

[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, "Better Call Parasol". Abby brings the case against her friend, Aidan. They belong to a secret online group dedicated to complaining about other passengers on the London Underground. One major debate? Umbrellas. Aidan says bringing an umbrella on the train is unacceptable. Abby disagrees. 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.

[00:00:37] **John Hodgman:** *(Singing with a warbling gravitas.)* Will you take me across the channel? London Bridge is falling down! Strange, a woman tries to save—

[00:00:46] **Jesse Thorn:** This impression again. Please stop. *(Chuckles.)* That's good.

[00:00:48] **John Hodgman:** —more than a man will try to drown. And the world—

[00:00:54] **Jesse Thorn:** I think we picked up on it. *(Laughs.)* And we're all set.

[00:00:55] **John Hodgman:** And a love like ours, my dear, is best measured when it's down! And I never buy umbrellas! 'Cause there's always one around.

[00:01:13] **Jesse Thorn:** *(Beat. Abby and Aidan, please rise—*

[00:01:14] John Hodgman: (Still singing.) And all over—

[00:01:15] **Jesse Thorn:** No, no! It started again.

[00:01:15] **John Hodgman:** Strangers talk only about the weather. All over the world, it's the same!

[00:01:23] **Jesse Thorn:** Oh, this is the new "Carol of the Bells" in cat sounds.

[00:01:27] **John Hodgman:** It's the saame.

(No longer singing.) Bailiff Jesse Thorn, please swear them in.

[00:01:33] **Jesse Thorn:** Come to our live show, hear us sing. Abby and Aidan, 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 he gets followed around by one of those little cartoon rain clouds?

(They swear.)

Judge Hodgman, you may proceed.

[00:01:57] **John Hodgman:** Uh, Abby and Aidan, you may be seated for an immediate summary judgment in one of yours favors.

(Chairs squeak.)

Can either of you name the piece of culture I referenced when I entered the courtroom? Abby, Aidan, were you at our London show by any chance?

[00:02:08] **Abby:** We were actually, yeah!

(Aidan confirms.)

[00:02:10] **John Hodgman:** So, you might have—you might have—I'm sorry, first of all, I apologize. We wanted to have you on stage at our London show, but the time, the time, gentlemen, as they say in the public houses. The time was too short, and so now we're so happy that you're able to join us here, video-phonically. But you might have a slight advantage in guessing this particular cultural reference.

[00:02:31] **Abby:** Mm! I was wondering whether there was a similarity there.

[00:02:33] **John Hodgman:** Yeah. Because—well, so what's your guess, Abby?

[00:02:37] **Abby:** Well, is it—? It's Tom Waits. Is it Tom Waits?

[00:02:40] **John Hodgman:** It is Tom Waits!

[00:02:41] **Jesse Thorn:** I was going to guess Barbra Streisand. I thought it was Barbra Streisand.

[00:02:44] **Abby:** It's not “Closing Time”, is it?

[00:02:46] **John Hodgman:** Your guess is “Closing Time”? I'm writing that down. I'm literally writing it down. I'm showing it to you that I wrote it down, good. So, that is a Tom Waits song. Now, Aidan, it goes to you. Do you think that Abby has guessed the correct Tom Waits song?

[00:03:03] **Aidan:** I don't really have anything to add. I have one Tom Waits album that rarely gets an airing. So, um—

[00:03:08] **John Hodgman:** Would you like to hear the song again?

[00:03:10] **Jesse Thorn:** No.

[00:03:12] **Aidan:** I'm satisfied.

[00:03:14] **Abby:** I'd really like to hear it again. All the way through, please.

[00:03:15] **John Hodgman:** I'll sing it for you later, Abby.

[00:03:18] **Jesse Thorn:** I don't even really want to hear Tom Waits sing it, myself. Personally.

[00:03:20] **John Hodgman:** Now, you know what? All these podcasters and all these smarty pantses, personal friends of mine, they shook me. They shook my faith in Tom Waits, one of my very, very favorite performing artists, songwriters, poets. They gave me a shakeup. For years, they just tried to reprogram me and say, "This guy's a big phony. And he wears a pork pie hat, and therefore he must never be listened to again." But I'm taking it back. I'm retaking the Waits! Love him. I should never have listened to those smarty pantses, David Reeses and Tom Scharplings.

(Abby agrees.)

[00:03:59] **Jesse Thorn:** He wrote a nice song for Solomon Burke called "Always Keep a Diamond in Your Mind".

[00:04:02] **John Hodgman:** He's an incredible songwriter, and obviously—

[00:04:05] **Jesse Thorn:** I mean, it was a bit extra, but it was nice that Solomon Burke sang it.

[00:04:09] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, exactly. No one's going to Tom Waits for no extra. Anyway, Aidan, what—you say you have one Tom Waits album that rarely gets rotation. Do you even know the name of the album?

[00:04:21] **Aidan:** It's *Swordfishtrombones*.

[00:04:23] **John Hodgman:** *Swordfishtrombones*. Well, I'll tell you what.

[00:04:25] **Abby:** My favorite one by him.

[00:04:27] **John Hodgman:** That is closer than Abby. Even though, Aidan, your contempt for Tom Waits reminds me of certain people, unfavorably, Abby's guess was further off Waits' base. Because "Closing Time" is from early Tom Waits when he still sounded relatively human.

[00:04:50] **Abby:** (*Laughs.*) He didn't sound like Rowlf the Dog from *The Muppets*.

[00:04:53] **John Hodgman:** Who I think, by the way—I think there's overlap there. I have a theory that Jim Henson heard Tom Waits singing or vice versa, perhaps.

(*Abby agrees.*)

[00:05:04] **Jesse Thorn:** I think Tom Waits heard Tom Waits singing and decided to do an unflattering Tom Waits impression.

[00:05:10] **John Hodgman:** Well, moving on without comment on that, when Aidan gets *Swordfishtrombones*, *Swordfishtrombones* is kind of the turning point when Tom Waits went extra weird, a little extra weird, and started doing more stuff with his voice. And this song is actually called "Strange Weather", and it was from the *Big Time* live album that came out after *Frank's Wild Years*, I believe.

[00:05:34] **Abby:** Yeah. I don't know that album as well.

[00:05:36] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, well, everyone should go out and check it out. If you want to have fun in your life, go Google Tom Waits, Martin Mull, Fred Willard, *Fernwood 2 Night*. Okay. And you're going to have a good time. You're going to have a good time on your video watching application. But in the meantime, as Rowlf says, I hope that something better comes along. We've got a case. Abby, you bring the case against Aidan, but I'm going to ask Aidan right at the top. Because Aidan, you are anti umbrella.

(*Aidan confirms.*)

What is your problem with Umbrellas, Aidan?

[00:06:07] **Aidan:** They are a nuisance, both on the street—

[00:06:11] **John Hodgman:** To raindrops?

(*They laugh.*)

[00:06:14] **Aidan:** They're a nuisance, a public nuisance, both on public transport and in general public.

[00:06:21] **John Hodgman:** And they should never be used then?

[00:06:23] **Aidan:** No. We have lots of technical fabrics now that we can keep us dry and clothing without needing an umbrella anymore.

[00:06:30] **John Hodgman:** Your feeling is we've outgrown umbrellas usefulness as a society.

[00:06:34] **Aidan:** Yeah. I think we've evolved now.

[00:06:35] **John Hodgman:** Interesting. Alright. Abby, tell me about this secret online group. You don't just discuss people doing wrong things on underground trains, but all kinds of public transport. Is that right?

[00:06:47] **Abby:** Yeah. I mean, it's mainly because it sort of—it isn't just London based, but it's—I'd say the majority of the people in the group are sort of based in London. And so, it's mainly a kind of great moaning opportunity for people who are sort of forced into using buses and underground during kind of rush hour and that kind of thing, but also it's an appreciation of the public transport system as well as a moaning opportunity. So yeah. (*Chuckles.*)

[00:07:15] **John Hodgman:** I need to schedule some moaning opportunities, Jesse Thorn.

(*Jesse and Abby agree.*)

You know? I mean like how many moaning opportunities is it fair to schedule in a week? Seven?

[00:07:26] **Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, I mean—well, the doctor says when you're sitting at your desk, every hour, you get up and take 60 seconds moaning opportunity.

[00:07:36] **John Hodgman:** Oh, okay. I'll follow that.

[00:07:39] **Jesse Thorn:** Just moan around the room. Sit back down, get back to work. You can set a timer on your desk.

[00:07:43] **Abby:** Is your doctor British, by any chance?

(*They laugh.*)

We love a moan over here.

[00:07:48] **John Hodgman:** No, no, we have to pay for our moaning opportunities. In any case, you are friends with each other. Are you friends from this secret group?

[00:07:57] **Abby:** Actually, I mean, I think I might have met you a few times before, but yeah, I think we kind of are pretty much friends through the group. Because we didn't really know each other that well before.

[00:08:06] **John Hodgman:** You know I love a secret society. Hodgman.Substack.com. You know I love a secret society. Why is this group secret?

[00:08:14] **Abby:** I don't know.

(They laugh.)

[00:08:19] **John Hodgman:** Like, you—are the members known to each other or not known to each other? Are you trying to keep your moaning, you know, confidential or what's going on?

[00:08:27] **Abby:** Yeah. We're not secret from each other, unfortunately. *(Laugh.)*

[00:08:29] **Aidan:** It's by invitation. It's by invitation only. So, we only invite responsible friends—or irresponsible friends—to join the group. People that share our aims and values, let's say.

[00:08:44] **Jesse Thorn:** Judge Hodgman, in England, you have to be a member to moan after midnight.

(They laugh.)

[00:08:51] **John Hodgman:** Otherwise, it's a lock in, I believe. So, like if you're sitting on a carriage on the Jubilee line or whatever, and across the way from you, you see—like what's something that someone does wrong? So, you see someone with an umbrella or something, Aidan, and the person sitting next to the person with the umbrella looks completely disgusted, then you know you may have met a fellow traveler.

[00:09:13] **Aidan:** Right. Exactly. Exactly. Someone's put a wet umbrella on the seat. That's a kind of revolting behavior.

[00:09:19] **Abby:** But I wouldn't agree with that. That's outrageous behavior. It's a terrible thing to do.

[00:09:22] **John Hodgman:** Putting a wet umbrella on the seat is obviously outrageous behavior. What are the things that people do wrong, Abby, on public transport that you moan about?

[00:09:31] **Abby:** Okay. Probably the two kind of main transgressions are outside seatism and bag on seatism. But there's also feet on seatism, which is terrible and never—you know, never excusable. Manspreading is another. You know, obviously we know about the manspreading and what else is there? Um, there's hogging the pole, you know, sort of—I can't remember what that's called now.

[00:10:01] **Aidan:** Pole hogging.

[00:10:02] **John Hodgman:** Where you basically hug the pole. Like, you put your whole body against the pole.

[00:10:06] **Abby:** Yeah. So, you're kind of taking up the most of the pole.

[00:10:10] **Aidan:** People who leave—who try and get on the train before others have left.

[00:10:15] **John Hodgman:** Oh, right. Try to enter the train before—you have to let the people off first.

[00:10:20] **Abby:** Yeah, exactly. When you can see the whole load of people trying to get off.

[00:10:23] **Aidan:** And then we've got escalator etiquette as well, which is you know—no offense to the overseas people in this podcast, but there's a strict—there's a very strict rule of standing on the right on an escalator and walking down on the left. And a gaggle of people blocking an escalator when you want to walk up or down is a massive transgression.

[00:10:44] **Abby:** Infuriating. Yeah.

[00:10:45] **John Hodgman:** Right. Yeah. No, we do have escalators in the United States, actually. Thank you very much.

[00:10:51] **Abby:** But do you have that, that rule?

[00:10:53] **John Hodgman:** No, because why would we ever take an opportunity to walk anywhere or climb stairs? They're moving.

[00:10:59] **Abby:** (*Laughs.*) So, you're never in a hurry?

[00:11:00] **Jesse Thorn:** I think I have that expectation. I disagree. I have that expectation on an escalator for sure.

[00:11:03] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, absolutely. People should stand on the right of an escalator so that people who want to move can climb the escalator or descend the escalator at their own speed or walk. But yes, it often doesn't happen. People don't. That is a bad thing.

[00:11:20] **Jesse Thorn:** I have to say that these moans are much lower stakes than I expected. I expected this to be a group where someone said like, "I saw someone eating soup!"

[00:11:28] **Abby:** Oh yeah, no, that is—that's absolutely, yeah. Yeah.

[00:11:32] **John Hodgman:** Maybe they don't want to give us the good stuff, Jesse, because it's a secret group. You know what I mean? It's only for initiates.

[00:11:38] **Aidan:** People do celebrate their direct action against these sort of travelers when they've got someone to move their bag so that they—and they'll purposefully seek out people that have put bags on seats and then get them to move the bag so they can sit down.

[00:11:53] **John Hodgman:** In a British sense, direct action means giving someone a withering enough glance that they eventually—

[00:11:58] **Abby:** Yeah, just like standing over them.

[00:12:00] **Aidan:** A slight tut, a slight tut. So. (*Laughs.*)

[00:12:05] **John Hodgman:** So, Aidan, your position is there should be no umbrellas on public transport, or in the world, right?

[00:12:15] **Aidan:** Yeah, well—(*laughs*) they're just not necessary anymore, and they're just dangerous to people.

[00:12:20] **John Hodgman:** How have you ever been endangered by an umbrella? What are you, fighting the Penguin?

[00:12:23] **Aidan:** Poked in the eye by an umbrella. Bashed in the head.

(*Jesse laughs and Abby "aw"s.*)

[00:12:26] **John Hodgman:** You know, Jesse, I really was thinking about quoting Danny DeVito as the penguin in *Batman Returns* for the cultural reference. And there's some great lines, but just none of them were long enough. And you know I love a long cultural reference. Well, one of them just had me laughing so hard. I had forgotten about this point where he's in the middle of a battle, all these umbrellas in front of him. And he picks one up to shoot it at Batman, and it like shoots a flower and he goes, "(*Censor beep.*) I picked a cute one."

(*They laugh.*)

Anyway, Abby, what is your position on Aidan's position regarding umbrellas? Why are we here?

[00:13:07] **Abby:** Because it's not taking into account the fact that under certain circumstances, you just can't keep dry without an umbrella. A hood isn't enough. And I'd say, as a woman who likes to wear makeup and, you know, I like to sort of dress up and go out, sometimes wearing a hood just isn't going to stop me looking like some kind of panda by the time I get to wherever I'm going.

[00:13:33] **John Hodgman:** So, there is no cultural difference here. A hood—we're just talking about a hood that you pull over from your jacket or whatever. Pull over your head.

[00:13:42] **Abby:** Yeah. So, the group who hate brollies, or umbrellas, are called the hood squad.

[00:13:49] **John Hodgman:** Yes, the hood squad, I noted that here. And they have a term they use for people who carry umbrellas. Is that correct, Abby?

[00:13:54] **Abby:** Yeah. Do you want me to say the full term or shall I—?

[00:13:58] **John Hodgman:** You may say the full term, in the interest of justice.

[00:14:01] **Abby:** broolly bastards, basically. broolly bastards, yeah.

[00:14:04] **John Hodgman:** broolly bastards. Wow. Yeah. Aidan, you're in the hood squad?

[00:14:08] **Aidan:** I'm in the hood squad, founding member.

[00:14:10] **Abby:** Yeah. They're very smug.

[00:14:11] **John Hodgman:** Have you used the hateful term broolly bastard in the past?

[00:14:15] **Aidan:** Oh, frequently.

[00:14:16] **Abby:** So, basically anyone using a broolly is a broolly bastard. This attitude kind of evolved without much discussion about two years into the group starting. And yeah, it's sort of like the majority view, but there's no kind of discussion possible, you know, about—you know, possible nuance, you know, where you might actually use an umbrella considerably, you know, and not be a broolly bastard. When I've tried to bring it up on a number of occasions—basically pretty much anytime I see someone ranting about it—it's usually ignored generally or dismissed or basically I'm told that—you know that I'm wrong.

[00:14:59] **Aidan:** Or we post pictures of ourselves with our hoods up.

[00:15:01] **Abby:** Oh yes, they're very—they're incredible.

(They laugh.)

They're really smart. They're so self-righteous about it.

[00:15:07] **John Hodgman:** Wait, you're saying the hood squad goes too hard and that sometimes they respond with just pictures of themselves wearing hoods?

[00:15:15] **Aidan:** In the rain.

[00:15:16] **Abby:** Well, it is not so much responding to me. You just do that in a sort of like, “Yeah, look at me. I'm doing the right thing.” You know.

[00:15:23] **John Hodgman:** How many hoods are in the hood squad, Aidan? If you had to guess.

[00:15:26] **Aidan:** I'll give you a percentage of the total group rather than actual hard numbers.

[00:15:30] **John Hodgman:** I'm sorry. I don't want you to reveal any of your precious secrets, including your membership numbers.

(They laugh.)

[00:15:35] **Aidan:** 14. Approximately.

[00:15:37] **John Hodgman:** 14. 14 hoods in the hood squad. Aidan, let me ask you—

[00:15:41] **Jesse Thorn:** I mean, that's a quorum. That's enough to do some *(snaps rhythmically)*.

[00:15:44] **John Hodgman:** It's true. Snapping in the rain.

[00:15:47] **Jesse Thorn:** Synchronous snapping, yeah.

[00:15:48] **Abby:** I'm surprised it's that low, actually.

[00:15:50] **Aidan:** Could be more.

[00:15:52] **John Hodgman:** But Aidan, my question to you is: can you lean into the camera a little bit? Mostly the top of your head, if you don't mind. It looks like—looks to me like your hair is cut fairly short. And do you often wear makeup?

[00:16:06] **Aidan:** Not as frequently as I used to, no.

[00:16:08] **John Hodgman:** How do you you—? You see where I'm going with this. Abby, whose hair might be styled in a certain way, might be wearing makeup, might need extra protection from the dyeing spray and the drizzle and the wet that a hood cannot provide, because it does not cover the face. And indeed, whatever her hairstyle might be, might be actively harmed by your precious hood—insofar as it is applying pressure to the hair, as well as admitting moisture to the frontal forehead area.

[00:16:40] **Abby:** And below, yeah.

[00:16:41] **Aidan:** I think she just needs a bigger hood.

(John snorts.)

[00:16:45] **Abby:** What, that covers my face?

[00:16:47] **Jesse Thorn:** That's the hood squad solution to everything.

(They laugh.)

[00:16:48] **John Hodgman:** When you're in the hood squad, every tool looks like a hood.

[00:16:57] **Jesse Thorn:** Solving the problems with the National Health Service. Bigger hoods!

[00:17:04] **John Hodgman:** Aidan, in parts of the United States, particularly the Pacific Northwest, it is very rainy, and yet there is a point of pride to not use umbrellas there, to go full hood squad, as it were. Is this true in London? How many umbrellas are we dealing with, and are the umbrellas on a decline or an incline?

[00:17:24] **Aidan:** I think it's probably on a decline again.

[00:17:27] **Abby:** *(Laughs.)* Wishful thinking.

[00:17:28] **Aidan:** I think umbrellas are definitely being—we're evolving away from umbrellas with modern fabrics that can repel water and voluminous hoods if necessary. *(Chuckles.)* But yeah, I think, you know, people—there was a figure of the lost property on the London Underground, 8,000 left umbrellas last year. Such a waste of resources and environment for people just to discard them. You see them every time there's a bit of a storm, there's all these broken umbrellas sticking out of bins.

[00:17:57] **Abby:** Yeah, I'm sure they can be recycled.

[00:17:57] **John Hodgman:** You're talking about trash umbrellas, but Jesse Thorn: does not England, particularly London, have a history of outfitting people with well-made umbrellas?

[00:18:09] **Jesse Thorn:** I would argue that London, England, is the world's most umbrella city. It is also the home of the world's greatest umbrella store, James Smith & Sons. Where you can still get a *(inaudible)* cane umbrella cut to size and custom made for your height and requirements. You can even get a silk canopy if you want.

[00:18:32] **Abby:** A silk canopy?

(Jesse confirms.)

Not canapé? Canopy. What does it look like?

[00:18:37] **Jesse Thorn:** I mean, it looks like an umbrella, but it's made of silk instead of nylon or whatever.

[00:18:43] **Abby:** Wow. Is it more like a parasol for the sun?

[00:18:46] **Jesse Thorn:** It's for people who want to really enjoy a rainstorm and have a little bit of the water land on them.

(They laugh.)

Some of the water go through their umbrella.

[00:18:57] **Abby:** Oh, those sort of people, yeah.

[00:18:59] **John Hodgman:** Aidan, have you ever been to James Smith & Sons Umbrellas at Hazelwood House in London?

[00:19:03] **Aidan:** I know exactly—I think I know where it is, in the end of New Oxford Street, but I am—I'd avoid—I walk on the other side of the road there to be passing. I might not be able to control my emotions were I to...

[00:19:16] **John Hodgman:** Have the hood squad ever come through there with their direct action? Go into that store?

[00:19:20] **Abby:** With bricks.

[00:19:21] **Aidan:** Tutting.

[00:19:22] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, tutting everyone.

[00:19:27] **Jesse Thorn:** Trying to take down 185 years of continuous operation at James Smith & Sons.

[00:19:32] **Aidan:** By rolling our eyes.

(They laugh.)

[00:19:35] **John Hodgman:** 1830, a Mr. Smith founded the now famous firm of James Smith & Sons Umbrellas, just off Regent Street in London's West End. The umbrellas were made in a small workshop in the back of the shop and then sold to customers at the front. This is the incredible history you're trying to erase, sir.

[00:19:53] **Abby:** Yeah, he's got no respect.

[00:19:56] **Jesse Thorn:** Let's take a quick recess and hear about this week's *Judge John Hodgman* sponsor. We'll be back in just a moment on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

[00:20:03] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:20:06] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:20:08] **John Hodgman:** Abby, you have to admit that umbrellas are enjoyed only by the person who has the umbrella, and to everyone else they are a threat of being poked in the eye.

[00:20:20] **Abby:** Absolutely, yeah. Umbrellas are a terrible design.

[00:20:21] **John Hodgman:** Or getting water dripped onto your shoulder from someone else's umbrella. Or ka-bonging against the umbrella you're trying to use.

[00:20:29] **Abby:** Ka-bonging, yeah. That's really annoying. Yeah I do totally agree. They're a really terrible design. But apparently, people are constantly trying to—well, they're applying for patents to sort of to improve the design, but for some reason it just seems to stay kind of put. But I had provided in my evidence, I'd provided some photos of some of kind of newer designs.

[00:20:54] **John Hodgman:** Yes, Abby, you did send us some photographic evidence. This, of course, will be available at the show page at MaximumFun.org and on our Instagram account, [@JudgeJohnHodgman](https://www.instagram.com/JudgeJohnHodgman). These are some innovative umbrella schemes, I will say.

(They titter with laughter.)

I am going to describe the first one, which is a woman. I think in 1989, looks like to me. I don't know, this seems like an older photo.

[00:21:22] **Jesse Thorn:** In England, this is like 2007.

[00:21:26] **Aidan:** I think it's Derek Smalls being stuck in his pod on *Spinal Tap*.

(They laugh.)

[00:21:32] **John Hodgman:** Yes, she's walking around with a—like a boy in the bubble pod around her upper body. Yeah. And I'm not exactly sure how—is this mounted on her somehow? Or—?

[00:21:42] **Abby:** It's a rucksack. It's a backpack. So, it kind of like comes over like almost like a convertible kind of like—

[00:21:52] **John Hodgman:** Oh, okay. So, it's like a dome that she pulls over her head.

(Abby confirms.)

Like a kind of, one might say, Aidan, like a kind of mega hood.

(Aidan laughs and agrees.)

And the way that it's designed is such that when it's deployed in the rain, it forms almost a full sphere around her body. It's like she's being eaten by a transparent Pac Man from above.

[00:22:14] **Jesse Thorn:** Sternum to shoulder blade, I would say.

[00:22:16] **John Hodgman:** Exactly so. And the way that it's designed—so, when it's deployed, she will stay—her upper body will stay dry while she is ka-bonking into everyone else in the world. And then when it turns sunny again, she can retract it and only ka-bonk people from—who are behind her. So, she goes from full ka-bonking, full circle ka-bonking, to just anytime she turns around, she's hitting someone in the nose.

[00:22:41] **Abby:** Okay, so it's more fun when you're doing it full circle, really, isn't it?

[00:22:44] **John Hodgman:** No, absolutely. It's like you're a living pinball. Where did you get this photo? Is this a product that I can buy?

[00:22:50] **Abby:** It actually is. Although, I don't know whether you actually can buy it anymore. It was around a few years ago, but not that many years ago. It's called the Newbrella. Yeah. So, it has varied reviews. I'm not saying that these are necessarily good designs, but they are people's attempt to solve the problem. They're alternatives. Yeah.

[00:23:13] **John Hodgman:** They're alternatives. Yeah. Aidan, I will leave it to you to describe this broolly bastard in the next photo. Look at this bastard.

[00:23:23] **Abby:** (*Laughing.*) Can you see? I'll show you the picture. I'll show you here, look.

[00:23:27] **John Hodgman:** Don't pretend you can't see. This is one of your most hated enemies right here. This is what you're trying to stop, right, Aidan? Tell us about this creep.

[00:23:39] **Aidan:** I'm not quite sure where to start here. There's a child with a hood and a visor.

[00:23:43] **John Hodgman:** Being a child is no excuse.

[00:23:46] **Aidan:** Which I quite approve of the hood with a visor. It starts well at the top, and then it rapidly goes downhill as the child seems to be what can only be described as a funnel or an upturned dinner plate, about four times its body width.

[00:24:07] **Jesse Thorn:** It's a partially transparent flying saucer from the neck down. And above that, it's an adorable creature hood plus an extended sort of elderly lady with a cold at the farmer's market face shield.

(*They laugh.*)

[00:24:28] **Abby:** Yeah, exactly. It's like one of those rain hoods.

[00:24:29] **Aidan:** I approve of the headwear, wholly.

[00:24:32] **John Hodgman:** Right. But the rest of this adorable child is pure bastard to you, right?

(Aidan agrees with laughter.)

Look, it's difficult to do visual humor on a podcast, but this is an adorable little child who is wearing very innovative rain protective gear that makes this adorable little child look like the head of a duck atop a UFO. Or like a—you know, it kind of looks like a dog cone, you know, like a cone you put around a dog's neck to keep it from biting its butt or whatever needs to happen.

[00:25:05] **Abby:** The cone of shame.

[00:25:06] **John Hodgman:** The cone of shame. Yeah. But it's the cone of adorableness in this case. 'Cause it's going in the opposite direction. It's not—if you wear a cone outside in the rain like a dog cone, you're just gonna—you're gonna drown, because the water's gonna fill it up. This is repelling the water; it's going the other direction. This is something that you could probably buy.

[00:25:21] **Abby:** I think you can buy those, actually, yeah. I mean, I'm not 100% for those because they still don't actually shield the lower half of your face very well.

[00:25:31] **Aidan:** I fully approve of the innovative hood design though, with a beak.

[00:25:35] **John Hodgman:** I get it, you like the hood part.

[00:25:38] **Aidan:** It's perfectly fine.

[00:25:39] **Jesse Thorn:** I've just noticed something that strikes me as important, which is the name of this rain prevention product that this child is wearing, which I think is a really apt name. It's called “Children Raincoat Children Umbrella Boys Girls Raincoat Headwear”.

[00:25:58] **John Hodgman:** *(Laughs.)* It really rolls off the tongue. You have the Newbrella on the one hand, and you have the Children Raincoat Children Umbrella Boys Girls Raincoat Headwear on the other hand. And what this evidence is proving to me—I don't know what your intention was sending it in, Abby—is that the umbrella, it's not going anywhere. Your classic umbrella has not been improved upon in at least as long as James Smith has been smithing those brollies. And all these new kids on the block, they are not successful. So, the umbrella's sticking around.

[00:26:29] **Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, I would question your assertion that it's an unfortunate piece of technology. I think umbrellas are really cool. I think they're really neat! I think they're one of the most charming and useful machines that human beings have. They're really cool!

[00:26:45] **John Hodgman:** You've got to admit, Aidan, that there is no charm to a hood. You know what I mean? This is a—as Jesse points out, this is a feat of human ingenuity. It is a contraption. There are probably fewer contraptions that are as contraptive as an umbrella. You go bbbvt! And it opens up. It's a portable roof, Aidan.

[00:27:05] **Aidan:** Infernal contraption, but that's a nuisance on the streets of London.

[00:27:10] **Jesse Thorn:** Aidan, do you and the hood squad object to open umbrellas on public transportation, or do you object to closed umbrellas as well?

[00:27:19] **Aidan:** Well, open umbrellas would be an absolute horror.

[00:27:22] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, I have to agree with you there, Aidan. That would be very, very bad. Right.

[00:27:26] **Aidan:** It's the wet dripping umbrellas put on seats that's—

[00:27:30] **Jesse Thorn:** Unlike their bone-dry hoods?

[00:27:32] **Aidan:** An evidence of—I have photographic evidence that unfortunately I've not submitted to the court due to time constraints, but wet umbrellas being put on seats.

[00:27:43] **Jesse Thorn:** As opposed to wet people being put on seats.

[00:27:45] **Aidan:** Well, it's different, because you've got your legs and things are, you know, dry where you're sitting down, there may be a bit of residual water. But—

[00:27:51] **Jesse Thorn:** You're right, water goes upward.

(They laugh.)

[00:27:57] **Aidan:** Not a dripping wet umbrella. It's just not done.

[00:28:01] **John Hodgman:** Let's be fair here, Aidan. Neither your precious hood nor the testament to human inventiveness, the umbrella, is going to keep your butt dry in the wind. You are probably going to be sitting down. And particularly if you're wearing a rain jacket that is repelling water rather than absorbing it, one of your vaunted new textiles, your back will probably be wet. And when you sit down, you're going to get the back of that seat wet, aren't you, Aidan?

[00:28:29] **Aidan:** *(Laughs.)* Yes, possibly, yes.

[00:28:30] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, but if you have an umbrella and you use it properly on the train or the bus or what have you, and you close it and you give it a good shake, now the top half of your body is relatively dry. And if you just hold it, you know, between your legs—which are—by the way, your legs are—you know, your knees are close together, because

you're giving everyone the room they need to sit down. That's a responsible use of an umbrella on the train, wouldn't it be, Aidan?

(Abby agrees emphatically.)

[00:28:59] **Aidan:** Unfortunately, as we've seen with multiple occasions, the public can't be trusted with decent and proper behavior on public transport, hence the beginnings of these groups.

[00:29:07] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, but doesn't the group itself become a kind of an echo chamber? Like a right-wing news organization convincing its audience that New York City is a burning hellhole by cherry picking a few facts? All you talk about is people doing wrong things on the train. And frankly, it seems to me like you're pretty—you're scraping the bottom of the barrel when it comes to wrong things.

[00:29:29] **Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, I'm 6'4". Of course, I'm an outside seat sitter!

[00:29:33] **Aidan:** We celebrate sitting nicely as well, don't we? I think we'll concur, won't we, Abby, on that?

(Abby agrees.)

But we do actually report good behavior, and we do celebrate it as well. It's not all about—it's not all about criticism of the public.

[00:29:48] **Abby:** No, no, it's not. It's about kind of enjoying driving the bus, either using the continental or the imperial position upstairs.

[00:29:58] **John Hodgman:** Excuse me?

[00:29:59] **Abby:** It has to be upstairs if you're driving the bus.

[00:30:01] **Jesse Thorn:** Oh! I like that a portion of this is celebrating sitting on the second floor of the bus in the front and pretending you're driving it. That's fantastic!

[00:30:09] **Abby:** Yeah! Yeah, that's quite a large portion of our post, isn't it?

[00:30:15] **Aidan:** And the DLR, which is the driverless London train, getting the—you know, usually shoving a small child out of the way and getting the driving seat on that too.

[00:30:25] **Abby:** And you can pretend you're a *Bladerunner* or something like that.

[00:30:28] **Aidan:** Especially if they're wearing an outfit like that in the picture.

[00:30:29] **John Hodgman:** Wait, wait, wait. Woah, woah, woah. I don't know about this train. This is a driverless train? First of all, I'm terrified.

[00:30:35] **Abby:** Yeah, it is actually quite scary.

[00:30:36] **Aidan:** It's kinda like one of those monorails you get at the airports where, you know, it's got a couple of carriages or a few carriages.

(John affirms.)

There's some sort of attendant, who occasionally flips open a box.

[00:30:46] **Abby:** Is there? I've never...

[00:30:47] **John Hodgman:** But there isn't an actual driver's—an empty driver's seat where you can sit and pretend—?

[00:30:51] **Abby:** Yeah, no there is. There is. Yeah. Absolutely.

[00:30:53] **Aidan:** The seats go right to the front. And the window, so you can see—there's two pairs of seats that face forward.

[00:30:58] **John Hodgman:** But they just happen to be seats that are there. It's not a situation where they have fake controls so that you can literally pretend. You have to bring those yourself.

[00:31:07] **Abby:** No, and they really have missed an opportunity.

[00:31:08] **Aidan:** *(Laughing.)* You can bring your own. We bring our own to play with.

[00:31:10] **Abby:** Yeah. I really liked that—you know, at the podcast festival, that pretend—that steering wheel.

(John affirms.)

Was it May had? Right?

[00:31:20] **Jesse Thorn:** Judge Hodgman, every time I visit you in New York, I pretend to do *Taking of Pelham One Two Three* on a subway car.

[00:31:27] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, well, that's right, because, you know, being a subway rider in New York—by the way, it's a terrific system, gets you where you need to go. I have fun on it, but the picture you're painting is a paradise compared to the world I'm living in. Where it's like, you know, I'm seeing people eat bowls of ranch dressing on the subway. Like, that's what's happening here. It's a little bit more provocative.

[00:31:49] **Jesse Thorn:** People are picking lobsters out of their hair and throwing them on the ground.

(They laugh.)

[00:31:53] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, it's like whole philharmonic orchestras will walk through playing the theme from *Jaws*. I like that part. That's fine. The point is a lot of stuff's happening on the New York City subway. Your subway sounds boring. Sounds like you're ginning it up.

(Abby disagrees.)

London Dry ginning it up.

[00:32:06] **Abby:** Are you trying to start a fight?

[00:32:07] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, I am. Something has to happen.

[00:32:10] **Aidan:** We're British. We're not prone to these sort of public displays of exuberance or narcissism.

[00:32:17] **Abby:** We are, actually. Well, only kind of late at night when we've had a few. Or at Christmas time, or the New Year, you know.

[00:32:22] **John Hodgman:** Right. When you're puking a curry on the upper deck of the night bus, that's when it all comes out literally.

[00:32:28] **Abby:** Yeah. I know, it's disgusting. But sometimes you do get sort of like sing songs on the tube and things like that, you know? Yeah. New Year 1999, everyone was singing.

[00:32:39] **John Hodgman:** Take us back.

[00:32:40] **Abby:** "1999" by Prince in the Jeep carriage. It was cool!

[00:32:43] **John Hodgman:** You were, or everyone was?

[00:32:45] **Abby:** Everyone was. It was good!

[00:32:47] **John Hodgman:** That's good. That's fun.

(Abby agrees.)

That's the fun part of living in a city is you're near other humans.

[00:32:52] **Jesse Thorn:** The most fun part of living in a city I always say is one thing that happened 24 years ago.

[00:32:57] **John Hodgman:** The fun part of living in a city is being near other humans and realizing it's fine. And that humans of all different backgrounds can live together and pack themselves into a train peaceably. And then just some people then go on the internet and complain about them. That's the worst that happens. Now, Aidan, Abby has established through her evidence, whether intentionally or not—

[00:33:18] **Abby:** (*Playfully.*) How dare you? (*Laughs.*)

[00:33:19] **John Hodgman:** That the umbrella, as we understand it, has existed for a long time. It cannot be replaced by any Newbrellas. It's going to continue to exist for a long time to come. Perhaps it's on a decline. Perhaps it will be replaced by hoods over time, but it's not going anywhere. So, your request that I outlaw umbrellas, frankly, is outside of my jurisdiction and my power. And yet there is still a dispute here. Abby, umbrellas aren't going anywhere. So, why is Aidan in this courtroom? What's going on in your group that brings you here today?

[00:33:53] **Abby:** Okay. So, numerous times I've tried to raise the issue that I raised to you, and I get no response, or it's just dismissed. But the issue about, kind of, that basically hoods don't sort of like protect you when you're dressed up or whatever.

[00:34:09] **John Hodgman:** You've dared to question the total efficacy of the hood by saying that an umbrella maybe suits your needs a little bit better in certain circumstances.

[00:34:17] **Abby:** In certain circumstances. I'm not sort of like saying all the time.

[00:34:20] **John Hodgman:** And how does the hood squad respond?

[00:34:22] **Abby:** They usually either ignore it, ignore me, or they sort of just say, "That's not true. Hoods protect your makeup fine; you don't need an umbrella." Or they just tell you that you're a broolly bastard and, you know, you should be banned.

[00:34:39] **John Hodgman:** Aidan, have you threatened, as a member of the hood squad, to ban your friend from the group or the Earth for being a broolly bastard?

[00:34:47] **Aidan:** I don't have any powers to ban comrades from the group.

[00:34:51] **John Hodgman:** But you make common cause with the hood squad. Would you agree that the hood squad goes too hard in the group?

[00:34:58] **Aidan:** I think we have to take a firm line because it's—I did a poll recently, actually, and I think it was about 90%.

[00:35:03] **Abby:** I sent it in, yes.

[00:35:05] **Aidan:** Yeah, 90% in favor of the hood over the broolly.

[00:35:07] **Abby:** Yes, can I just—can I explain about this poll, this so-called poll.

[00:35:11] **John Hodgman:** Right, let's un-skew the poll.

[00:35:14] **Abby:** Basically, he—(*chuckles*) I did actually send in evidence. He put up a poll that said, “I've been thinking about umbrellas recently, I'd like everyone to fill out this poll. Are you A) hood squad, or B) are you a broolly bastard?”

(*John “wow”s.*)

So, it was, you know—it wasn't really very neutral.

[00:35:33] **Aidan:** There may have been a pejorative element to the questions.

[00:35:36] **John Hodgman:** Well, it was framed that way. You're saying 90% of the secret group chat voted hood squad?

(*Aidan confirms.*)

[00:35:43] **Abby:** No, that's not actually true.

[00:35:46] **John Hodgman:** Well, numbers are numbers, Abby.

[00:35:48] **Abby:** Basically, about eight people voted hood squad and about three people actually owned up to being a broolly bastard. But most of us just didn't take part in it at all, 'cause it was just—I'm not going to call myself a broolly bastard, 'cause I'm not one. So, yeah. It was a total joke of a poll.

[00:36:08] **John Hodgman:** 72% of the respondents, if those numbers are correct, self-identify as hood squad.

[00:36:14] **Abby:** Yeah, but basically by taking part in the poll, you were admitting that you agreed with the whole premise, which I don't agree with.

[00:36:23] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, why would I partake in a poll in which, to vote for umbrella, I'd have to self-identify as a broolly bastard?

[00:36:30] **Abby:** (*Laughing.*) You know, yeah! He's evil. Yeah.

[00:36:32] **John Hodgman:** The question is somewhat leading. But here's the thing, it's easy to be mean on the internet. Aidan, will you look Abby in the eye right now and call your friend a broolly bastard to her face?

(Aidan puffs.)

Oh, let the record show, he did not hesitate to turn.

[00:36:48] **Aidan:** *(Softly.)* Brolly bastard.

[00:36:50] **Abby:** He did it, but he was sort of giggling a bit and stuff. I didn't—it wasn't very convincing.

[00:36:55] **John Hodgman:** How did it make you feel to call your friend a brolly bastard to her face, Aidan?

[00:36:59] **Aidan:** I think I might have called her worse things before.

(They laugh.)

[00:37:04] **Abby:** Yeah, I think that's true.

[00:37:06] **John Hodgman:** How did it feel to be called a brolly bastard?

[00:37:08] **Abby:** Um, it was no worse than being called it constantly by people on—my friends on the internet. So. And also, he was kind of giggling in a sort of slightly coy way, so it did slightly undermine the outrage I would have felt normally.

[00:37:26] **John Hodgman:** But you would like him to stop this behavior.

[00:37:26] **Abby:** I would, I would really. In London and probably other big cities, it's a real thing to sort of behave as though you are kind of in a bubble and you're—whatever you do is kind of not actually even visible by other people. Or—

[00:37:39] **John Hodgman:** If you have a Newbrella, you're literally in a bubble.

[00:37:42] **Abby:** Yeah, that's true. So, you know, there's some entitled way of being. And I—you know, I do agree that people with umbrellas can behave like brolly bastards, but I just, I just don't agree that, you know, by definition, if you use a brolly, you are a brolly bastard and you are selfish and you're—you know, you are hurting the other people around you. Because I did actually put up a post the other day to just try and establish some criteria for using a brolly in a considerate way. And this is actually taken from an article that's been shared before on the group.

[00:38:20] **John Hodgman:** An umbrella code of ethics, if you will. Alright.

[00:38:21] **Abby:** Yeah, exactly. And I asked people for their opinions. And basically, all I got was Aidan saying, “You're making a really reasonable case, so I'm not interested in what you're saying,” basically.

(They laugh.)

Um, yeah. Yeah, and that was my only response.

[00:38:40] **John Hodgman:** What's the percentage of the hood squad that are dudes?

[00:38:43] **Aidan:** I don't think I'm the main—there's another person who's a woman who is the more of a—takes a harder line than I do.

[00:38:49] **Abby:** Yeah, she is. Yeah. I think that it's probably—they probably are more blokes than women. But I think that some of the women have actually admitted that they do sometimes use brollies. And some of them don't admit it, but I've seen them using them.

(Laughs.)

[00:39:06] **Aidan:** In our defense, I would like to say that we've never called for an outright and complete ban on umbrellas.

[00:39:14] **Abby:** You have. You've frequently called for it. You just haven't—you can't enforce it.

[00:39:18] **John Hodgman:** It says right here, Aidan, “Ideal Ruling. Aidan, for umbrellas to be outlawed.” What do you—?

(Abby laughs.)

[00:39:24] **Aidan:** That's a—that's a personal belief. *(Laughs.)* But—

[00:39:27] **John Hodgman:** That's not an official hood squad position?

(Abby disagrees.)

That's your private position?

[00:39:32] **Aidan:** We don't call for it in the forums of the group.

(Abby vehemently disagrees.)

We promote hood use. Because it's responsible.

[00:39:41] **Abby:** So, I beg to differ, Aidan, because I have evidence here.

[00:39:45] **John Hodgman:** So, Abby, do you have proof that Aidan has called for banning?

(Abby confirms.)

And what form does the proof take?

[00:39:50] **Abby:** On the post that I made about umbrella etiquette, or umbretiquette, as we put it.

[00:39:54] **John Hodgman:** (*Laughs.*) Umbretiquette.

[00:39:57] **Abby:** Thanks for laughing. Yeah, he—at the end, as well as saying, “This is a very fair and balanced piece, therefore I have no interest in it at all,” he also said, “Ban them all, utter filth.”

[00:40:09] **John Hodgman:** (*Laughs.*) So, you're a liar.

(*Abby confirms.*)

I mean, this is serious, Aidan. You just said, “I don't call for banning them.” And yet, obviously this is in jest, but you lied about your position. You said you don't call for them to be outlawed, but that is what you have requested of this court.

[00:40:24] **Aidan:** I'm trying to show some type of human face here.

[00:40:26] **John Hodgman:** Oh, really?

[00:40:28] **Abby:** It doesn't really exist.

[00:40:29] **John Hodgman:** Now that you don't have a hood to hide behind, you want to look good? Hm. Abby, what else does the hood squad do in this group to show off their colors?

[00:40:37] **Abby:** Yeah, I mean, there are lots of rather kind of smug, self-righteous selfies of them on a rainy day, kind of wearing their hoods. And I've got a picture here of Aidan wearing his hood, looking very pleased with himself, and it just says, “Brolly bastards everywhere.” And there are lots of similar kinds of posts basically.

[00:40:54] **John Hodgman:** Does the hood squad have a habit of posting smug selfies of themselves in hoods calling for the end of brolly bastards, Aidan? Yes or no?

[00:41:01] **Aidan:** We do. We're leading by example and showing how the world can be a better place by wearing suitably hooded and water-resistant outerwear.

[00:41:12] **John Hodgman:** Abby, do you ever respond in kind with a photo of yourself with an umbrella?

[00:41:16] **Abby:** I haven't. I don't tend to like taking selfies.

[00:41:20] **John Hodgman:** I understand. It's a good practice.

[00:41:22] **Abby:** I do sometimes post pictures of like the Beatles and Jarvis Cocker and various people with umbrellas.

[00:41:29] **John Hodgman:** Historic umbrellas.

[00:41:31] **Abby:** Yes, just to sort of wind up, because there are people in the group who are really big Beatles fans, that kind of thing—people who are very sort of virulently anti-brolly, so it's nice to sort of show that the Beatles liked brollies. So, there's things like that I sometimes—but I mean, I haven't—honestly, I haven't really done anything like that for a while.

[00:41:50] **John Hodgman:** Is hood squad tearing the group apart for real, or are you just having some good old fashioned troll fun with each other?

[00:41:59] **Abby:** I don't think it's tearing the group apart. I think it feels too unbalanced for that. I'm probably the most vocal person about sort of the right to use an umbrella considerably. But there are a few other people who do, and similarly that doesn't lead anywhere.

[00:42:14] **John Hodgman:** Do you feel you speak for a silent majority, or even a silent minority, of people who are too cowed by the hood squad to speak up in support of the brolly?

[00:42:23] **Abby:** (*Chuckles.*) I don't know whether they're cowed by the hood squad, but I think people basically can't be bothered to deal with them, so they just sort of ignore it. But it just really—it annoys me. You know, it gets to me for some reason, and I just don't like feeling like I'm being shouted at by a lot of people who are supposed to be my friends. (*Chuckles.*)

I know it's a kind of a joke thing, but it's a sort of ambiguous joke/not joke type, because people do actually believe what they're saying. It's not a complete joke, you know. So, it's one of those gray areas where people can kind of get away with sort of saying anything, because it's a joke. But it—

[00:43:01] **John Hodgman:** Aidan, Abby has just said that she doesn't enjoy being called a bastard by her friend, even when he's giggling. How do you respond?

[00:43:09] **Aidan:** The inflammatory language may be sometimes unnecessary, but the sentiment of the majority of the group remains anti-umbrella. And—

[00:43:19] **Abby:** There's never really been a discussion about it, or there's no discussion allowed. It's just complete, basically, bullying, really. I mean, it's not—obviously, it's not hugely serious, but it does sort of feel like when you can't discuss something at all and you kind of get dismissed out of hand, it does sort of feel like you either have to shut up and go along with it or just join them. (*Chuckles.*)

I don't know. So, I just—I would just like—you know, I just kind of wanted the opportunity to make the points that I was making, try and be heard for once. And you know, it would be nice to have the group acknowledge that not everyone that uses a broolly is a bastard, and they kind of alter the way they deal with it, the way they address it.

[00:44:02] **John Hodgman:** So, if I were to rule in your favor, would you have me outlaw the term broolly bastard?

[00:44:08] **Abby:** Not necessarily. I mean, because there are people who do behave in a very entitled, selfish way.

[00:44:15] **John Hodgman:** Can't be applied blanket style.

(Abby agrees.)

What about walking around in the rain just with a blanket over your head, Aidan? That would be very effective.

[00:44:21] **Aidan:** I think the term broolly bastard has grown from the people who misuse the said instruments, where we were criticizing people who were dripping them over or poking you in the eye, has become a blanket term in the group for anyone using an umbrella.

(Abby agrees.)

Even if they're not using it in an inappropriate way.

[00:44:40] **John Hodgman:** What would you have me rule if I were to rule in your favor? I can't outlaw umbrellas, obviously.

[00:44:44] **Aidan:** I think we'd have to—I mean, in the absence of, you know, capital punishment now in this country for the last, you know, 60 years.

(They laugh.)

I suppose we'd just have to have very strict laws regarding their use and if they're *(inaudible)*.

[00:45:01] **John Hodgman:** I don't think you understand. This is a podcast. This isn't the Hague.

(They laugh.)

All I can do is make a ruling with regard to the behavior of the chat, to mitigate the beef between the hood squad and the umbrellites.

[00:45:15] **Abby:** Oh, I like that. Umbrellites. I like that.

[00:45:16] **John Hodgman:** I'm not going—I can't order a complete um-Brexit for you.

(They laugh.)

[00:45:20] **Abby:** *(Clapping.)* That is great. I love it.

[00:45:23] **Aidan:** So, what would you have me, if I were to rule in your favor? Because the fact of the matter is, Aidan, you hold all of the cards here. The hood squad is a gang of thugs that are bullying people on this group.

(Abby agrees.)

You post pictures of yourselves, and you hurl accusations at nice people who just want to keep their hair dry and not mashed down. What would you have me order?

[00:45:43] **Aidan:** I can see which way this is going. *(Laughs.)*

[00:45:46] **Abby:** Actually, it's highly, highly unpredictable. So.

[00:45:49] **Aidan:** I should have brought my solicitor with me really.

[00:45:53] **John Hodgman:** I think I've heard everything I need to in order to make my decision.

(They laugh.)

I will retire now to my private tube carriage, which is like that luxury train car in *Snowpiercer* with the big aquariums in it. And I will ponder those fish and eat some caviar, and I'll be back in a little while to get my verdict.

[00:46:08] **Jesse Thorn:** Please rise as Judge John Hodgman exits the courtroom.

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

Abby, how are you feeling about your chances?

[00:46:17] **Abby:** Fairly good, I think. Yeah. Because I'm not—you know, I don't want anything too extreme. I just want to be listened to a bit more and to have my opinions sort of like taken into consideration, basically. So, hopefully, it'll be alright.

[00:46:32] **Jesse Thorn:** Don't get too cocky.

(Abby laughs.)

I'm sick of this rude 'tude from you!

[00:46:38] **Abby:** Oh, well, you never told us to shut our pie holes. I'm really upset. We were just—we were waiting.

[00:46:43] **Jesse Thorn:** No, shut your pie hole! I have to ask Aidan how he feels.

(Abby laughs.)

Aidan, how are you feeling about your chances?

[00:46:49] **Aidan:** I'm a reasonable person, and now I'm feeling quite—I'm feeling a little bit unsure *(laughs)* whether I'm in a position to be defended in any way here.

[00:47:03] **Jesse Thorn:** *(Laughs.)* Well, we'll see what Judge Hodgman has to say about all this, and I hope he doesn't cross me, when we come back in just a second on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

[00:47:11] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:47:15] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:47:17] **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.)

[00:47:25] **John Hodgman:** Mary Poppins, the Penguin, the Kingsman, Rihanna, poison-tipped umbrellas, beach umbrellas. “Gimme Shelter”? I don't know. These are the terms that pop up when you Google famous umbrella users. And some of them are. Some of them are actually umbrellas. To which I would also add famous gentleman spy John Steed from the British TV show *The Avengers*, famous umbrella user. And look at this! Here's a photo of the Beatles using the umbrellas. And Gene Kelly, famous umbrella user. Umbrellas feature in the wonderful film *My Neighbor Totoro*. And here is even a photo of your late Queen Elizabeth II using an umbrella.

[00:48:10] **Jesse Thorn:** And of course, counterpoint, there's Mary Poppins' famous hood.

(They titter.)

[00:48:19] **John Hodgman:** There are a lot of famous umbrellas! Oh, and the internet's just reminding me. You were talking about driving that train makes you feel like you're in *Bladerunner*? That movie's full of umbrellas. And those umbrellas light up.

(Abby agrees.)

[00:48:31] **Aidan:** But like many things, like Atari and other things featured in *Bladerunner*, have gone out of business and gone out of fashion.

[00:48:38] **John Hodgman:** Interesting. Is it your turn to talk? No, I believe it's my turn to talk.

[00:48:41] **Jesse Thorn:** Shut your piehole, sir!

[00:48:42] **John Hodgman:** Thank you very much, Jesse. Thank you very much. Now, I will say this to you, Aidan. Brolly bastards are real. I live in New York City. I have absolutely encountered more than my share of same. The umbrella sins that you have enumerated are true. And I don't even know if you in London deal with people who have golf umbrellas.

(Abby confirms.)

Okay then. So, you know, like those huge umbrellas that are—I guess you use them to play golf somehow? I don't know. But they're not good for a city street. You are going to be taking out some eyes. You're going to be shutting some ear holes with the pointy ends of your spokes of your umbrella. But that said, you are going to say to me that Mary Poppins is a brolly bastard? No. Not Gene Kelly, who sometimes uses an umbrella and sometimes just sings in the rain. And I would even go so far as to say not only is it one of the great contraptions in human history, but also one that is intrinsically linked to the city of London specifically. I regret that when we were in London, I didn't have time to go to—was it James Smith & Sons, Jesse?

(Jesse confirms.)

Yeah, I would have loved to have gotten a really good, high-quality umbrella, because they're beautiful. And they're cool, and they're a nice thing to have, and you feel better walking around with one. And there are ways that you can use them, I believe, respectfully of others. Doesn't happen often, I admit it. If you're on a crowded street, it is very hard to use an umbrella respectfully. But under no circumstances would I ever even entertain the theoretical banning of such a beautiful and whimsical and practical accessory as an umbrella. Now, are they not for you? Yeah, fine. What do I usually do in the rain? I wear a hood, and I wear a baseball style cap. And that keeps the rain pretty much out of my hair and makeup. But I don't wear makeup, and my hair is... hm. Let's just put it this way, with regard to my hair: I use a thimble full of Baby Johnson shampoo once a week to wash it, and it dries when a human baby breathes on it once.

(They laugh.)

It's very low maintenance. I just have to find a human baby, which is not hard to do in *(inaudible)*. I think that Abby raises a really important point, which is that for some people and certain needs, umbrellas are more practical than hoods. In general, Aidan, you may be surprised that I more or less agree with you: that in most settings, wearing proper rain gear, including a hood, is more effective than an umbrella a lot of the times in terms of just keeping you dry. But there are times when an umbrella is very useful indeed, in fact, irreplaceable, and it is a thing of beauty. And I would say that it is unfair to label those who use umbrellas universally as brolly bastards. And I would never join the hood squad because you're a bunch of bullies!

(Abby laughs.)

Hoods are good, but that doesn't make you the good squad. Everything here is being taken in, you know, with a laugh in your group. I don't get the impression that you are actually meaning to be malicious, nor do I get the impression that Abby is secretly nurturing a deep wound around this situation. But I do feel that the umbrella deserves not only respect in your group, grudging as it may be, but also defense. And in this regard, Abby, it comes down to you.

As long as there's a hood squad, there needs to be—I don't know, an Umbrella Academy, a counter group of some kind. That you must lead the way. Frankly, the rudeness that you're discussing in your secret group chat, it's so low-key that I think it's time to spice things up in the group and, you know, respond in kind to the hood squad. And start flaming them, you know? A good old fashioned flame war. I love that you're putting pictures of the Beatles in the group with umbrellas. And I think that you should become the biggest umbrella advocate in the group. I want you to go as hard as the hood squad. So, when they tut, you tut-tut, if you know what I mean. Tut them back twice as hard.

(Abby agrees.)

I would say that you do this only for your own amusement. Because it's not going to resolve the fact that some of those hood squatters, they're just going to continue to call you broly bastards no matter what. I think it's unfair. I think it's unfortunate. But that's what the internet is most of the time. Name calling. As long as there's a hood squad, though, there has to be counterbalance. And I order you, Abby, to wield your umbrella proudly and stick its poisoned tip into Aidan's calf when he's not looking.

(Abby laughs.)

They deserve defense as a practical device when used correctly, and I think that you must very much uphold umbretiquette. I want you to send it to us so that we can post your list of umbrella rules on our Instagram, but it mostly needs to be defended as—I think, as a piece of a kind of beautiful cultural artifact and a bit of human ingenuity that I think deserves defense. Sorry, Aidan. Even as someone who wears a hood, I like an umbrella. That's fair. I also want you to invite me to the group so that I can join it and I can flame the hood squadders with you.

[00:54:05] **Abby:** *(Laughing.)* Oh, I'd love that.

[00:54:06] **John Hodgman:** This is the sound of a gavel.

[00:54:07] **Sound Effect:** The rustle of a nylon umbrella unfurling.

[00:54:09] **John Hodgman:** Judge John Hodgman rules, that is all.

[00:54:10] **Jesse Thorn:** Please rise as Judge John Hodgman exits the courtroom.

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

Aidan, how do you feel?

[00:54:18] **Aidan:** Uh, well, I guess I'll have to abide by his ruling, although I'm very worried about this umbrella defense group forming and causing a schism within our otherwise fairly balanced—

[00:54:31] **John Hodgman:** *(A door opening.)* The schism is already there, Aidan.

[00:54:34] **Aidan:** Widening the schism.

[00:54:36] **John Hodgman:** You're just afraid that there are going to be more umbrella supporters than you thought. And your hood squad dominance is going to be undercut as Abby musters the silent minority of umbrellites. As a famous English actor pretending to be a dead Roman Emperor once said, "Let all the poisons in the mud hatch out." Have some fun in your group, since no one's eaten ranch dressing on the subway anyway.

(Abby laughs.)

[00:54:58] **Jesse Thorn:** Remember that, just as Dr. Martin's boots brought the Mods and the Rockers together, so can bags on seats bring together the pro- and anti-umbrella forces.

(Abby agrees.)

Abby, how do you feel?

[00:55:13] **Abby:** I'm wearing my Doc Martens, actually. Um, I'm really happy with that verdict, of course, yeah. Particularly the fact that it allows me to just go and cause mayhem. I was sort of expecting more of a kind of peacemaking verdict. So, you know, warmongering one's kind of a lot more fun, actually. So, I'm quite, quite pleased with that.

[00:55:33] **Jesse Thorn:** I want to thank you for coming on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. I also want to thank you for dressing in parallel all black and white outfits against a white wall wearing white headphones, thus transforming our show into *2001: A Space Odyssey*, like a slightly more whimsical version of *2001*.

(They laugh.)

[00:55:54] **John Hodgman:** And I also would like to say thank you, and I have one other thing to add. *(Singing like Tom Waits.)* Inside a broken clock, splashing the wine with all the rain dogs. Taxi, we'd rather walk!

(Speaking.) Do you remember that time we all sang this song on the Tube in 1999? *(Singing.)* A doorway with the rain dogs, for I'm a rain dog too!

[00:56:21] **Jesse Thorn:** Abby, Aidan, thank you for joining us on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

(They thank him.)

[00:56:27] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:56:29] **Jesse Thorn:** Another *Judge John Hodgman* case is in the books. We'll have Swift Justice in just a moment. Our thanks first to Redditor KetchupLove for naming this week's episode "Better Call Parasol". A lot of fun names over there on the MaxFun—[MaximumFun.Reddit.com](https://www.reddit.com/r/MaximumFun) is where that goes down.

[00:56:43] **John Hodgman:** A lot of fun over there. That's where it happens.

[00:56:46] **Jesse Thorn:** It's fun because you can see all the suggestions that don't win and they're also delightful.

[00:56:50] **John Hodgman:** They're all delightful.

[00:56:51] **Jesse Thorn:** Evidence and photos from the show are posted on Instagram at [Instagram.com/judgejohnhodgman](https://www.instagram.com/judgejohnhodgman). Make sure to follow us. The show was created by Jesse Thorn and John Hodgman. This episode, engineered by Aamir Yaqub at BISON Studios in London, England. Marie Bardi-Salinas runs our social media. Our producer is Jennifer Marmor. This episode, edited by Daniel Spear.

Now, Swift Justice, where we answer small disputes with quick judgment. Bill says, "In summer or winter, I'll say the days are getting longer or shorter. My partner says I'm wrong. The length of a day is 24 hours. All 365 days of the year."

[00:57:35] **John Hodgman:** Well, I don't know what pronouns Bill's partner uses. So, I'll just say divorce them.

(Jesse laughs.)

I don't even know if they're married.

[00:57:43] **Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, this is wild. Wild!

[00:57:46] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, that's not something up with which you should put. That's pedantry of the highest order. That's pretty good. Pretty good needling of one's partner, though. I have to admit, Bill's partner, you needled Bill pretty well there. But it's too bad you're going to get divorced.

[00:58:01] **Jesse Thorn:** You know, speaking of the days getting shorter, Judge Hodgman, we've got winter holidays around the corner, and I bet there are winter holiday related

disputes—Thanksgiving disputes, Hanukkah disputes, Christmas disputes. My Aunt Gail celebrates the Winter Solstice.

[00:58:16] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, absolutely. Have you given a gift that you felt was not properly appreciated? Have you received a gift that was wrapped poorly? Have you ever gotten into a heated argument over a dreidel outcome?

[00:58:32] **Jesse Thorn:** Oh wow. Gimel those disputes!

(They chuckle.)

[00:58:34] **John Hodgman:** Give us your holiday related disputes, end of year, solstice, wintertime related disputes. And hey, you know, this is the time when you break out the Fanta and Eggnog. It's actually delicious. Orange Fanta and eggnog. If you've got any traditional holiday recipes or treats that you want to share with us for our holiday party, send those in as well. I'd love a recipe for little meatballs or something.

And of course, we're eager to hear about all your disputes on any subject. No case is too small. So please remember to submit your cases at MaximumFun.org/jjho.

[00:59:14] **Jesse Thorn:** MaximumFun.org/jjho.

[00:59:17] **John Hodgman:** MaximumFun.org/jjho! And don't forget! VanFreaksRoadshow.com. The Van Freaks Roadshow moves on. We'll talk to you next time on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. That's your line!

[00:59:29] **Jesse Thorn:** Wait! That's my line! We'll talk to you next time on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

[00:59:31] **Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:59:33] **Sound Effect:** Cheerful ukulele chord.

[00:59:34] **Speaker 1:** Maximum Fun.

[00:59:36] **Speaker 2:** A worker-owned network.

[00:59:37] **Speaker 3:** Of artist owned shows.

[00:59:39] **Speaker 4:** Supported—

[00:59:40] **Speaker 5:** —directly—

[00:59:41] **Speaker 6:** —by you!