justice in just a second. Our thanks to Redditor MutantFriend for naming this week's episode, "Diss Bard".

[01:00:58] **John Hodgman:** "Diss Bard", 'cause it was a bard who dissed that guy. That was a good one.

[01:01:02] **Jesse Thorn:** We're asking for those names at MaximumFun.Reddit.com, where you can also sneak a peek at upcoming topics of Judge John Hodgman cases. It's a sneaky move. You can go sneak on over there.

[01:01:16] **John Hodgman:** Sneaky! No one ever goes to Reddit to not be sneaky.

[01:01:18] **Jesse Thorn:** Uh, Instagram.com/judgejohnhodgman is where you can see this picture of the world's most/least rocking-est man, ripping out a sweet acoustic guitar solo at summer camp. Really looking like—you know, really looking like Coop from *Wet Hot American Summer*, Michael Showalter's character.

[01:01:43] **John Hodgman:** It's true. Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah, absolutely. (*Humming the sit-down song.*) Here, I got a music bed for the rest of the credits. (*Humming.*) Go ahead.

[01:01:53] **Jesse Thorn:** *Judge John Hodgman*, created by Jesse Thorn and John Hodgman. This episode, engineered by Max Jewer at Clutch Sound in Madison, Wisconsin. Marie Bardy runs our social media. Our producer is Jennifer Marmor.

Now, Swift Justice.

[01:02:08] **John Hodgman:** (*Between humming.*) Now, Swift Justice.

[01:02:09] **Jesse Thorn:** Redditor Medved801 says, "My husband drinks my drinks if I don't finish them within 30 minutes. He claims after 30 minutes, I've given up my right of exclusivity to my drink, and it is up for grabs."

[01:02:25] **John Hodgman:** Uh, yeah, no. Um, I mean, you can't—uh, you can't grab—you can't steal someone's drink, 'cause then they're only having half a drink. And we all know a body needs two drinks, right, Jesse?

[01:02:36] **Jesse Thorn:** A body needs two drinks. It's true! (*Laughs.*)

[01:02:40] **John Hodgman:** That's science.

[01:02:41] **Jesse Thorn:** It's science!

[01:02:43] **John Hodgman:** Don't steal people's drinks. So, that settles that.

But now we need some new disputes. How about stranger disputes? You know, when Howie and Mark met, they didn't—when this all happened, they didn't know each other. This is a grudge that Mark was holding against a stranger until he wandered into Zach's kitchen and saw a chance to redeem himself with the saltine challenge. Maybe you've gotten into a dispute with a stranger. Arguments you've had at the airport with a stranger, in the subway, or online. You remember that person who was going too slow in the passing lane? And you couldn't pass those cars, because they wouldn't get over? Or remember that person at the grocery store who had 16 items in the 15 item or less line? Remember those teens who guilted your son into switching seats on the airplane, such that he had to give up his nice window seat for a middle seat, three rows back? Ugh, those teens! What did you do about it? Seethe, like I did? Or did you get justice? Probably you didn't get justice. It's hard to get justice against strangers in this world, but I will give it to you!

If you have a dispute against a stranger who cannot speak for themselves, send it into us at MaximumFun.org/jjho, and Jesse and I will resolve it for you and probably find in your favor. But we're also looking for all disputes, right, Jesse?

[01:03:57] **Jesse Thorn:** All disputes! And especially disputes in places where we are headed out on tour. So, if you are in one of those places, make sure to let us know when you go to MaximumFun.org/jjho. We'll talk to you next time on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

[01:04:11] **John Hodgman:** (*Singing.*) “Everybody, let's sit down.” Boom.

[01:04:13] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[01:04:15] **John Hodgman:** Hey! It's a completely unsurprising and totally promised post credit sequence where I'm going to read that letter from Mary that I alluded to in the cultural reference. So, you may recall Camp Robin Hood in Maine—the, let's say... over-resourced camp offering golf and tennis and squash programs along with its—per its website, “95 years of traditional values”. (*Disapprovingly.*) Hmmmm. A few months ago, listener Rachel wrote in about being a counselor there, and I read her letter online. And she revealed the instructions that some campers were allowed to ignore all camp rules and do whatever they wanted. The rumor being they were children of the leaders of a drug cartel. Camp Robin Hood.

Anyway, here's a letter from listener Mary, who did not attend Camp Robin Hood but had an interaction with them. She went to Camp Four Winds. Here's what she had to say. “Camp Four Winds was an all-girls sailing camp, and even though it was the early aughts, Four Winds was still very much stuck in the heydays of 1960s prep/preppy culture. So, we sang songs dedicated to pink and green polo shirts, including the classic, ‘Just like you would to your IZOD shirt, be true to Four Winds, now.’ I had no clue what Izod was. Across the lake was Camp Robin Hood. One night, the girls in my bunk caught up to some mischief. After our counselors fell asleep, we snuck down to the docks. We stole canoes and quietly paddled toward Camp Robin Hood. It was July, but it was Maine, so it was freezing. I was in the middle of one canoe, a freeloading non-paddler, desperately hoping we wouldn't capsize and drown.

At Camp Robin Hood, they had dark green shirts with a Jaunty Robin Hood logo embroidered on the chest. They had a practice at the end of the day of leaving them to dry in the docks. We wanted those shirts, and we planned to steal them. But as we were docking. A revolving bright light shone out and some kind of alarm started blaring! We grabbed as many shirts as we could, and we started panic paddling back, and we made it. When we got back, we shoved the Robin Hood shirts deep into the bottom of our camp trunks. I lived with dread every day afterwards that we would be found out and thrown in jail. But we got away with it, until—days later—one of our group made a mistake and wore one of the shirts. It was a dead giveaway, especially as the shirts had been reported missing. We got a stern talking to, and we were forced to return the shirts to Camp Robin Hood, but I kept one. I wore it a few times once I got home before I felt too guilty and gave it to Goodwill.”

So, she ended up stealing from the rich and giving to the poor. Good job, Mary. She goes on. “In a twist of fate and imbalanced budgets, Camp Four Winds closed the year afterwards. I was sad. Camp Four Winds was old and rundown, but also genuinely fun. I promptly forgot how to sail. Though, I think I could still successfully win a game of jacks if the opportunity arose.” So, Mary sent in a recording of her singing that one bit of the Camp Four Winds song that I quoted when I entered this courtroom. So, we'll close out today with that.

[01:07:26] **Music:** “Camp Four Winds Song” sung by Mary.

Just like you would to your Izod shirt

Be true to Four Winds now

[01:07:32] **Sound Effect:** Cheerful ukulele chord.

[01:07:34] **Speaker 1:** Maximum Fun.

[01:07:35] **Speaker 2:** A worker-owned network.

[01:07:36] **Speaker 3:** Of artist owned shows.

[01:07:38] **Speaker 4:** Supported—

[01:07:39] **Speaker 5:** —directly—

[01:07:40] **Speaker 6:** —by you!