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Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Welcome to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. I'm Bailiff Jesse Thorn. This week, "Power Off Attorney". Marti brings the case against her husband, Andrew. Andrew has created automated systems in their home, controlled by voice commands. Marti hates it. Andrew says she just needs time to get used to it. Marti just wants to live an analog lifestyle.

Who's right? Who's wrong? Only one can decide. Please rise as Judge John Hodgman enters the courtroom and presents an obscure cultural reference.

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

John Hodgman: "Hey, Pat, how about activating some kick butt video screens?"

"Sure man, how's this?"

"(Singing.) Do you want to get down? Do you want to get funky? Do you want to get down? Get on down. Slam dunk the funk. Put it up. If you got that feeling. Slam dunk the funk. Put it up. Put it up. Boom, boom, ba-doom, slam dunk the funk, put it up, swear in the litigant. Slam dunk the funk, swear 'em in, swear 'em in. Jesse!"

Jesse Thorn: Marti and Andrew, please rise and raise your right hands.

(Chairs squeak.)

Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you, God or Whatever?

(They swear.)

Do you swear to abide by Judge John Hodgman's ruling, despite the fact that he sang that song just now?

(They swear, chuckling.)

Judge Hodgman, you may proceed.

John Hodgman: Jesse Thorn, guess where Marti and Andrew are?

Jesse Thorn: I don't know. Where are they?

John Hodgman: Your favorite town in North America, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Jesse Thorn: Oh, Ann Arbor, Michigan, that's a great town. Home of the Ann Arbor District Library, the legendary venue of a show, a *Jordan, Jesse, Go!* show 12 years ago, where it had to be free, so there were a lot of drifters wandering through.

(They chuckle.)

John Hodgman: Home of the ghost of Borders Bookshop number one, where I did two book events a long time ago—before Andrew or Marti were born, apparently.

(They laugh.)

One of these days we're going to get—we've been talking about Ann Arbor a lot off camera and off mic, because one of these days we want to get there and do a live show. We're thinking about doing some live shows in Ann Arbor. But meanwhile, we have Marti and Andrew here. Marti and Andrew, 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 that I performed beautifully as I entered this courtroom? A little—I started a little lower than I meant to. But I still did a good job. Andrew, we'll start with you.

Andrew: I'm going to guess that was from the movie *Space Jam*.

John Hodgman: *Space Jam*.

Jesse Thorn: It was probably from the movie *Space Jam*.

John Hodgman: Probably from the movie *Space...* Let me get out my pencil and my piece of paper, and I'll write that down.

Jesse Thorn: I was thinking *Looney Tunes: Back in Action*, but probably *Space Jam*, now that I think of it.

John Hodgman: *Space Jam* is a *Looney Tunes* movie about space basketball.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. Well, Earth basketball, as practiced by spacemen.

John Hodgman: Right, of course. And slam dunking is a basketball move. So, maybe they slam dunked the funk. Interesting guess. Nice. I like that one. That felt like an improv guess. It's not something you came in prepared with, right, Andrew?

Andrew: Yeah, I was on the fly.

Jesse Thorn: Would you say that basketball is your favorite sport?

Andrew: I would not.

(Marti laughs.)

John Hodgman: Are you speaking to me or Andrew? Because you know it's my favorite sport.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, well, you love the way they dribble up and down the court.

John Hodgman: Marti, what's your guess?

Marti: I'm going to guess like a 1994 public service commercial about the internet.

John Hodgman: 1994 PSA, re: the internet.

Marti: They loved those funky songs, you know.

John Hodgman: They did love those funky songs, and I like these guesses. Marti and Andrew, I like these guesses a lot. You know why? First of all, they're all wrong.

(They chuckle.)

Second of all, they're in what we call a wheelhouse of the 1990s, and they represent a certain 1990s—you absolutely got correct the '90s new jack swing vibe that I was going for there. And I would say, Marti, you got a little closer with your PSA regarding the internet. Because there was a lot of preoccupation with new technology in the 1990s, which is definitely a hallmark of the piece of culture that I was referencing, but you're wrong. I was quoting and singing from a scene in the movie *Smart House*.

Marti: What?!

John Hodgman: It's a DCOM—that means a Disney Channel Original Movie—about a family of three that moves into a smart house, fully automated house—much like the one you want to live in, Andrew, with your smart bulbs. Well, this is a whole smart house that's got an AI built into it, played by Katey Sagal.

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The mom has died. That's how all good Disney movies start.

Marti: Oh, classic.

John Hodgman: Death of one or more parents. And so, the young—the boy, Ben, reprograms the AI in order to make it like a 1950s mom to replace his mom, which is a creepy thing to do. And creepy things happen, although it's more of a lighthearted romp.

Marti: It sounds like a nightmare.

John Hodgman: Well, there are nightmares. I mean, I'm going to spoil it. Katey Sagal traps them in the smart house for a little while, then they get out.

Andrew: Man, I wish I knew about this movie!

(Marti laughs.)

John Hodgman: I'm a little surprised you haven't, because according to *Entertainment Weekly*, circa 2015, it was ranked as the number one of the top 30 DCOMs, Disney Channel Original Movies.

(They chuckle.)

Jesse Thorn: In my house, we stan *Can of Worms*.

John Hodgman: Oh! People love them! And I was singing a song from a scene in which Ben and two of his friends dance along to a video screen that has been activated by Pat, the Artificial Intelligence. The only part of the movie I've seen is this scene from YouTube.

Jesse Thorn: Does Katey Sagal sing the song? She's a great singer.

John Hodgman: No, she doesn't sing the song. There's a boy band that the three young boys—they're like 12 years old or whatever—are watching sing this song. And they do a little dance to it that is hilarious and wonderful. Anyway—also, oh, this is the reason that I homed in on this one. The movie, directed by friend of the court, LeVar Burton, 1999.

(Everyone reacts with joy and surprise.)

Andrew: Now I gotta watch it!

John Hodgman: In 2019, the 20th anniversary of this famous DCOM, Burton called the film, quote, “a clear precursor to the widespread use of AI and virtual assistant technology,” end quote. And that's true, although in our homes right now—oh, that quote is from Wikipedia. Thanks, Wikipedia editor.

(They chuckle.)

And that's true, except although in our current smart home technology—Andrew, you don't have like a Dr. Octopus arm that comes out of the ceiling to electrocute and then kick out your teenage bully?

Andrew: I do not have one of those yet.

John Hodgman: That's going to come to your house soon, I think. And anyway, let's go ahead and hear this case. Who comes seeking justice in my court?

Marti: I do, your honor.

John Hodgman: And that is Marti. Marti, what is the injustice that you seek to remedy in my court? What has Andrew, your husband, done to your home?

Marti: About three months ago or so, a light bulb in our dining room fixture burnt out. And I asked Andrew if he could replace it with a bulb, thinking he would use just like a standard LED, like all the other lights. And then cut to like two or three days later, every light in our house had been switched to a smart bulb.

John Hodgman: Woah. An integrated system that you can turn on and off with a phone or with a voice command to a smart speaker or something like that.

Marti: Yeah, so we have a smart speaker. We call her Svetlana, so as not to activate her when she's listening to us. *(Laughs.)*

John Hodgman: Right. Jesse Thorn, do you have any instructions for Svetlana right now?

Jesse Thorn: Svetlana, play TinaMarie, "Square Biz".

John Hodgman: Thank you, Jesse. And thank you, Svetlana. It's hard to say, Svetlana. It's a pretty good one.

(Marti thanks him.)

Sorry to any listeners out there who might be named Svetlana, including you, AI. Don't come at me with your robotic arm.

Marti: So, yeah, we can use her to activate the lights. And then Andrew does have an app that he uses. I don't have the app on my phone as a bit of a protest of the whole thing. I've refused to get the app.

John Hodgman: Oh, okay. He's not withholding it from you?

Marti: No, no. Luckily, he's not. *(Laughs.)*

John Hodgman: He's not ordered Svetlana to hold you prisoner in the home.

Marti: No, it hasn't gone that far yet.

John Hodgman: In a *Don't Worry, Darling* type situation.

Marti: *(Laughing.)* No.

John Hodgman: Okay. Andrew, tell me about your lighting system. What inspired you to do this?

Andrew: Weeell, that's a long story, really.

John Hodgman: Is it? It sounded pretty short the way Marti was telling it.

Jesse Thorn: It all started in high school with this guy who used to take my lunch money!

(Laugh.)

John Hodgman: Someday I'll get an AI with a robotic arm to kick him out of my house!

Let me take you back. Let me take you back to the beginning, Andrew. A light bulb goes out in the light fixture above your dining room table. Is that right, Marti?

(Marti confirms.)

So, there's this light burned out in the chandelier or the lighting fixture above your dining room table. And rather than just fill the whole room with cement and walk away forever, as I would do, you decide to replace it. And what inspired you to get a smart bulb?

Andrew: Well, we do have other smart bulbs in the home.

John Hodgman: Did Marti ever know anything about them? 'Cause as far as I know, this is the first she's ever heard of it.

Andrew: She knew about them.

John Hodgman: You've been sneaking in the Smarties all this time under her nose?

Andrew: She knew about them when we got them. So, these smart bulbs we got when we first moved in.

John Hodgman: So, you didn't—

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Did you know about these smart bulbs in your kids' rooms, Marti?

Marti: I did, yeah. I just—I don't use them, honestly.

John Hodgman: You never go into their rooms?

Marti: *(Laughs.)* If I can avoid it. No, I just—I turn on the light manually, and I don't find myself like changing the function in the bedrooms like to different colored lights or to different dimness or anything like that.

John Hodgman: Is there something different about the light fixture above the dining room table? Can you not activate it manually now? You have to activate it vocally or what?

Marti: No, I can activate it manually still. The problem is that now the children—they're young kids, and so they still find it funny to like, you know, interfere and change the lights or ask her to change the light color to like poop or something little kids do like that. And it wreaks havoc on like what we're trying to do during the day, or—just it's kind of a nuisance, in general.

John Hodgman: Svetlana, change light color to poop.

(They laugh.)

What just happened in your home, presuming you're listening to this now? Explain to me what that looks like.

Marti: She'd probably say, “I can't. I don't know how to do that.” But then they would ask again and pick a real color. And then she would change to that color.

John Hodgman: So, what you're saying is the change that has brought you to this court isn't the introduction of smart bulbs but the integration of the whole house system that now can be disrupted by your three children who are all under five, if I have this information correctly.

Marti: Yes, yeah, that's correct. And they can be little, mischievous hooligans at times. So, it's that, and then it's also that there are some lights that are on like routines. And so, those ones you can screw up if you flick them on or off. That can cause problems where then you have to like reset them the next time. Or—

John Hodgman: Andrew, explain the routines for people who don't have any smart bulbs.

Andrew: Well, there are fewer routines than I would like at this early stage of development.

John Hodgman: Svetlana, order Andrew to answer the question, “What is a routine?”

Andrew: So, I have lights in the house set up to automatically turn on and off, you know, at different times of day or relative to when the sun sets. And they will go on and off or change to a dimmer setting in the evening or in things like that.

John Hodgman: Right. And so—and if you turn off the lights at the wall or something, does that interrupt the routine or does that reset something or what?

Andrew: Yeah, so that's one, I guess, key point of contention is that if the light is turned off at the wall, then it's unavailable for the system to activate the routine. So, the routine will trigger, but the light's off, and so nothing changes. Then you turn the light back on, and whatever setting was part of the routine would not be applied while it was off.

John Hodgman: And this is all controlled by like an app on your phone or something? That's where you set the routines?

Andrew: Yeah. I actually want to get away from the Svetlana speaker.

John Hodgman: You're tired of the same old routine?

(They laugh.)

Andrew: Indeed. I'm not a huge fan of the voice products that are always listening and presumably just stealing all of your utterances and making advertisements based off of them. I'd like to get away from that. That part of it is a bit dystopian, which is why I'm trying to convert the entire system to be completely within the house. It's my own server running in the house that controls all this. So, it never leaves the house. To me, that makes it much less creepy. 'Cause it's all—we have all—

John Hodgman: What happened between you and Svetlana that you're breaking up with her now and trying to rebuild a relationship with your wife?

(Marti laughs.)

Andrew: Well, it's just that dystopian aspect of the relationship. I just—it's drained me over the years.

John Hodgman: You know what's a foolproof way to de-dystopianize your home?

Andrew: Please tell me.

John Hodgman: Plain, old light switches.

Marti: That's what I'm saying.

Andrew: Well, plain light switches are all well and good. But when combined with these smart lightbulbs, they do present a problem. Yeah, which is why I would like to replace the light switches in the home with smart switches. Because then the switches can be programmed to, when you press the button to turn off the light, it doesn't cut power to the light. It only sends a command to the light to tell the light to turn off. So, then the light stays available. And it's—you know, I think it will solve all of our problems.

John Hodgman: May I quote “all of our problems”?

(They laugh.)

Andrew: Well...

John Hodgman: All of these problems were introduced by the, quote/unquote, “solution” of the smart bulbs to begin with. So, let's go back. Why did you want smart bulbs, to start?

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Andrew: So, I think the color changing aspect of the lights can be fun for the kids. Now, I do agree with maybe cutting off their voice access of the lights to limit that potential annoyance, but having the lights change color, you know, have a party mode that you can turn on—I mean, it could function as a little reward for the kids.

(Marti laughs.)

They do something good. Hey! Party mode!

John Hodgman: They do something good—*(chuckling)* hey, kids, you know what? If you're really good today, Svetlana will induce a seizure in you by flashing lights in your eyes.

Jesse Thorn: When you say cutting off their voice access, is that like declawing a cat?

(They laugh.)

Andrew: No, no nothing so grim.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

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John Hodgman: Is it fair to say that you put in the smart bulbs because it seemed like a cool idea?

(Andrew confirms.)

That's why I put in smart bulbs into my home. And I should recuse myself, because the person I share my life with—who's a whole human being in her own right and happens to be married to me—also can't stand them. And sort of neither can I. *(Chuckles.)* But they are cool. I mean, I don't know if people understand how cool they promise to be.

Jesse Thorn: Andrew, what do they do?

Andrew: They provide illumination to the home?

Jesse Thorn: Okay, so I know what light bulbs do! I don't have gas lamps in my home! Andrew, they provide light. They change colors?

John Hodgman: Yeah, tell us about the features that you think are so cool.

Andrew: Well, yeah. I mean, they are normal, dimmable bulbs. And they also have a wide range of colors that they can display. So.

Jesse Thorn: Why do you want that?

Andrew: Well, as the judge has said, they're cool. I think the kids like them. I think there's some utility that we can have the lights change color or change brightness based on the time of day when it's getting ready for the bedtime routine. You know, we could activate a bedtime routine when it's time for bed. You know, the lights in the playroom go off. You know, the lights in the bathroom come on. I've got a color changing bathroom light routine that's two minutes long to let them know how long to brush their teeth, so they can keep brushing till the lights go back to normal sort of thing. So, I think there's some utility with having the lights do stuff automatically at certain times.

John Hodgman: Marti, tell me about the day you found out you had to start talking to your lights. Did Andrew inform you of this? What was it like?

Marti: He did tell me. When I saw that the light bulb was replaced, he did tell me that he went ahead and replaced all of the light bulbs in the house with smart lights.

John Hodgman: And how long ago was it that the smart bulbs were installed in the whole home?

Marti: Like, three months ago or so.

John Hodgman: Okay, Marti. And how has the adjustment been?

Marti: Pretty awful, I would say. For me.

John Hodgman: You sent in some evidence—a photo and a video of what it's like in your home now. I'm looking at Exhibit A. Speaking of colors, this is the light above the stove. I didn't even know that they made like appliance-size lights to fit in the ventilator above the stove, but there they are. This photo is obviously available on our show page at MaximumFun.org and our Instagram account, [@JudgeJohnHodgman](https://www.instagram.com/JudgeJohnHodgman). Marti, how would you describe the lights above your stove?

Marti: Like creepy, horror-movie red.

John Hodgman: Yeah, yeah. This is the stove of Satan. Why is it this color red?

Marti: Well, this is a manufactured photo. I did do this just to show that our stove lights can do this.

John Hodgman: (*Teasing.*) This is AI?!

Marti: (*Laughs.*) No, I put Svetlana up to this. I made her change them to this color.

Jesse Thorn: For the reference.

Marti: For the reference. To show—A) that they make stove lights that you can do this with, which is just baffling to me. And to prove the point like why do you need that over your stove? Like, I don't wanna look—

John Hodgman: So, this is not the way the stove looks all the time.

Marti: No, no. This is like you tell her to do this, and then she can change it. But...

John Hodgman: Jesse Thorn, let's shred this piece of evidence.

Jesse Thorn: So shredded.

(*Paper shredder sound.*)

Andrew: Well, I have set the stove lightbulbs to colors in the past, to be fair.

John Hodgman: What colors? What colors are you cooking to?

Andrew: Probably a red color like this is what I would have—

John Hodgman: Why?!

(*Marti laughs.*)

Okay, unshred it, Jesse! Unshred it! Is it in the shredder yet?

Jesse Thorn: I took it out of the shredder, John.

John Hodgman: Phew. Andrew, you mentioned that you also put the smart lights into the bathroom to help your kids time their toothbrushing.

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Which is an ingenious idea that you obviously retconned in order to come up with a reason for doing this. We have a video of a bathroom, not sure if this is the bathroom in question. Is that right, Marti?

Marti: Yeah, that's the bathroom. That's our like main bath.

John Hodgman: The main bathroom. And if people want to watch this video, they may. But if you suffer from seizure disorder or otherwise are sensitive to flashing light, maybe not. Maybe you should not watch it. Because what am I going to see here when I press play, Marti?

Marti: It's like a discotheque rave party bathroom happening.

John Hodgman: Jesse, can you see this?

Jesse Thorn: So, what I'm seeing here is just a normal, all-American, contemporary bathroom setup. It's got track lighting on the ceiling. It looks like there are five track lighting fixtures, and there may be wall sconces somewhere that I'm not seeing as well.

John Hodgman: There are always sconces. Alright, I'm gonna press play. Three, two—and again, flashing light warning. Three, two, one.

Jesse Thorn: Buh! (*Startles into a laugh.*) Woah! Hah! What's—what was that?!

John Hodgman: Was that a lighting cue to teach your children like when the light is on, brush up. When the light is off, brush down.

Marti: No, this is actually another one of the downsides of these lights. So, that's not his toothbrushing routine. This was a child had flicked the lights on and off too many times too quickly, and when you do that, it like freaks out the lights.

Andrew: It resets them.

John Hodgman: It angered Svetlana.

Marti: Yeah. And it causes them to strobe like you're in some sort of rave nightmare.

Jesse Thorn: And they were strobing in opposition to what looked like some kind of nightlight on the wall. So, it wasn't just that they were turning on and off in quick succession. It was alternating with this weird other color light and creating kind of like a nuclear strike in the bunker feeling.

(*They laugh.*)

John Hodgman: Yeah. Andrew, would you agree that that's not optimal performance when it comes to your smart lights?

Andrew: Yeah. Well, that is definitely not optimal. But see, this is—I think that video is actually strong evidence in my favor.

John Hodgman: I love it. Here, tell me all about it.

Andrew: Well, you see, Marti thinks—she lists this as an example of that I've gone too far. But it's clearly showing that I haven't gone too far enough. Because if I replaced the light switch—

Jesse Thorn: (*Laughing.*) I haven't gone too far enough, he says! That's my new personal mantra!

John Hodgman: Alright, I'll allow it. Go on.

Andrew: So, if I replaced the switch, the light switch, in the bathroom with a smart switch, well that solves that problem.

John Hodgman: How.

Andrew: That problem would no longer occur, because when they flick the switch, it would just be telling the lights to turn on and off really quickly without cutting power. So, it never activates the reset routine, which causes the horrible, apocalyptic light show.

John Hodgman: So, the new smart switch, first of all, won't break the routine.

(Andrew confirms.)

And are you able to install this new smart switch, or would you have to have some other smart person come in and do it?

Andrew: I could do it

John Hodgman: Marti, has he done electrical work around the house?

Marti: No. No. I'm a little hesitant. Like, Andrew is very methodical. He'll do a lot of research. I think he maybe could do it. I'm not crazy about the idea of him shutting power off to our house and messing with our light switches, but I think that he's capable of doing it.

Jesse Thorn: Judge Hodgman, if I learned anything as an apprentice stage electrician at the Herbst Theatre in San Francisco, it's that when it comes to electricity, you can do whatever you want as long as someone is standing next to you with a broom handle to hit you if you start getting electrocuted.

(They laugh.)

John Hodgman: Andrew, do you have broom handles in your house, or have you replaced them all with smart brooms?

(They laugh.)

And you said that you could command the lights to turn on via the switch, but you want to de-network your home. So, would you still be able to do voice commands even if you were—I don't understand how you would get that effect.

Andrew: So, I'm using a system called a home assistant. Which is a server you build yourself, and it's running in your house. That system, they added in, you know, voice technology into that system. So, you can actually—you can speak to that system directly and have it control your stuff. So, that's—ideally, that's what I would like to do.

John Hodgman: What do you envision for the home? What's the end goal of your smart home?

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Are there other systems you want to put in place?

Andrew: There are other systems that can augment the lighting and other things, but you know, there are presence sensors that you can install that, you know, can detect like how many people are in a room and where they are in the room. And so, you can build—

Jesse Thorn: How many of them are school bullies?

Andrew: Exactly. Exactly. So, you can make very customized routines based on—you know, based on presence within the home.

John Hodgman: Oh, so this is not just about you surveilling your family. It's about like when someone walks into the room, the hell light goes on over the stove or whatever.

(Andrew confirms.)

Got it. Uh-huh. But you're not messing around. You're not messing around with like surveillance of the front door, front door cameras, the thermostats that come on and off.

Jesse Thorn: Music systems.

John Hodgman: Music systems, entertainment. How much Smartie-pants do you want to put into this home?

Andrew: Yeah. You know, I don't have like a five-year plan for the smart home and what I envisage.

John Hodgman: At least not one you're willing to reveal to me. Marti, what is his grand design?

Marti: He does want cameras outside the house on the property. This is something he's mentioned many times. And I don't know if they would be integrated into like the smart technology in any way.

John Hodgman: If you were to guess, based on your knowledge of your husband and the time that I've spent with him just today and what he's said, do you think he'd want to integrate the cameras into a central system or no?

Marti: Yeah, probably.

John Hodgman: Yeah, probably.

Jesse Thorn: Marti, is any of the stuff that's in the house right now fun or useful to you?

Marti: Yeah, I think that there's a couple of cases where these bulbs are fine, like in lamps. I don't mind them in like some of our lamps that we have. I think it's just the fact that it's like every overhead light that we have in the house—it's too much. Like, I'm not opposed to just dialing it back a little.

John Hodgman: And I would—Andrew, if you don't mind—argue on your behalf for a moment to say that overhead lights are probably the place where you want smart lights the most. Because they are the least easy to replace, and they are the ones that convey the basic mood of the room. And you would want some, you know, some control over them. As much control as you can possibly get, as opposed to accent lighting. I'm just saying, Marti.

Marti: I disagree.

John Hodgman: Fair enough. You're still human for now.

(They laugh.)

Marti: And also, I'm more of like a lamp person anyways. Like, turn off the overhead light and get mood lighting from your lamps. And I'm like a nightlight person. I have the nightlight in the bathroom that you saw flickering that like comes on when it's dark so the kids can see when they go in there. You know, like it's quaint.

John Hodgman: Is that a smart—oh, it's a nightlight. So, it's—I understand what's happening now. So, the nightlight was alternating with the lights, because when it turns dark in there, the nightlight comes on.

(Marti confirms.)

I just had a little—to me it just seemed like a sad little story of the nightlight that's trying to keep up with the older brothers.

Marti: No, that's much sweeter. But no. (*Laughs.*)

John Hodgman: So, how far—like, how smart are you willing to make the lights then? Where would you like to set the line?

Marti: I guess maybe 50% of the lights in the house, like mostly lamps and maybe a couple of rooms where it makes sense to have overhead lighting set up that way. But I think that all the lights is too far, and I do think that even though Andrew would like to go even further with the switches, I'm kind of like opposed to that for other reasons too, not just because I don't really want him—

John Hodgman: Why? Because it sounds like those switches would obviate the problem that you're having. Then you'd just be able to turn them on and off just the way you do now.

Marti: So, I have two kind of points of opposition. One is that I'm not like crazy about Andrew doing electrical work with no experience. It does scare me a little bit. Like, there have been projects that he's done on like our plumbing as an amateur plumber, where he's had to call me and be like, “Okay, like don't come home yet, because the water is still shut off. Like, don't come back. Like, I'm still trying to figure this out.” And I just don't want that happening with the electrical systems in our house.

And then also, he's got kind of like a backlog of other projects that I think should take priority over something like this. Because this seems very like it's not necessary. This is like a luxury project where it doesn't need to be done right now really at all.

John Hodgman: Understood. Andrew, it says in my brief here that you describe yourself, I believe, as a quote, “tinkerer”, unquote.

[00:30:00]

Andrew: That sounds accurate.

John Hodgman: And I received some photos—Marti, I believe you sent these in as well—of what are termed as unfinished projects. What can you tell me about these photos? There's one—there's a big bucket with a red pipe emptying out into it.

Marti: Yeah, so this was from I think that exact plumbing project that Andrew had to like keep me out of the house for when it didn't get resolved immediately. And it's still not been attached to anything. So, when you run our washing machine upstairs, (*chuckling*) this pipe will just randomly like spit out some water into the bucket.

John Hodgman: What were you trying to fix plumbing wise, Andrew?

Andrew: Well, the washer and dryer were in the basement. But because we're on a well, you have to pump the water out, you know, up and out of the house. So, we wanted to move the washer and dryer up into our garage. And so, this plumbing that you're seeing in the picture is the redirecting of the water supply from where the washer and dryer were up to the garage where they now sit.

John Hodgman: How long has this red pipe been staring forlornly into this bucket?

Marti: A year. Almost a year now, yeah.

Andrew: I guess it could be almost a year.

(They laugh.)

John Hodgman: Marti, are there any other projects that Andrew has started and not completed that you'd like me to know about?

Marti: Yeah we have a pole barn on our property that has been in a state of like—

John Hodgman: You have low ceilings, you have a well, you have a pole barn.

(They laugh.)

You never use the hot water. I thought you lived in Ann Arbor. The Paris of Michigan. Now it's like you live on *Little House in the Prairieland*.

Jesse Thorn: What's a pole barn? How many poles do you have?!

Marti: It takes a lot of poles to build one.

Jesse Thorn: Oh! They're made of poles! *(Chuckles.)* Okay.

Marti: Yeah. It's like one of those galvanized steel metal framed barns, you know?

Jesse Thorn: I thought it was like a horse barn. You know, that's where a horse lives. Got it. Okay.

John Hodgman: It's just where you store the may poles over the winter.

Jesse Thorn: *(Laughing.)* Or something, yeah!

Marti: It's been pretty like utterly trashed, and one of the projects was to clean it up. And that still hasn't been done, and so it's kind of snowballed from there. Because now we can't use that space to do like woodworking for other projects, so he also has been building another bee

box for his bees. And that has to be in the garage, because we have no room in the barn to do it.

(Andrew chuckles.)

So, now the garage has been like overtaken with this unfinished building of frames and bee boxes.

Jesse Thorn: When you say that it's been moved to the garage, you mean an unfinished bee box, not an in-operation bee box.

(Marti confirms, laughing.)

The whole bee box situation hasn't been moved to the garage.

Marti: Right, we're not keeping bees in the garage. We're just—he's building the hive, currently, in the garage now.

John Hodgman: Wow, that's worse than a bee box in a pole barn!

(They laugh.)

That's a very famous Michigan saying in a very accurate Michigan accent. You keep any other animals on your property there north of Ann Arbor? I know you don't live in actual Ann Arbor; you live north of there in an unnamed town. Sure.

Marti: Right. The sticks, yeah. We do. We have eight chickens.

John Hodgman: Excuse me. Poles.

Jesse Thorn: *(Laughing.)* I was about to say the same thing!

Marti: We have eight chickens, eight hens. And we have one duck currently, and then two dogs. Well, our duck—do you want to know her name?

John Hodgman: Yes, please. Duck name.

Marti: Flipper. Her name is Flipper.

Jesse Thorn: Great name.

Marti: Yeah, she's got like a wing that sticks out. Her wings like didn't form properly, so she—

John Hodgman: Uuuuh, I did not see any of this in the evidence! I admire your restraint, Michigan. You have a literal lame duck named Flipper. You didn't send me a photo.

Marti: *(Laughs.)* I didn't know she was pertinent to the case, to be honest. I can send you one after the fact.

John Hodgman: That's never stopped any of our other litigants!

Andrew, when you think about your fully automated lighting system—not only automated, but insulated from corporate scrutiny. When you have your dream system in place, all of your sensors, all of your lights, all of your routines, all of your smart switches in place. And then you've, of course, used whatever technology you're going to use to cut off the world from your homestead. How does it make you feel?

Andrew: Feels like a little piece of heaven.

John Hodgman: Do you think that that would be enough for you? Or are you going to keep going in some way?

Andrew: I think you always have to keep going, just to have something to do. You know? There's always innovations and new things that you just want to tinker with for fun.

John Hodgman: Mm, mm, mm. Marti, do you have any hobbies?

[00:35:00]

Marti: I do. Yeah. They're a little more analog than Andrew's.

John Hodgman: What are they?

Marti: I like to crochet. And sew.

John Hodgman: *(In a hurried rush.)* Alright. I think I've heard everything I need to in order to make my decision.

(Marti laughs.)

So, your hobby is collecting little pieces of string and leaving them around?

Marti: Yeah. I'm like a cat.

John Hodgman: Mm-hm. Crochet is a wonderful hobby.

Marti: I like to do yoga. I do like to play video games. Andrew and I, that is one of the things that we like—that's the one more technology-driven thing I will do.

John Hodgman: Crochet is a little puzzle, the same way Andrew is treating your home as a little puzzle to tinker with and work on and solve and improve and get better. Right?

Marti: Yeah, but I guess my crocheting doesn't like interfere with Andrew's whole life in the house. *(Laughs.)*

John Hodgman: Is that true? Because I live with someone who does what I call string work.

(They laugh.)

And may I remind you, madam, that there are little pieces of string all around my house.

Marti: I keep them contained. *(Laughs.)* I think I'm pretty tidy. I'm a pretty tidy crocheter. I don't think I've intruded on the rest of the house too much with my projects.

John Hodgman: Do you agree, Andrew? Yes or no?

Andrew: Well, I would mostly agree so far, but I do see a potential dark future where the sun has been blotted out by various string goods.

(Marti giggles.)

John Hodgman: Yeah. Then you'll be crying for that smart light to come on when the sun is blotted out.

Andrew: It is definitely a possibility.

Jesse Thorn: I do get the impression from the outside that one of the challenges of being a crocheter is finding new people to impose your crochets upon.

Marti: That's very true, yeah. Right now, I'm forcing it on the children, mostly. *(Laughs.)*

Jesse Thorn: Like, pretty quick everybody you know has one of those hats, and you don't need a bunch of them.

(Marti agrees.)

Marti, do you like changing the colors of the lights? Do you enjoy the atmospheric possibilities?

Marti: I think I do it very infrequently. So, I'm not a huge fan or utilizer of that function really, no.

John Hodgman: Do you think that your kids enjoy the color changes in the routines? Does it make toothbrushing more fun for them?

Marti: Yeah. I mean, I take a different approach to toothbrushing. I do like a timer on my phone for two minutes, and we do like a race like a toothbrush race. So, I don't think they're like necessary to making, you know, mundane activities fun. But the kids do like having different color options sometimes. So, like I said, I'm not opposed to keeping a few of them in the house for that purpose. But—

John Hodgman: How do you think your kids will feel when they can no longer ask for Svetlana to turn the light into poop?

Marti: (*Laughs.*) I think that they'll be very briefly devastated, and then they'll move on to asking her to do something else, like playing a song from *Moana* or something. And they'll be over it.

John Hodgman: I don't want to put you on the spot, Andrew, but how much of did all those bulbs cost?

Andrew: Anywhere from, you know, three to six hundred dollars, probably.

John Hodgman: Marti, now that you know the rough estimate of how much these smart bulbs have cost so far, is that out of your means, would you say?

Marti: No, I don't think it's out of our means.

John Hodgman: And Andrew, if I were to rule in your favor and allow you to continue going forward, completion of the project, how much more do you expect you'll have to spend?

Andrew: I won't have to spend—there's no more expenses to make for phase one, which is just lighting and routines and automations around lighting. Now, if you want to talk about, you know, having surveillance cameras and bringing that in, that really is sort of a separate—that's an entirely separate conversation to have.

John Hodgman: Yeah, but what about the smart light switches? That would have to be tech you would have to buy.

Andrew: (*Sheepishly.*) Well, I have already purchased some light switches.

John Hodgman: So, you have a lot of the equipment already. The sunk cost is already part of your fallacy.

(*Marti laughs.*)

Andrew: Well, I will admit to the court that I am still within the return window, I believe, for most or not all of those switches.

John Hodgman: That's very brave of you to admit.

Jesse Thorn: Marti, is the amount of time and money that Andrew is spending on this appropriate for a hobby?

Marti: That's a good question. I mean, if Andrew is using mostly his personal money, that's what that money is there for. But the time thing, that's a little trickier. Because it is very engrossing for him.

[00:40:00]

And it is going to require many phases of tinkering around the house. And I feel like that might be like a bit of a reach for like an individual hobby, like especially when we have all these other things kind of like going on. It feels a bit macro for a hobby. *(Chuckles.)*

John Hodgman: Marti, you mentioned that there is a pile of smart switches and presence sensors already in your home.

(She confirms.)

How do you feel about the presence sensors? How does that make you feel?

Marti: It like really creeps me out. And I know Andrew was saying it's going to be like a closed system. So, I know I'm not being like surveilled by the state or anything, but I find it very like clinical and almost like—like, I don't want to feel like I'm in a department store where like you walk into a room and it senses that you're there and like lights turn on and off, you know? It's—I don't know.

John Hodgman: And you're going to get the new Svetlana to go, *(with a canned affectation)* “Hello, Marti. Welcome to the open space—the open concept dining kitchen Area. Shall I turn on the inferno oven light?”

(They laugh.)

But these are not cameras, to be clear, Andrew. These are motion sensors—or these are—I should say presence sensors, right? Because you said they can count the number of people in the room and who they are and so forth, right?

Andrew: Yeah. So, unfortunately, currently I'm just slumming it with the motion sensors. But there are presence sensors that are much more advanced.

John Hodgman: So, Marti, if I were to rule in your favor, you want me to order Andrew to pause on all new smart tech installation and cut back the smart bulbs by 30%?

Marti: Yeah, yeah. That's fair. That's probably what I'm looking at. Yeah.

John Hodgman: Are there particular bulbs you have in mind that you would like to de-smartify?

Marti: I would want our main fixtures, I think. I know there's some opposition about the fixtures, but I would want the main fixtures to go back to being regular, dumb bulbs. And then like other—

John Hodgman: You're talking about overhead room lighting, in particular?

Marti: Overhead room lighting and then like the stove lights I feel like can just—they should go back to just normal lights also. But lamps—we have like a few lamps, and I would say like in the bedrooms, maybe it's fine also. But our main living area, I would like to go back for overhead lighting to be traditional LED bulbs.

Jesse Thorn: Andrew, if you changed the light switches, would the overhead light fixtures then function the way that Marti would like them to?

Andrew: I believe they would.

John Hodgman: And if I were to rule in your favor, Andrew how would you have me rule?

Andrew: Well, I guess I would just have you rule that, at whatever pace is reasonable given all the other responsibilities, that I can continue to update the house. I would rule that you have Marti install the app on her phone, so that she can get more use out of it and get more used to operating the lights that way as an option.

John Hodgman: Marti, when Andrew is not preoccupied with the lighting situation in your home, is he a full participant, parent, and partner?

Marti: Yeah! Yeah, Andrew's a great dad. And he's a pretty good partner.

(They laugh.)

Andrew: Fair enough. I'll take great dad, pretty good partner. That was good for me.

John Hodgman: Okay, I think I've heard everything I need to in order to make my decision. I am going to go have my presence sensed in my chambers, and I'll be back in a moment with my decision.

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

Jesse Thorn: Please rise as Judge John Hodgman exits the courtroom. Marti, how are you feeling about your chances?

Marti: You know, I'm not a naturally confident person, so I'm a little nervous. I feel like things might not go my way here.

John Hodgman: Andrew, how are you feeling?

Andrew: Well, I don't feel like husbands defending crazy modifications to their homes against their wives typically goes in the direction of the husband. And fair enough. I mean, we come up with a lot of stupid ideas, but I think this one could be a winner. So.

Jesse Thorn: You think this is the one?

(They laugh.)

Andrew: I think this might be the one.

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

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Judge Hodgman, we are mere days away from our monster show in San Francisco at SF Sketchfest.

John Hodgman: Days away! Low ticket alert! We are going to have such a great time at the Palace of Fine Arts and its wonderful lagoon.

[00:45:00]

Dispensing justice at my home away from home and Jesse's own home, San Francisco and the San Francisco Sketch Fest. What a delight it's going to be. And it would be so much better if you were there. If you don't already have your tickets, please go to bit.ly/JJHOSF24, all capital letters. The numbers are just numbers. Or just, you know, SFSketchfest.com, and find us on the schedule.

Jesse Thorn: John, this is going to be an auspicious occasion. My mom's going to be there. Yeah, that's right, Judy. My bookkeeper, Amity's, going to be there. Yeah, that's right. Amity's going to be there.

John Hodgman: I haven't met Amity yet. I can't wait to meet Amity.

Jesse Thorn: Will my childhood best friend, Jody, be there? I don't know! I'm about to text him and see if he wants to come. This is going to be big stuff.

John Hodgman: Big stuff happening at the Palace of Fine Arts in San Francisco. It's happening later this month at 4PM. Want to find out what day? Go to SFSketchfest.com. Or go directly to bit.ly/JJHOSF24 for direct tickets right now.

Jesse Thorn: Saturday afternoon the 27th at 4PM. Go to SFSketchfest.com.

John Hodgman: Oh, you just totally—you just gave away the day! I was maintaining mystery!

Jesse Thorn: I'm trying—no, we're trying to sell tickets. SFSketchfest.com. Tell a friend. If you don't live in the Bay Area, tell a friend who does, because they're gonna have a great time. Our show is not a web of impenetrable references and in-jokes. It is a live comedy show that anyone can enjoy. So, go to SFSketchfest.com or send your friends, and we'll see you Saturday the 27th at 4PM in San Francisco.

John Hodgman: And at 4PM, you might as well bring along your precocious tween.

Jesse Thorn: And hey, John, I mentioned that my mom's gonna be there. I mentioned that my bookkeeper's gonna be there. So are two of our favorite friends of all time, Rob Baedeker and James Reichmuth from *Kasper Hauser*.

John Hodgman: Oh, I can't wait!

Jesse Thorn: They have a wonderful dispute between the two of them. These old friends of—I guess they've probably been friends 25 years.

John Hodgman: Two of the funniest humans on Earth, the *Kasper Hauser* comedy podcast on Maximum Fun, still one of my very favorite things.

Jesse Thorn: Two of the funniest, most brilliant, delightful, decent guys that there are. So, SFSketchfest.com. We'll see you there. Let's get back to the case.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

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.)

John Hodgman: So, I should recuse myself, because I live in a half smart-lit home. I like these lights. I like these lights! Someone I know, a dear friend, has smart-lit their home. And he can say to his Svetlana, when he wants to set a mood to watch a movie, say, “Svetlana, I want to watch a movie,” or whatever. And then everything, phewww, changes. I think that's gorgeous. Sometimes he says—I don't remember the exact phrase, but it's like, “Go below the sea.” Everything turns into deep blue.

(They chuckle.)

And I'm a dumb guy! And I'm like that's great! So, he sent me some smart light bulbs as a gift, and I put them in. And then I got more of them, because once you get a few of them and you get them on a routine, it seems really fun. And it also fulfills one of my great life's ambitions, which is to stop reaching under lampshades to turn on lights. I hate it. It often

invents bending over at the waist, which I also hate. Just reaching around up there. And I also hate changing hanging light fixtures, because it involves like getting up on top of something and—you know, and unscrew the light fixture, and then a bunch of dead bugs fall out. And these LED lights—they last a long, long, long time.

But the downside I have to say is that it is connected to a computer. And the bugs in the computer are worse than the bugs in the lampshade. Because all of a sudden your beautiful routine doesn't work, or one of them does blow out and you don't get around to redoing it, or someone comes along and presses a switch, and it takes it off the routine. And then your spouse—who is a whole human being in her own right—is like, “I'm just trying to beg my light to turn on. Why won't it turn on?” But when you live in a house where the router for the smart lights alone is hidden in your son's closet, so you can't access it when he's home and sleeping. And then it gets reset, and all of a sudden things aren't working. And then it's hard to figure out how to fix the problem and reset all of the routines. And then you're watching television, and at 10 PM all the lights go off because you forgot that you have this routine. It just feels like you're living in a haunted house with a hell light above the stove. My experience.

But Andrew, I'm with you. I love the idea. But I'm here to tell you, I've been wrestling with these for a long time, and I don't think—I don't know that it ever gets better.

[00:50:00]

But on the other hand, Andrew, these lights—I thought these were a solution to something. They're not. But for Andrew, Marti, they're a hobby. And you know what a hobby is. You crochet. It's something that you can lose yourself in for a little while. And insofar as Andrew is fulfilling his responsibilities as a dad and partially fulfilling his responsibilities as a partner to you at least, and he is not running you into ruin with his hobby, then I think in general I want to protect it. But Andrew, there's a problem here. You're not just doing a jigsaw puzzle. You've been treating your whole home like a jigsaw puzzle. And the home is not your private puzzle box to solve so the Cenobites will finally come and take you away to a world of pain.

(Marti laughs.)

You share this puzzle box with your wife, Marti. You share this space, and it affects her life, obviously, in ways that are frustrating to her—as you have heard—and your shared time. Like, even though I do believe that you're a good dad to your children, and I think you're also probably a good dog dad and a good lame duck dad and probably a good partner to boot. You know, changing light bulbs is one thing. But changing light fixtures and light switches and turning off power to the house, et cetera, et cetera—that absorbs a lot more time than simply sitting down and crocheting, where Marti can probably have a conversation with you. You know what I mean?

On top of all of this, you have these kids, which are worse than the dead bugs in the lampshade or the bugs in the computer when it comes for automating your home. Because those kids have figured out that they can turn their bathroom into a disco if they flip that switch on and off. They're the gremlins in the system who are going to mess up your system first, before anything else does.

Jesse Thorn: And it's *Gremlins 2*!

John Hodgman: The best of the gremlins. So, here's what I'm going to say. Here's how you're going to troubleshoot these use cases. First of all, you have to finish your other projects. You've got to reroute that hot water line. You've got to get everything in shape so that you can move forward clean on this new project or the completion of this ongoing project, I should say. So, we're going to pause on this until those things are done. Two, you are going to re-envision—you say you don't have a five year plan, but you do have a phase one, and then you have phases down the line. You have to re-envision this as a project that is finite. Not a project that is going to be ongoing. The project ends when all of the stuff you have already purchased has been installed. The analog switches, because I do think that they promise potentially to solve the problem that Marti has with the whole system.

And I guess you have some motion sensors. I don't know. That's at Marti's discretion. I can sense one thing for sure: presence sensors are not part of your future. She's expressed—your partner has expressed an anti-desire for that. And I think motion sensors—if they're within the return window, I think you need to return those motion sensors. But because the light switches themselves, the smart switches, promise potentially to solve Marti's issues, I'm going to allow them to be installed. But notice I said I'm going to allow them to be installed. I did not say you can install them, because you can't. I'm sorry. You did something wrong, which was to spend joint money on a personal hobby without checking with your partner first. And even though I am allowing the project, narrowly defined, to go forward so that you can at least complete the cycle and not wander through a haunted house of what might have been—as I do every day—you still have to pay some damages for that marital felony. And the damages are, first of all, you're not allowed to kill yourself by doing amateur electrical work.

(Marti laughs.)

I don't care how many videos. And this is not just a concern for your safety. And it's not me saying it can't be done, because people can do this amateur electrical work. But because it's complicated enough that I'm afraid it's going to slow down the project to a stop, given the time management issues that we've already seen in the pole barn. So, in order to bring this forward to a conclusion, so that you can actually give Marti a chance to see the project in completion and maybe possibly win her over to the new way, I'm ordering you to contact a professional electrician.

[00:55:00]

And pay that person to install those switches all in one day, so that it's over with. And the money for the electrician, it's coming out of your fun money. That's the damages. To sum up: pending Marti's decision, returning the motion sensors. The current smart bulbs stay. The smart switches are moved in, in order to prevent your kids from triggering light shows and otherwise make this house seem dumb when it's secretly smart and ideally give you the sense of completion that the project is done and that your hobby has been honored. And then the two of you can move forward and make considered decisions about which new improvements you want in your life. This is the sound of a gavel.

Sound Effect: The theme song from the original commercial for the Clapper light switch.

Clap on, clap off

(Clap, clap)

The Clapper

John Hodgman: Judge John Hodgman rules. That is all.

Jesse Thorn: Please rise as Judge John Hodgman exits the courtroom. Andrew, how do you feel?

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

Andrew: Well, I guess I feel pretty good about it. It seems fair. And I look forward to winning Marti over.

(Marti laughs.)

Jesse Thorn: Marti, how are you feeling?

Marti: Andrew is pretty good at winning me over, usually. I'm feeling okay, honestly. I'm really relieved that a professional will do this, and it'll be done and over within a day, and hopefully I adapt quickly. But it was a wise and fair ruling, I think.

Jesse Thorn: Did either of you have any concerns, with this developing interest in light shows, that your children might grow up to like jam bands?

Marti: *(Laughs.)* They would take after their mother, I guess, if they did.

Andrew: I am very concerned.

Jesse Thorn: Well, I wish you the best of luck in that and all your endeavors. Thanks for joining us on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

(They thank him.)

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Another *Judge John Hodgman* case is in the books. We'll have Swift Justice in just a second. First, thanks to Redditor MKBecker for naming this week's episode "Power Off Attorney". You can join the conversation about this episode at [MaximumFun.Reddit.com](https://www.reddit.com/r/MaximumFun). We also ask for your puns there. Always fun to see the puns. Although I have to say, Judge Hodgman, this week, I'm a little disappointed with MKBecker.

John Hodgman: Didn't come through?

Jesse Thorn: It could at least be—at least it could be like MKBecker420 or something like that.

John Hodgman: Oh, it's a little too normal.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. Evidence and photos from the show are on our website at MaximumFun.org and our Instagram account at [Instagram.com/judgejohnhodgman](https://www.instagram.com/judgejohnhodgman). Follow us, like those posts and save them for later, share them to your stories. We're really grateful for all your help with that. And if you're listening to us on Apple Podcasts, give us a rating and review there. It really does make a big difference. We're always really grateful for those ratings and reviews. *Judge John Hodgman*, created by Jesse Thorn and John Hodgman. This episode, engineered by Eric Wojahn at Solid Sound in Ann Arbor, Michigan. A.J. McKeon is our editor. Marie Bardi-Salinas runs our social media. Our producer is Jennifer Marmor.

Now, Swift Justice, where we answer your small disputes with quick judgment. Redditor KGreen100—see, that's better. I like that one better.

(John agrees.)

I mean, KGreen69 would be—but it's fine.

John Hodgman: No, it's fine. Yeah, 69420FlipperTheDuck.

Jesse Thorn: It says on the Maximum Fun subreddit, “I want to get rid of our wooden spoons. They're worthless, as they're too shallow to scoop anything with any efficiency. My significant other insists they're essential kitchen tools. Help!”

John Hodgman: Ooh, okay, you can't get rid of—wooden spoons are not scoopers, right?

Jesse Thorn: They're not for scooping.

John Hodgman: They're not for scoop—I mean, I have a pretty good scooping wooden spoon.

Jesse Thorn: They exist!

John Hodgman: They exist, but probably what you got are good wooden spoons, which are great for stirring and great for tasting.

(Jesse agrees with a “bingo”).

Because the wooden spoons don't get hot. And then you can taste whatever you're stirring without burning your lips on the spoon. And then you gotta wash the spoon, because you can't put it back in there after you've tasted it, obviously. But that's what they're for. And

they're beautiful, and they're works of art. The only reason that I would find in Redditor KGreen100's favor is if the significant other has 200 wooden spoons. That would be a problem. But otherwise, they're an essential kitchen tool, correct, Jesse?

Jesse Thorn: The shallowness of the bowl is why the liquid cools fast enough that you can then taste it. If it had a deep bowl, even with the wood not getting hot, that depth would prevent it from cooling when you give a little blow on top of it—(*blows*)—and then you—(*slurps*).

John Hodgman: Yeah, exactly.

Jesse Thorn: Sorry to those with misophonia.

John Hodgman: Yeah, I was gonna say.

[01:00:00]

And thank you for slurping on mic, absolutely. Yep. And, and you know what? I hope KGreen100 is a misophoniac, 'cause that's punishment for you for even bringing this up. (*Slurps several more times.*) Slurp, slurp,

Jesse Thorn: (*Laughs.*) And John, I have enamel dishes where you can't use a metal spoon, because they'll scratch the enamel!

John Hodgman: Absolutely. Or what if you have nonstick? You can't use a metal spoon in nonstick to stir something up.

Jesse Thorn: You want one of those flat, wooden paddle things if you're trying to scrape fond. I'm looking at Jennifer, because she knows what I'm talking about.

John Hodgman: Yeah. She's a fond scraper. I'm very fond of her fond scraping. Hey, as this episode—speaking of fondness, as this episode comes out, it's almost the end of January. Which means CVS is trying to tell you it's Valentine's Day tomorrow! Of course, I want to hear any cases about Valentine's Day gone wrong. Obviously, that would be a great, great subject for a whole docket.

Jesse Thorn: My Valentine is Dwayne Reed.

John Hodgman: Oh, yeah, exactly. What about the other Hallmark holidays? Did your clueless boss demand a gift from the office for boss's day? Are you a mother who just wants to spend your mother's day alone? Are you trying to make October's sweetest day happen? I've never even heard of that one. I don't want to make it happen, but I guess it's probably gonna. Sweetest day. If so, you may actually be—you know, sweetest day should happen in early November, so you can get rid of all that Halloween candy they made you buy in August or whatever.

Jesse Thorn: I'd go to Swedish day, if it had like some lingonberry stuff.

John Hodgman: Oooh, if it was just a—look. Why isn't there a national meatball day? That's my dispute with the world. Send us your Valentine's Day dispute, your Hallmark holiday dispute, your disputes about any holidays or any card sending days at MaximumFun.org/jjho. And I dare say, Jesse Thorn, send us all of your disputes.

Jesse Thorn: Indeed. MaximumFun.org/jjho. Don't censor yourself. If you think this might be something, just go to MaximumFun.org/jjho and send it to us. We can figure out if it's something or not. We'll help!

John Hodgman: And hey, maybe you just bought tickets to see us in San Francisco in a couple of days at SFSketchfest.com. And you're like, "I bet they have all the cases they need." Probably we do, but you never know! What if you have the greatest case of all time? Go ahead and submit your Bay Area cases at MaximumFun.org/jjho and let us know that you're going to be at that San Francisco show at the Palace of Fine Arts January 27th, Saturday at 4PM. If you don't have tickets, get them. SFSketchfest.com.

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

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Transition: Cheerful ukulele chord.

Speaker 1: Maximum Fun.

Speaker 2: A worker-owned network.

Speaker 3: Of artist owned shows.

Speaker 4: Supported—

Speaker 5: —directly—

Speaker 6: —by you!