

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

[00:00:02] **Jean Grae:** Welcome to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. I'm guest bailiff Jean Grae, sitting in for Jesse Thorn. We are in chambers this week to clear the docket. This week's topic, who's right and who's wrong on the internet? The answer is everyone! Everyone get off the internet now! Please! Please! Here to judge your online beefs is Judge John Hodgman. He's still on the internet.

[00:00:31] **John Hodgman:** Thank you very—I know, we're using the internet to make the podcast. Thank you very much, Jean.

[00:00:34] **Jean Grae:** Get out. Get out.

[00:00:35] **John Hodgman:** Jean Grae, welcome back to the program. I have not seen you in person or even virtually for some time, my friend. I thank the internet for being there so that I can see your incredible personhood—at least virtually, at this moment. We're going to be chatting with you all this episode. But first—now, normally on these docket episodes, I don't do an obscure cultural reference like we do on the other episodes. Because it's not really necessary. But this is a special episode—not just because you're here, Jean. But because we're also joined by a very special expert witness.

(Jean agrees.)

Whose name shall be revealed in a moment.

In honor of this specialness, I will offer this special obscure cultural reference. See, Jean and Mystery Guest, if you can guess the source of this quote.

(Jean confirms.)

Quote, “Parents have an obligation to let their kids go out in the world, in broader and broader circles of independence. But they also have to train them how to be in the world, how to avoid hurting themselves and others, if possible. I trust in your case that guidance was absolutely present. But nostalgia for how it used to be doesn't make that time necessarily better, nor this dude any less of an asshole.” End quote. I'll start with you, Jean. Can you guess where this quote is from?

[00:01:45] **Jean Grae:** It sounds like something I would say, because it's reasonable, and it involves critical thinking.

[00:01:51] **John Hodgman:** Yees!

[00:01:52] **Jean Grae:** I don't know exactly who it is, but I can say that it's not a lot of people on the internet.

[00:01:58] **John Hodgman:** Okay. (*Chuckles.*) Not a lot of people on the internet. I'll write that down.

[00:02:00] **Jean Grae:** Like, it's definitely no one at Fox, and it's definitely, absolutely not Kanye.

[00:02:07] **John Hodgman:** Okay, fair enough. Without commenting, I'm just writing that down. Mystery expert witness, do you have a guess as to the of that quote?

[00:02:16] **Mystery Guest:** I don't, but it also sounds like someone that doesn't spend too much time online.

[00:02:20] **John Hodgman:** It doesn't sound like someone who spends too much time online. That's a great guess. Unfortunately, all guesses are wrong. The correct answer was me, John Hodgman—

(*They laugh.*)

—fighting with Reddit user SAILSHONAN. Yeah, I'm going to name that person, SAILSHONAN, S-A-I-L-S-H-O-N-A-N, all caps—in the comments on a post on the popular Reddit community Am I the Asshole, a community to which I am an addict.

(*Jean “wow”s.*)

Now, I would like to ask our expert witness a few questions, so let's introduce her. She is the technology and online culture columnist at the *Washington Post*, a very famous newspaper, author of the new book, *Extremely Online: The Untold Story of Fame, Influence, and Power on the Internet*. It's Taylor Lorenz! Hello, Taylor. Thank you for being here.

[00:03:12] **Taylor Lorenz:** Thanks for having me!

[00:03:13] **John Hodgman:** Of course. So, you are an expert in online culture, so I just would like to ask you a couple of questions right up front before we get into these docket questions. Is fighting with people in the comments section or in reply threads or on the internet in general, are these debates totally fun and worthwhile and a great use of your time all the time? Yes or no?

[00:03:34] **Taylor Lorenz:** (*Interrupting.*) No. No.

[00:03:36] **John Hodgman:** No? They're not a great use of one's time?

[00:03:38] **Taylor Lorenz:** It's like draining blood from your body. It takes a lot out of you. I suggest not doing that.

[00:03:42] **John Hodgman:** Hmm. Okay. Alright, quick follow up. But it's harmless, right? Expressing an opinion on the internet could never ever come back to haunt you in an unpleasant way later, right? I mean, what could happen?

(They chuckle knowingly.)

[00:03:55] **Taylor Lorenz:** You could only lose your job and career and life, you know.

[00:03:59] **John Hodgman:** Nothing bad has ever happened to you, I mean, I presume.

[00:04:03] **Taylor Lorenz:** Yeah. Yeah. I've experienced the worst and the best of it all, but you know, I like the drama.

[00:04:09] **John Hodgman:** I appreciate that. And how long have you been covering online culture?

[00:04:12] **Taylor Lorenz:** Since 2009. So.

(Jean and John “wow”.)

[00:04:15] **John Hodgman:** I was just thinking about 2009. That's a long time ago. We only had the iPhone for two years at that point.

[00:04:22] **Taylor Lorenz:** Yeah, I started as a blogger. So, I started in that blogger boom back then.

[00:04:26] **John Hodgman:** Oh! What was the name of your blog?

[00:04:28] **Taylor Lorenz:** Well, my main blog was just TaylorLorenz.Tumblr. I was a Tumblr girl.

[00:04:32] **John Hodgman:** Wowie! That's amazing, yeah. That's old school for sure. So, given that you've been around for a long time on the internet, let me ask you this. A relatively internet savvy adult of about my age—and, say, with my name—should have learned to stop getting into fights on Reddit threads around when? Like, 2009 maybe?

[00:04:55] **Taylor Lorenz:** Yeah, Reddit is the one platform I have to say, even as an internet culture writer, I don't touch it. I've never waded in there. It's a bad place.

[00:05:02] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, well, the correct answer is: I wrote that one month ago.

(Taylor “no”s with a laugh.)

I can't—yes, yes, I am an avid reader of *Am I the Asshole*. As I've said on the show before, it is the greatest collection of extremely short stories told by the most unreliable narrators

since—well, Yelp. And I have a policy. I have a policy of only lurking. I only read I don't, and then sometimes I get into it when, as Randall Munroe in the famous *XKCD* comic number 386 said, “Someone is wrong on the internet,” and that's something I posted. If you want the full context and to see the full story, just search my comment history on Reddit. My username is JohnHodgman. I have a very simple username on Reddit. No underscores.

[00:05:46] **Jean Grae:** Surprise!

[00:05:47] **John Hodgman:** No numbers. And you don't have to take a look, Jean or Taylor, but listeners, if you want to take a look, I think you'll see I—it's a rare one, because I won it. I won this argument. I won it on style. But meanwhile, we asked for you, listeners—your stories of mixing it up online. So, Taylor and Jean, will you—

[00:06:04] **Jean Grae:** Wait a second, wait a second! Wait a second, wait a second.

[00:06:07] **John Hodgman:** I won the argument.

[00:06:08] **Jean Grae:** (*Stammering.*) Wh—you—no, you did! I think you did. I'm just saying, you didn't ask me anything about my precious online beefs.

[00:06:17] **John Hodgman:** Oh! Please tell me, Jean.

[00:06:19] **Jean Grae:** I've been fighting in chat rooms since AOL chat, in forums, everywhere. Oh, it was the greatest.

[00:06:26] **John Hodgman:** What? What!? Who was your nemesis?

[00:06:30] **Jean Grae:** Oh, which one? What's the plural of—? Nemesai? Nemesissies?

[00:06:33] **John Hodgman:** Nemeses? Nemesissies? Nemesos?

[00:06:35] **Jean Grae:** Nemesize? Nemesisies. I have many a nemesissie. And before Twitter, it was—I think I had just been in like—it was like Friendster and then Myspace, and then Twitter happened. And like those early days of Twitter, man, I went to town. I went to town, like I came there to rip heads off. It was my job, and it was beautiful.

[00:07:01] **John Hodgman:** And you won!

[00:07:01] **Jean Grae:** Of course! That's not a question.

[00:07:04] **John Hodgman:** 100% win rate, I presume.

[00:07:05] **Jean Grae:** Listen, I don't start if I'm not gonna win.

[00:07:08] **John Hodgman:** And victory in an online thread fight is absolutely clear. It's not just that everyone loses, because they lose their time and their dignity.

[00:07:15] **Taylor Lorenz:** No, whoever has the most likes wins.

[00:07:17] **John Hodgman:** Oooh, that's true. I only got one upvote on Reddit for my takedown of SAILSHONAN.

[00:07:23] **Taylor Lorenz:** Damn.

[00:07:24] **John Hodgman:** Ugh. Boy, that person really got on my nerves.

[00:07:26] **Taylor Lorenz:** We'll upvote it.

[00:07:27] **Jean Grae:** I'll go vote for it. Like, you know, you were right about not stepping foot into Reddit, because it's fun—it's fun to hang out there, but I'm not opening up a conversation.

[00:07:36] **John Hodgman:** No. I come here to farm karma. You make your own choice. Go, you know, upvote it, downvote it, see what you want. You can decide whether or not I'm right or wrong when I say that I won that fight. I think that SAILSHONAN just abdicated from the conversation, because I was being weird. But meanwhile, we asked you, the listeners, for your stories of mixing it up online. So, Taylor and Jean, will you help me in judging some people?

(They confirm.)

[00:07:56] **John Hodgman:** Yes, great. So, Jean, take it away. You can read the first one.

[00:07:59] **Jean Grae:** Okay, I got the first case! Okay, here's a case from Mike. He uses pronouns he/him, and Mike is in New Brunswick, Canada. Been to New Brunswick many times. Never met Mike!

[00:08:10] **John Hodgman:** Fredericton, specifically.

[00:08:12] **Jean Grae:** Yeah! Okay. Mike says, "I bullied a local restaurant on their Facebook page. All of their food photography was stock, blatantly taken from other websites. The address was residential and very far from their purported location. I was very certain they were not a real restaurant. On every post, I'd hop on and say, 'This place isn't real.' Or 'There's no way this restaurant is a real thing.' Or 'This is a bewildering scam.' But it ended up being a real restaurant. It took me three years of prodding by my friends to go there. It was fine."

[00:08:50] **John Hodgman:** Alright, Mike is an internet bully from New Brunswick, Canada, who only bullied one restaurant. Before we get to judgment on whether Mike should be doing this kind of thing or not, I did an internet search for this restaurant and found some photos.

[00:09:04] **Jean Grae:** I'm so excited.

[00:09:06] **John Hodgman:** Provided by the restaurant to Google Maps. And I don't know, Jean and Taylor, you tell me. I'm going to share my screen. Does this—can you see this photo?

(Jean laughs.)

[00:09:13] **Taylor Lorenz:** Stop. Stop! *(Laughs.)*

[00:09:18] **John Hodgman:** Do they look like real people to you? Real people having a real good time? Not an incredible scam, right?

[00:09:23] **Jean Grae:** Is the guy in the back on a date with a chair?

[00:09:27] **Taylor Lorenz:** I think that looks like a stroller to me.

[00:09:29] **Jean Grae:** What?!

[00:09:29] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, I think he—I think he brought his invisible infant to the party while these women in the foreground are enjoying each other.

[00:09:34] **Jean Grae:** Oh, okay. Is this the only picture?

[00:09:37] **John Hodgman:** No, there's one other. This, I think, is from the same—this is—obviously, they commissioned—it does look like a stock photograph. It doesn't look like something that ever really happened.

[00:09:43] **Jean Grae:** This does not look real.

[00:09:45] **Taylor Lorenz:** This is the fakest thing I've ever seen.

[00:09:47] **Jean Grae:** Yeah, this is pretty bad.

[00:09:48] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, yeah. And this is another picture that they commissioned. This one just turned out to be kind of a weird piece of art. It's just a—

(Taylor laughs.)

Obviously, these pictures are going to be available on our Instagram page and our show page at MaximumFun.org.

[00:10:00] **Jean Grae:** The depth of field!

[00:10:01] **John Hodgman:** A chilled seafood tower, and behind it in soft focus is a woman just staring into the middle distance.

[00:10:07] **Jean Grae:** Lovingly.

[00:10:08] **John Hodgman:** In a way that I find to be a little—you know the movie *M3GAN*?

[00:10:11] **Jean Grae:** Yeah, yeah.

[00:10:12] **John Hodgman:** A little *M3GAN*-y. It feels like *M3GAN* is going—yeah.

[00:10:14] **Jean Grae:** Oh yeah, no, yeah, there's a little *M3GAN* over there, and then the other one is very proud of her son, the lobster is what it feels like.

(John agrees with a laugh.)

[00:10:23] **Taylor Lorenz:** In both pictures, the glasses are all completely full. No one's taken a sip.

(Jean and John confirm.)

[00:10:28] **Jean Grae:** No, you can't drink there. They bring you drinks.

[00:10:30] **John Hodgman:** Those breadsticks are probably made of plastic, and they are limited. Well, okay. So, but the fact is it is a real restaurant, called Maxwell's. Quote, “A classic steakhouse with a maritime twist” in Fredericton, New Brunswick. And it's very well reviewed, and it looks okay. And there are definitely other photos online which are not professional at all, which you can see if you go to their Google Photos page or whatever. But Taylor, let me turn it to you. Was Mike wrong to bully a restaurant?

[00:11:00] **Taylor Lorenz:** I general think that it's fine to bully certain restaurants. Like, if they're bad chain restaurants that—you know. I don't know. But in this case, I think he was wrong, because it looks like a nice—it looks like a nice place. I feel bad that it's like a family owned—you know, if it's like a nice—like he said, it's a residential address.

[00:11:20] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, but I don't think it's a mom-and-pop restaurant. I think—and by the way, Mike was not the only one in the Facebook comments. I went back—way back to 2018, when they were launching and putting out these stock photographs, and there were many people in New Brunswick going, “Is this real? This address is wrong. This is—nothing is there. These photos look strange.” But apparently they developed a new hotel in that area, and then this restaurant is in it. So, it's a hotel restaurant. So, I don't—you know.

[00:11:48] **Jean Grae:** I—you know, I feel like it was fair. I feel like this is something I would do. I would absolutely be like, “This is not real. What are we talking about?” And also, because I don't want people to get murdered. So, I'm like—

[00:12:03] **John Hodgman:** Oh, you mean tricked into going to a fake restaurant? Yeah.

[00:12:06] **Taylor Lorenz:** You're thinking of the safety of the community.

[00:12:08] **Jean Grae:** Yes. I am always—I only bully the bullies or for the sake of the community or both.

[00:12:16] **John Hodgman:** You know, Mike said that he's a bully, but I think that I don't accept his self-judgment 100% there.

(Jean and Taylor agree.)

Because I trust that he was actually operating on good faith. He thought this restaurant was fake. He was genuinely confused. He wasn't trying to gaslight an existing restaurant by leaving a lot of comments and reviews saying, "This is fake. Don't go there. It's a front for—" You know, I don't know.

[00:12:37] **Jean Grae:** Like Mattress Firm.

[00:12:38] **John Hodgman:** Mattress Firm isn't real?

[00:12:39] **Jean Grae:** You ever seen anyone in Mattress Firm buying mattresses?

[00:12:42] **John Hodgman:** You're saying that Mattress Firm is a front for some shady biz?

[00:12:45] **Jean Grae:** The whole internet thinks Mattress Firm is a front for some shady business.

[00:12:50] **John Hodgman:** Does this ring a bell with you, Taylor? I've never heard this before.

[00:12:52] **Taylor Lorenz:** I haven't, but there's actually a really good series on *Morning Brew*. I don't know if you guys heard of that. They have this video series where they go to all the random shops in New York that you're like, "How is this like a business?" And they interview them and explain how the place is actually in business. And it's the most weird shops ever. So.

[00:13:09] **Jean Grae:** We have a lot of those.

[00:13:11] **John Hodgman:** Are the explanations convincing? Do they ever seem like maybe this bodega is not a bodega, or this Jennifer Convertibles is actually a front for nefarious business or something?

[00:13:21] **Taylor Lorenz:** The ones that *Morning Brew* does, they are all real businesses, and it's very interesting. A lot of them do like online businesses, but they have the storefront.

[00:13:28] **Jean Grae:** Hmm. But not Mattress Firm!

[00:13:30] **Taylor Lorenz:** Mattress Firm, they haven't, and that's one we need to investigate. Maybe Mike needs to look into it. That's weird!

[00:13:34] **Jean Grae:** It's a big thing! I'm not the only one suggesting this. Mattress Firm, money laundering. And then after that, I was like, well, I've never been in a Mattress Firm, and I never saw anyone go in a Mattress Firm.

[00:13:46] **John Hodgman:** Well, it's sort of like a serial killer begging to be caught, right? Because, you know, traditionally, where do you hide your money? Under your mattress, right? It's leaving a trail of breadcrumbs right to their door.

[00:13:57] **Jean Grae:** Yeah. Right to their mattress.

[00:13:58] **John Hodgman:** That's right.

[00:13:58] **Jean Grae:** I feel like he's definitely not a bully, 'cause like at the end he still left a decent review for the restaurant.

(They agree.)

He's like, "It was fine."

[00:14:10] **John Hodgman:** Well, speaking of reviews, as a follow up, if someone writes a mean review of a restaurant on Yelp or Google or whatever, first of all: why? What are you doing? Who cares? You had a bad experience. That's fine. But if someone writes a mean review on Yelp or Google, is it a good idea for the owner to fight back in the comments?

[00:14:27] **Taylor Lorenz:** No.

[00:14:28] **John Hodgman:** No? Why not, Taylor?

[00:14:29] **Taylor Lorenz:** 'Cause the person always edits their comments. So, when you go to the review and it's like "edit", the response below is bullshit.

[00:14:35] **John Hodgman:** Really?

[00:14:36] **Taylor Lorenz:** I don't know if you guys see that on Google. Yeah.

[00:14:38] **Jean Grae:** There's—I like—I don't want them to do it, but there are a couple of restaurants, I'll see if I can find them in my phone, that are my favorite of the owner responding to every single person.

[00:14:51] **John Hodgman:** *(Chuckles.)* Getting feisty, right?

[00:14:52] **Jean Grae:** Just—oh, it is. They don't hold back.

[00:14:55] **Taylor Lorenz:** If someone was negatively reviewing my restaurant, I want to fight back. I'm going to fight back in the comments if people review my book bad. I would want to put my own story out there.

[00:15:04] **John Hodgman:** No, no, no, no! Taylor, no, don't fight back!

(They laugh.)

Don't, don't! So, many of you—do you know what's happening on Goodreads right now?

[00:15:12] **Taylor Lorenz:** I'm scared.

[00:15:13] **John Hodgman:** Do you understand? Do you understand what happens if you piss off the Goodreads community in any way? They will come for you. They will downvote your book.

[00:15:22] **Taylor Lorenz:** They're vicious.

(John agrees.)

Some guy signed up for multiple accounts to rate my book one star the second it went on Goodreads, before I had even finished writing it!

(John “oh no”s.)

And I got an alert, and I was like, “Oh, a Goodreads alert!” It was like, “This book sucks.” I'm still writing it!

[00:15:38] **Jean Grae:** I'm always amazed when people start other accounts.

[00:15:41] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, that's incredible, right? We'll talk more about sock puppet accounts a little later in the episode but let me just say something to the people of Goodreads. I love you, you're all terrific.

(They laugh.)

Actually, you know, I'm on Goodreads. People who are very close to me are on it. I would say that it's not that they're vicious, but they are a very protective community of readers. And if they feel that they are slighted, there are some that will go too far. So, I would argue for you, Taylor, please don't. If you are GP Cremonini, the owner and proprietor of the Ristorante Riviera in Venice, Italy, please keep it up. Because this guy is my absolute favorite.

Ristorante Riviera is a restaurant in Venice. It's in the Dorsoduro district of Venice, very near the Conad City. And in between the Conad City and my—the apartment that we did a house swap. It was very nice. And in between them, there was this restaurant called Ristorante Riviera. And I was like, “Maybe I should check this place out.” And I went, and it got a lot of—had a lot of good reviews, but also had some negative reviews. All of which were responded to by the owner with intense fury.

(Taylor “oh no”s with a laugh.)

This is from a year ago. This one-star review comes from a user named MC—the initials MC. The review is, “One star, this place is a total scam.”

Response from the owner. “Have you even come here, MC? I don't think so. Because I know by name each one of our guests. And I spend time with all of them, as in a lot of real reviews you can see. If you were a real human being, you would have talked to me if you had been here, but for sure, you have never sat down at our table, and you don't even have a real name! Or maybe you were the one who vandalized our front door a few nights ago, taking advantage of the darkness—not as a hero, but as a real coward. We don't receive liars or cowards, never mind anonymous ones. Have the little day that you deserve, MC, AKA Master of Cowards!”

(They cackle.)

[00:17:38] **Jean Grae:** Yes! There were so many gems in there! The darkness! And—anytime anyone tells someone to have the day they deserve, they win. But he said the little day you deserve.

[00:17:52] **John Hodgman:** The little day you deserve, MC, AKA Master of Cowards. He just made that up. Incredible. One time I saw—it was, uh—you know the Earth is dying, so the tides are rising. And Acqua Alta in Venice is higher than ever. That's when the water comes up above the streets. And one time, I saw him carry a woman out of his restaurant to get her to dry land or dry pavement, while the boyfriend or husband kind of just waded through in some boots that he provided. A gallant man! And yet I would never eat at this restaurant. It scares me too much. So, I love him, and I love his restaurant, but I feel that fighting back in this way makes me not want to go to the restaurant.

[00:18:31] **Jean Grae:** Oh, it makes me want to go!

[00:18:33] **John Hodgman:** Well, I mean, let's all go, then!

[00:18:35] **Jean Grae:** I wanna go.

[00:18:36] **Taylor Lorenz:** Yeah, I kind of want to go too. I want to greet him.

[00:18:38] **Jean Grae:** Because that's an art. What he's doing is an art.

[00:18:40] **Taylor Lorenz:** As a fellow writer, I feel like I can appreciate his prose.

[00:18:44] **Jean Grae:** We are going to take a quick break to hear from this week's partners. We'll be back with more cases to clear from the docket on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

[00:18:53] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:18:56] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:18:58] **Jean Grae:** Welcome back to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. This week we are clearing the docket and talking about online disputes with Taylor Lorenz, author of the upcoming book, *Extremely Online: The Untold Story of Fame, Influence, and Power on the Internet*. And I am very interested in reading that.

[00:19:17] **John Hodgman:** Well, I think you have to wait just a minute longer. Because it is up for preorder right now, right, Taylor?

[00:19:23] **Taylor Lorenz:** Yes, it comes out October 3rd.

[00:19:24] **Jean Grae:** Oh, fabulous.

[00:19:25] **John Hodgman:** October the 3rd. Very exciting, and everyone should go rate it five stars on Goodreads. Give it some good karma. Taylor, before we get back into the docket, tell us about your book.

[00:19:36] **Taylor Lorenz:** Yeah, my book is about kind of the first 20 years of the social internet, so from bloggers to Vine to Twitch to TikTok stars, kind of how the content creator industry emerged and how we have this half a trillion-dollar influencer industry now and how we all became influencers ourselves a little bit in the way we post.

[00:19:55] **John Hodgman:** How do you mean? How does it influence the way we post? I'm a podcaster. I'm a 52-year-old man. I'm not an influencer. How does it change the way we interact with the internet?

[00:20:05] **Taylor Lorenz:** Yeah, my book sort of talks about the ways that the internet pressures us all to create content and commodify ourselves and post in certain ways. I mean, even just the way that people post on Instagram, for instance—how it went from like pictures of other things in the world to pictures of ourself and full body shots, usually. Things like that. So, yeah.

[00:20:24] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, you know, I find it very strange, because when I started using Instagram, it was a refuge for me from the world of what we used to call Twitter, which had transmogrified from a fairly fun place where funny people I knew got together and told jokes with one another to an increasingly difficult place where a lot of bad feelings were being spread around. And it was feeling like a job to be on Twitter, and I wasn't getting paid

for it. So, Instagram was a more fun place, and it was a smaller place at the time. And I was just taking pictures of the world and whatever my travels on my book tours or whatever.

(Under his breath.) You can get all my books wherever you get books. I guess I'm just gonna plug that.

But as it grew, and they added stories, and they added reels, and they were absorbing sort of the vernacular of other online platforms that I had no idea how to use, I started getting invited to use different tools that I had no native understanding of and also tools to evaluate how my stuff was being seen and how to monetize it. Which was not something that ever crossed my mind, and it revealed to me that there was this, at the time, sort of incipient but now booming monetary economy where people are supporting themselves doing this. And I just want to know, Taylor, where's my money? I mean, I took like two pictures this week.

(Jean laughs.)

[00:21:38] **Taylor Lorenz:** You can start—you can turn on subscriptions now on Instagram and start probably collecting some paid subscribers there.

[00:21:45] **John Hodgman:** Oh, I don't know. I'd be nervous to see that data, actually. It might make me feel bad. When did this flip? What was the beginning of the monetized influencer as opposed to fun user world?

[00:21:59] **Taylor Lorenz:** Yeah. I would say there was a real turning point in the mid-2010s. This book is really about sort of the shift in our media environment too, like how we consume news and information, and a lot more people—especially around the 2016 election—started to consume news like more through nontraditional channels. YouTube, Instagram, newsletters, podcasts.

[00:22:18] **John Hodgman:** And that was all positive for our society.

[00:22:22] **Taylor Lorenz:** *(Laughs.)* Yeah, I mean—yeah, my book gets into the downsides as well. There are many, but that's when a lot of money started to really pour into the space. And then the past three years, obviously with covid, that just pushed everyone online further. And now, yeah, you can make millions as a TikTok influencer and many do.

[00:22:35] **John Hodgman:** Wow. And we'll talk a little bit more about how that compares to what's happening in what we call legacy media of film and television and other filmed entertainment that is not being made right now. Because as we speak, we are still—I'm a member of both of the WGA and SAG/AFTRA. And you're a member of SAG/AFTRA too, Jean, right?

[00:22:53] **Jean Grae:** Yes, I am.

[00:22:54] **John Hodgman:** So, we are on strike. I'm hoping for a fair deal from major corporations, but I'm wondering if maybe they don't need us anymore. Well, we'll talk more about that fun story later.

[00:23:03] **Jean Grae:** (*Sadly.*) Yeah.

[00:23:04] **John Hodgman:** But we have a dispute with an influencer next. Jean, do you want to read the letter from Krista?

[00:23:09] **Jean Grae:** I do. And I'm so glad that this is an item, because I'm like, "Great, it answered a question I really needed answering." So, thank you, Krista.

(*John laughs.*)

Alright. Krista says, "A major coffee influencer on TikTok used an oat milk from Califia Farms in one of his videos, but he pronounced Califia (*cal-ih-fee-uh*) incorrectly. Kuh-liff-ee-uh). I commented with the correct pronunciation. He said I was actually wrong, and that someone from the company told him to say Califia (*kuh-liff-ee-uh*)." It was Califia Jones.

(*John snorts.*)

"Then, I found a commercial on YouTube where they clearly said it my way, but he doubled down and still said I was wrong. I ended up dropping it, because it was making me feel very stressed and uncomfortable. I still have no idea why I was so invested in being correct." Oh, I do. I do.

[00:24:03] **John Hodgman:** (*Laughs.*) Because one's right and one's wrong?

[00:24:05] **Jean Grae:** No, things that people pronounce wrong stay with me for decades, and I think about them often.

[00:24:12] **John Hodgman:** Like what?

[00:24:14] **Jean Grae:** Okay, once—

[00:24:15] **John Hodgman:** I didn't mean to put you on the spot, but I'll tell you one of my favorite ones.

[00:24:17] **Jean Grae:** (*Interrupting.*) No, no! No, I got them in there.

[00:24:18] **John Hodgman:** Oh, you got it? Okay, bring it out, then.

[00:24:20] **Jean Grae:** They're ready. I can pull them out at any time. Uh, once, I was about maybe like 19, and I was hanging out with a friend, and we were about to go to a club. And she was like, "Hold on, I'm just going to take a quick horse bath." And I was like a what?!

(*John "oh no"s with a chuckle.*)

Because I'm that person. I'm not going to tell you. I'm not going to tell you you're saying it wrong. And she was like, "Before we go to the club, just a little quick—I'm going to wash up. A horse bath." And I was like are you saying horse? Are you saying you're taking a horse, like in a trough bath? She was like, "Yeah." And I was like that's like a horse bath. And I was like how would—in your mind, how—what—is the horse doing that? Is the horse—?

[00:25:01] **John Hodgman:** I think she meant she was going to go into a stall and be hosed down by a stable keeper.

[00:25:06] **Jean Grae:** Was it supposed to be me? Should I have hosed her down in the bathroom?

[00:25:10] **John Hodgman:** Oh, that was—maybe that was the invitation?

[00:25:11] **Jean Grae:** The horse, just a little washcloth, maybe squatting in the tub, just getting the bits that needed to be gotten.

[00:25:19] **John Hodgman:** Right. But what she meant was something else.

[00:25:20] **Jean Grae:** The same person also said—it was, again, like a very quick passing, was that it was very cold because of the windshield factor.

[00:25:31] **John Hodgman:** Oh no. Oh no, the windshield factor. It makes sense when you think about it.

[00:25:37] **Jean Grae:** No, it doesn't.

[00:25:38] **John Hodgman:** But before we get into Califia (*kuh-liff-ee-uh*) versus Califia (*cal-ih-fee-uh*), I just want to start with the first four words of this letter. "A major coffee influencer." I—look, I want everyone to get—

[00:25:49] **Jean Grae:** That's a thing!

[00:25:50] **John Hodgman:** I want everyone to follow their passions and be rewarded for it. But what I find fascinating, Taylor, is that like there was a time when we would write stories, but now there is a time where this guy makes a mocha latte and films it, and that's what people want to watch. Probably more than a lot of stories. What's happening with the influencer economy vis a vis entertainment?

[00:26:10] **Taylor Lorenz:** I think people just prefer their content kind of spoon-fed to them in short, engaging videos. I'm also trying to think which coffee influencer. (*Chuckles.*)

[00:26:19] **Jean Grae:** I'm also thinking, because I follow a couple of them. And also, when you do that—like one, you know you're going to be like in the comments with people like of the coffee community. So, you can like talk of things that maybe other people aren't willing to talk about with you. And it's like—and you learn about new products and new gadgets.

And then you get to also be a coffee snob and say—and argue with coffee people in there. But I want to know who it is, and I'm going to go back and watch a bunch of TikToks today to see if I can figure it out.

[00:26:53] **John Hodgman:** I'll tell you the answer. Because I'm not afraid to name this person. But before I name him, let's play the audio. Maybe you'll recognize him from the audio.

[00:27:03] **Clip:**

Music: Bright, cheerful music.

Speaker: I'm using oat milk. My choice of oat milk is Califia for iced drinks. And if you like Oatly, then stay away from me.

[00:27:10] **John Hodgman:** Do you recognize that voice? I'm using Califia (*kuh-liff-ee-uh*), but if you like Oatly, stay away from me.

[00:27:16] **Jean Grae:** Nobody is very confident in the Califia (*kuh-liff-ee-uh*) pronunciation. He didn't even think.

[00:27:21] **John Hodgman:** That was just a short bit, because, you know, I'm taking Taylor's advice, right? We have to give people stuff in short bits. We're only giving them seconds of audio here. It's a short bit of a 56 second video about how to make a caramel macchiato by Dan, aka SoftPourn, P-O-U-R-N. Does that ring a bell to either of you? Taylor, you're indicating maybe?

[00:27:42] **Taylor Lorenz:** Well, I know CoolManCoffeeDan, but I think that's a different—

[00:27:44] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, this person's, uh—

[00:27:46] **Jean Grae:** There's too many Dans in the coffee game!

[00:27:48] **John Hodgman:** This person's handle is SoftPourn, P-O-U-R-N, as in pour over coffee.

[00:27:53] **Jean Grae:** That's clever.

[00:27:54] **Taylor Lorenz:** I love that.

[00:27:55] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, that's pretty good.

[00:27:56] **Jean Grae:** It's clever. It's a clever name.

[00:27:57] **John Hodgman:** But let's hear how an actual commercial for this company's almond milk, in this case, sounds when the actor is pouring some into a cereal bowl for Cookie Monster. It's a crossover.

[00:28:09] **Clip:**

Speaker: I know, it's not your usual, but cereal's tasty with Califia (*cal-fee-uh*) almond milk.

[00:28:12] **Jean Grae:** That was questionable! That was very questionable.

[00:28:16] **John Hodgman:** It was on the bubble a little bit, there.

[00:28:18] **Jean Grae:** That was questionable.

[00:28:19] **John Hodgman:** Jennifer Marmor, can you go to the end of that ad where the company logo is shown and there's a—they sing the name?

[00:28:28] **Clip:**

Music: “Califia Theme Song” from the Califia commercials.

Califia (cal-ih-fee-uh)

[00:28:30] **Jean Grae:** Califia (*cal-ih-fee-uh*), SoftPourn put the em-phasiS on the wrong syll-able, and he should own up to it.

(Taylor agrees.)

[00:28:35] **John Hodgman:** It would seem so. It's pretty cut and dry.

[00:28:37] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:28:38] **John Hodgman:** So, let me unpack this for a second. Taylor, what percentage possibility is there that, through this fake letter from Krista, I have been tricked by this alt-milk company into buzz marketing their products for free?

(Taylor laughs.)

This podcast has become an ad. How many times have we said Califia so far?

[00:28:57] **Taylor Lorenz:** It's true. I think Krista's a brand marketer at Califia.

[00:29:00] **John Hodgman:** Do you think that that's possible? I mean, honestly, in your gut, from what you know, how are these companies getting creative and getting the word out?

[00:29:07] **Taylor Lorenz:** They're very creative in getting the word out! I think a lot of companies are very creative, but I don't know. I don't know if Califia would stoop to these lengths. I'd have to look into Krista a little bit more.

[00:29:19] **John Hodgman:** But I don't want to erase Krista. She's a real human being. I think. I believe. I believe in you, Krista. Especially, since Dan erased her in the comments in response, because Krista said, "The milk is pronounced like California, but replace fornia with fia."

And Dan says, "I actually spoke with one of their reps a while back since they sent me a bunch during the summer, and they walked me through the pronunciation."

What's happening here?!

[00:29:40] **Jean Grae:** I don't know, that seems—that's a lot. That's a lot to be like someone—also, how long is the walking through of that? Is it half an hour?

[00:29:50] **John Hodgman:** (*Chuckles.*) I don't—I don't know.

[00:29:50] **Jean Grae:** What are you saying? What are you saying? Just send me the thing with the—and highlight in caps the syllable to pronounce. That's the walkthrough. Or what if Dan—what if the other coffee guy, the other Dan, hired—so, this is an elaborate scheme. This is a nemesis play.

[00:30:12] **John Hodgman:** The internet is for conspiracy theories.

[00:30:13] **Jean Grae:** And he was like, "I'm going to send Dan—I'm going to send him a bunch of Califia products. And then, I'm going to tell him to say it the wrong way."

[00:30:22] **John Hodgman:** Well, you're saying Dan got conned.

[00:30:24] **Jean Grae:** I'm saying that Dan conned Dan.

[00:30:26] **Taylor Lorenz:** Well, one thing that people do all the time for engagement is say things the wrong way, because then you know people are gonna comment.

[00:30:31] **Jean Grae:** Yep, that's also true.

[00:30:32] **Taylor Lorenz:** And that gets—that boosts your views.

(*John "oh"s.*)

And people do things the wrong way too all the time, because it boosts your views, because everyone wants to correct you. That's why they say you should misspell something too sometimes.

[00:30:43] **John Hodgman:** Really?

[00:30:44] **Jean Grae:** Or eating stuff, and people are like, “How could you do that?” Or—

[00:30:48] **John Hodgman:** Well, that’s interesting. Because do you remember how SoftPourn Dan said, “I like Califia. If you like Oatly, get away from me.” People in the comments were mad about that.

And Dan—and someone—Dolores said, “Honest question, do you not like Oatly?”

And Dan responded saying, “Eh, just have my preferences. I don't actually care what people like. I just wanted to stir the pot a little. I love discourse.”

[00:31:08] **Taylor Lorenz:** Oh! So, this guy is 100% trolling.

[00:31:12] **John Hodgman:** Oh! Ho-ho-ho, we got you, Dan! Dead to rights.

[00:31:14] **Taylor Lorenz:** That’s my feeling.

[00:31:15] **John Hodgman:** Anytime a man says, “I love discourse” in a comment thread, you know that there's a problem. Stay away. That is 100% trolling.

[00:31:22] **Jean Grae:** Nobody wants this.

[00:31:24] **John Hodgman:** I was going to ask you, Taylor, how much does annoyance play a role in getting likes and clicks?

[00:31:31] **Taylor Lorenz:** I think a lot. Well, I mean, annoying your audience, you mean?

(John confirms.)

Yeah.

[00:31:36] **John Hodgman:** Or being a little bit gaslight-y, like Dan was being.

[00:31:39] **Taylor Lorenz:** I think it helps a lot, because you have to get people talking in the comments to get your videos boosted. So, people do a lot of creepy things too with fishing wire where they'll like have something, you know, fall off the back of their shelf behind them as if there's a ghost, you know, to make people say like, “Wait, what happened?”

[00:31:56] **John Hodgman:** “Wait a minute.”

[00:31:57] **Taylor Lorenz:** One guy, he was selling these like bins that go on your ceiling, and there was a rat that went by in one of his videos. And everyone was commenting about the rat. And so, then he started putting a rat in all of his videos, in the background.

[00:32:12] **Jean Grae:** And people are gonna be like, “Oh, so we're not gonna talk about the rat? We're not gonna discuss that?” And I remember—was it two Christmases ago? And I'm—who was it who was sending out—what designer house was sending out all the Christmas ornaments?

[00:32:27] **Taylor Lorenz:** Yes! Chanel!

[00:32:28] **Jean Grae:** And when everyone opened them they would like—yeah, it was Chanel. And they would immediately be like whoop! And break them.

[00:32:35] **Taylor Lorenz:** Yes! That became such a thing.

[00:32:37] **Jean Grae:** I was like this is wild.

[00:32:39] **Taylor Lorenz:** Yeah. It was like one person did it on accident, and then everyone was like, “Oh, that got so much engagement. We're all going to break our gift packages now.”

[00:32:48] **Jean Grae:** And everyone broke them, and the people in the comments—it worked every single time. I was like this is fascinating.

[00:32:57] **John Hodgman:** Well, I'm recording this here in the studios of WERU FM in Orland, Maine, with our Maine-based mixer and producer, Joel Mann. Hi, Joel.

[00:33:07] **Joel Mann:** Hello, Judge.

[00:33:08] **John Hodgman:** Do you have a rat around here that I can have run behind me, or?

[00:33:12] **Joel Mann:** I could probably go down to the basement and find one, yeah.

[00:33:15] **John Hodgman:** I've never been in the basement of the radio station.

[00:33:17] **Joel Mann:** You don't wanna go there.

[00:33:18] **John Hodgman:** I gotta have something go wrong. Do you have a gift package? Do you have any swag that I can smash? Like a WERU mug?

[00:33:22] **Joel Mann:** (*Chuckling.*) No.

[00:33:24] **John Hodgman:** Oh, okay. Hey, hey, Joel, what's the best route to get to Bangor (*banger*), Maine today?

[00:33:31] **Joel Mann:** Well, you either go up to 15 or 46.

[00:33:33] **John Hodgman:** I'm saying it wrong. What's the best route to get to Bangor (*banger*), Maine?

[00:33:37] **Joel Mann:** Bangor (*banger*)? Where's that?

[00:33:38] **John Hodgman:** No, I'm sorry. Bangor (*banger*). It's called Bangor, Maine.

[00:33:41] **Joel Mann:** Bangor (*ban-gore*)?

[00:33:42] **John Hodgman:** No, Bangor (*banger*). Bangor. Someone from the company told me how to say it, Joel.

[00:33:46] **Joel Mann:** Which company was that? (*Chuckles.*)

[00:33:48] **John Hodgman:** Janet Miles, the governor of Maine.

[00:33:51] **Joel Mann:** Miles?!

[00:33:52] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, Janet Miles, the governor of Maine, called me to say it's actually pronounced Bangor (*banger*).

[00:33:56] **Joel Mann:** Is this an alternative reality?

[00:33:58] **John Hodgman:** Alright. I'll see you in the comments, Joel. Thanks.

[00:34:00] **Joel Mann:** I think it's Janet Mills, and it's called Bangor (*ban-gore*).

[00:34:03] **John Hodgman:** (*Chuckles.*) I have just—now I'm gaming the algorithm! I've got it, now. I'm getting engagement. Right, Taylor? Am I doing it right?

[00:34:08] **Taylor Lorenz:** You're doing it. You nailed it.

[00:34:09] **John Hodgman:** Thank you.

[00:34:10] **Jean Grae:** That was fabulous, because Joel responded exactly how someone would respond to the comments, especially the, "Is this an alternative reality?" That was great. Good stage play, you guys!

[00:34:20] **John Hodgman:** Uh well, we did it right, but Dan, you absolutely did it absolutely wrong. Krista, you are a real human being. I am sorry that Dan not only—I don't think it was an honest mistake. I think Dan was doing it on purpose. And that's—I think that's the truth. That is the reality, not an alternative. The only reality in the court of *Judge John Hodgman*.

[00:34:36] **Jean Grae:** Alright, we're gonna take a quick break. When we come back, challenging your online troll to a real-life duel! I want to do that!

(John giggles.)

[00:34:46] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:34:50] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:34:51] **John Hodgman:** Jean, we're taking a break from clearing the docket. Somehow, I backed my way into giving a lot of free advertising on this episode to Califica?

[00:34:59] **Jean Grae:** Yeah.

[00:35:00] **John Hodgman:** And Maxwell's and New Brunswick.

[00:35:04] **Jean Grae:** Mattress Firm!

[00:35:05] **John Hodgman:** Mattress Firm got a big bump. They got that *Judge John Hodgman* bump. Obviously, we're very, very happy to talk about Taylor's new book. But you, an artist of unparalleled talents in every media, you must have something going on that you'd like the people to know about.

[00:35:17] **Jean Grae:** You know what?

[00:35:18] **John Hodgman:** I know you're doing art.

[00:35:20] **Jean Grae:** You know what? Yeah, I make art. I'll have some larger pieces. I've been working with a lot of threading of canvases now. So, if you're into I guess like sort of—um, maybe the smallest ones are like 16x20, but I have some 36x48s. I mean, so if you're interested in purchasing a piece for your home or getting a commission, you can go check out my Instagram, which is [@JeannieGrigio](#) and see if you see anything you like. I've always got maybe like two to four new pieces a month. And then, there are some months I might take off, but by the time this is out, there'll be something up there and think about buying one.

[00:35:58] **John Hodgman:** These are beautiful visual art that you hang on the wall, woven of thread with texture, and they're just beautiful.

[00:36:05] **Jean Grae:** Thank you.

[00:36:05] **John Hodgman:** So, everyone should go over there to [@JeannieGrigio](#), J-E-A-N-N-I-E-G-R-I-G-I-O. Like Pinot Grigio, but Jeannie Grigio.

(Jean confirms.)

And check out Jean's world, which encompasses all worlds. It is everything. It is the Alpha and the Omega. The world of Jean Grae is one in which you would like to be in orbit for the rest of your life.

[00:36:26] **Jean Grae:** It is.

[00:36:27] **John Hodgman:** I have never ceased enjoying and learning from just being in reflected light of your world.

(Jean “aw”s.)

I’m your moon, Jean.

Meanwhile, you know me. I'm Judge John Hodgman. This is the podcast. Jesse Thorn is awake this week, but we are reuniting shortly together on the road. It's our biggest tour in years.

(Jean “wow”s.)

And we're thrilled to greet you and meet you and judge you all across the Midwest and the Southeast and the Northeast, starting in Lexington, Kentucky. Never been. Chicago, Illinois. I have been. Madison, Wisconsin. Been there. St. Paul, Minnesota. Been there. Austin, Texas. Been there. Love all those places I've been to. Atlanta, Durham, Charlottesville. Never been to Charlottesville. Can't wait to go. Washington, DC, Portland, Maine, Boston, Massachusetts, and Brooklyn, New York.

VanFreaksRoadshow.com, of course, is where you get all the tickets and details. It's also where you can submit your disputes for these cases, and I and Jesse will judge you personally on stage if we choose your case to be heard. VanFreaksRoadshow.com. Just click the link, let us know what your beef is with whoever it is in your life, and let us know where you are.

[00:37:36] **Jean Grae:** This is a long tour.

[00:37:37] **John Hodgman:** Honestly, it's a long tour, and I cannot wait. It's going to be so great. It's been so long since I've been out on the road for a little bit, and we're playing some of my very, very favorite cities, and very, very favorite venues in those cities. And we're going to new places, which is always profoundly exciting. So, please come and see us. It's better when you're there. VanFreaksRoadshow.com. Let's get back to the docket.

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

[00:38:01] **Jean Grae:** Welcome back to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. I'm guest bailiff Jean Grae, and we are talking about online beefs with Taylor Lorenz. We got another case, and I don't know why, but I kind of just want to use this voice right now. So—

[00:38:15] **John Hodgman:** Alright. That's allowed. I'll allow it.

[00:38:17] **Jean Grae:** I think it's the way—it's the way it starts.

[00:38:20] **John Hodgman:** This letter comes from Kevin in California.

[00:38:22] **Jean Grae:** (*With a combination Brooklyn and Boston accent and a lot of verve.*)
“It's Kevin. I'm writing to you from California.”

[00:38:26] **John Hodgman:** This is great.

[00:38:27] **Jean Grae:** “Hey, I had a guy harassing me on Twitter. Through his other posts, I learned he lived north of Hollywood. I live south of Hollywood. I was planning a day in Hollywood, which for me typically includes a drink in the bar, and Musso & Frank, so I told my troll we should meet to talk things out in person. He talked big and made all kinds of threats about what he'd do to me when he saw me, and then failed to show up. Interestingly, a few strangers who had seen our Twitter exchange were at a booth in the bar waiting to back me up if the guy actually showed. Now, I'm not a fan of violence, but I confess part of me was kinda hoping for a bar room brawl in the same bar where Wyatt Earp used to drink. But the troll didn't show, and once he was exposed as a coward in real life, he backed off and deleted his account shortly thereafter. Kevin out.”

[00:39:19] **John Hodgman:** Wooow! Wow! So, this is not—

[00:39:20] **Jean Grae:** That's a lot.

[00:39:21] **John Hodgman:** First of all, that was incredible acting. Kevin from California, as channeled by Jean Grae. Now this is—we are an independent podcast. We are not a struck company. So, that incredible acting is perfectly allowable under the SAG/AFTRA strike guidelines.

[00:39:32] **Jean Grae:** Yes, it is. It was. It was.

[00:39:34] **John Hodgman:** Also, it's not compensated, I'm sorry to say.

[00:39:36] **Jean Grae:** No.

[00:39:37] **John Hodgman:** You know what? I will compensate.

[00:39:39] **Jean Grae:** That's fine.

[00:39:39] **John Hodgman:** I'll compensate you. A drink at Musso & Frank. What do you say in Hollywood?

[00:39:42] **Jean Grae:** (*In Kevin from California's voice.*) Hey, Musso & Frank! I love to drink there! It's the same Barbara Wyatt Earp to drink! Just found that out.

[00:39:49] **John Hodgman:** Taylor, you know Musso and Frank in Hollywood, right?

(Taylor confirms.)

[00:39:55] **Jean Grae:** *(In Kevin from California's voice.)* It used to be a Musso, Frank, & Jimmy's. But, uh, you know.

[00:39:59] **John Hodgman:** I didn't know about that. I don't know about Wyatt Earp. Taylor, when you go into Musso & Frank, that famous old school steakhouse and martini house, do you think to yourself, "This feels like a real Wyatt Earp kind of place?"

[00:40:11] **Taylor Lorenz:** No. I had no idea. There's a lot of history. A lot of history there.

[00:40:15] **John Hodgman:** Yeah. I guess Wyatt Earp came to Hollywood in the 20s and died there or something.

[00:40:20] **Taylor Lorenz:** You know what this story reminds me of? Do you guys remember the "meet me in Temecula"?

[00:40:25] **John Hodgman:** No, I don't.

[00:40:26] **Taylor Lorenz:** Oh my god, John, this was like one of the great moments in Twitter history. These guys were fighting about the NBA, about an NBA game.

[00:40:33] **John Hodgman:** Oh yeah?

[00:40:34] **Taylor Lorenz:** And they go back and forth, and then the guy's like, "Meet me in Temecula," and the guy drives an hour and a half to fight this other guy from Twitter, because they're arguing about like whether Kobe Bryant was good or something. And he drove to Temecula, and he like was posting throughout the whole time. And same thing, the other guy didn't show.

[00:40:50] **Jean Grae:** Didn't show.

[00:40:51] **John Hodgman:** The other guy didn't show. Wow. So, "meet me in Temecula" showed and the other guy didn't. Kevin from California showed up, and his troll didn't. Let me ask you this, Taylor. Do you think that this is a smart plan, to call out your trolls online to meet you in real life? To literally feed or at least share a cocktail with your troll?

[00:41:08] **Taylor Lorenz:** No. I don't want to know. I don't want to ever encounter a hater in the wild.

[00:41:14] **John Hodgman:** It seems extremely dangerous to me.

[00:41:17] **Taylor Lorenz:** Yeah! 100%.

[00:41:18] **Jean Grae:** I have made this kind of invitation.

[00:41:21] **Taylor Lorenz:** You have?!

[00:41:21] **Jean Grae:** Oh, so many times. So many times.

[00:41:22] **Taylor Lorenz:** Successfully?

[00:41:23] **Jean Grae:** Um, no, nobody—it didn't happen. But I mean, I also tried to fight Flavor Flav—

(They giggle.)

In the parking lot of a festival, because I was trying to get my meal ticket done. And he was just like—he was—I don't know, I was very hungry. And he just was like cutting in front of me in line. And then I yelled like, “Meet me in the parking lot at three o'clock.” But everything was the parking lot, because it was a music festival.

[00:41:54] **John Hodgman:** He didn't show up is what you're saying?

[00:41:55] **Jean Grae:** He didn't show up. But I mean, we were already there.

[00:41:57] **John Hodgman:** Maybe he didn't know what time it is. Maybe he had no way of telling time. You know?

(They laugh.)

[00:42:03] **Jean Grae:** That is a very good joke!

[00:42:07] **John Hodgman:** Thank you, Jean.

[00:42:08] **Jean Grae:** I think we can all go home now.

[00:42:10] **John Hodgman:** No! No, we have more to—

[00:42:11] **Jean Grae:** I think that was it. Okay. But no, I have tried this, but I've also had people like threaten when I didn't want to be threatened at all and just be like, “I'm going to be there. I'm going to be at the show.”

[00:42:22] **Taylor Lorenz:** That's scary.

[00:42:22] **John Hodgman:** Do people have resources now, when you're being trolled or stalked online, that they didn't have before? Is there any recourse?

[00:42:30] **Taylor Lorenz:** No. And actually, I just wrote about a recent Supreme Court case that decided online stalking is basically totally fine as long as the person means well, they're not doing it maliciously.

[00:42:41] **John Hodgman:** (*Sarcastically.*) Boy, see that coming from the Supreme Court. Wow.

[00:42:43] **Taylor Lorenz:** Yeah, they've been on such a roll.

[00:42:45] **John Hodgman:** Yeah. Wow, what a zig!

[00:42:46] **Jean Grae:** Yeah. That's always fun trying to report people. And they're like, you know, there's nothing you can do. You can block. It's wild to be on the side of deciding that you don't want people to be able to protect themselves. That's just such a wild decision to make, because you're going through some personal issues.

[00:43:05] **Taylor Lorenz:** Well, Elon loves to block journalists, so he's not gonna take that away any time soon.

[00:43:08] **John Hodgman:** Hmm. Do you have any personal experience with that?

[00:43:11] **Taylor Lorenz:** With Elon? Yes. He was just tweeting at me yesterday. He called me like—he was mad that I was sharing news about Twitter on Threads.

[00:43:19] **Jean Grae:** I saw that.

[00:43:20] **Taylor Lorenz:** And he said that I was giving stalker ex-girlfriend vibes or something.

[00:43:22] **Jean Grae:** I saw that.

[00:43:23] **Taylor Lorenz:** He banned me. Yeah, he banned me in December, and then he was forced to let me back on. I felt vindicated.

[00:43:29] **John Hodgman:** Who forced him to let you back on?

[00:43:31] **Taylor Lorenz:** Well, he banned me under this rule that ended up being illegal in the UK, which is that I was promoting my Instagram too much. That was like the rule that—do you remember he made that rule in December that you couldn't promote other platforms?

[00:43:42] **John Hodgman:** It's a little hard for me to keep track of the rules that he's making up.

(*They chuckle.*)

Okay.

[00:43:46] **Taylor Lorenz:** Yeah. Well, that rule ended up being rescinded, and I got my account back for now. I'm kind of done with Twitter. I'm more into Instagram and TikTok now.

[00:43:54] **Jean Grae:** I wish someone with some vision would come and do something else. And I think even when TikTok—when we were afraid that TikTok was going to go, they were like, “How about Lemonade?” And I was like this is not gonna—it's not gonna work.

[00:44:05] **Taylor Lorenz:** I'm an Instagram. I still like—I know everyone hates on Instagram, but it's my favorite.

[00:44:09] **John Hodgman:** I would say it's where I spend most of my social media time, I guess. I like seeing my friends. And there's a very high barrier to posting. I can't write a caption with my thumbs. I can't touch the screen properly anymore. Something's going away. I'm losing electroconductivity in my fingers somehow, so it's like I have to push the buttons five times.

[00:44:29] **Taylor Lorenz:** The phone won't recognize—?

[00:44:30] **John Hodgman:** The phone doesn't recognize that I'm human.

[00:44:33] **Taylor Lorenz:** No! Okay but wait, the Apple keyboard has been very broken lately.

[00:44:38] **John Hodgman:** Oh, really?

[00:44:39] **Taylor Lorenz:** I made a TikTok about this, and it ended up spreading. But they did an update to the Apple keyboard, and so it's been very broken. So, it might just be that.

[00:44:45] **John Hodgman:** Oh. Interesting. (*Hurriedly.*) That's not been my experience with Apple products at all, and they're perfect as far as I'm concerned. Let's move on.

(*Taylor and Jean laugh.*)

I believe we have a letter. (*Chuckling.*) I believe we have a letter. Look, I only use Apple products, and I love them. That is the honest truth. And I don't—all my sponsored content days are over by a decade. So, I just don't want to talk about it anymore. Let's move on!

[00:45:08] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:45:09] **John Hodgman:** Jean, we have a letter from Llama from *Get Your Pets*.

[00:45:12] **Jean Grae:** Okay, Llama writes in from—I'm assuming it's Reading (*redding*), England.

[00:45:18] **John Hodgman:** it's Reading (*read-ing*). It's Reading, England.

[00:45:20] **Jean Grae:** Is it?

(John confirms.)

Is it really?

[00:45:22] **John Hodgman:** I really want to get engagement on this one. So, it's definitely Reading (*read-ing*), England (*ang-land*).

(They chuckle.)

[00:45:28] **Jean Grae:** Llama writes in from Reading (*red-in*), England (*en-gland*). “Wikipedia editors—” Oh, this is of my heart, “—have stopped me and several other people, from adding the adjective ‘tender’ to a certain Wikipedia page for almost 15 years.”

[00:45:44] **John Hodgman:** Right, so (*chuckles*) Llama has actually been banned—we're gonna hear about it—for using the adjective “tender” while editing a certain Wikipedia page, but I'll let Llama tell the story, because Llama is also a twitch streamer—speaking of online—and told this story in some detail last year. The Wikipedia page in question page for the UK band The Streets.

(Jean “oh”s.)

Which is one of those bands like the Mountain Goats, where they have one person. That person is Mike Skinner.

[00:46:08] **Jean Grae:** Oi! And he says oi a lot.

[00:46:10] **John Hodgman:** Yeah. And Llama made an edit regarding when Mike Skinner learned to play keyboards. And this is what happened. Let's listen to the clip.

[00:46:16] **Clip:**

(Bird chirps regularly in the background.)

Llama: I've been having a beef with this page for about 15 years, I guess? Maybe it's only 10 years. So, (*laughs*) there used to be a section on here—they moved it to the Mike Skinner page—where they didn't want me to put the word “tender” in there. The sentence was, “Mike Skinner has been playing keyboard since the age of five,” or something like that. For some reason, they don't like you to write “the tender age of five”. All of this is people arguing about “tender” and whether it should be in this Wikipedia article. None of this is me. This is just other people talking about whether you should be allowed to put “tender” in there. For and against, whether it's Wikipedian or not.

[00:47:19] **John Hodgman:** Alright, so what you just saw was Llama scrolling through pages and pages and pages of fights over the topic of whether or not it is okay to use “tender” or not on Wikipedia. What you may have also heard in the background was a chirping. That is Llama's bird. They have a cockatiel named Cocky. And not only that, but also in the home, that's—Cocky is a regular guest on *Get Your Pets*. Also, in the home live two dogs. They're both cockapoos. And one is named Chloe and the other one's named Coco. So, it was very adorable over there in Reading (*read-ing*), England (*ang-lond*). Llama did this video last year, but if you go there now, there's still a ton of argument, and every argument is a full paragraph. I will let you, the listener, go into the talk section of The Streets Wikipedia page and search for “tender” and get the contours of this debate.

On the one hand, some of the Wikipedia editors feel that “tender” is an expression of opinion, that it's non-neutral. The tender age of five is somehow giving an emotional context that doesn't need to be there. On the other hand, as user213.235.24.138 points out, quote, “Someone show me a specific Wikipedia policy against the use of adjectives, and I will back down.” They are really into this. Now, I have my own opinion about whether Mike Skinner started playing keyboards at the tender age of five or not. But first, Taylor and Jean, have you ever had weird things happen with people editing your Wikipedia page? Or have you ever edited your own Wikipedia page, which I don't think you're supposed to do?

[00:48:52] **Taylor Lorenz:** I've tried. My Wikipedia page is crazy and has so much false information on it, because people mess with Wikipedia pages all the time. And I tried to get in there and correct it. I didn't realize that that was very frowned upon. And so, then they were like, “Oh, she's trying to edit it herself.” I think I got banned.

[00:49:09] **John Hodgman:** You were the tender age of today years old when you learned you can't—

[00:49:14] **Taylor Lorenz:** There is an age conspiracy on my Wikipedia as well, which I think is hilarious.

[00:49:17] **John Hodgman:** Is there? I mean, I've done stuff with the Wikimedia Foundation, and they seem like stand up people as an organization, as far as I can tell. So, there's an organization there that you can appeal to. Did you try to?

[00:49:28] **Taylor Lorenz:** I have not tried that. I should ask. Jean, have you ever? Successfully?

[00:49:32] **Jean Grae:** I have tried. Because I too—everything on my—all—99% of my Wikipedia page is wrong. It has always been wrong. All of the updates are wrong. They never have anything I'm doing. They don't know—where I'm from is wrong. It's just wrong. I'm surprised that my name is right on there, because that's about the only thing. And I did also try to get in and edit myself, and then they shut that down. So, they won't let me correct anything. And I did write in, and I was like, “Can I please do this? It's me!”

And they're like, “No, you can't.” So, I was going to ask if anyone—anyone. It has been just, I really—I've been trying to do this for like 10/15 years, to be in control of my own Wikipedia page and put the correct information on there.

[00:50:25] **John Hodgman:** You're not allowed to do it, you know.

[00:50:26] **Taylor Lorenz:** Do you guys know Annie Rauwerda, who does Depths of Wikipedia?

[00:50:28] **Jean Grae:** No, no.

[00:50:29] **John Hodgman:** I don't know her, but I know that account for sure, yeah.

[00:50:33] **Taylor Lorenz:** Well, she herself is a powerful Wikipedia editor. So, maybe she can—we can appeal to her.

[00:50:39] **Jean Grae:** What is her name?

[00:50:39] **Taylor Lorenz:** Annie Rauwerda, she does Depths of Wikipedia.

[00:50:44] **John Hodgman:** Depths of Wikipedia is a really incredible account that finds the strangest Wikipedia entries, the most charmingly strange Wikipedia entries. And I wonder where she stands on the controversy of “tender”. Might have to ask her about that.

[00:50:59] **Taylor Lorenz:** Yeah. You know what we need on Wikipedia? We need, like they have on Google Reviews and Yelp, like we need the ability to respond. They should let the person respond.

[00:51:06] **Jean Grae:** Yes, because I would be responding all day.

[00:51:11] **John Hodgman:** I agree, but until that happens, let me suggest a *Strangers on a Train* type of arrangement. Taylor, I'll edit your Wikipedia page. Jean, you edit my Wikipedia page. And Taylor, you edit Jean's Wikipedia page.

[00:51:25] **Taylor Lorenz:** I like this plan.

[00:51:26] **Jean Grae:** Someone has to do it.

[00:51:27] **John Hodgman:** They would never know, just because we said it on a podcast that this was happening. I wonder what they—I wonder what they—

[00:51:30] **Jean Grae:** No.

[00:51:31] **John Hodgman:** They'll never know.

[00:51:32] **Taylor Lorenz:** They'll never catch us.

[00:51:34] **John Hodgman:** Okay, as for “tender” on Wikipedia, here's what I have to say about this. I am against trolling, except in one circumstance. The only form of trolling I have

ever endorsed is when *Late Night with Colbert* writer and incredibly funny person and writer, Ariel Dumas, goes on Twitter and simply says, “Zelda is the boy,” pertaining to the *Legend of Zelda* video game franchise. She'll just say, “Zelda is the boy,” and just watch people go out of their minds trying to explain to her that Zelda is the princess and that the boy is Link. And then, she will simply say—and I've talked about it on the podcast before—with a very straight face on Twitter, it's like, “No, the name of the game is *Legend of Zelda*, and the character on the cover, is the main character. It's the boy. *Zelda is the boy.*” And they're like, no, it's the princess. It's like, “No, it's a very famous game.” And it just goes on. And it's so funny to me.

[00:52:24] **Jean Grae:** So, you didn't enjoy when I used to do that?

[00:52:26] **John Hodgman:** Did you used to do that before she did? Zelda is a boy?

[00:52:28] **Jean Grae:** On Twitter? When I used to be like, “I just found—” No, “I just found out that there's this comic book character called Jean Grey?!”

[00:52:36] **John Hodgman:** (*Laughing.*) Yes, that's right. I forgot about that.

[00:52:37] **Jean Grae:** And then, I would wait for men to explain it to me.

[00:52:41] **John Hodgman:** Alright. So, that's—so, okay. Jean, you're right. When you would go on Twitter and say that you had never heard of Jean Grey, the *X-Men* character that your name is an homage to, and people would go bananas—equal rights. Equal rights.

[00:52:53] **Jean Grae:** Bananas.

[00:52:54] **John Hodgman:** Fun. As much as I adore Llama, Cocky, Chloe, and Coco, I have to say: Llama, you know you're trolling when you put “tender” into “tender age of five”.

(*Jean giggles.*)

You know what you're doing. You know what you're doing, and guess what? I endorse it. Because it's funny; it's silly. It's silly, and it's harmless. I dare say it's tender, so you keep doing it. People are so bananas about “tender”. Anyway.

Taylor and Jean, that's everything we got. I do have one last quick letter before we go. I'm gonna read it in a second, but Taylor, I just want to say thank you so much for joining us. Everyone go out and check out the new book, *Extremely Online: The Untold Story of Fame, Influence, and Power on the Internet*. I say check out. Look, if it comes to your library, you can check it out. But until then, why don't you go and preorder it wherever books are sold? And you know, I think it's really a fascinating subject. This whole influencer economy just bubbled up under our noses when we weren't looking. And what I love about your book is it outlines just how profound an effect it's going to have our culture—obviously, entertainment culture, but just how we interact with each other.

(Taylor thanks him.)

Yeah, and so good luck with it, Taylor. And where online—do you want people to find you?

(They laugh.)

I mean, at this point?

[00:54:14] **Taylor Lorenz:** Yes, please find me. I'm just—I'm @TaylorLorenz on Instagram, TikTok, YouTube. You can find me anywhere, just @TaylorLorenz.

[00:54:24] **John Hodgman:** Okay, excellent. And Jean, of course, you've got all your projects going. Where can people find you?

[00:54:29] **Jean Grae:** Don't.

[00:54:30] **John Hodgman:** Very good! Perfect. Don't find Jean Grae.

[00:54:33] **Jean Grae:** Leave me alone.

[00:54:34] **John Hodgman:** Let's read this last letter before we go. It's not a case; it's just a formal announcement from Tricia in Salt Lake City. Joel, pay attention, because I think you're going to relate to this.

(Joel affirms.)

Alright. “I used to run social media for the NPR station in a major city. We worked hard to provide great local journalism. But for years, the most frequent comment we would get back on the news stories we posted were three words that still raise my blood pressure. ‘Bring back jazz.’”

[00:54:59] **Joel Mann:** Jazz is dead.

(They chuckle.)

[00:55:01] **John Hodgman:** That’s the first time I've ever seen Joel laugh this summer.

[00:55:04] **Jean Grae:** Yeah, Joel.

[00:55:05] **John Hodgman:** “Never mind the fact that the station had dropped its jazz programming many, many years ago. No matter what the news story was about, it had nothing to do with it. Every time, ‘bring back jazz’. So, to the jazzy internet trolls, I—Trisha—would like to say once and for all: jazz is cool, but it's not coming back. Your war has been lost.”

I fully endorse this. I'm not against jazz, but yeah. It's hard. It's hard when a radio station changes its programming. I get it.

[00:55:40] **Jean Grae:** Alright! The docket is clear. And that's it for another tender episode of *Judge John Hodgman*. *Judge John Hodgman* was created by Jesse Thorn and John Hodgman. Marie Bardi runs our social media, and our producer is Jennifer Marmor. The show is on Instagram, [@JudgeJohnHodgman](#). Follow us there for evidence and other photos from the show. And check out the Maximum Fun subreddit to discuss this episode at [MaximumFun.Reddit.com](#).

[00:56:14] **John Hodgman:** And also, remember we're hitting the road. It's our Van Freaks Roadshow Tour. You can get all the details and tickets at [VanFreaksRoadshow.com](#). You can also go there and submit your cases if you have disputes that you'd like adjudicated on stage by me, your judge, John Hodgman, in Lexington, Chicago, Madison, St. Paul, Austin, Atlanta, Durham, Charlottesville, Washington, DC, Portland, Maine. (*Stuttering.*) Portland, Maine or Port-land, Maine?

[00:56:39] **Joel Mann:** Portland.

[00:56:40] **John Hodgman:** Right. Port-land, Maine! Boss-town, Massachusetts, and Brook-line, New York. Go to [VanFreaksRoadshow.com](#). Hey Joel, where do you want to be found on the internet these days?

[00:56:54] **Joel Mann:** Uh, TheMaineMann.

[00:56:56] **John Hodgman:** [@TheMaineMann](#) on Instagram.

(*Joel confirms.*)

T-H-E-M-A-I-N-E-M-A-N-N.

[00:57:02] **Jean Grae:** Oh, clever!

[00:57:03] **Joel Mann:** Almost at 2 million followers.

[00:57:04] **John Hodgman:** Almost at 2 million followers! The number one influencer in the Bangor (*banger*), Maine area. We'll talk to you next time on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

[00:57:12] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:57:15] **Sound Effect:** Cheerful ukulele chord.

[00:57:16] **Speaker 1:** Maximum Fun.

[00:57:17] **Speaker 2:** A worker-owned network.

[00:57:18] **Speaker 3:** Of artist owned shows.

[00:57:20] **Speaker 4:** Supported—

[00:57:21] **Speaker 5:** —directly—

[00:57:22] **Speaker 6:** —by you!