Welcome to the Judge John Hodgman podcast. I'm Bailiff Jesse Thorn. This week, “Convection Overturned”. Jeff brings the case against his wife, Jen. Their home came with a very unusual appliance. When they moved in, Jen gave Jeff one year to enjoy this device before removing it from the house. The year is now up. Jeff wants to keep it. He says this contraption is the centerpiece of their living room. Who's right, who's wrong? Only one can decide.

Judge John Hodgman, you may proceed.

Jeff, do you have a guess?

Jeff: I believe that is Cheers fan fiction written by an obscure French artist and then Google translated back into English.
John Hodgman: That’s a guess, Jeff. *Cheers* fan fiction. I’m gonna write all of that down just to punish you. *Cheers* fan fiction. It’s only gonna take about seven minutes.

(They giggle.)

Recorded. Right. French, translate. Done. Okay. Wrote it down. Jen, do you have a guess? You want to hear it again?

(Jen confirms.)

Okay. I’m so glad. This time I’m going to sing it. A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H—*(singing)* “I take a nap in the afternoon. I come down for dinner, then I close the place. To me, that’s living. *Zoo, zoo, zoo, zoo.*”

And then it goes on for a little bit and then it says, “Après moi le déluge—luge, luge, luge, luge.” Alright, in this case, I sung it. Did that help?

Jen: No. *(Chuckles.)* The first thing that came to my mind, and I know I’m totally off base, was *Where’s Alice?*

John Hodgman: *Where’s Alice?* Good question. *Where is Alice?* And what is—what are you talking about?

Jen: Isn’t it a movie? I feel like it’s a movie.

John Hodgman: *Where’s Alice?* It’s probably a movie.

Jesse Thorn: Sounds like it’s probably a movie.

Jen: But there’s like a restaurant involved, like she worked in a diner.

John Hodgman: Oh! *Alice Doesn’t Live Here Anymore.*

(Jen confirms and thanks him.)

That was made into the TV show *Alice* that was set at Mel’s Diner and costarred Vera, played by Beth Howland, who sang “I’m Not Getting Married Today” in the original Broadway cast of *Company*, which has been on repeat in my brain since the first time, Jesse Thorn, you mentioned the documentary about the making of the original Broadway Cast recording of *Company*. Beth Howland. Heroic performance by Beth Howland. And an incredible performance by Nancy Meyers, who I only knew as the, as the spokesperson for Sha Na Na. She sings *(inaudible)* people get off the train. She was the announcer for Sha Na Na.

Wait a minute, what were we talking about? Oh, right. Obscure cultural reference. I sang it to the tune of “I’ve Got a Gal in Kalamazoo” by the Glenn Miller Orchestra, because you are—we are reaching you, Jeff and Jen, in Kalamazoo, Michigan. That’s a very fun place name.
But all guesses are wrong. As interesting as your guess was, Jen, it was wrong. And Jeff, as long as yours was, it was also wrong.

I was quoting from the obituary of Robert Tréboux, restaurateur who died at the age of 87, and he was expressing his life's philosophy as the proprietor of the very storied Manhattan restaurant, very famous for it not changing its menu for decades, Le Veau d'Or, and not caring that it was woefully and wildly and wonderfully out of date. And what he does, he just takes a nap in the afternoon, goes down and talks to people. For him, going on vacation is boring. And then he said, “Après moi, le déluge,” which was originally attributed to Louis XV, which is something he said, apparently, to his favorite mistress, Madame Pompadour. And people interpret that as like, “After me, it's the French Revolution, who cares?” He was actually talking about when I die, Halley's comet's gonna come and cause the world to flood, and all civilization will end. So, let's live it up, and who cares?

Generally, it's an expression of “who cares what happens after I die”, which is sometimes interpreted as a capitalistic, gross thing to say, because we're not thinking of the next generation. And sometimes you're a wonderful restaurateur who's just like, “I'm not gonna change my menu, who cares? Après moi le déluge. After me, the flood. After me, life doesn't exist.”

Now why? Why did I quote from this guy? Well, he did own Le Veau d’Or. He also owned a traditional French restaurant in Manhattan, called Le Manoir. But he also owned one, Jesse Thorn, called La Rotisserie Française.

Jesse, I bet you know why La Rotisserie Française is an important part of culture, right?

[00:05:28] Jesse Thorn: I do. That's where the original Rotisserie Baseball League was founded and organized—rotisserie baseball being the progenitor of pretty much all American fantasy sports.

[00:05:42] John Hodgman: Yeah, and they called it rotisserie baseball after this restaurant.

[00:05:47] Jesse Thorn: Yeah, because they happened to be eating rotisserie chicken at the time they thought it was the idea.

[00:05:51] John Hodgman: Yeah, they put it—it was Daniel Okrent and a bunch of other sports writers and baseball enthusiasts and media people, put it together in 1980. And it caused a big thing. Would you say that fantasy sports, Jesse, is a big thing?

[00:06:04] Jesse Thorn: It is a big thing, and it's all due to Daniel Okrent and his rotisserie baseball team, the Okrent Fenokees.

[00:06:10] John Hodgman: No. No, you're joking me. The Okrent—

John Hodgman: Well, there we go.

Jesse Thorn: Take it from me, a guy who sat in the aisles of Aardvark Books in San Francisco and read old copies of the Rotisserie Baseball Handbook. (Laughs.)

John Hodgman: When I found out that rotisserie baseball was named for a restaurant called Rotisserie Française, I was like maybe I ought to learn this game. But I haven't yet, and I never will, because we've got a case to settle here. And there's a—and this case involves a rotisserie. Who seeks justice in this court?

Jeff: I do, your honor.

John Hodgman: Jeff, tell me about your house, and what is the contraption that you consider to be the heart of the home?

Jeff: The house is a 1950s built, normal two-level house with a basement and a upstairs.

John Hodgman: In Kalamazoo.

Jeff: In Kalamazoo, Michigan.

John Hodgman: You have a house in Kalamazoo.

(Jeff confirms.)

A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, S, T—(singing) U have a house! In Kalamazoo, standard two-floory house that—" (Shorts.) Two-floory. Would you say your house is too floory? Or just floory enough?

Jeff: Is two-floory, but not floory enough. I would always love a third floor if possible. But we can only live with what we have.

John Hodgman: And what's in the middle of the home?

Jeff: The middle of the home is a former patio that has been turned into an enclosed room, sometime in the '60s probably by the original owner, named Bruno. The room was built to enclose a rotisserie, which is about 6 feet by 7 feet wide. It has a slate countertop with a fireplace in the front of it and then about a six-and-a-half-foot wide rotisserie in the back of it.

John Hodgman: Now, people are thinking, whoa, whoa, whoa. Is Jeff talking about a baseball league? No. You're talking about a spit that you put chickens on or other meats or other foods, and you can—and you rotate them in front of this fire.

(Jeff confirms.)
So, this was a patio—originally an outdoor appliance that became enclosed when they enclosed the patio into a kind of a sunroom deal?

[00:08:25] **Jeff:** That is what we think. The exact history is not clear. Even though we have contacted or been in contact with the daughter of Bruno, we still don't know the exact provenance of when the rotisserie was built—if it was outside, if it was inside. There's some—I have a theory based on a secret tunnel that is inside the rotisserie.

[00:08:46] **John Hodgman:** Alright. We're gonna talk about the secret tunnel for sure. But I want to hear Jen's response to this. Jen, why would you want to remove the rotisserie from the now enclosed patio other than the threat, I presume, of carbon monoxide poisoning?

[00:09:02] **Jen:** That looms large, for sure. I think having an indoor, large cooking device like that just—mm, sketches me out a little bit. The smells, the potential risk for, you know, burning down our house, and the fumes it creates. Because we have used it a couple times now, and it is quite smoky. The exhaust fan doesn't quite work the way I think it was intended to, or maybe it's not as powerful. So, it's not my favorite appliance.

[00:09:30] **John Hodgman:** So, is it primarily—so, are you making the case that it's primarily a safety issue?

[00:09:34] **Jen:** Yes, I would argue that yes.

[00:09:36] **John Hodgman:** What are your additional issues?

[00:09:38] **Jen:** So, my mother, who lives in our basement apartment, suffers from pretty severe asthma. And the last time we did use the rotisserie, the smoke was pretty noxious. And she did complain, you know. And I don't really want to put her into an asthma exacerbation, have her end up in the hospital.

[00:09:53] **John Hodgman:** So, this is not—you're not opposed to having a rotisserie in the home on principle. It's just that it doesn't work properly, it's not ventilated properly, and Jeff's trying to murder your mother.

(They chuckle.)

[00:10:07] **Jen:** I don't know about the last part. (*Laughs.*) They do have a pretty good relationship, so I don't think that's probably intentional.

[00:10:12] **John Hodgman:** Alright, Jeff, you sent in some photos of this rotisserie and the room that contains it. I'm gonna click a link on here. And all these photos are available, obviously, on the show page at MaximumFun.org and on our Instagram, @JudgeJohnHodgman. Well, this is a really cool home, Jeff. I gotta say, this—I feel like I'm leafing through the pages of an interior decoration book that I got at the Big Chicken Barn from 1979. Tile floor, a lot of wood, and a cool looking rotisserie. And a very cool—Jesse, what would you call that style of chandelier up there? That light fixture? Is that—is that MCM or no?
Jesse Thorn: It's like late mid-century modern. It's certainly modernist, but it goes with the rest of this sort of 1972 architectural aesthetic.

John Hodgman: Yeah. This is a classic 1972 Kalamazoo two-story decory type home.

Jesse Thorn: Although, to be fair, it also has a sort of 1984 marble trim on the walls. I just noticed that.

John Hodgman: There may have been some updating there. Do you know—if you haven't already told me, Jeff, when was the house built? Do you know? Did Brunette or Bruno tell you that?

Jeff: I believe it was in 1958. But this came in later.

John Hodgman: Okay, and I see from the other angle, it looks like there is a wall with two windows looking into the kitchen proper. Which, presumably, was an exterior wall of the home at one point.

(Jeff confirms.)

And now this is all enclosed. And there is a hood over the rotisserie, and is that a fire pit?

Jeff: Yes. In the front of the rotisserie is a fire pit. It's a gas fireplace, where the flames just kind of go up. And then behind that is the four different flames that make up the rotisserie.

John Hodgman: Okay, and I see from the other angle, it looks like there is a wall with two windows looking into the kitchen proper. Which, presumably, was an exterior wall of the home at one point.

(Jeff confirms.)

Highly poisonous. What did you cook on the rotisserie when you were attempting to kill your mother-in-law?

Jesse Thorn: Let the record reflect that, upon having had his equipment described as highly poisonous, Jeff made a (sad noise) face.

John Hodgman: I'm just saying as someone with asthma, I've started to notice that anytime I use my gas burner, I feel like garbage. And I'm probably going to move on to an induction type situation in the future, even though I've always loved cooking with gas. That's something that I'm thinking about. What were you thinking about when you tried to kill your mother-in-law, Jeff? “Mm, delicious chicken.”

Jeff: Well, we started off with a delicious duck, which was the inaugural use of the rotisserie once I fixed it up. Then we did a chicken, and finally we did a turkey about two
weeks ago in thinking that we would do a practice run for Thanksgiving. And the amount of smoke in the house was overwhelming, and we nixed that idea.

[00:12:53] **John Hodgman:** And you said that you had fixed it up. What did you do to fix it up?

[00:12:57] **Jeff:** When we purchased the home last year, the hood didn't work. So, I had to replace the electric motor in the hood and do some wiring, which was 1960s amateur, I would say. So, that was—and also replace the actual rotisserie motor and the spit itself. So, there was quite a bit of maintenance that needed to be done.

[00:13:18] **John Hodgman:** Jen, is Jeff a handy person?

[00:13:21] **Jen:** He is! He actually has his own handy business.

[00:13:22] **John Hodgman:** Oh, really?

*(Jen confirms.)*

So, you have faith that he did the best he could, given the materials that were presented to him?

[00:13:29] **Jen:** I do. I do. I definitely have faith in his abilities.

[00:13:31] **John Hodgman:** So, you talked about the smoke getting noxious and causing your mother to have breathing difficulty—or be uncomfortable, shall we say?

*(Jen confirms.)*

Was this during the turkey experiment or the duck experiment?

[00:13:45] **Jen:** This was during the turkey. I don't recall the previous ones.

[00:13:49] **John Hodgman:** Because you fainted and fell down and hit your head?

[00:13:53] **Jen:** *(Laughs.)* I'm not sure if she was even present. She may have been out of town when we did some of those. I don’t know.

[00:13:56] **John Hodgman:** How was the duck? How was the duck, Jen?

[00:14:01] **Jen:** The duck? Meh. The chicken was pretty good. The turkey really tasted **good**.

[00:14:02] **John Hodgman:** Even though it smoked everything up?
[00:14:06] **Jen:** Yeah, it tasted amazing. I know. I feel terrible saying that, because I feel like I should be like, “No! It was awful!” No, it was very good.

[00:14:11] **John Hodgman:** No. Look, I'm very curious about this contraption. What did you think about the rotisserie when you moved in, Jen?

[00:14:19] **Jen:** Oooh, *(chuckles awkwardly)*—a lot of feelings. It's just odd. And it's just impractical. I think it's more practical and like, why? Why would we use an indoor rotisserie? Like, we're not going to be having pig roasts, like cooking a goat. I don't know. It just—I guess the impracticality of it.

[00:14:38] **John Hodgman:** I'll grant you that this room is somewhat strange, because I'm looking at another angle of it now. I guess I'm looking away from the rotisserie into what used to be the patio, is that right?

*(Jeff confirms.)*

I skipped down a couple of photos to this one that is featuring, beautifully and appropriately, a huge fern or some kind of frondy plant, which seems very apropos of Kalamazoo two-floory, late mid-century modern decorly.

[00:15:05] **Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, the plant appears to be taking up a full third of the room.

[00:15:08] **John Hodgman:** Then it looks like you've got a pretty nice mid-century modern like sideboard with a—is that an accordion perched on top of it?

[00:15:15] **Jeff:** That’s correct. That was my grandmother's accordion.

[00:15:16] **Jesse Thorn:** Would you say, Jeff, that this third of the room is the fern and accordion area?

[00:15:23] **Jeff:** You said it, not me.

[00:15:22] **John Hodgman:** You know, in classic late mid-century modern Kalamazoo houses, Jesse, there was always an accordion and fern pit.

[00:15:31] **Jesse Thorn:** Well, they call it the rule of threes, John. Any enclosed patio is 1/3rd fire, 1/3rd television and sitting area, and 1/3rd accordion and fern zone.

[00:15:42] **Transition:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:15:46] **Transition:** Three gavel bangs.

[00:15:48] **John Hodgman:** Did Bruno or Brunette, his daughter, give you any indication about why they enclosed this?
Jeff: Yes. So, I've been able—through internet research and talking to the family—to figure out that Bruno was quite the entertainer. So, his daughter told me that when it was a patio, he used to go out onto the patio and bask in the sun and look upon his garden, which he had encased in marble. Because he was actually a marble tile terrazzo entrepreneur in Kalamazoo. Perhaps one of the most famous Kalamazoo entrepreneurs of those three materials.

(Jesse laughs.)

And I think he—we don't know for sure if the rotisserie was there while it was a patio. There's some evidence that makes me think that there was, but clearly he wanted to entertain all year long. And I believe that's why he enclosed it. This is a man who has modified this house many, many times with many, many marbles, tiles, and terrazzos, and just could not stop himself from adding new features into the house and yard.

Jesse Thorn: Looking at these photographs, it's very clear that your house—like a prime steak—is well-marbled.

(They chuckle.)

John Hodgman: Jeff, it says here that you're now a handy person, but in the past you've been a college teacher, a farmer, and a truck driver. Jen, it says you're a nurse practitioner. These are all interesting and wonderful jobs. I like you both a lot, but could you leave and get Bruno?

Jeff: We'd need to exhume him.

John Hodgman: Oh, wow. Yeah, it's not going to be easy getting into his tomb. Only the finest marble.

Jesse Thorn: And terrazzo!

John Hodgman: I'm not surprised here to look at Exhibit C now, which is captioned, “Marble and Tile Throughout the Home”. Jen, what's going on with all this marble and tile?

Jen: Ooh, it's a mishmash. It's a—yeah, a lot of patterns. A lot of different colorways. We've been trying to accommodate our sort of style around it, but definitely having plans to sort of remodel some things in the future.

John Hodgman: Yeah, I mean, but Bruno went a little bit Bru-nanas in this situation here.

(Jen agrees.)

A lot of different tiled patterns all over the place. And then is this a litter box?
[00:18:10] **Jen:** Yes, what you see—yeah, in sort of the side, there's like a little side cubby underneath the slate part of the rotisserie.

[00:18:18] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, let me congratulate you both, first of all, for being the first couple to not send in a photo of their pet but instead a photo of where their pet poops.

(*They laugh.*)

I don't think we've ever had a litter box on the show before. What's this litter box doing underneath your rotisserie? It looks like it's in a—it seems like it's in a litter box shaped hutch underneath the rotisserie, Jeff.

[00:18:39] **Jeff:** That is correct. When we got our kitten, we had to make a decision about where we were going to put the kitty pooper. And we thought that the farthest place away from any sort of food, ironically, would be in the rotisserie itself. So, because we don't use the rotisserie a lot, we could put the kitty pooper in the rotisserie area, and it would be hidden. The smells would be somewhat minimized. That was the idea.

[00:19:06] **John Hodgman:** Definitely, when I'm visiting my friends in Kalamazoo on their enclosed patio, the thing that really brings a party to life when they're roistering up a duck is the smell of hot kitty litter.

(*Jen laughs.*)

Seems like this is a room that is still finding its purpose, wouldn't you say, Jen?

[00:19:24] **Jen:** I would agree, yes. As you can tell, there's sort of—some has been very decorated and we've kind of gotten our aesthetic, and then the other part is still kind of—meh, in progress.

[00:19:34] **John Hodgman:** And when you gave Jeff a year to enjoy this rotisserie—and the year is up now—what do you want this room to become, Jen?

[00:19:45] **Jen:** I guess so far we've used it as like an entertaining space, which I do like. Like, we were able to use it 'cause it's got the—the palm can be moved. It's on casters.

(*John reacts with shock and interest.*)

So, when you move the palm, we get a third of our space back.

[00:20:05] **Jesse Thorn:** I think the next step is obviously to motorize the palm.

(*They laugh.*)

[00:20:05] **John Hodgman:** Yeah. Can you put it—can you tape it to a Roomba?
[00:20:09] **Jen:** *(Laughs.)* Ooh, I hadn't thought of that. I feel like you would love that, Jeff.

[00:20:12] **Jeff:** Well, that would be a heavy-duty Roomba, but I'm sure with enough time and money, we could do it.

[00:20:18] **John Hodgman:** Jeff, I'm just saying, you could be the mobile Palm King of Southern Michigan.

*(Jen laughs.)*

[00:20:25] **Jeff:** Can I use that for advertising purposes?

[00:20:27] **John Hodgman:** Yeah, of course. We get 10%, right, Jesse? That's our thing right now?

*(Jesse corrects to 15%.*

15. Sorry, 15. My boss says 15. That's the best we can do, Jeff.

[00:20:37] **Jeff:** I'll take it.

[00:20:39] **John Hodgman:** Okay, so you can move the palm around. You envision using it for entertaining.

*(Jen confirms.*

Do you have a more—do you have a specific vision for it that might differ from Jeff's?

[00:20:51] **Jen:** So, in my perfect world, the rotisserie device itself is gone. We can keep the slate little bar area, get some bar chairs, have it as sort of like a sitting sort of chatting area. The couch is also on casters, because it's MCM. And so, you can turn that, and you can have people sit there, and maybe have my daughter do a little dance in the middle. You know.

[00:21:17] **John Hodgman:** I love that. I'll come to this caster party. One thing that's great about casters is they move very smoothly over—guess what, everyone?—tile floors. Jeff, you agreed that you would remove the rotisserie after a year. It's coming up on a year. It's not working as you had hoped. The vent doesn't do the venting, despite your handiness. Don't you think it's time to let it go?

[00:21:41] **Jeff:** No. I don't. I think—

[00:21:43] **John Hodgman:** Why not?

[00:21:45] **Jeff:** When you purchase a house that has an enclosed rotisserie, and then you meet the family members of the person who installed the rotisserie, you have a moral
obligation to keep that rotisserie and make it work. To invite people over for a party. To enjoy a roast poultry or maybe a roast pig. We were told that Bruno would roast a pig every year on the rotisserie.

[00:22:10] John Hodgman: After the patio was enclosed?!

[00:22:13] Jeff: That is my understanding. It was the ‘60s or the ’70s. I think people were more okay with having large amounts of smoke amongst them.

[00:22:20] John Hodgman: When you say you buy a house with a rotisserie, you have an obligation to keep it, are you concerned of a vengeful ghost type situation? That Bruno's gonna come back from the grave?

[00:22:29] Jeff: I wouldn't be surprised if he was buried in the backyard, considering all the things I found of his back there. But I'm not a superstitious person, but I do feel a kinship to Bruno in a way. His gregarious nature excites a past gregariousness in me that I would like to keep. Because this rotisserie is… it's sort of a window into a different type of person that I want to be. I want to be an entertainer. I want to have a rotisserie that I can show off to people. It just—it wasn't something we were looking for when we purchased the house, but I just can't—I don't want to let it go.

And instead of adhering to our agreement, I brought this case. Because I believed that you would see in my argument that it was necessary to keep it.

[00:23:12] John Hodgman: Have you considered investing in a mid-century modern carbon monoxide alarm?

[00:23:19] Jeff: (Chuckles.) Yes, we're thinking about getting a few canaries, perhaps.

[00:23:22] John Hodgman: Uh-huh. Jen, you sent in the photo of all the tile and stuff. Is there other work that needs to happen in this house? Is there other ways you want to exorcise the ghost of Bruno?

[00:23:32] Jen: Yeah, some—I guess, yeah, the flooring. Some of the windows in that room are not ideal, probably not the most energy efficient windows. Probably the main—and then the outside. The outside needs a fair amount of work.

[00:23:47] John Hodgman: Speaking of the transition between inside and outside—Jeff, you had mentioned a secret door.

(Jeff confirms.)

And somehow I didn't get into that right away. So, let's get into it now. Let's walk through that secret door together. What are you talking about?
Jeff: You'll see in Exhibit D, your honor, that there is a secret door in the rotisserie room, adjacent to the rotisserie, that leads from the inside to the outside. It has two latch-able doors on it.

John Hodgman: Alright, well, it's not a secret door. You can see it. It's just a door that's purpose is somewhat secret.

Jeff: That's correct. It's—we don't know why it was there. And also, if you weren't looking for it, you wouldn't necessarily see it.

John Hodgman: It looks like about a foot square cut into a really highly stuccoed wall beneath a very thick beam of like—it looks like teak wainscoting. But it's a foot square hatch with looks like a metal door on the inside and the outside. My question to you is why didn't you put a little ramp on either side and retrofit this into a little cat door?

Jesse Thorn: It looks like what they would call a milkman door, a place for deliveries. But the truth is that the wall is not wide enough to deliver milk into. And so, it truly is of baffling purpose. (Chuckles.) That said, on the opposite wall, there are windows to the inside of the house. So.

(They chuckle.)

John Hodgman: Now, to me—you know my reputation, Jeff and Jen. John Hodgman, Rotisserie Detective. You've seen my show on HGTV, where I look at old rotisseries and homes and I'm like, “How is this supposed to work?”

(They chuckle.)

To me, alright, the rotisserie—if I'm looking right at the rotisserie, right? To the left of it is this hatch to the outdoors or the other side of this wall, correct? Is that what I'm seeing?

(Jen confirms.)

And also, at the end of the rotisserie, on the left, is this hutch. There's an enclosure.

Jen: Opening, yeah.

John Hodgman: Do you know if this rotisserie, Jeff, was always powered by gas?

Jeff: That I don't know, and I think that's an interesting supposition.

John Hodgman: You see where I'm going with this.

Jeff: I do, and I agree that we should probably turn the rotisserie into a wood fired rotisserie, which would certainly reduce the amount of asthma-inducing smoke.
John Hodgman: I beg to differ strongly! (Chuckling.) As a connoisseur of both gas fumes and fireplace smoke. I've breathed them all, and they're all pretty noxious. But what I'm getting at is I wonder if—and this is just pure speculation; you can talk to Brunette about this. But I wonder if there was wood that was stored on the other side of that hatch, and that you would open that hatch to throw wood into the house. And then you would store the wood underneath the rotisserie where your cat litter box is currently. That's just a guess, maybe. I don't know.

Jeff: It's an excellent guess. There is also a secret door within the fireplace area that would lead evidence to perhaps that it was an outdoor rotisserie at some point.

John Hodgman: Well, I thought we knew that it was an outdoor rotisserie.

Jeff: We don't. We don't know. We didn't look at the aerial photos. We don't know if the rotisserie was built at the time the patio was enclosed or if it existed before the patio was enclosed.

John Hodgman: You're saying the rotisserie may predate humanity.

Jeff: That is exactly what I'm saying.

John Hodgman: You're saying that Bruno saw this rotisserie and built this house around it, because Bruno knew that if he ever got rid of the rotisserie that the house would be cursed forever.

(Jeff agrees.)

Jesse Thorn: The rotisserie has existed since a time when Kalamazoo was ruled by accordions.

John Hodgman: Now you just suggested something else, Jeff. Now you're suggesting converting this to a wood burning stove.

Jeff: I was not serious about that, sir.

John Hodgman: You weren't?

(Jeff confirms.)

Why not?

Jeff: I would burn the house down at that point.

John Hodgman: (Skeptical.) Would you?
Jeff: I used to be a firefighter. So. I don't know how that would stop me from burning the house down, but I'm trained.

John Hodgman: How many jobs have you had? And what are you running from?

Jeff: Oh, that is an excellent question.

John Hodgman: You’ve got more career changes than that guy in Catch Me If You Can. You were a professional firefighter or a volunteer firefighter?

(Jeff confirms volunteer.)

But you, of all people, should know this is not meant to be this way. This thing was built as part of an outdoor entertainment area. Bruno is a delight, but you know, we don't know how Bruno died, do we?

(Jeff confirms.)

Yeah, maybe we should check Brunette. Could be something like, uh, rotisserie poisoning? But Jen, when you talk about all the tile in the house, is this a situation where it's like, “I would like to be spending our budget redecorating all of the weird tile rather than pouring it into further refinement of the rotisserie”? Is that what's happening here?

Jen: Mm. I don't know that specifically, but I do think we've probably put enough time into the rotisserie. Like, it is what it is. We've used it. It's—you know—noxious at best. Although it does make a good turkey. Yeah. And I would like to spend a little more time doing some of the additional housework that is needed.

John Hodgman: Jeff, I know that you're scared to get rid of the rotisserie and with good reason, but I also wonder have you done any exploration about how you could make it safer and less noxious in that space?

Jeff: I have considered it. When I put the new motor in the rotisserie, I got a lower powered motor, thinking that a higher-powered motor would be too loud. And I can certainly get the higher-powered motor—

John Hodgman: Noise pollution isn't the issue.

Jeff: Exactly. Now that we've experienced it, we know that noise pollution is not the issue, air pollution is. I believe a higher-powered motor could exhaust more fumes more quickly. I've also learned that I can put a box fan in the window or two, and that helps to exhaust.

John Hodgman: Oh, no, no, no. If you're trying to get rid of ghosts, you can't put a box fan in there! Jesse!
[00:29:58] Jesse Thorn: That will only increase the number of ghosts in your home.

[00:30:01] John Hodgman: Yeah, and that box fan's gonna chop up your air supply. It's like you've never even listened to this podcast, Jeff.

(Jen laughs and Jeff apologizes.)

Besides, I'm talking about real ventilation, Jeff. Where does the hood go?

[00:30:15] Jeff: The hood goes to a commercial vent on the roof.

[00:30:16] John Hodgman: So, that should be working.

(Jeff confirms it is.)

But it seems like it's not powerful enough.

(Jeff agrees.)

So, maybe that's where you would focus first, your attention—rather than putting box fans in the windows.

(Jeff agrees.)

Have you consulted with a kitchen designer or an indoor fireplace person or—I don't know—a firefighter that you might know?

[00:30:38] Jeff: I'm too stubborn to consult with people.

[00:30:40] John Hodgman: (Snorts a laugh.) Is that why you leave all your jobs?

(Jeff confirms.)

It's like, “No, I drive the truck this way, on the top of the truck.”

(They giggle.)

I’m sorry, that doesn't work. “I'm a firefighter. I just throw—I throw one bucket of sand, and then I go away.” Sorry, that doesn't work. “I'm sorry, I'm too stubborn to adapt!”

Now you're a handy person. Hm! Is there anyone you can consult in Kalamazoo about indoor fireplaces and so forth?
Jeff: There is a fireplace shop that I have frequented. It's where we actually purchase those lights that you mentioned. And I could ask for advice there.

John Hodgman: And yet so far you haven't.

Jeff: No, I'm afraid.

John Hodgman: What are you afraid of, Jeff?

Jeff: Talking to people.

John Hodgman: You're doing a great job today.

(John snorts a laugh.)

How much are you willing to spend to upgrade this thing to get it working?

Jeff: I'm willing to spend any price within our—

(John snorts a laugh.)

You know, I'm afraid of Bruno.

John Hodgman: I shouldn't have asked you. I shouldn’t have asked you.

Jeff: Yeah. Thousands, hundreds of thousands.

John Hodgman: Woah! Okay! (Chuckling.) Alright, that's—I guess—hey, Jesse, I need to change careers and go be a handy person in Southern Michigan.

Jesse Thorn: Well, you need to change careers 47 times and then become a handy person in Southern Michigan.

John Hodgman: Jen, you heard about Jeff's attachment and fear of the eventual ghost of Bruno. Does any of that resonate with you?

Jen: No. (Laughs.) I'm not sure they're 100% sincere. I don't know that that's the full driving force.

John Hodgman: Really? What do you think is the crux, Madame Crux-finder?

Jen: (Sighs.) I think it's the stubbornness. I think he wants to keep this, because he likes it. And it's his sort of project. Jeff has a long-storied history of projects.
John Hodgman: Go on!

(Jen laughs.)

What's another project, aside from his many careers?

Jen: We have had multiple vehicles in previous homes that just sort of lived in our garages and our barns and became sort of tinkering projects that lasted forever and ever. So, this feels like one of those projects to me.

John Hodgman: This is a whole different kettle of fish, Jeff. Do you have a history of taking on projects and not completing them?

Jeff: I don't think I've ever not completed a project.

John Hodgman: Well, one of you's lying.

Jen: He has finished them. He just takes a very long time, and they tend to take up a lot of space in our properties. So, I will say this is the least sort of cumbersome one.

John Hodgman: Is that why you had to move to Kalamazoo a year ago? Because your previous home—it says here in Vermont?—was full of old trucks and projects, and you had to leave?

Jen: Not exactly. No, that was not the primary reason but definitely having less space here minimized the chances that he could acquire more vehicles for tinkering.

John Hodgman: But little did you know that there was a machine right inside the house. The project is coming from inside the house!

(Jen agrees with a tired chuckle.)

Jeff, when you first moved in, how did you envision the rotisserie in your life?

Jeff: I envisioned it as a place where we could entertain people around food. I have, in the past, had pig roasts when we used to be farmers. And I had it—and after talking to our neighbor, who had attended one of Bruno's pig roasts 30 years ago, I really could imagine that, oh, this is an awesome place where we could actually roast a pig, have potentially 40 people in our house, have this huge party. That's how I envisioned it.

John Hodgman: And you sent in some video of the rotisserie in action, which I'm going to take a look at now. Okay. Yes. I see a lot of blue flames heating up. Is this a pigeon or is this rotisserie really, really big? I mean, if that's a full-size chicken, you could fit like 10 chickens on that spit!

Jen: It's huge.
[00:34:27] **John Hodgman:** It's huge! I don't know what I'm hearing. Is this the motor or the fan mechanism?

[00:34:31] **Jeff:** It's probably the motor of the rotisserie itself. This was the initial try, and I did not heat shield the motor very well, and it got a little too hot.

[00:34:40] **John Hodgman:** I’m hearing a lot of motor, but you know what I'm not hearing enough of? Fan.

So, obviously, Jen, if I were to rule in your favor, you want me to enforce the contract that you made with Jeff, that he entered into willingly, and remove the rotisserie and turn it into a classic Kalamazoo slate tiled bar or something, right?

*(Jen confirms.)*

And Jeff, if I were to rule in your favor—I mean, you entered into a contract. What are you looking for, an extension? What?

[00:35:10] **Jeff:** I would settle for an extension. I would love a blanket forever-extension to improve the rotisserie in perpetuity until it becomes the ultimate appliance for our house.

[00:35:19] **John Hodgman:** The ultimate appliance for our house. That doesn't mean that it has to be the ultimate appliance in the house.

Anyway, I think I've heard everything I need to in order to make my decision. I'll be back in a moment with my verdict.

[00:35:30] **Jesse Thorn:** Please rise as Judge John Hodgman exits the courtroom.

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

Jeff, how are you feeling?

[00:35:37] **Jeff:** I'm feeling good. I think the judge—I've experienced his wisdom in the past. I know he's a lover of food. I know he's a lover of spectacle. And I believe that he will see how important it is to maintain the rotisserie and improve the rotisserie and to honor Bruno and Bruno's ghost.

[00:35:58] **Jesse Thorn:** *(Cackling with delight.)* Spectacle. Yeah, that's great. Jen, how are you feeling?

[00:36:04] **Jen:** I think the judge is probably gonna rule in my favor—more towards me in my favor. Partly because he does not want to see my mother injured or maimed by said rotisserie.

[00:36:16] **Jesse Thorn:** Jeff, have you thought about picking up any new careers?
Jeff: Yeah, the motorized fern business. I could totally transition into that.

Jesse Thorn: If you could combine Millennials’ love of houseplants with Millennials’ love of vacuuming, these motorized ferns are going to make you rich! You can terrazo your entire home! At least, that small portion of it that is not already terrazzo-ed.

Jeff: I love the idea.

Jesse Thorn: We'll see what Judge Hodgman has to say about all this when we're back in just a moment.

Transition: Three gavel bangs.

Transition: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Judge John Hodgman, we're taking a break from the case but not from our preparations for San Francisco Sketch Fest.

John Hodgman: That's right! We're returning to San Francisco, January 27th! A wonderful 4PM show at the Palace of Fine Arts. Why, Jesse? It's a Palace of Fine Arts! And we're going to fill it up with as much live justice as it can take, and we would love for you to be there with us.

You can get your tickets at SFSketchfest.com. That'll give you the whole lineup of San Francisco Sketch Fest, which I order you to peruse! Because everything there is wonderful. If you want to go directly to get tickets to our show, just go to bit.ly/jjhosf24. That's J-J-H-O-S-F-2-4. It's all in capital letters except for 2-4, which are numbers.

I love Sketch Fest. I've been—(stammers) I've been thinking all year about coming back, and we're gonna have such a great time seeing you there, bit.ly/jjhosf24. And of course, go to SF Sketch Fest for all of the offerings that they are offering. Jesse Thorn, what are you offering?

Jesse Thorn: I’m offering the holiday season in the Put This On Shop, John. As you know, and our listeners know, I have my own vintage shop at PutThisOnShop.com. And we've just launched all kinds of incredible products there. It's not just handmade pocket squares, although that is one of the things on offer. It is also jewelry for men and women, antique treasures of all sorts. Lately, a lot of rings and pocketknives, pins from the beginning of the 20th century, trading cards if you need a stocking stuffer, all kinds of beauties and treasures at PutThisOnShop.com. And because you are a Judge John Hodgman listener, I will give you 15% off anything with the code “justice”. 15% off literally anything in the entire store. So, run over there, and place your order so it gets it gets to you in time for your holiday celebration and a gift for your favorite person.

John Hodgman: You're talking about 15% off a turn of the century tiger hat store display?!
Jesse Thorn: I’m talking about 15% off literally anything in the store, even this Victorian gold gemstone and pearl ring, even some of the incredible Native American turquoise jewelry we have, even this board game called *On Tour: A Game of Music, Money, and Making It Big*.

John Hodgman: What about the early 20th century dog breed pins?

Jesse Thorn: Oh, oh, yeah, absolutely. Those are so great. *(Chuckles warmly.)* I love those. Those are from like 1910. Man, they're tobacco premiums. You know, they came with your pack of tobacco or cigarettes, and they're little and gorgeous. And there are so many breeds available.

All of this at [PutThisOnShop.com](http://PutThisOnShop.com) and use that code “justice” for your discount.

John Hodgman: [PutThisOnShop.com](http://PutThisOnShop.com). Use the code “justice” for your discount. And don't try to buy the game *Outdoor Survival: A Game About Wilderness Skills*, because it's sold out. Don't make the mistake I did and wait too long to get that game. Get over there. [PutThisOnShop.com](http://PutThisOnShop.com).

Jesse, we're still recording on this plug, right?

*(Jesse confirms.)*

I'm going to tell you right now, I'm going to go over to [PutThisOnShop.com](http://PutThisOnShop.com). I'm going to buy a bunch of stuff for my family.

John Hodgman: People better get over there, because I'm going to buy a bunch of stuff right now. If they want any of this stuff, they better get over there. Because I'm out there doing it. But before I go over to [PutThisOnShop.com](http://PutThisOnShop.com) and use code “justice”, I'm just going to remind you one more time, get your tickets to San Francisco SketchFest at [SFSketchfest.com](http://SFSketchfest.com). And we need your cases of course, so submit them at [MaximumFun.org/jh](http://MaximumFun.org/jh) and let us know that you'll be at the San Francisco show.

Jesse Thorn: Let's get back to the case.

John Hodgman: Jen and Jeff, thank you for coming to speak to us here in the court of Judge John Hodgman. Jen, I don't know if you share Jeff's purported introversion and
fear of speaking to people. But whether you do or not, you both did a really good job of speaking to people—specifically, me and Jesse. And Jeff, I think you did a very good job of speaking to me. Because I want you to listen to this. Listen to this. You know what this is the sound of? *(Ripping sound.)* It's me tearing up the contract. Yeah! I'm tearing up the contract, Jen. This is not—I am finding in Jeff's favor. Why? I love spectacle.

*(They laugh.)*

I absolutely was like, “I could not—I would not be able to so easily give up a rotisserie that was left behind in a house that I purchased.” Wherever it was. Kalamazoo, I don't care! A rotisserie is—that demands to be the heart of the home. The hearth of the home, arguably! And what would it be like to just roast ten—I'm not gonna even say what it is. Ten chicken-sized things while you're listening to some cool music on the hi-fi and enjoying the friends that you're making there in Kalamazoo? Maybe Bruno's daughter will come over and cry?

This room is coming together! And I'm afraid if you take that rotisserie out, it will fall apart. Because it's not where it needs to be yet. I think that you both know it looks a little haphazard. It needs a little refinement. I'm not talking about a lot of renovation on the non-rotisserie side of the former patio. I'm just talking about a little decoration. It's coming together. For one thing, I don't like the way that that accordion is just sort of left unstrapped up there with its bellows kind of out. Like, you got to tighten that up and put the straps on. That's your mother's—grandmother's accordion over there! And you got a wire rack thing that doesn't fit in with the decor, and the room doesn't flow. Because you've got a nice-looking couch, but it's facing away from the hearth.

You need to figure this out. You need to figure out the flow of this room. Because whether it's a bar or a rotisserie, the room isn't flowing correctly. And my argument is that it should be a rotisserie—here comes the caveat for you, Jen—if possible. I don't know that it's possible to have the rotisserie in this space and have it be safe. And this is where you need to talk to a lot of people, Jeff. Because safety is—and I'm not just talking about burning down the house type safety, although that is a concern—but air quality safety. This thing was not built to be inside of a home. There are lots and lots of homes that have gas fireplaces, gas stoves, wood burning stoves. My friend, Adam—he built his home around an indoor wood burning cooking hearth. And it's got a thing that you can raise and lower. And you know, he just puts wood in there and burns it. And he has a thing to raise the meat up or raise the vegetables down, whatever it is. And he cooks on it all the time. It is in the home, but it is ventilated on purpose from the beginning to get the the smoke out of there and keep the ghosts happy.

And when I'm looking at this video, what's clear to me is that—first of all the, the motor is too loud. Frankly, I don't know why you haven't hooked up some kind of a treadmill for your cat to walk on to rotate the chicken. You know what I mean? I mean, you've already got the litter box over there. The motor is not ideal, because it's making too much noise, and that will be distracting to your parties. So, you might need to figure out something quieter, or just maybe turn it yourself. And the other thing is, you gotta be hearing a big ol’ fan, and I do not see an appropriate ventilation fan. I don't think whatever they've got built in there is enough. You need to put in a real hood over this thing. And that will cost money. And even then, it might not be safe, you know.
You need to do some air quality tests; you need to do some consultation with your friends at the fireplace store. They'll know how to make this work. And you want to talk to some friends at the fire department in Kalamazoo. You know, just show them your former firefighter card, and they'll give you the inside dope on whether this thing can work or not. I'm giving you six months to do a feasibility study. That's half the time you've had to almost burn your house down with a turkey. In this time, you have to, you know, talk to professionals, figure out how to properly ventilate it, talk to firefighters, figure out if it's possible to ventilate it properly, figure out a motor solution such that it's properly heat shielded and not too noisy. I mean, the fan's going to be noisy itself, you know what I mean? And then you bring that feasibility study to me, and I think it would be appropriate for you to CC Jen, too. And I'll make a final ruling on whether it's okay to go forward.

And I need—I'm talking about cost. And I'm talking about like what it's going to cost to make it 100% safe. Because this thing was not built to be indoors. You have to retrofit the whole area around it. And then, Jen, you can reconsider. And unfortunately for you, Jeff, you know, Jen does have a veto on this. If it's too expensive or just not feasible, then we'll have to find another way. But I'll give you six months. I'll give you six months for you to keep the ghost of Bruno away. I'll give Bruno another six months of peace in his lasting marble tomb. This is the sound of a gavel.

[00:46:50] **Sound Effect:** A chorus of voices chanting “set it and forget it, set it and forget it!” from the Ronco Showtime Rotisserie infomercial.

[00:46:57] **John Hodgman:** Judge John Hodgman rules, that is all.

[00:46:59] **Jesse Thorn:** Please rise as Judge John Hodgman exits the courtroom.

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

Jen, how do you feel about this extraordinary spectacle/mortal threat to Grandma Wheezy?

[00:47:16] **Jen:** *(Laughs.)* Ooh, I'll just tell my mom that's her new nickname. I mean, I think it's fair. I think the three-month—or six-month trial—I suspect that I will ultimately prevail in the end. So, yeah. I'm pretty comfortable with this decision.

[00:47:32] **Jesse Thorn:** Jeff, how prepared are you as a professional handyman to meet these demands?

[00:47:38] **Jeff:** Conducting a feasibility study sounds like the perfect job for me to do. I will provide one that is more detailed than one can imagine. The feasibility study itself will be a spectacle that will be well received by the judge. It'll allow me to prevail in the end, I hope. But I do respect that Jen gets the final veto, as she should. She's already allowed me to get essentially a six-month extension. So, this is a great outcome for me.

[00:48:05] **Jesse Thorn:** Jen, Jeff, thanks for joining us on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

[00:48:10] **Transition:** Three gavel bangs.
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 MKBecker for naming this week's episode “Convection Overturned”. You can join the conversation at the MaxFun subreddit, MaximumFun.Reddit.com. That's where we ask for those title suggestions. And there's always fun conversation about every episode of Judge John Hodgman. You can see all the marble and terrazzo in this home at Instagram.com/judgejohnhodgman or on the episode page at MaximumFun.org. Judge John Hodgman was created by Jesse Thorn and John Hodgman. This episode, engineered by Ian Gorman at La Luna Recording in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Our editor this week, A.J. McKeon. Marie Bardi-Salinas runs our social media. Our producer is Jennifer Mar

Now, Swift Justice, where we answer small disputes with quick judgment. PetHens from the Maximum Fun subreddit says, “Please rule that the Lilliputians were right, and Gulliver should be blinded.”

John Hodgman: I had to really run to the Gulliver's Travel Wikipedia page to remember this detail.

So, Jesse, a little background for you. As you know, Gulliver traveled. And he washed up on the shore of Lilliput and was captured by the Lilliputians, who are these little people—these little, teeny, tiny people. And they tied him up, and then they let him go on the condition that he would help them fight their war against Blefuscu—which is another island. And he does, but then he betrays them, and he declines to conquer the rest of Blefuscu. And consequently, he is condemned as a traitor by the council of Lilliput and condemned to be blinded. And he escapes to Blefuscu.

So, that's the backstory on that. And thinking it over real quick, now I'm just gonna say Swift Justice: Gulliver was kind of a jerk about it and didn't fulfill his promise. But on the other hand, blinding is a cruel and unusual punishment. You know what they say? An eye an eye makes the whole world blind. And then if you blind Gulliver, that's the end of his travels. It's mean.

Okay, as of this episode's release, it is December, Jesse Thorn. Did you know that?

Jesse Thorn: I did know that it's December.

John Hodgman: The end of the year is nigh—at least the Gregorian calendar or Justinian calendar? I don't care about it. The point is, we're excited for another Judge John Hodgman office holiday party.

Jesse Thorn: In my case, it's an illustration of a Mexican maiden calendar that I got at the restaurant down the street from me, La Abeja.

John Hodgman: You're gonna make me hungry for that food.

Jesse Thorn: I know, it's great food.
John Hodgman: (Sighs heavily.) And I'm hungry now, because I'm thinking about this holiday party! We always have some weird treats and unusual snacks that people send in. Remember that tomato soup pudding or whatever it was?

(Jesse confirms.)

Remember that orange soda and eggnog? That was suggested by Pam from Seattle. And Jesse, we had an opportunity to meet with Pam during the meet and greet after the Van Freak's Roadshow livestream. And she mentioned she has a new treat for us to try. A new beverage combo that—I don't want to reveal it now, because I want you to listen to this episode. But it's gonna blow your minds when you hear about it, everybody.

Jesse Thorn: It borders on the alarming but also on the potentially thrilling.

John Hodgman: So, what are your favorite holiday foods and drinks? What are the old family traditions that you—unfortunately—had passed down upon your taste buds by your aunts and your uncles and your grandmas and your whatever? I don't want any more of that tomato soup salad, because we've already tried it. Tell us your holiday must-haves. I don't want any more of that tomato soup salad, because we've already tried it. Tell us your holiday must-haves.

Jesse Thorn: We do indeed. No matter what your dispute is, send it to us. MaximumFun.org/jjho. I'm not opposed to you drumming up disputes for the purposes of this program. If you need to do a little drumming, yeah, be our little drummer boy! MaximumFun.org/jjho.


Jesse Thorn: (Laughs.) We'll talk to you next time on the Judge John Hodgman podcast.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Sound Effect: Cheerful ukulele chord.

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