

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

[00:00:02] **Jesse Thorn:** Welcome to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. I'm Bailiff Jesse Thorn. This week, "S'morder in the Court"! Katherine brings the case against her husband, Lee. They like to go camping together. Katherine recently bought a new camping chair, but Lee says there's no room for this chair in their car! But Katherine thinks they can make it work. 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.

[00:00:34] **John Hodgman:** "Yeah, Smooth Sailing and Hall of Fame are my top two nicknames. Also, Cool Guy and Jolly Jon, Fun Jon. There's a lot of derivatives of Jon. Cool Jon. Some people took Smooth Sailing and Fun Jon and made Smooth Jon. That's a good one. It just started catching on with the general public every now and then. 'Hey, Smooth Jon,' or 'Yeah, you're Smooth Jon, right?' And people aren't quite sure, and I'm like, yeah. And they're like, 'Okay, cool, that's what I thought.'"

Bailiff Jesse Thorn, please swear them in.

[00:01:01] **Jesse Thorn:** Katherine and Lee, please rise and raise your right hands. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God or whatever?

(They swear.)

Do you swear to abide by Judge John Hodgman's ruling, despite the fact that when he goes camping, he brings a mid-tier business hotel?

(They swear.)

Judge Hodgman, you may proceed.

[00:01:22] **John Hodgman:** I always pack a Hampton Inn and Suites.

[00:01:24] **Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, or a Courtyard by Marriott.

[00:01:26] **John Hodgman:** No, thank you. Sorry about that.

(Jesse "wow"s.)

I mean, if they, if they were to sponsor the podcast, I'd change my mind. But as long as I am neutral, I'm going to tell you what John Darnielle told me—which I live by from now on: Hampton Inn Suites, best mattresses in the biz.

[00:01:40] **Jesse Thorn:** Well, bon voy to you! Because I'm staying at the Courtyard by Marriott. (*Chuckles.*)

[00:01:44] **John Hodgman:** This is going to be awkward on our tour, which is just about to get underway! The Van Freaks Roadshow, as you know, is hitting the road. Starting October 9th in Lexington, Kentucky, and going on. If you haven't gotten your tickets yet or submitted your disputes, go to VanFreaksRoadshow.com. That was just a plug since we got there.

Meanwhile, Lee and Katherine, you may be seated.

(*Chairs squeak.*)

For an immediate summary judgment in one of yours references, can you name the piece of culture I quoted as I entered the courtroom? Um, let's start with Lee. What's your guess? I'll give you a hint. Starts with a Jon. Starts with a Jon. J-O-N, by the way, if that helps narrow it down. It should.

[00:02:20] **Lee:** (*Laughs.*) J-O-N Jon. Um. I—

[00:02:23] **John Hodgman:** J-O-N Jon. You want another hint?

(*Lee confirms.*)

Alright. Katherine, do you have a guess first before I give him a hint?

[00:02:29] **Katherine:** The only thing that popped in my head was like horse racing names.

[00:02:35] **John Hodgman:** Horse racing names? Okay. I think the idea of a horse named Jon is terrific. Because I love animals that have just plain, vanilla human names.

[00:02:53] **Jesse Thorn:** 200 on Frank to show!

[00:02:49] **John Hodgman:** Go Jon! Go Jon! (*Giggles.*)

[00:02:52] **Jesse Thorn:** Judge Hodgman, do you have Bill in the third race?

[00:02:54] **John Hodgman:** No, I'm picking Alan. I think Alan's got the stuff.

[00:02:59] **Jesse Thorn:** I'm going to go for the trifecta. I'm bringing Marty into this.

[00:03:01] **John Hodgman:** (*Laughs.*) Okay, well, I'm going to give you both a hint, and I don't know if this is going to break the dam open for you or what. Here's your hint. Ready?

(*Absolutely screaming.*) GEEEEEAR!

So, there are your two prompts. That whole long quote I gave about Smooth Jon, Cool Jon, Hall of Fame, Smooth Sailing Jon, and me yelling gear.

[00:03:25] **Katherine:** I am just stumped.

[00:03:26] **John Hodgman:** I can tell that you are.

[00:03:26] **Katherine:** And I usually, when I listen to the podcast, can shout out the obscure cultural reference. So.

[00:03:31] **John Hodgman:** I know. Well, you know, but here you are in studio in Stanford, Connecticut. You're on the spot. You shouldn't feel bad that all guesses are wrong—or in this case, no guesses are wrong.

(They chuckle.)

No, you had guesses. You had Jon the Horse and Jon Colton, Jonathan Colton's dad. Those are two valid guesses. Joel Mann, do you have a guess?

[00:03:50] **Joel Mann:** What people call you when you make breakfast sandwiches.

[00:03:54] **John Hodgman:** Smooth John? Smooth Sailing John? Hall of Fame John?

(Joel confirms.)

Here at the General Store in unnamed coastal town Maine? Yeah, I'm not in there cooking those sandwiches that often anymore, so don't come looking, please!

[00:04:06] **Joel Mann:** A great loss.

[00:04:08] **John Hodgman:** Before I reveal the answer, Joel, while this episode is coming out in October—if you can believe it—this is our last time recording here in Maine this summer, because—

[00:04:15] **Joel Mann:** Sad.

[00:04:16] **John Hodgman:** Exactly so. When I came into the studio, Jesse Thorn and Lee and Katherine, I was chit chatting with Joel briefly. Just talking about normal stuff, like roadwork on Route 15, how's it going on Backridge Road, talking about Joel eating scallops out of the shell off an illicit scallop boat on Cape Cod.

(Joel chuckles.)

Normal stuff. And then Joel, just as he was dialing in to Jennifer, just goes, “Yeah, I showed John and Yoko how to get out of a Senate hearing during Watergate once.”

(*Jesse honks a laugh.*)

Your life has many chapters, Joel.

[00:04:45] **Joel Mann:** It does. And it's not done yet.

[00:04:47] **John Hodgman:** Yeah. And we don't want to hear about any of them right now, because we've got to hear Lee and Katharine's case.

(*Joel agrees.*)

But we'll talk about them when you're on stage with us in Portland, Maine, in November on the Van Freaks Roadshow. So, get your tickets, VanFreaksRoadshow.com. Okay. No guesses are wrong. All guesses are wrong. I was quoting Jon Glaser. Jon Glaser is a comedian, a sketch writer, an actor, and one of the truly funniest people I know in my life. He is the creator of the incredible TV shows *Delocated*, and also *Neon Joe Werewolf Hunter*, and also *Jon Glaser Loves Gear*, because Jon Glaser loves camping gear. He loves gear of all kinds. And he did this remarkably funny show on TruTV called *Jon Glaser Loves Gear*. And he invited me to play the voice of the robot AI in his phone, who is named Geary. It was a very fun job, a really funny show. Jon Glaser is a true delight. And you might know him as Jeremy Jam from *Parks and Recreation*.

[00:05:43] **Jesse Thorn:** I know him as half of the Fuggedabuddies.

[00:05:46] **John Hodgman:** Half of the Fuggedabuddies. He's one third of the Slipnutz on Conan O'Brien. Just one of the, one of the great weird comic minds. And, oh, by the way, he is one of the stars of *Dicktown*, a TV show that David Rees and I made, that I am not promoting in any way. I'm just stating a fact that it's out there. WGA, SAG-AFTRA solidarity forever.

So, we've talked enough about that, but he loves gear. And one of you loves gear, and the other one is just fine about gear. Who comes to this court seeking justice between the two of you?

[00:06:16] **Katherine:** I do, Your Honor.

[00:06:17] **John Hodgman:** That would be Katherine.

(*Katherine confirms.*)

And state the nature of your dispute.

[00:06:21] **Katherine:** Well, we like to go camping a few times a year, several times a year. And we like to bring our—

[00:06:27] **John Hodgman:** GEEEEEAR!

(They chuckle.)

Sorry.

[00:06:30] **Katherine:** We like to bring our creature comforts with us. But not too many creature comforts. The most recent point of contention is we have one really nice camping chair. It's a—you might call it a camping loveseat made by a company who I don't think we want to buzz market. But it's a great chair for the two of us to sit on in front of the campfire. However, we have a dog that also loves to sit on the chair with us. And so, that gets a little uncomfortable.

So, on my own power, I bought an additional single chair. And when this arrived, my husband Lee said, "How are we going to fit that in the car?"

[00:07:14] **John Hodgman:** Lee, is that the nature of your response? It doesn't fit?

[00:07:17] **Lee:** It doesn't fit safely. The point is not that there isn't room. The point is that if we use that room, it might not result in a good outcome down the road.

[00:07:28] **John Hodgman:** Because the chairs sticks out the back window or something? It might fly off and decapitate the driver behind you?

[00:07:36] **Lee:** Well, we've been doing this for a long time, and I've gotten really good at packing the car. But it's to the point now where if we want to put anything else in it, we're going to have to stack up the space between the top of the heap and the ceiling of the car.

[00:07:49] **John Hodgman:** You do not like that prospect. I can tell by the sheer fury in your Canadian voice.

(They laugh.)

That really makes your blood boil, because you can't see out the rearview mirror, right? Is that the issue?

[00:08:05] **Lee:** Yes. That's one point. And the other is that these things potentially become missiles if you have to make a hard stop somewhere.

[00:08:11] **Jesse Thorn:** Lee hasn't been this angry since someone queued inappropriately.

[00:08:15] **John Hodgman:** At the, at the Loblaws? Yeah, probably so. Lee, I happen to know here, because I was given—this information was provided to me—that you are from Toronto, originally.

[00:08:24] **Lee:** Yes, actually—well, I was born in Northern Ontario, but yes, I lived in Toronto most of my life.

[00:08:28] **John Hodgman:** And Katherine, you are from the Bay Area, which is—I don't know what those words even mean.

(Jesse laughs.)

But you both live in Connecticut now.

[00:08:38] **Katherine:** That's correct. Which is a part of New England, I'm told.

[00:08:40] **John Hodgman:** Where are you, though, if I may ask?

[00:08:44] **Katherine:** We live in Stanford.

[00:08:45] **John Hodgman:** Oh, okay. Got it. New York north. Got it. Understood. And where do you do your camping?

[00:08:49] **Katherine:** It depends. We like to go to the Adirondacks and the Catskills. And this upcoming weekend, we're going to—it's called Taconic State Park. It's right near the New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts border.

[00:09:05] **John Hodgman:** Yeah. So, the question really is: are you gonna bring the extra chair to Taconic State Park or no? I'm gonna decide it. Unless, Lee, you've already destroyed the chair in a fit of Northern Ontario peak?

[00:09:19] **Lee:** *(Laughs.)* No, it's still intact.

[00:09:21] **John Hodgman:** Okay. For now, it's still intact. So, you mentioned that you like to go camping, you mentioned that you like your creature comforts. You also mentioned that you have a creature. So, now it's time to pay the evidence—dog tax, as they say online. Let me see a picture of this dog. This image, of course, will be available on our show page at MaximumFun.org.

(John and Jesse immediately start giggling.)

As well as our Instagram account.

[00:09:44] **Jesse Thorn:** *(Tittering.)* I switched early to the picture, sorry.

[00:09:47] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, no, that's okay. It's great. [@JudgeJohnHodgman](https://www.instagram.com/judgejohnhodgman). I just want to get a plug for our own Instagram account out. Okay.

[00:09:54] **Jesse Thorn:** It's a little chubber.

[00:09:56] **John Hodgman:** How would you describe this dog, Jesse Thorn? What kind of dog is this?

[00:10:01] **Jesse Thorn:** This is a small to medium sized dog with floppy ears and short fur. It's sort of a classic dog look. Legs are a little bit stubby.

[00:10:10] **John Hodgman:** A little dachshund-y, would you say, Lee and Katherine?

[00:10:13] **Jesse Thorn:** A little bit dachshund-y, yeah. And its head is resting on the arm of a camping chair, and it's sort of—it's perpendicular to what I presume is Lee's lap. And because its head is resting on this camping chair arm, it has some really great sort of neck and shoulder chubs.

[00:10:32] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, a lot of good chubs in this dog. So, Katherine, what is the name of this dog?

[00:10:36] **Katherine:** His name is Dibny.

[00:10:38] **John Hodgman:** Dibny. And Lee, is Dibny a dachshund?

[00:10:41] **Lee:** Yes. He's a so-called miniature dachshund that grew to—well, he's an overachiever, let's put it that way.

[00:10:47] **John Hodgman:** Seems pretty maxiature for a mini.

[00:10:49] **Jesse Thorn:** An overachiever in the area of kibble.

[00:10:52] **John Hodgman:** Is this picture—Dibny relaxing in the Kelty loveseat on top of Lee's lap?

(Katherine confirms.)

And this is evidence not only of a cute dog, but also that Dibny has claimed this loveseat for his own love and will not admit another lover to this to this loveseat. Correct?

[00:11:09] **Katherine:** Yes, it's a tight squeeze if all three of us are on the chair.

[00:11:12] **John Hodgman:** That seems pretty adorable though, to tight squeeze in that Kelty love chair. Scrolling down here is another picture of Dibny in Dibny's little dog bed in the back of your car. You catching this Jesse Thorn?

[00:11:28] **Jesse Thorn:** Awww! He's wearing his own little—he has a little seatbelt, and it involves a little orange safety vest. *(Laughs.)*

[00:11:36] **John Hodgman:** Yep. And he's peeking up over his little dog bed. And finally, there's a photo of your campsite. Now, this is a pretty developed campsite, I have to say. I'm a non-camper. I have slept under cover of a tent twice in the past 30 years. But looking at your campsite—I mean, it seems like this is not a campsite. This is like a camp compound. You have multiple hang stations. You have—how would you describe the tent that you have over

here on the left of this photo? It doesn't look like a tent so much as like a wind tunnel that they used to test jet turbines.

[00:12:10] **Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, just an outdoor co-op supply, like wedding and event tents, because this thing is gargantuan! (*Laughs.*)

[00:12:16] **John Hodgman:** It's incredible!

[00:12:18] **Lee:** It is a six-person tent.

[00:12:19] **John Hodgman:** It's a six-person tent!

[00:12:21] **Lee:** And there's an addition on it they call a garage, which we use to park the firewood. And sometimes we put the seat in there, the chair in there for the night. Also, if the rain's coming down, we can just sit in there and provide some shelter.

[00:12:35] **John Hodgman:** It literally looks like your tent has a garage.

[00:12:38] **Lee:** I will say that the only way you could fit six people in that tent was if four of them were children, I think. If you try to put six adults in there, I think it would be a tight squeeze.

[00:12:49] **Jesse Thorn:** To be fair, six adults is four too many for any given tent.

[00:12:52] **John Hodgman:** Where was this photo taken? In the woods of Connecticut or—?

[00:12:55] **Katherine:** That was taken in the Catskills at North South Lake Campground.

[00:12:59] **Jesse Thorn:** I'm also seeing here a picnic table, a barbecue, and three large bags of firewood.

[00:13:09] **Lee:** (*Chuckles.*) Well, of course, the picnic table is on the campsite, but you know, we drape a cloth over it, and it's nice.

[00:13:15] **Jesse Thorn:** I was about to say, there's also a tablecloth!

[00:13:20] **Lee:** But we don't usually use the campfire for cooking. We have a Coleman stove that Katherine uses. It's a little more easier to deal with, I think, than trying to cook over a grill.

[00:13:29] **Jesse Thorn:** In other words, when you're camping, it's only the bare essentials.

[00:13:33] **Katherine:** Yeah. I mean, I bring my cast iron pans.

(*Jesse chuckles.*)

[00:13:36] **John Hodgman:** I was going to say, this looks like a really comfortable setup where you could hang out for some time. And you're not sleeping on the ground, are you, Lee and Katherine?

(They confirm.)

What do you got going on in there?

[00:13:49] **Lee:** Katherine found this bedding set that's got like a big—like a queen size inflatable mattress, you know? So, one of the things that has to be done when we arrive after the tent is up is, you know, I am sitting in there blowing up this mattress with the pump for 20 minutes. *(Chuckles.)* And then—you know, and then putting the bedding on, and then you'll see in the next picture when we get to it, there's the foam tiles that go down over one end of the tent so that we have like a floor that doesn't hurt when you walk on it.

[00:14:18] **John Hodgman:** You have a floor that you put in your tent?!

(Katherine confirms.)

I'm—so, I have scrolled down, and I see this luggage cart full of equipment, which I take it to be the full complement of what you pack into your car.

[00:14:33] **Lee:** That's not even all of it.

[00:14:34] **John Hodgman:** No? Oh, so it's more than one luggage cart's worth of—?

[00:14:37] **Lee:** The loveseat's not on the cart in that picture.

[00:14:40] **Jesse Thorn:** This is a real luggage cart from a—are you staging your camping trips at a Courtyard by Marriott?

[00:14:49] **Lee:** *(Laughs.)* No, the building where we live has a few of these for the use of the tenants.

[00:14:54] **Katherine:** Yeah, it's the apartment building's cart.

[00:14:55] **John Hodgman:** I see. I see. Yeah, base camp, Jesse, is at the Courtyard morning muffin station.

(Jesse agrees with a laugh.)

Look, I appreciate how much comfort that you're inserting into the camping experience. This is a lot more than I would have thought. Who had the idea to put a comfort floor into the tent between the two of you?

[00:15:14] **Katherine:** That would be me.

[00:15:16] **John Hodgman:** That would be Katherine?

[00:15:16] **Katherine:** Yes. In the interest of full disclosure, it isn't just foam tiles. There are a few blankets that we spread over the foam tiles to keep the dirt from getting in the tent.

[00:15:26] **John Hodgman:** *(Whistles.)* Right, of course.

[00:15:29] **Lee:** There's also a little folding stool that goes on top of all of that, so someone has a place to sit.

[00:15:34] **Jesse Thorn:** Nothing worse on a camping trip than dirt.

[00:15:37] **Katherine:** Well, inside the tent!

[00:15:38] **Jesse Thorn:** Next thing you know, there'll be trees around.

[00:15:39] **John Hodgman:** I didn't come out here in the wilderness to get my foam tiles dirty.

(They laugh.)

I think it's terrific. It's on the glamping spectrum insofar as you want to be outdoors, but you also want to not be uncomfortable and to enjoy yourself. I think that's fine.

[00:15:58] **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.

[00:16:04] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:16:07] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:16:08] **John Hodgman:** My question is: who came to this relationship with the idea of camping?

[00:16:13] **Katherine:** I think I may have been the more avid camper. But I think Lee also camped when he was younger.

[00:16:20] **Lee:** I would go on cycling tours, supported tours where we basically brought our own tents and set them up every night at the end of the day. So, I did a lot that way. When I was a kid, you know, my family would go out. Of course, my dad had one of those pop-up trailers for a few years. So, it was, you know, a little more swanky than a tent maybe. But yeah. I've done a fair amount of tent camping, you know, over the years.

[00:16:48] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, but Lee, when you're describing the foam floors and the special stool, etc., you kind of just keep pointing at Katherine like she's the one introducing all this comfort into the outdoor experience. Is that your feeling? You think it should be a little bit more rustic?

[00:17:07] **Lee:** (*Laughs.*) These are not unwelcome improvements.

[00:17:11] **John Hodgman:** That's the harshest thing I've ever heard a Canadian say.

(*They laugh.*)

I've never heard anything more passive nor more aggressive.

[00:17:21] **Jesse Thorn:** That's the key to the Canadian nuclear football.

[00:17:26] **John Hodgman:** I'm sorry, Lee and all of Canada; I'm dealing in these stereotypes. Is it true that these improvements are not unwelcome, Lee? You're under oath, fake oath.

[00:17:34] **Lee:** Yes, I would say so. It's not like we have an inflatable sofa in there or a television set, you know, but these are things that make the experience more enjoyable, especially if you're going to be there a few nights.

[00:17:45] **John Hodgman:** You could probably get a projector, a camping projector, put that on a sheet. No, Katherine? I'm trying to glam this out for you.

(*Katherine laughs.*)

Do you have a particular way you like to pack the car?

(*Lee confirms.*)

Tell me about it.

[00:17:55] **Lee:** Okay, so it really doesn't all come together until the cooler's ready to go in, because that's the biggest thing. There is—you would have noticed on that last photo, there is a sort of a big dark gray box, and that has most of the like—you know, the gear, like the plates, the pans. The wash tubs and all that.

[00:18:16] **John Hodgman:** I'm sorry, the what? You said that has most of the guh—it was a G word.

[00:18:22] **Lee:** Oh, the gear.

(*John screams "GEEEAR".*)

Yes. (*Chuckles.*) And then, you know, so the cooler goes in first, the gear sort of goes in sideways.

(*John mutters "geeeear".*)

And then, that bedding set I talked about, it comes in a bag, and you can tie the bag down. It has straps to sort of ratchet down to compact it, but it's still pretty bulky. So, it has to fit in sort of behind that. And then, there's the space behind the seats that the boxes don't quite fit into, because the seats are angled. And that's where I tuck like the poles for the tarp. I fill up that spot with stuff. Then, I end up layering things on top of that. I'm trying to get it all sort of into, you know, a roughly level shape.

[00:19:02] **John Hodgman:** You're Tetris-ing it in there.

[00:19:06] **Lee:** And still so that it only comes up to about the level of the top of the seat.

[00:19:10] **John Hodgman:** Right. Because, as you point out, if there is something heavy in the back, not only does it block your view in the rearview mirror, but should you stop short, it could come flying forward and hit you in the back of the head or go through your windshield. Yeah, right.

[00:19:23] **Lee:** Yeah, exactly. I mean, and just to be clear, I'm not overlooking other opportunities for using space. Like, the space behind the driver's seat, behind the passenger seat, it's all full of stuff too. And the other half of the backseat where Dibny isn't sitting is also stacked with stuff.

[00:19:38] **John Hodgman:** What kind of vehicle do you drive?

[00:19:40] **Lee:** It's a Honda CRV.

[00:19:42] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, no one's accusing you of getting lazy finding space in that CRV. We know you're packing it up.

[00:19:48] **Jesse Thorn:** Lee, would you characterize yourself as a packing dad? Which is to say that, like me, you spend five days preceding any trip obsessing over exactly where each package is going to go in your motor vehicle?

[00:20:01] **Lee:** Uuuh, not so much. I mean, I've been doing it enough now that I can just sort of wing it. You know, we'll pack up maybe the night before we leave just to get some of the stuff in the car. But, you know, we've done it so many times now I can just—it used to take a lot longer.

[00:20:15] **Jesse Thorn:** But you have a system, right? I mean, this is like filling a dishwasher. If someone else does it, it's big trouble.

[00:20:21] **Lee:** Oh yeah. Yeah. I have a very particular way of doing it these days. You know, stuff that I've discovered works in terms of just getting things to fit.

[00:20:28] **John Hodgman:** Bailiff Jesse, may I ask you a question?

(Jesse confirms.)

You ever pack a car for a car trip—say to Maine—at the beginning of the summer, right? And then, someone in your family decides to put something else in the car on their own.

[00:20:43] **Jesse Thorn:** Oh my god! Oh my god! Oh my god. Oh my god, oh my god, oh my god, oh my god.

[00:20:45] **John Hodgman:** And maybe you're still thinking about it. *(Laughs.)*

[00:20:48] **Jesse Thorn:** I love my wife so much, John. I love my wife sooo much, and I can't emphasize that enough. But I don't think there's anything that makes me break out in hives of irrational rage more than just when even one new bag shows up after the packing line has been drawn. And then, just “Why is this open top tote bag full of marbles here?!”

[00:21:12] **John Hodgman:** *(Laughs.)* Oh, and yes, and I will need access to that during the drive, so find somewhere where I can reach my marbles.

[00:21:22] **Jesse Thorn:** I can't emphasize how much I love my wife. She's really great. She's so great.

[00:21:25] **John Hodgman:** No, and she deserves a tote bag full of marbles, that's not it. It's our brains are broken.

[00:21:31] **Jesse Thorn:** Nobody should be separated from their marbs during a long drive.

[00:21:34] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, no, my brain is just broken. It's just I can't *(shudders)*—I have to rearrange everything in my mind and maybe in the car to adapt for new things. But Lee, I think you're a little bit cooler than me and Jesse in this regard. You just want to be safe.

(Lee confirms.)

[00:21:50] **Jesse Thorn:** I see a “meh” hand signal from Katherine.

[00:21:52] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, I definitely saw a “meh” or a “mezza mezza” hand signal from Katherine. Please explain.

[00:21:59] **Katherine:** Well, you know, he's Canadian. So, he is hiding his deep-seated rage at anything that might disrupt this perfect packing system that he has in his head.

[00:22:09] **Jesse Thorn:** Katherine, I heard him say that he's pretty much got it under control now. To me—and correct me if I'm wrong—that signifies that he has the perfect system that will be broken by the slightest change or addition.

(Katherine confirms.)

[00:22:22] **John Hodgman:** Do you cop to that, Lee?

[00:22:31] **Lee:** Yeah.

(They laugh.)

Every time something new arrives, it's like, ugh, how am I gonna make this work?

[00:22:35] **John Hodgman:** Let the record show, Lee is touching his hand to his brows and just picturing this extra complication in the back of his CRV.

[00:22:43] **Jesse Thorn:** He looks like a stock photograph of someone suffering a migraine headache.

[00:22:47] **John Hodgman:** That's right. Just trying to paint a word picture for the podcast listeners at home.

[00:22:52] **Katherine:** Pretty much like I got this chair, and it was, “How—where is this going to go? How am I going to make this fit? We have to get rid of something else.” But if I get a new piece of gear, he often will figure out how to make it work.

(John whisper-screams “GEEEAR”.)

He was angry when we got the tarp, at first. He was like, “We don't need this tarp!” And now he loves the tarp!

[00:23:15] **John Hodgman:** Lee, were you angry at Tarpie in the beginning?

[00:23:19] **Lee:** I don't remember that so much, but I suppose it's possible. In the end, it turned out to be not a big deal. The tarp doesn't take up a lot of space, and we were able to get it in the gear box.

(John whispers “gear”.)

[00:23:30] **Jesse Thorn:** When you say the gear box, you're referring to the gearbox of the CRV? *(Chuckles.)* You're out of room in the cargo area?

[00:23:36] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, I mean, he's putting stuff in the carburetor. That's how resourceful he is when it comes to putting stuff into the CRV. Taking out the spark plugs and

replacing them with Slim Jims. Katherine, you got this chair, you say under your own power. That is to say, without consulting your husband. You just went off rogue and got this chair. Tell me about the chair. Tell me why you love it. Tell me where you got it. You can tell me the name of the brand of the place that sold it to you.

[00:24:04] **Katherine:** Well, it's another Kelty's chair. It's just—

[00:24:06] **John Hodgman:** Here we go.

[00:24:10] **Katherine:** (*Laughs.*) It's just a chair for one person instead of two people. And it's also lower to the ground. That's the other differences. It's the kind where you can stretch back and stretch out. The other chair is up a little bit higher and sometimes I feel like my short legs kind of swing when I'm sitting on it.

[00:24:34] **John Hodgman:** Oh, really?

(*Katherine confirms.*)

So, I'm taking it that when you say that this new chair can seat only one, the one it seats is you.

[00:24:43] **Katherine:** Well, whoever decides to sit in it. Sometimes even Dibny sits in it, because he can get on and off the chair with his little stumpy legs more easily than the taller chair, which might injure him if he jumped off of it.

[00:24:56] **John Hodgman:** Tell me about Dibny as a camper. What's it like to be camping with Dibny? Because it seems like he's running the show.

[00:25:02] **Katherine:** He really is. He's a very spoiled dog. He is great to camp with. He loves to wander around the campsite, sniff things, curl up on a chair, curl up on whoever is sitting in a chair. He's also—when it's cold at night, he is an excellent sleeping bag, sleeping quilt heater.

[00:25:22] **Lee:** Hot water bottle.

[00:25:22] **John Hodgman:** So long as he wipes his paws on the blankets on top of the camp tent floor before coming in, I presume.

(*Katherine laughs.*)

Do you have a camp—do you have a camping outdoor shower?

[00:25:31] **Katherine:** We do have one. We've never actually used it as a shower though.

[00:25:37] **Jesse Thorn:** What do you use it as instead?! An irrigation system?

(They laugh.)

[00:25:41] **Katherine:** We intended it as a camping shower during covid, when it was a little nervous feeling to go into bath houses and campgrounds. But we never actually used it for that purpose. We actually use it to wash our bikes.

[00:25:56] **John Hodgman:** Okay. Fair enough. So, does Dibny have his own camp seat?

[00:26:01] **Katherine:** No, because he wants to sit on whomever's lap is currently sitting down.

[00:26:07] **John Hodgman:** And whose lap does he prefer?

[00:26:09] **Katherine:** He is an—he is pretty evenly split. He's a—

[00:26:12] **John Hodgman:** Equal opportunity lap-sitter?

(Katherine confirms.)

Right. How did it feel before you got the new chair to be coming out of the tent, walking through the garage, then you have to pass through the east wing and the video games room, and then also the lounge and then the mudroom, and then you finally get outside to see your loving husband, Lee, sitting in the loveseat with Dibny in his lap, and there's no room for you?

[00:26:41] **Katherine:** Mostly, it was when we both sit there, and then the dog just drapes himself across both of our laps. It's cozy, but it was getting a little uncomfortable, like—

[00:26:53] **Lee:** Because he won't sit still.

[00:26:55] **Katherine:** Yeah. It's kind of like when your feelings on people sleeping together at night, where it's a little too cozy and there's too many people in bed and everyone's shifting around. So, it's nice to just have that one chair.

[00:27:10] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, no, I mean, Lee, do you deny that this chair serves a pretty vital purpose? I mean, what other option is there for Katherine if you and Dibny are snuggled up on that loveseat and she's not comfortable? What do you say to her? Go sit on the ground?

[00:27:24] **Lee:** Well, we could've asked Dibny to sit on the ground. I mean, he does have an actual dog bed.

[00:27:27] **John Hodgman:** Come on, Lee. Let's be serious now. No one's asking Dibny to sit on the ground. I've seen the photos.

[00:27:34] **Jesse Thorn:** He'd just bring dirt to the blankets, which would then transfer to the foam!

[00:27:36] **John Hodgman:** And Dibny can't be on the ground. He's a dog. He's got to be on those laps. You know his position on this.

[00:27:44] **Katherine:** He's pretty adamant on that.

[00:27:45] **John Hodgman:** I get back to my original question, Lee. It seems reasonable to have an extra chair, don't you agree?

[00:27:52] **Lee:** If it's not possible to have three of us in the loveseat, then somebody would like to have a place to sit. So, no, I don't think it's unreasonable, but...

[00:28:02] **John Hodgman:** But it's still too much.

(Lee confirms.)

Why a loveseat to begin with? Why not just two chairs? Isn't that how two people camp? They get two chairs. They sit in them. How did this loveseat come into your life? Who bought it?

[00:28:14] **Lee:** I think that was a group decision. It's just one piece, you know, instead of having two of these to haul around and bundle up. And it's actually convenient when we need to move it around, there's just one thing to move. It's just a little bigger, a little heavier.

[00:28:25] **John Hodgman:** So, it wasn't for closeness reasons that you wanted this loveseat. It was for expediency of packing.

[00:28:32] **Lee:** I didn't say that.

[00:28:33] **John Hodgman:** Well, you're not saying anything else. You're saying it's one piece and it's easy to move around. It saves you some hassle with the CRV. That's what I'm hearing.

[00:28:40] **Katherine:** It is also—leg swinging notwithstanding—it is very comfortable. But less so with a dog sometimes.

[00:28:49] **Jesse Thorn:** Wouldn't the easiest answer to this be to just get rid of the dog?

(Katherine disagrees.)

[00:28:56] **John Hodgman:** Yeah. Yeah. Here's what you do. How far away is this drive to the Catskills from Stanford, would you say? A couple hours?

(Katherine confirms.)

So, here's what you do. You get another car. You fill up your CRV with all of your campsite stuff, and then the other car with all of Dibny's chairs and beds and tents.

[00:29:14] **Jesse Thorn:** And you two drive in the human car, and he can drive the dog car.

[00:29:16] **John Hodgman:** Exactly. And you'll have to help him set up his little campsite, of course, because no thumbs. And also, you're under his sway. Yeah. But just have a separate campsite for Dibny. I think that that's a great solution. Probably not the one you're looking for. So, Katherine, you have the new chair, and you went camping with it. How did that go?

[00:29:33] **Katherine:** I think it went pretty well. You know, we sat in it. Dibny sat in it. It fit. Lee made it work. It did fit in the car, as he narrows his eyes at me. And it was fine.

[00:29:47] **John Hodgman:** How did it feel to sit in your own chair while camping?

[00:29:51] **Katherine:** It was pretty nice. I mean, I would sit in the chair. Sometimes Lee would sit in the chair. Sometimes we would both sit in the loveseat.

[00:29:57] **John Hodgman:** Excuse me. I'm sorry to interrupt you. Lee? You sat in the chair, too?

[00:30:02] **Lee:** Yes. Once or twice.

[00:30:03] **John Hodgman:** How dare you?

[00:30:04] **Lee:** It's a little low to the ground for me.

[00:30:05] **John Hodgman:** So, Lee, are you telling me that not only did you want to ban this chair, but when it showed up, you then had the nerve to sit in it?! And now you have the nerve to come on our podcast and—there's no other way to say it—poop on it?!

(Katherine laughs.)

[00:30:18] **Lee:** Well, it's there. Might as well use it, right?

[00:30:22] **Jesse Thorn:** *(Yelling.)* Is this a sit and poop, Lee?! Is it a sit and poop?

[00:30:23] **Lee:** Not usually.

[00:30:25] **John Hodgman:** Okay. So, Lee, let me ask you this question. When you were sitting in the loveseat this last time camping, with presumably Dibny on your lap, and you look across—not the campfire, but the Coleman range that you brought, probably a six top

burner or whatever—and you see Katherine sitting there in her own chair, how do you feel then?

[00:30:45] **Lee:** You know, sometimes I wish Dibny would be happy to sit somewhere else, so that Katherine and I can just have a little loveseat for each other, but...

[00:30:53] **John Hodgman:** So, you do value love, not just seat.

(Lee confirms.)

Right. It's not just an efficient one-piece of furniture that is easy to pack. It is also an opportunity for coziness with your partner.

(Lee confirms.)

So, it did fit in, or you got it there somehow. How did you—how did it fit?

[00:31:11] **Lee:** Well, I had to figure out a way to squeeze it onto the stack without blowing everything up.

[00:31:19] **John Hodgman:** It could possibly explode?!

[00:31:20] **Lee:** Let's just say sometimes when we have to stop and I have to open the tailgate, I worry that some things will not stay put. *(Chuckles.)* Just got to be ready to catch them if they drop out.

[00:31:32] **Jesse Thorn:** You're concerned about a cartoon closet situation.

(Lee confirms.)

[00:31:35] **John Hodgman:** You probably shouldn't have packed those three bowling balls. Doink, doink, doink. Falling on your head. Stars and birds.

(Jesse laughs.)

So, it was frustrating for you to pack it. Were you able to see out the rear-view mirror or was it blocking your view?

[00:31:49] **Lee:** I was able to see out the back.

[00:31:50] **John Hodgman:** You did. Find. A. Way. Now, Lee, is this a slippery slope situation? Are you concerned that if you allow this chair, this addition, that there'll just be more and more and more additions?

[00:32:03] **Lee:** I think that's clearly a danger. I mean, eventually we will run out of space.

[00:32:09] **Jesse Thorn:** Lee, does your car have a roof rack?

[00:32:10] **Lee:** Unfortunately, it does not.

[00:32:12] **John Hodgman:** Have you ever considered a cargo box on top? Cause you're not against the gear. GEEEAR!

[00:32:17] **Lee:** If we had rails on top, we'd definitely consider it, I think. Although, then the question remains where we'd put the cargo box when we were done with it at the end of the season, because we don't really have a place to store it.

[00:32:26] **John Hodgman:** Have you—Katherine, have you investigated a cargo box? Is what Lee's saying true? No rails on the CRV, no way—no place to store it?

[00:32:32] **Katherine:** That's correct. When we got the car, we had the smart idea to get a trailer hitch for our bikes, but no roof rack. It was an oversight. There are aftermarket rails you can get for CRVs. And there's also things like cargo nets. You can install a cargo net in the CRV to prevent flying objects.

[00:32:58] **John Hodgman:** Oh, inside the car, you mean?

(Katherine confirms.)

I thought you meant you were going to put stuff on top of your car, and then sort of secure it with a net. I'm like, yeah, that seems a lot of fun to drive around knowing you got all kinds of bowling balls and extra chairs secured by a net on top of the car. No thank you.

[00:33:13] **Jesse Thorn:** Lee, what's wrong with a net or a cargo barrier between the cargo area and the back seat?

[00:33:16] **Lee:** There's no real place to mount it on top of the pile to keep it from bouncing off. I don't see any tie downs or anything inside the car where I could actually make that work.

[00:33:25] **John Hodgman:** I bet you that CRV has some tie downs. Look, I know that you're a Canadian car-packer. I know you've gotten in there, so I'm going to trust that you know your vehicle. But it seems to me most hatchbacks have some tie downs.

[00:33:37] **Jesse Thorn:** I just googled “Honda CRV cargo barrier”, and there are many, many choices.

[00:33:42] **John Hodgman:** Many, many choices of cargo barriers. But maybe that's not what's at the crux here, Jesse Thorn. Maybe the crux is the concern that Katherine has things that she wants to put in the car, period.

(Jesse giggles.)

Katherine, Lee mentions—and checking online, I can concur—a Honda CRV is not a bottomless pit. There is a limit to the amount of space in there. Do you have your eye on any other equipment that you would like to add to your camping profile currently?

(Katherine denies it.)

I'm sorry, that felt like a lie to me, Katherine. There was a significant pause there. That pause, to me, did suggest that you were thinking like, “Am I truthful here, or do I hold back the fact that I'm really interested in getting a camping media console?”

[00:34:25] **Katherine:** It's more that I self-police myself to try to eliminate any temptation of acquiring any new gear. Like, for example, there's like a sale going on at REI. And I go, “Okay, that would be kind of cool, but no.” If I try to buy anything else or mention anything else, Lee will say, “No, that won't fit or what are we going to do? What are we going to take out instead of taking this thing?” So.

[00:34:53] **John Hodgman:** First of all, let me say: finally, a mention of REI in this buzz market fest that we've got going on here today.

(Katherine apologizes with a laugh.)

I am a member of that cooperative. So, thank you very much. But second of all, policing my desires to look for new camping equipment as a way of life does not sound like fun.

[00:35:09] **Katherine:** Well, you know, it's the deep-seated Canadian anger that if I buy anything, he might make a passive aggressive comment about how it won't fit in the car.

[00:35:16] **John Hodgman:** How does it make you feel, Lee, to know that Katherine is spending her time tamping down even the idea of a curiosity of a desire for some new piece of camping equipment? That she fears your Canadian passive aggression?

[00:35:33] **Lee:** Well, now, I don't know if it'll go that far, but, um—

[00:35:36] **John Hodgman:** She just said it! So, how does that make you feel?

[00:35:38] **Lee:** I'm not I'm not trying to stifle you, dear.

[00:35:40] **John Hodgman:** You know what, Lee? I believe you. Was there something more you wanted to say?

[00:35:46] **Lee:** You know, it's okay to look at these things. Any decisions that we make about adding more equipment to the pile, I mean, have to be undertaken jointly, I think.

[00:35:54] **John Hodgman:** That seems very reasonable, Katherine. You admitted from the beginning that you got this chair on your own without consultation.

(Katherine agrees.)

I mean, you could appreciate that Lee's negative reaction might be less, “How do I fit this into the car?” but also like, “Why aren't you checking with me? I have a very specific way I get things into the car.” This chair is not going away. This chair is part of the pile now, right, Lee?

[00:36:18] **Lee:** More or less.

[00:36:19] **John Hodgman:** So, what specifically would you have me order, Lee, if I were to rule in your favor? Nothing ever again, or what?

[00:36:25] **Lee:** I would probably would just like to request that any desire to add new things be discussed first, you know, with an eye to practicality and available space. So, no more sort of springing these little surprises on me. *(Chuckles.)* “And oh, yes. We'll be taking this.” Well, I hope so, but we'll find out.

[00:36:47] **John Hodgman:** Lee, are there any items in the current pile that you would like to get rid of? Because I could order them gone, too. It's not just the chair that hangs in the balance. It could be anything. Floor tiles, turntable and hi-fi set, portable swimming pool.

[00:37:02] **Lee:** *(Laughs.)* I'm fine with the current collection of camping gear that we have.

[00:37:06] **John Hodgman:** Portable helipad, portable casino. Do you have a casino? Do you have slot machines? No? You're okay with the pile as it is? Just this chair is the last—it's the last straw.

[00:37:16] **Lee:** Yeah, that's pretty much the limit as far as I'm concerned.

[00:37:18] **John Hodgman:** Let this chair be the penultimate straw. The last straw is the one that breaks the CRV. That's when the explosion happens. Katherine, what would you have me order if I were to rule in your favor?

[00:37:29] **Katherine:** *(Sighs heavily.)* What he's asking for isn't unreasonable.

[00:37:31] **John Hodgman:** Oh, communication in a marriage?

(They laugh.)

[00:37:37] **Katherine:** The irony is normally we're very good communicators.

[00:37:41] **John Hodgman:** So, why is this happening? If you're good communicators, and I believe that you are, what drove you to go behind Lee's back and get a chair for yourself?

[00:37:51] **Katherine:** *(Laughing.)* Because I thought he would say no if I got it. Or if I asked to get it, he would say no. And I wanted it.

[00:37:57] **John Hodgman:** Right. Classic “beg for forgiveness, don't ask for permission” move. Lee is concerned with safety during driving, Katherine, and not being able to use the rearview mirror. Do you do any of the driving on these trips, or is he the sole driver?

[00:38:12] **Katherine:** Oh, I drive. I usually drive on the way there. And then, he'll drive on the way back. Or if it's a longer drive, we'll share the driving.

[00:38:20] **John Hodgman:** But you don't share the same urgency when it comes to the possibility of your brand-new chair that you bought flying out of your windshield like a missile?

[00:38:31] **Katherine:** I think I'm more comfortable with driving, because I've driven across country with a trailer. And so, I'm more familiar with having driven without being able to see out of the rearview mirror. I mean, I totally understand the safety aspect of it, but I feel like the “I can't see out of the rearview mirror” is something that isn't 100%, to me, like a valid reason.

[00:38:57] **John Hodgman:** Mm! Do you think that, consciously or unconsciously, Lee is making it up?

[00:39:03] **Katherine:** No. Well, I don't—maybe he's just less comfortable.

[00:39:05] **John Hodgman:** Right. He's just less comfortable. Genuinely less comfortable. He's not using that as an excuse to cover up a different preference, which is, “I just don't want any more stuff, and I don't want you to go buy more stuff.”

[00:39:18] **Katherine:** I don't think so.

[00:39:20] **John Hodgman:** Okay. Lee, any mischaracterizations that I've made of you that you'd like to clear up at this point?

[00:39:25] **Lee:** I don't think so. I think the discussion has proceeded fairly.

[00:39:28] **John Hodgman:** Alright, good. I'm glad to hear it. So, one thing I have to ask you, Lee, is—you know, Katherine said that she wanted the chair, and she was afraid if she asked you about it, you would say no, and she wanted it. So, she went ahead and got it anyway. What do you feel about that?

[00:39:42] **Lee:** Obviously, I think it would have been better if she had asked me first you know, “Are you sure there's no room for this?”

And then I probably would have said, “Yeah, I'm pretty sure.” But you know, sometimes I'm wrong about things like that, you know, until we actually try it. If the chair was on sale, say, you know, we got it and we couldn't make it fit in the car, then we can't use it, either we send it back or find some other use for it. It can't come with us. The worst thing that happens is

we've wasted some money. But I would have preferred that she had approached me about it before she ordered it.

[00:40:13] **John Hodgman:** Okay. Well, I think I've heard everything I need to in order to make my decision. I am going to go into my portable planetarium that I just assembled while I was judging this podcast. I'll be back in a moment with my verdict.

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

[00:40:26] **Jesse Thorn:** Please rise as Judge John Hodgman exits the courtroom. Katherine, how are you feeling about your chances in the case?

[00:40:33] **Katherine:** Oh, I'm not feeling great.

[00:40:34] **Jesse Thorn:** Why's that?

[00:40:35] **Katherine:** *(Sighs.)* Lee has presented some very logical arguments. And I don't feel like things are on my side.

[00:40:45] **Jesse Thorn:** I mean, this is a man with a system.

[00:40:47] **Katherine:** True. And he does have a habit of thinking things won't work at first, but then discovering that they, in fact, will work. Or being resistant to change and then, once he's presented with a change, adjusting himself.

[00:41:02] **Jesse Thorn:** You're telling me a man with a system is resistant to change?! These pieces just aren't adding up!

(They laugh.)

Lee, how are you feeling about your chances?

[00:41:11] **Lee:** I feel like I've presented my arguments rationally and tried not to be unreasonable about things. I would—I don't know, if the judge ruled in my favor, I almost feel a little bad about it. I don't want to make Katherine unhappy, right? I don't want there to be disharmony because of this. You know, the important thing is we know that the time that we spend together—and you know, it's fun time regardless of the work it takes to get there. And once the stuff is there and we're there, you know, it's usually a nice relaxing time. And I don't want squabbling over whether things will fit into the car or not, you know, to be the thing that sort of hangs over these trips in the future. All I'm asking for is a little consultation, I guess, before we throw anything more into it.

[00:41:55] **Jesse Thorn:** Well, we'll see what Judge Hodgman has to say about all this when we come back in just a moment.

[00:41:59] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:42:02] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:42:03] **Jesse Thorn:** Judge Hodgman, we're taking a break. And as this episode is released, we are on the road. We are ripping our way through the Midwest, delivering justice.

[00:42:16] **John Hodgman:** We just had an incredible time at the Opera House in Lexington, Kentucky. And if you're hearing this today on the day of release, it's not too late to get your tickets for our Chicago show, which is tonight, October 11th!

And then it's on to Maddison, Wisconsin, St. Paul, Minnesota, Austin, Texas. And then a short break before we go down to Atlanta, Charlottesville, Durham, North Carolina, Washington, DC, Portland, Maine, Brooklyn, New York. Why? It's the Van Freaks Roadshow, and we're just getting on the road. So, join us, won't you? Go to VanFreaksRoadshow.com for tickets and a link to submit your disputes.

[00:42:53] **Jesse Thorn:** We need your disputes in all those places, whether you're in the Southeast, the Northeast, or the Midwest. Go to VanFreaksRoadshow.com, submit your dispute. We'll get you backstage. We'll shake your hand and take your picture, and you'll be immortalized on the world's most popular podcast, *Judge John Hodgman*. Right? Probably the world's most popular podcast. We haven't looked this up. We don't have access. It's proprietary information for many podcasts.

[00:43:17] **John Hodgman:** Yeah. Yeah. No, no. I'm checking our stats. And yep, it's the world's most popular podcast. You know, absolutely.

[00:43:25] **Jesse Thorn:** VanFreaksRoadshow.com. Submit those cases and get those tickets.

[00:43:30] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:43:32] **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.)

[00:43:39] **John Hodgman:** You may be seated. First of all, Lee and Katherine, I was so excited when I saw your camping set-up. And then, when I heard that you had a queen air mattress, I was like, "Oh, they are so close to the dream." Like, they already have a tent that is a house, and they already have one queen-sized air mattress in it. How hard would it be for them to upgrade that to a king-sized air mattress and then get another tent house with another king-sized mattress and set it across from a portable reflecting pool, which you can easily get at REI, and it comes in a bag. That means it's portable.

(Jesse giggles.)

And then, you can live the *Judge John Hodgman* dream of the ideal sleeping arrangement between people who love one another, which is obviously two king sized beds in separate

villas, separated by a reflecting pool. And you can visit each other from time to time. But then, I realized that's not for them, nor is it for me, honestly. I also would miss my partner in that situation. It's a joke. It's an idea. It's an ideal that should never be reached, because clearly you two love each other and want to be close to each other and care about each other, and you want to snuggle on that loveseat. And if it weren't for Dibny, you wouldn't have a problem in the world. You have the loveseat, not because it is a seat, but because it is love. And if we could get rid of that dog somehow! But we can't. Dibny rules everything around us. And that's also the way it should be.

Now, it is perfectly reasonable, rational, logical—as you are all saying—that if you can't share the loveseat comfortably, that you should then have another seating option for someone who might be like, I don't know, the person you married and love who has shorter legs than you do, Lee. As Katherine pointed out—and as you pointed out, Lee—you also presented perfectly reasonable, rational, and logical reasons for why you want it to stop here. This chair, no further. And I agree with you. I think you are out of room in that CRV. And besides the discomfort that you feel just thinking about fitting more into your CRV—a discomfort that I think you might want to interrogate a little bit more closely as to whether that's a good thing in your life or not. You feel put off and made discomfited by slight changes to your packing arrangement. That might not be a trait that is bringing you happiness. It's certainly not bringing Katherine happiness.

You are right. And it is logical, quite honestly, that Katherine should not have bought that chair behind your back and should not go off and buy other pieces of camping equipment behind your back in the future. This chair, no further, in that regard as well. You are good communicators, right? But here's the thing. You did a very, very good job answering all of my questions, as you pointed out, rationally, Lee. But you didn't do a very good job answering emotionally. Perhaps it's not part of your Canadian constitution. We'd have to ask Howie from *Disbarred* about that. He's an expert in Canadian constitutional law. But when I asked you, “How does it feel to hear that Katherine went behind your back, because she was afraid you would say no?” you kind of sidestepped it. And instead, you said, “Well, if she had asked me, I would have (*chuckling*) said no,” basically.

You went into this long extrapolation of everything that could go wrong with the chair—how it might not fit, how it might fit in a way that is dangerous, how if it didn't work out, what would you do with it? I mean, you really looked far into the future instead of staying in the present and considering what you had just heard. Maybe you would have said no. Maybe you would have said all those other things. Maybe you would have said yes. But I think that you need to reckon with the fact that she went behind your back to buy a chair, because she was afraid you would say no and get freaked out if she asked you about it ahead of time. And I think that's a reasonable thing that she felt. That is rational. That is based on prior engagement that she would feel that you would not be comfortable with even the idea of adding a chair to the portfolio and fitting it into the CRV.

And though I rule in your favor, and I do feel that Katherine made the error here, and it's not an error that should be repeated by sidestepping communication, I think that both of you need to interrogate a little bit about why this ended up happening. And this is coming from someone who packs a car really, really intently. And with intention. And truly, I was not exaggerating that I get very, very psychologically derailed when all of a sudden a person who

lives in my house comes out with two guitar amplifiers that I didn't know anything about that have to immediately come to Maine.

(Jesse "oh no"s with a helpless laugh and playful panicking.)

Yeah, I know, Jesse. I know. I know. I know. Excuse me, two guitars, one amplifier, but still. That's one guitar and one amplifier more than I knew I was dealing with. In any case, I feel you, Lee. I really do. Like, I am someone who really does go to the worst-case scenario with every camping chair, metaphorically, that I buy. What if it doesn't fit? What if it doesn't work? What if it's not the best? What if it doesn't go into the car? How would we return it? Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And I'm telling you, Lee, it's not a happy place for me. And Katherine, I don't think it's a happy place for you to be, you know, sort of like walking by a web browser open to REI or Kelty's or whatever, and you're like, "No, no, I can't think about that. Gotta shut that computer, because I don't even want to think about adding something to the portfolio."

These are things that we all go through. It's not a big deal. But I do encourage you, though I rule in Lee's favor in this case—but that you interrogate the dynamics a little bit and talk and communicate and reckon with the emotional stuff that's behind the chair. And leave the rational and the logical. They both have their place, of course. But Lee, your response to the Tetris of your car planning being upended is an emotional response, as much as it is a logical and rational one. And Katherine too, your desire for a chair that you can sit in rather than be edged out by Dibny—that's also both a logical desire and an emotional one. So, with those caveats to talk further about this, I don't know when you would ever have time to talk about this. It's like—it's not like you're going to be sitting out under the stars just contemplating life anytime soon, looking up at the vast field of the Milky Way, listening to the Coleman stove percolate or whatever it is that happens, contemplating the big questions in life. I don't know if that's ever going to be part of your life in the future, but you might take some time around that to discuss this stuff. And give Dibny a pet for me. This is the sound of a gavel.

[00:50:31] **Sound Effect:** A dog barks three times.

[00:50:32] **John Hodgman:** Judge John Hodgman rules, that is all.

[00:50:33] **Jesse Thorn:** Please rise as Judge John Hodgman exits the courtroom.

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

Lee, how do you feel about that verdict?

[00:50:39] **Lee:** I think it's fair. And John's point about further introspection is well taken as well.

[00:50:46] **Jesse Thorn:** Can you imagine if someone in your family showed up with two guitars and an amp after you already packed the car?

[00:50:53] **Lee:** I can imagine them showing up. I'm not necessarily imagining me driving away with it.

(Jesse cackles.)

(Inaudible) putting it in the car.

[00:51:05] **Jesse Thorn:** The dads united will never be defeated! *(Laughs.)*

Katherine, how do you feel?

[00:51:09] **Katherine:** I feel pretty good about it. The judge gave several good points about communication, and we'll spend some time when we're in front of the campfire looking at the campfire and talking it over.

[00:51:24] **Jesse Thorn:** Well, I love it. Katherine, Lee, thanks for joining us on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

(They thank him.)

You're welcome to join me on a camping trip anytime, as long as you don't show up with an open topped bag at the last minute. You got to put it by the door the night before so that I can work it out of my head.

[00:51:43] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:51:44] **Jesse Thorn:** Another *Judge John Hodgman* case is in the books. We'll have Swift Justice in just a minute. First, our thanks to Redditor ToLiveAndBrianLA for naming this week's episode, "S'morder in the Court". You know why everyone that wins this contest's Reddit handle is a pun? It's because they won a pun contest. That just occurred to me. Just now that occurred to me.

[00:52:07] **John Hodgman:** Yep. They won a pun contest. ToLiveAndBrianLA is a great pun too.

[00:52:11] **Jesse Thorn:** Yep, exactly. Join the conversation over at the Maximum Fun subreddit. That's [MaximumFun.Reddit.com](https://www.reddit.com/r/MaximumFun). That's where we've been asking for these title submissions. So, get in on it. It's fun just to see them, even if you don't—look, I can never think of puns, and I have nothing but contempt for them. But I look at it and I still enjoy it. You know what I mean?

[00:52:29] **John Hodgman:** Yep, I still do too. I really enjoy them a lot.

[00:52:31] **Jesse Thorn:** You can find the photos of this amazing dog and this wild campsite at [Instagram.com/judgejohnhodgman](https://www.instagram.com/judgejohnhodgman). Follow us there. *Judge John Hodgman* was created by Jesse Thorn and John Hodgman. This episode, engineered by Ian Callinan at Carriage House

Studios in Stamford, Connecticut and by Joel Mann at WERU in Orland, Maine. Marie Bardi runs our social media. Congratulations to her on her wedding. Congratulations, Marie.

[00:52:56] **John Hodgman:** Congratulations, Marie.

[00:53:00] **Jesse Thorn:** Our producer is Jennifer Marmor.

Now, Swift Justice, where we answer small disputes with quick judgment. Stacey—and Judge Hodgman, this is our MaxFun colleague, Stacey Molski! Extraordinary.

[00:53:12] **John Hodgman:** That's true. Extraordinary.

[00:53:14] **Jesse Thorn:** Extraordinary that the number two executive at Maximum Fun is taking the time to submit dumb disputes. Hopefully it's not with me! Oh boy. Stacey says, “I use the words ground and floor interchangeably, and I think that's fine and normal. My partner does not think that is fine and normal. He always laughs at me if I say things like, ‘I don't like when blankets touch the ground.’”

[00:53:40] **John Hodgman:** So, this is really interesting, Jesse, because not only is Stacey a member of the Maximum Fun employee owner cooperative and a friend, she is also—along with Lee and Katherine—a member of a secret society that I have no knowledge of and cannot acknowledge that it even exists. So, for all of these reasons, maybe for the first time in *Judge John Hodgman* history, I have to recuse myself from this one.

(Jesse let's out a “holy moly!”)

And I'm going to throw this one to our good friend, Joel Mann. Joel, did you hear the case in question?

(Joel confirms.)

And I'm sorry, I didn't give you any warning that I was going to ask for your wisdom on this. But I have to recuse myself, you understand. I can't be unbiased on this.

(Joel agrees.)

Now, wait a minute, before I ask you this question, has Stacey bought you any luxurious trips in private planes?

(They chuckle.)

Has she invited you to her hunting lodge for five weeks or anything like that? Do you know Stacey Molski? Has she had business before your court before?

[00:54:41] **Jesse Thorn:** Did Stacey get you a \$250,000 RV?

[00:54:45] **John Hodgman:** Anything like that?

[00:54:47] **Joel Mann:** No.

[00:54:48] **John Hodgman:** Okay. So, you are prepared to be unbiased?

[00:54:50] **Joel Mann:** I am unbiased.

[00:54:52] **John Hodgman:** And well, then all I can do is I'm ready for your ruling.

[00:54:55] **Joel Mann:** Ground or floor, are they interchangeable? I don't think so. I think the ground is when you're outside, and the floor is when you're inside.

[00:55:05] **John Hodgman:** Wheeew. Harsh, but fair. Thank you very much. Look, this is exactly what we were talking about in this case. If you're camping, the outside is ground. If you're inside the tent and you've put in a floor, then it's floor. You know what I want to get, Jesse? REI sells hardwood flooring for tents. Did you know that?

[00:55:23] **Jesse Thorn:** (*Chuckling.*) No, I hadn't.

[00:55:24] **John Hodgman:** I'm getting classic pattern and herringbone.

[00:55:28] **Jesse Thorn:** I would prefer a parquet like the garden in Boston.

[00:55:31] **John Hodgman:** Joel Mann, I just want to say thank you. It's been so much fun to spend the summer with you as always. WERU is a fantastic radio station. I listen to it not only on land, but also there's a boat that has a radio on it, and I was listening to it last night. And I heard Sue Georges play a couple of David Bowie songs from the *Life Aquatic* soundtrack, and I was just like what a gift to the world that WERU is. And I know that you had your pledge drive; that's long in the distance—

[00:55:57] **Joel Mann:** It was great.

[00:55:58] **John Hodgman:** And it's a shame, because it means people can never donate money to the station.

[00:56:01] **Joel Mann:** No, no, that's not true.

[00:56:03] **John Hodgman:** Oh, my mistake.

[00:56:04] **Joel Mann:** Yeah, yeah. WERU.org.

[00:56:06] **John Hodgman:** WERU.org. Everyone, you can also listen to the station there, and I highly recommend it. I'm just going to put out a plug. Not only do I make it a point to

always listen to Joe Byrd and the Field Hippies on repeat during the Joel Mann hour. Do you have an hour when you spin discs?

[00:56:21] **Joel Mann:** Not anymore.

[00:56:22] **John Hodgman:** Not anymore. You just run the show here now. But I love the Akkadian music show on Sunday mornings. It's really terrific. Everything's great.

[00:56:30] **Joel Mann:** Well, it's been a great summer, and I wish you and Jesse all the best of luck on your tour.

[00:56:35] **John Hodgman:** Oh, thank you very much. And when we see you, you can explain how you helped John Lennon and Yoko Ono escape from the Senate during Watergate hearings.

[00:56:43] **Joel Mann:** Watergate hearings, yeah. I will.

[00:56:44] **John Hodgman:** Alright. Thank you very much. WERU.org. Meanwhile, unbelievably, we are already in October. And that means it is (*singing*) spooky day, spooky night, Halloween. Coming up. I wrote that song myself, don't get on me, ASCAP. It's my own composition. Do you have Halloween themed disputes? We always have them. Fun size vs. full size. What's the better kind of decoration? Classic plastic skeleton or some kind of blow-up situation? You know, those inflatables. Are those cheap or are those good? What about a 10-foot skeleton? I saw one of those in Brooklyn last year. Very, very scary. Is that acceptable, or do the neighbors have a right to TP it? What's the worst costume you've ever wore? What's the best costume to wear in Halloween this season?

Any kind of dispute you have for us, please send it in, MaximumFun.org/jjho is where we absorb all of your disputes and make podcast magic out of them. But we do need your disputes, and I do mean all of them. Right, Jesse?

[00:57:48] **Jesse Thorn:** MaximumFun.org/jjho. No matter what they are.

Judge Hodgman, as I was reading that question from Stacey, it occurred to me that now that I'm a mere creative executive at Maximum Fun and a member of the worker-owner cooperative myself, not only do I no longer outrank Stacey—who is the number two business executive at Maximum Fun on our org chart—but also, then, when you recused yourself, I found out that I'm also outranked by Joel.

[00:58:24] **John Hodgman:** Wow! Wow!

[00:58:25] **Jesse Thorn:** It's a dark day for me, co-creator of the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

(*Joel apologizes.*)

Do you want to make a quick list of everyone that outranks me now?

[00:58:33] **John Hodgman:** We should put out a t-shirt that has the *Judge John Hodgman* org chart on it. Probably sell some sweet tees.

[00:58:40] **Jesse Thorn:** Oh my gosh. You know what? I'm a free radical. I'm going to cause cancer in this organization.

[00:58:44] **John Hodgman:** Hey, I guess we always say we'll talk to you next time on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast, and that's true. But we'll also see you soon on the Van Freaks Roadshow. So, go on to VanFreaksRoadshow.com. Get those tickets, send in those disputes. And what else is there to say, Jesse?

[00:58:57] **Jesse Thorn:** That's it. We'll talk to you and see you next time on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

[00:59:01] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:59:04] **Sound Effect:** Cheerful ukulele chord.

[00:59:05] **Speaker 1:** Maximum Fun.

[00:59:06] **Speaker 2:** A worker-owned network.

[00:59:07] **Speaker 3:** Of artist owned shows.

[00:59:09] **Speaker 4:** Supported—

[00:59:10] **Speaker 5:** —directly—

[00:59:11] **Speaker 6:** —by you!