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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, "In Photo Parentis". James brings the case against his wife, Morgan. James put up some photos of the extended family in their home. Morgan wants him to take them down. They can go back up in 20 years, when the couple is closer to grandparent age. 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:** This absence of people should be and feel unnatural and place the scene in a clear limbo. Liminality in this way naturally draws on other concepts. Although only pertaining to physical people, the concept of kenopsia defines well the kind of emptiness we seek, pertaining to the surreal atmosphere of an empty place usually populated by people. This ties in with the abstract transition of a place being between uses.

Bailiff Jesse Thorn, please swear the litigants in.

**Jesse Thorn:** James, Morgan, 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 doesn't show up in photographs like some kind of dang Dracula?

*(They swear.)*

It's not true.

**John Hodgman:** It's not true!

**Jesse Thorn:** Judge Hodgman, you may proceed.

**John Hodgman:** It's not true! Anyone can go and see me and see that I'm not a dang Dracula over on our YouTube channel right now—where you might notice this episode, I got a little haircut. Did you notice that Jesse? I got a little haircut.

**Jesse Thorn:** You look great. You look great in my little monitor that I have.

**John Hodgman:** Thanks. You look great too. And so do you, James and Morgan. And we are back at the Sycamore, the studio not far from Columbus, Ohio—where we last spoke to Casey and Matthew. You remember that Casey wanted to buy a church and a bank and a castle. Now we have James and Morgan in there. James and Morgan, hello.

*(Chairs squeak.)*

You may be seated for an immediate summary judgment in one of your favors. Can either of you name the piece of culture that I referenced as I entered this courtroom?

Oh, I don't know. Morgan, you go first.

**Morgan:** Well, the first thing that came to my mind when you said, I think, kenopsia or something—it reminded me of *Barbie*. So. *(Laughs.)* But I know that it has nothing to do with this.

**John Hodgman:** Oh! Kenopsia. Yeah, no. Kenopsia—and I'll give you a hint. That is the eerie atmosphere of a place that is usually bustling with people, but is now abandoned. That's a term from the dictionary. But I'll put down *Barbie*! I'll write it down, and I'm going to write it down. B-A-R-B-I-E. If you think I'm faking it, check out our YouTube channel. I wrote it right down. Morgan, that was a good guess. What is your guess over there, James?

**James:** I mean, since I have no idea, and she went with *Barbie*, I think I have to go *Oppenheimer*, right?

**John Hodgman:** Sure. Absolutely.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah. Gotta go *Oppo*.

**John Hodgman:** Got to go *Oppo*. Got to do your *Oppo* research. I'm just writing *Oppo*, 'cause I don't have all day to write these things down, because all guesses are wrong. Throw that on the floor. All guesses are wrong. The answer was but one of many bullet points in the rules, the posting rules, of the subreddit called Liminal Spaces, which is a subreddit devoted to posting unnerving photos of typically abandoned places. They define liminal space, and it's really tricky. 'Cause if you post something that's merely creepy, you're going to get flamed. A liminal space is a transitional space, a space that connects other spaces—like a corridor or a road—or spaces that you transition through often without paying attention to, like an airport skybridge or a steam tunnel. Some place that is mundane. A place, especially empty spaces, that feel abandoned and uncanny and a little unnerving. Like, for example—mm, I don't know, James and Morgan, your dining room.

*(They laugh and Morgan agrees.)*

Now, I mean this in the nicest way possible. Buuut you sent in some photos of your home as evidence, which people can go and see on our show page at [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org), as well as on our Instagram page, [@JudgeJohnHodgman](https://www.instagram.com/JudgeJohnHodgman). And your home is lovely. Uh, but your dining room scares me.

*(They laugh.)*

**Morgan:** It does need more in it.

**John Hodgman:** We'll get into it in a second, but I just want to say that this one photo of the dining room where you see the stairs to the upstairs—this is truly, I think, could be posted on Liminal Spaces and not get taken down. Because it's a transitional space between a living area and a kitchen, and there are the stairs going up. And you also have two different styles of—three different styles of flooring! There's a transitional wall to wall carpet between tile and what looks like hardwood or laminate hardwood. And there's nobody in these photos. It was a little scary to me, this particular one. And even though there is one picture on a wall—and in some of other photos, we see a lot more—

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But there is an element of sparseness and bareness to these walls, which is part of why we're here today. Because we're talking about wall decoration, right? So, let's get into it. Who comes to seek justice in this fake court of law?

**James:** I do.

**John Hodgman:** Who is that speaking?

**James:** Jim. James.

**John Hodgman:** Oh, would you prefer that I call you Jim?

**James:** Either is fine.

**John Hodgman:** Alright, Jimmy. What is the nature of the justice that you seek?

**James:** I seek to put up more photos on the walls. I'm from a big, extended, close family, and I would like to have more of the aunts and uncles and cousins displayed on the walls.

**John Hodgman:** And you have some up there already, correct?

**James:** Yeah, but that's pretty much immediate family, like siblings and nieces and nephews, yes.

**John Hodgman:** Oh, you want to go—do you want to go full chronology? Like, back in time?

**James:** Not necessarily back in time. I mean, the ones that lived lifetimes that overlapped with mine would be nice.

**John Hodgman:** Do you want me to send you the photos that my dad has of my great grandparents?

**James:** Sure, I'll put it next to my grandparents' wedding photo.

**Jesse Thorn:** Jimbo, you know that nieces and nephews are by no definition immediate family.

**James:** No, but they're the immediate family of our immediate family. *(Laughs.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** Okay, got it.

**John Hodgman:** Jimmy James, you want to be putting up many, many more family photos than are up already.

*(James confirms.)*

And Morgan, you say no. Why do you hate family photos? Particularly, why do you hate Jim's family?

**Morgan:** *(Laughs.)* I do not hate Jim's family. I actually like them very much. No, they are very kind people.

**John Hodgman:** You just don't ever wanna look at their faces.

**Morgan:** Well...

**Jesse Thorn:** Kind, but homely.

*(They laugh.)*

**Morgan:** I'm okay with having some pictures in our house of extended family, but not that many. I think it's more important to have pictures of immediate family in the house.

**John Hodgman:** And why?

**Morgan:** It reminds me of going to like a grandparent's house. *(Laughs.)* Because usually when you go to a grandparent's house, they have pictures of all of the extended family in the house. So, it just—it reminds me of this older type of house.

**John Hodgman:** And you're not a grandparent, right?

**Morgan:** No, I'm not. (*Chuckles.*)

**John Hodgman:** You're a parent. You're both parents, right?

(*Morgan confirms.*)

You have kid? Kids? What do you got?

**Morgan:** Two kids.

**John Hodgman:** Two kids, and they're young, right?

**Morgan:** They are, yeah. Seven and two.

**John Hodgman:** They're young. Like you are, Jim. That's what I think that's what Morgan's trying to say. Too young to have all these family photos, because it makes you feel like you're visiting a granddad. Someone like my dad, who's got—who is a granddad, and he's got pictures of my great grandparents up there.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, Jimbo, why do you want to put out a bowl of dietetic candy?

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. What, do you want a bowl of brocks?

**James:** I think part of it might be, you know, I grew up so close to a lot of my cousins and aunts and uncles. And we aren't seeing them quite as frequently, now that my grandparents have passed away. And—

**John Hodgman:** I'm sorry to hear that.

**James:** Thank you. And the pandemic, you know, the kibosh on that for a year or two. And so, it would be nice to see those faces of the people that I don't get to see as often as I used to

**John Hodgman:** Where did you grow up?

**James:** In central Ohio.

**John Hodgman:** Where you live now?

**James:** Yes.

**John Hodgman:** So, why don't you get to see them? Did they move away?

**James:** Half of my cousins and siblings have moved out of state.

**John Hodgman:** Where'd did they escape to?

**James:** I've got a sister in Michigan. I've got a brother in Colorado. I've got a cousin in—

**John Hodgman:** You have a sister who left Ohio for Michigan, and you still want to talk—?! You still want to keep a photo of her?

**James:** (*Laughs.*) I know that my family—

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, to remember what she used to be like before she betrayed him.

**James:** My family are huge Buckeye fans. So, it has been a point of contention. But her husband has a very similar family of huge Michigan fans, so we tolerate him.

**Jesse Thorn:** I like to imagine that when he says his family is a huge bunch of Buckeye fans, that they're just fans of buckeyes. Not college football Buckeyes, but just the actual tree nuts.

**James:** I have an aunt that has a buckeye tree, but my mom grew up next door to Archie Griffin, so they're very, very close.

**John Hodgman:** Alright, alright. I know I introduced this, and I was very pleased with myself for even knowing about a sports rivalry. I credit Jordan Klepper with introducing me to that. But now you're talking about probably a coach, right? Probably a coach you're talking about? Or a player?

**James:** A player.

**John Hodgman:** Morgan, what do you do?

**Morgan:** I work at Ohio State University.

**John Hodgman:** Oh, literal. You're a literal Buckeye.

**Morgan:** Yes, I am. (*Chuckles.*)

**John Hodgman:** What is a buckeye?

**Jesse Thorn:** It's like a—

**Morgan:** A tree nut.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, it's like a tree nut. Looks sort of like a chestnut, and it falls on your head or something.

**James:** It looks vaguely like the eyeball of a male deer. Not quite, but enough that's what it got its name from.

**John Hodgman:** Why don't they call it a deer ball?

*(They laugh.)*

Enough! Enough, already. Enough buckeye talk. Tell me which family members are currently represented in your home decor. Walk me through it. I'm going to look at the evidence and people can look at it too if they want, over at the websites that I mentioned before.

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**James:** So, there's pictures of us and our daughter. No pictures of our son yet. We are overdue on getting that up.

**John Hodgman:** But your son is photographable?

**James:** He is, but he's two. We've just been busy. *(Laughs.)* We have like a wedding picture from my brother's wedding. So, all of us together—which includes all of my siblings and my parents. And then we have some individual pictures of a couple of my siblings and one of my siblings' family. And then we also have pictures from our wedding of us with our siblings and with our parents.

**John Hodgman:** And Morgan, is this already too much?

**Morgan:** Yeah, it is.

*(They chuckle.)*

**John Hodgman:** Which ones would you like to get rid of?

**Morgan:** There's a whole wall in our dining room of extended family that I would like to rid of.

**John Hodgman:** There are multiple angles on your dining room. And I will say this, only the one angle creeped me out. The rest suggest a very comfortable and extremely tidy home. Are you equally tidy?

**Morgan:** We try to be. *(Chuckles.)*

**John Hodgman:** James, do you believe that you are equally tidy?

**James:** In the main living spaces of the house, yes.

**John Hodgman:** I mean, this is pretty God-or-Whatever damn tidy, you two. Like, I don't see this very often. Did you stage these photos? I mean, you know, did you have a professional come in and stage your house to take photos for this podcast? 'Cause that would have been a wild waste of money.

**James:** No, there are a couple things on the floor in the photos, and I was worried she'd be really mad that happened. But they're not very obvious.

**John Hodgman:** Oh, I didn't notice. Where are they? Oh yeah, there's like a throw pillow down. You know, normally when people share photos of their home, it's like I wonder if they've taken a t-shirt cannon full of dog hair and just blasted the place before they took the photo. But this is very, very spare, I would say.

Whose sensibilities does this represent, Morgan? Yours or James's?

**Morgan:** Yeah, probably more mine.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, yours. Okay. I will say this. So, I'm looking at sort of the wall of family photos in the dining room. And I see like—this is the photo that sort of has a Nest thermostat and then three photos. Whose photos are these? Just so I know.

**Morgan:** Well, two of them are family photos—or immediate family. The other one is the one of your brother's wedding.

**John Hodgman:** And you'd like all of these down from this wall. Right, Morgan?

**Morgan:** No, I like the one of my immediate family. But the one of the brother's wedding, I think—

**John Hodgman:** Would you want to replace them with something else?

**Morgan:** I would like to have more decorative art pieces on the wall.

**John Hodgman:** I was going to say, you know, I noticed that there is a—I mean, perhaps you have only taken photos of the family photos, which would be reasonable. But in this spot in particular, it feels like you have three small family photos where one nice piece of art could go.

**Morgan:** Yes! I agree.

**Jesse Thorn:** I feel like this photo size issue needs to be addressed directly, Judge Hodgman.

**John Hodgman:** I know, I danced around it for too long. Go ahead, Jesse, weigh in.

**Jesse Thorn:** How did you end up with tiny, tiny pictures on big, giant walls? (*Laughs.*)



**Morgan:** Well, I think it's also the angle of the picture that you took of the picture.

**Jesse Thorn:** It's clear in all pictures! In all pictures, there are 4x6 photographs in frames on giant walls. One to three tiny photographs on a big, giant wall.

**James:** I think one's an 8x10. The canvas is a little bigger. *(Laughs.)*

**John Hodgman:** That's the size of a piece of notebook paper.

**Jesse Thorn:** Bring that 8x10 down to the dry cleaner and sign it for him.

**John Hodgman:** Now, Morgan, do you agree or disagree that these pictures, no matter what they're of, too small for the walls? Yes or no? Do you agree or disagree?

**Morgan:** I agree.

**John Hodgman:** You agree. Okay. There is one room that feels a little bit distinct from the others. And this is a room that looks packed full. It's got bookshelves; it's packed full of books and maybe—and then a bunch of collectibles, including the character Q from the first episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* dressed up as a judge. Which you know I'm a big fan of that costume. Whose collection is this?

**James:** Oh, definitely mine.

**John Hodgman:** Yours. Okay. It's got a lovely brio of—it's got a lovely feel of nerdery to it. Would that be fair to say?

**James:** Absolutely.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. And there's a photo of a beloved family member on the wall here above Q. Who is that?

**James:** That is my grandmother.

**John Hodgman:** And can you describe what your grandmother is doing in the photo?

**Jesse Thorn:** She's hanging out with some anime guys.

**James:** She is giving the photographer the middle finger.

*(They laugh.)*

**John Hodgman:** This room feels alive to me. Morgan, how do you feel about this room?

**Morgan:** I think it represents Jim.

*(James cackles.)*

**John Hodgman:** You two have a good marriage. How long have you been married?

**Morgan:** 15 years in June.

**John Hodgman:** Oh, well, happy anniversary in advance!

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And how long have these family photos been on the dining room wall, would you say, Morgan?

**Morgan:** Almost since we moved in.

**John Hodgman:** So, what was your reaction when you saw them for the first time? Did you know that Jim James was going to put these photos on the wall, or what?

**Morgan:** Well, did we have them up in our last house?

**James:** We did. Yeah. I don't remember where they were in the last house. We moved into this house about two and a half years ago.

**John Hodgman:** Oh, okay.

**Morgan:** So, they're holdover from our last house. So, it wasn't surprising when they were put back up on the wall.

**Jesse Thorn:** In the photograph, they're small enough that I can't see anything in the photos. And it kind of makes me feel like, when you say they've been up since you moved in, that they were there before you moved in.

*(Laughter.)*

**John Hodgman:** And did you ever ask him directly, "Can we just take these down?"

**Morgan:** Eh, we've had conversations about it.

**John Hodgman:** And how does the conversation go? I'll play you; you play James.

Hi, James. It's me, your spouse and whole human being in my own right, Morgan. I noticed you put those pictures up. We didn't talk about it. It's not my favorite. I'd like to put something else up in there. How do you feel about that?

**Morgan:** I like having pictures of my family up. I like to see them on the walls.

**John Hodgman:** James, have you received a specific request to take these photos down, at least in the dining room, and put up something else?

**James:** No!

**John Hodgman:** Why not, Morgan? Why wait for a podcast?

**Morgan:** (*Laughs.*) I feel like maybe I've said it once.

**James:** You've expressed that you would like less family photos. You haven't said you wanted to replace them with anything.

**John Hodgman:** So, but—okay, so Morgan, you have requested—made a general request, “fewer family photos”. But you could understand why that could be interpreted in many ways, and that James is prepared to interpret it to his benefit.

*(Morgan agrees.)*

We're at an inflection point. Because, James, you would like to add more. Correct?

**James:** Yeah, I've tried to. And she's kind of like moved them in places that aren't very visible.

**John Hodgman:** Where did Morgan put them?

**James:** In the living room where there's the record stand. Like, I had them up on top of the record stand, and she put them down like in the record stand where they're kind of hidden.

**John Hodgman:** This living room photo—this is the one which has sort of the—there's a piano in there. There are framed images on the wall here. Are those family photos, or is that art? I can't tell.

**James:** Above the piano are our wedding photos. Four photos from our wedding.

**John Hodgman:** Got it.

**James:** And then above the record player, that is a piece of art that I believe you made, and your mom framed for you.

**John Hodgman:** And do you like that piece of art, James?

**James:** Yes, I do.

**John Hodgman:** Good. But I want you to answer this question. How many more photos you got, and where are they? Are they ready to go? What's going on?

**James:** No, I don't have any ready to go. I would probably go through the giant tub of photos and try to pick out some nice ones if she allowed more.

**John Hodgman:** Please describe the giant tub of photos.

**James:** It's like one of those plastic bins, storage bins, that's maybe like—I don't know, a couple of feet by 18 inches and that deep. And I've got almost one full.

**John Hodgman:** And it's full of photos.

**James:** Yes.

**Jesse Thorn:** Of your family, or of miscellaneous subjects?

**James:** Almost entirely of my family.

**John Hodgman:** You have a plastic bin full of photos on paper. Are we speaking to you in the past?

**James:** I mean, I also have a record player. So, yeah, maybe. (*Laughs.*)

**John Hodgman:** And how large are these photos?

**James:** I mean, most of them are the standard 4x6s, but we have some larger ones that are older.

**John Hodgman:** And do you have a vision for where they would go? All over the place, or on a particular wall, or throughout the dining area, or what?

**Jesse Thorn:** Two tiny ones on each wall in your home?

**James:** (*Laughs.*) I mean, I've never really—

**John Hodgman:** Really near the ceiling for some reason? I don't know. Yeah. Think about it that way.

**James:** I don't think I've ever dared to dream enough to actually come up with a plan, because I knew it would immediately be shot down. So, I don't have a specific plan, but I would say any place where there's a couple of feet of empty wall, we should have something on there. And I'd probably put a photo. Or two, or three.

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**Jesse Thorn:** It does feel like your photo placement to this point has just been one photo every few feet. That's been the main—like, just one 4-inch by 6-inch photo every 4 feet on the wall.

**James:** Yeah, she dictated where they would go roughly. And so, I just—yeah.

**Jesse Thorn:** Have you ever considered grouping smaller photographs into more substantial, less frequent displays?

**James:** Oh yeah, definitely.

**John Hodgman:** So, why don't you do that?

**James:** Not allowed.

**John Hodgman:** Where did this tub of photos come from? Are they photos you've taken, or did you collect them from other family members, or what?

**James:** It's really been basically my whole life. Not that I take paper photos anymore.

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Now they're all—any one we've taken the last 10 years is digital on the computer. But yeah, so these are mostly photos from childhood, ones I took, or my family members took. And my mom at one point went through all her photos and gave me a bunch of them that I was in, because she was slimming down how many she was holding on to, so. And then we have some photos from after her mother passed away; we got a bunch of her family photos from her house, and I added them to the tub. So, yeah, we've got quite a few.

**John Hodgman:** And I presume you would want to represent Morgan's family as equally as your own, right? That's not what this is about, is it?

**James:** No. I mean, she has a smaller family, so it would probably be fewer photos, but I would want to represent them, proportionally equally for sure.

**John Hodgman:** Morgan, what is your vision for the walls of your home that's currently being stifled by your husband?

**Morgan:** I would like some more artistic pieces on the wall. I would like some family photos, more of our immediate family. But I would also like some more artistic pieces on the wall as well. I will say we have a couple of pieces in the house that we have—and we did not include them in here, but we have, “The Son of Man” by René Magritte. We have a photo of that, like a poster of it.

**John Hodgman:** Like a print. Yeah.

**Morgan:** And we also have—

**Jesse Thorn:** It would be awesome if the payoff to this was that you just had the painting.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. This is the famous painting of the gentleman with the business dude with the big green apple in front of his face. Yeah, if you had the original Magritte, that would be pretty intense.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, like we got these 4x6 photos of cousins' cousins. We got about a dozen of those. We got a Magritte, two Chagalls.

*(They laugh.)*

**Morgan:** Yeah, we also have another Magritte, too. “This Is Not a Pipe”. We have that as well. So, we both like that. And my mother actually put a framed picture of Jim's poster from *Battlestar Galactica* in a nice frame. It's—and you can explain what the scene is, but it's the scene—it's a “Last Supper” scene from *Battlestar Galactica*, and it's hanging up above our fireplace. And I'm—you know, it's a nice picture, so I'm fine with that.

**John Hodgman:** I mean, Jim, you have a—that's a pretty famous photo from *Battlestar Galactica*, where the cast is recreating the famous positioning of the painting “The Last Supper” by blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. What is it? Micky-angelo da Vinci or whatever? Who is it?

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah. It's one of those Ninja Turtles.

*(They laugh.)*

**John Hodgman:** Who did “The Last Supper”? It's, uh—Leonardo da Vinci. Okay, good. And it's the entire cast, minus—unfortunately, they ended up editing me out of it. I was in one. I was the brain guy. I was the brain doctor in one episode in the final season. I didn't get into “The Last Supper”. I was painted in the overflow room. It's pretty cool that you have a spouse who will let you hang a *Battlestar Galactica* fan poster above your fireplace in your living room. That's a pretty major display area in any home, wouldn't you say?

**James:** Oh, absolutely. I was really surprised she let me. But her—as she said, her mom did frame it really nicely, so it actually looks like a piece of art and not just a geek poster.

**John Hodgman:** Maureen, you said that having extensive photos of extended family kind of feels like a grandparenty vibe. Did that describe like your grandparents' house, or is there a place you're thinking of?

**Morgan:** Not only my grandparents' house, but also Jim's grandparents' house. And his mom, now a—she's a young grandma, but it's also kind of filtering on into her house as well.

**John Hodgman:** What does a grandparenty vibe feel like to you? When you're in a house like that? How does it make you feel?

**Morgan:** Just feels kind of dated.

**John Hodgman:** You didn't marry James's mom; you married James. Yeah. James, your mom has extended family photos throughout the house?

**James:** Not throughout the whole house, but the main living spaces, yes.

**John Hodgman:** And did she always have them up? Was this a part of your decor growing up, or did she add onto it as she got older?

**James:** We always had quite a few, I think. But yeah, she's definitely added to it as she's gotten older.

**John Hodgman:** James, do having a lot of photos of extended family around the house feel like home to you?

**James:** Yes, absolutely.

**John Hodgman:** I see. And do you feel—are you worried that if you don't have them up, you won't feel at home?

**James:** I wouldn't say that. I feel pretty at home in our house. That's just if I'm looking at walls, that's what I would like to see on the walls.

**John Hodgman:** Morgan, do you feel at home in your house or just at home at your desk in the corner of the living room?

**Morgan:** *(Laughs.)* No, I feel at home in my house. But I would feel better if I had more things on the walls that represented my interests.

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**John Hodgman:** So, Morgan, when you look at the photo of the dining room, like would you be happy if those precise photos in that configuration were replaced with 8x10 Magritte's or something?

**Morgan:** No.

**John Hodgman:** What's your vision there?

**Morgan:** I think I would like more pictures of our immediate family in the dining room. And then maybe a couple of artistic pieces on the wall as well.

**John Hodgman:** Mm-hm. Mm-hm. James, it says here that you're the family historian. Is that correct?

**James:** My younger cousins would say that. Yes.

**John Hodgman:** Besides the point that you obviously love your family. Why do you collect these photos in a tub?

**James:** I don't know. I've always been interested in history and connection and family, and I have a degree in history. And I'm the oldest of my generation on my mom's side of the family. So, the younger ones always rely on me to tell them the family stories and stuff. And I don't know. It just has always felt important to me, and that's kind of my role as the oldest, to keep track of that stuff.

**John Hodgman:** Has your family been in central Ohio for a long time?

**James:** Yes, absolutely.

**John Hodgman:** Got it. Morgan, is James sentimental?

**Morgan:** It depends on what it's about.

**Jesse Thorn:** Okay. Example, *Battlestar Galactica*.

*(Laughter.)*

**Morgan:** Yeah. If you have him watching a show, he will cry while he watches shows. But in real life, he doesn't usually shed tears.

**John Hodgman:** James, would you say that Morgan is unsentimental?

**James:** About her immediate family she's sentimental. But yeah, she does not have the same extended close family that I do. She's not close to any of her cousins or aunts or uncles. So, I think that is a big difference in our perspective. I consider them like close family, and I don't think she has anyone beyond her immediate sisters that she would call close family.

**John Hodgman:** Morgan, where are your siblings in the world?

**Morgan:** My brother is in Columbus as well. My sister is in LA.

**John Hodgman:** Do you feel that you might—if you're surrounded by images of James's extended family, that you might feel chased out of your own home?

**Morgan:** Maybe a little bit.



**John Hodgman:** Oh! Maybe a little bit. How do you respond to that, James?

**James:** I mean, I'm not trying to chase her out!

**John Hodgman:** How many—do you have a photo in particular that you cannot wait to put up, James?

**James:** If I had to pick one, we took a huge group family photo when my—shortly before my grandfather passed away that has everybody, almost everybody in that extended group in it. And that would be great to get a good print of that and blow it up and hang it up.

**John Hodgman:** Where would you see that?

**James:** In the dining room, maybe on that empty wall.

**Jesse Thorn:** All the walls are essential empty, I wanna be clear about this.

*(They laugh.)*

I can't overemphasize this point.

**John Hodgman:** How big are you going to blow it up to? Maybe 9x12? Or are you going to go all the way to like 10x13?

**James:** I'd say at least 10x13. *(Laughs.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** I'd say 4x6... feet.

**James:** I wouldn't go that big!

**John Hodgman:** This photo has not been entered into evidence. Can you—do you have it on your phone or something? Can you hold it up to the camera?

**James:** It would probably take me a little bit of time to find it. But yeah, it's just a group of people in a living room around the couch. Grandparents in the center, the youngest grandchildren on their laps, and all their kids behind them, and their kids' spouses, and all the grandkids around.

**John Hodgman:** I appreciate that you paint a wonderful word portrait, but I don't know what this—how the photo looks. I mean, what if they all have apples in front of their faces? Then it's art!

**James:** I can try to find it. It just may take a minute.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. Why don't you take a second and why don't you try to find it?

*(James agrees.)*

I'd love to take a look at that, because I'm going to have to decide, Bailiff Jesse, whether or not we're going to make this 8 feet by 10 feet and put it all—and fill up that whole wall with it.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah. Or at least make it *Battlestar Galactica* sized.

**James:** So I did not find the specific photo I was talking about, but this is a similar photo that includes even more extended family that might be more representative of the kind of photo I'm talking about.

**John Hodgman:** That's a lot of family. Morgan, what do you think about putting a huge print of that particular photo in your home?

**Morgan:** *(Clicks teeth.)* I'm—I'm not interested in having that in my home.

**John Hodgman:** Alright. But what if I ordered a huge print of that photo being in your home and then no more family photos after that?

*(James laughs.)*

**Morgan:** Maybe.

**John Hodgman:** I'm trying to strike a bargain here. Is that—? Be honest, is that enticing to you or no?

**Morgan:** Maybe.

**John Hodgman:** Maybe. Okay.

**Jesse Thorn:** Morgan, I have a question. If it were me, I think the placement of these photos would feel important.

[00:30:00]

And I wonder if that's the case for you. I wonder if there are places in the home where you would be more comfortable with there being a lot of family photos and places where you are less comfortable.

**Morgan:** Yes, I would agree with that.

**Jesse Thorn:** What are those places?

**Morgan:** His office is pretty much wall to wall with books, so I don't think there's much space in his office for family photos. The basement has a lot of his movie posters in it. Which I'm fine with, because it's the basement.

**John Hodgman:** Sure.

**Morgan:** So, that kind of leaves—

**Jesse Thorn:** The septic tank.

*(They laugh.)*

**Morgan:** The living room/dining room area, which I don't really want them in. So, I would say if he wants to take down some of the posters from the basement and put those family pictures in the basement, I'd be more okay with that.

**John Hodgman:** James, I tried to ask Morgan to describe her style, and she was stumped. Can you describe her style? And I'm talking about decor, the things that she likes to see in a home.

**James:** Yeah, I'd say kind of minimalist. She definitely like hates to have anything on the kitchen counter. She wants to hide everything away. Even the things that we use all the time, which drives me crazy.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, I kind of want to live there. Keep going.

**James:** *(Laughs.)* I mean, it would be great if we had like one of those walk in second kitchen pantry areas with counters, and I could put stuff there. But we don't, so. You know.

**John Hodgman:** No, you chose a poster basement instead. That's a tradeoff.

**James:** *(Laughs.)* Sure. But yeah, she's got like some like—in terms of decor, she might have like some little fake plant or a little plate with like just colored balls on it.

**John Hodgman:** Morgan, do you feel that you would be—I keep asking like what would you want to put on the wall instead of these photos in the dining room. And now I'm wondering, would you rather there just be no photos at all?

**Morgan:** I would like immediate family photos. I'd like more immediate family photos.

**John Hodgman:** You don't want bare walls.

**Morgan:** No, I do not want bare walls.

**John Hodgman:** Right, you don't want to live in a place that looks like you were going to leave at any given moment in the middle of the night.

**Morgan:** No. (*Laughs.*)

**Jesse Thorn:** Morgan, one of these pieces is an artwork that you made, right?

(*She confirms.*)

So, what kind of—do you make art as a matter of course?

**Morgan:** Not anymore. I used to draw, but I haven't done that for a while.

**John Hodgman:** And James, you didn't submit Morgan's artwork, other than the side view where I can't see it.

**James:** I apologize.

**John Hodgman:** Do you have a photo of that you can hold up to the camera?

**James:** I don't, unfortunately. It would be hard to see with a photo anyway, because it's like a white Styrofoam she did like carving on. So, it's like—

**John Hodgman:** It's just a blank piece of paper.

(*They laugh.*)

**James:** No, but it's carved in such a way that you can't get the depth unless you're like looking straight on it. And it's—yeah, it's cool. I really like it, but.

**John Hodgman:** Morgan, James has a lot of places to express himself in this house. With his stuff, I mean to say. Do you have a place that you feel is yours that you can fill up with your own stuff in the same way?

**Morgan:** I have a desk in the corner of the living room that I put some things on. (*Laughs.*)

**John Hodgman:** Now, (*chuckling*) I don't know how to ask this question, but is that as sad as it just sounded?

**Morgan:** Yeah, it really is.

**John Hodgman:** Okay—(*stammers*) do you feel good about the desk in the corner of the living room? Or do you—? I mean you might feel fine with it. Or do you feel like—

**Morgan:** Yeah. I'm fine with—I have a desk. So. (*Laughs.*)

**James:** And a window.

**Morgan:** And a window! It's right by a window, so I like that.

**John Hodgman:** So, let me go back for a second, Morgan, to when Jim put up those family photos. What happened when you saw them?

**Morgan:** You know, I just kind of like, "Oh yeah, we had those in our old house, so I guess it makes sense we have them in the new house."

**James:** She directed me hanging it. She didn't just come home and find them. She told me where I could hang them, and directed me to make sure they were level, and I had to measure from either wall, and all that.

**John Hodgman:** That's an interesting thing to do for something you don't want in your home.

*(Morgan laughs and agrees.)*

Do you feel like you can't just put your foot down and say no?

**Morgan:** I think it's more of the fact that we hadn't bought anything yet that I wanted to put on the wall, so I was fine with it being on the wall in the interim.

**John Hodgman:** James would like to blow up this huge photo of this family gathering and put it somewhere. And you've talked about the Magritte prints that you have. Is there something that you would like to put up that isn't a family photo?

**Morgan:** I don't really have anything in mind yet. I'd have to look for something, but I would like something artistic.

**John Hodgman:** And by artistic, you mean not a family photo, but a piece of art.

**Morgan:** Right. A piece of art or some type of ceramic design or something that would go on the wall.

[00:35:00]

**John Hodgman:** Do you ever go into like antique shops, thrift shops, Goodwills? Sometimes you can find some pretty fun art there.

**Morgan:** I haven't, but I would like to do that.

**John Hodgman:** So, James, what would you have me rule if I were to rule in your favor?

**James:** That I could—I don't want to make her walls too full. Like, not a full—my grandma had walls that were just covered. I'm not trying to do that, but I'd say at least let me put up enough photos that all of my first cousins and my parents' siblings—aunts, uncles—are covered, so that the whole clan's represented.

**John Hodgman:** (*Beat.*) Morgan, how do you feel about that?

**Morgan:** I think that's too much.

**John Hodgman:** You think that's too much. Morgan, were there a lot of family photos, immediate or otherwise, in your home when you were growing up?

**Morgan:** We had a number of immediate family. Each of one of our siblings, probably a couple of the whole family—immediate family—that we had, but we didn't have a lot.

**John Hodgman:** What did you have on the walls of your home? Do you remember? Anything you liked?

**Morgan:** Yeah, we had some artistic pieces. Yeah.

**John Hodgman:** Got it. Anything that you could get your hands on?

**Morgan:** Yes, I think we probably still have some of them in storage.

**John Hodgman:** In a storage space that you have somewhere else, so that James can put his posters in the basement?

(*Morgan chuckles.*)

What's going on in the basement, James? What do you have down there? A little hangout area? A little poster museum? What's going on?

**James:** It's a nice, finished basement, there's a TV and an elliptical machine and some tables and microphones, when I do like theatre rehearsal and stuff with my podcast troupe.

**John Hodgman:** What do you do? You have a podcast troupe. Tell me about that.

**James:** I write a—I'm sure—I know you're familiar with *Thrilling Adventure Hour*. It's kind of like that with our own material. We've been doing it every month for nine years.

**John Hodgman:** Oh, cool!

**James:** Live in front of an audience, recorded for podcast.

**John Hodgman:** What is it called?!

**James:** *It's All Been Done Radio Hour.* Jesse's been on it; he's guested for us.

**John Hodgman:** Jesse, is this true?! And you didn't recuse yourself?

**Jesse Thorn:** I'll go on any podcast that invites me, pretty much. My main thing is—look, if you're out there and you want me—I feel like I don't get asked enough to read historical newspaper clippings, or otherwise perform headlines for nonfiction podcasts concerned with the past. I recently portrayed Gore Vidal, on a podcast. I would love to welcome those kinds of invitations. But yeah, if you got a scripted fiction podcast, you need Jesse to lay down a few tracks? I'm there for you. You know me; I'm the star of television's *Archer*.

**John Hodgman:** Morgan, before I go into my chambers, can I ask you what would you have me rule, if I were to rule in your favor specifically?

**Morgan:** That I think we have enough family photos around—well, enough of his extended family photos around the house, and actually I think some of them should be taken down. That maybe we could have a couple, maybe in the living room, but I think that's about it.

**John Hodgman:** Would you be more okay with it if the family photos were all collected together on one wall as part of a sort of wall of photos of family?

**Morgan:** I think that might be a little too much. Unless it was immediate family, then I'd be okay with that.

**John Hodgman:** So, you really feel like the extended family cannot go. That's not okay with you.

**Morgan:** I think it's okay if there's a couple of framed photos maybe in the living room, but that's about it.

**John Hodgman:** I think I've heard everything I need to in order to make my decision. I'm going to go into my poster basement and stare at this framed, 9x30 photo of me from *Battlestar Galactica*. I'll be back in a moment with my verdict.

**Jesse Thorn:** Please rise as Judge John Hodgman exits the courtroom.

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

Morgan, how do you feel about your chances right now?

**Morgan:** I feel pretty good about my chances. *(Laughs.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** Why's that?

**Morgan:** I think it's just a little unreasonable to have too many extended family photos in your house.

**Jesse Thorn:** I mean, it's only one every four feet, like some kind of weird breadcrumb trail around the walls of your home. James, how are you feeling?

**James:** I mean, I think the best I can hope for is a compromise ruling, so I'm hoping that maybe I'll get to have like one nice, big photo of everybody, and then maybe I'll have to lose some of the other ones. But I don't know. I think the judge is fair and wise, and I'm the one that's listened to every episode of the show, not her. So, I hope he keeps that in mind.  
(Laughs.)

**Jesse Thorn:** Maybe a nice cluster? Do you think you could manage a nice cluster?

**James:** I'd be happy to do a nice cluster.

**Jesse Thorn:** Okay. Well, we'll see what Judge Hodgman has to say about all this when he comes back in just a moment.

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**Jesse Thorn:** Judge Hodgman, we're taking a quick break from the case. What's going on with you?

**John Hodgman:** Oh, I'm just over here at my friend, Christopher Frizzell's, Substack [Frizzlit.Substack.com](https://frizzlit.substack.com). That's Frizz, F-R-I-Z-Z-L-I-T dot Substack dot com.

[00:40:00]

I'm looking at this video that he posted of our *Middlemarch* book group reading our favorite sentences from that week's *Middlemarch* reading. Oh, I love *Middlemarch* so much.

**Jesse Thorn:** What's a one of the sentences?

**John Hodgman:** Well, I'll read you one of my favorite sentences from this most recent week's reading, which I didn't get to read in book club, because Chris read it instead of me by accident. "It was as if he had a loathsome dream and could not shake off its images with their hateful kindred of sensations, as if on all the pleasant surroundings of his life a dangerous reptile had left its slimy traces." Ohhh! Boy, oh boy!

**Jesse Thorn:** OHH!

**John Hodgman:** But I'll tell you what, George Eliot, Mary Ann Evans knew how to write sentences and how to put them in order to create a novel. I'm loving *Middlemarch* so much. I think that by the time you listen to this, the book club may be done, and I'll be sad for it. But if you go to [Frizzlit.Substack.com](https://frizzlit.substack.com), you might see some videos of me reading sentences. And also, you know who's a member of the book club, Jesse Thorn?



**Jesse Thorn:** Who?

**John Hodgman:** The incredible Julia Sweeney, from *Saturday Night Live*, and a memoirist, and a wonderful, funny writer and person. It's been such a treat. I guess I'm just plugging books this week! Books and Substacks. Like, if you don't know that you have it in you to read a whole book, why don't you join a book club, check out George Saunders, read some Chekhov along some guided reading experiences. It can be so much fun. It's been such a gift in my life. And I'm so lucky to have been inspired by both our daughter and my wife, both of whom are whole human beings in their own right, to read *Middlemarch*—which I never would have done. And it's just been great. So, read *Middlemarch*, everybody. It's terrific. Or find another book and read it.

By the way, there is a Substack called [Hodgman.Substack.com](https://Hodgman.Substack.com). What would you find there? I don't know. Maybe just me trying to figure out what my creative life is going to be going forward. It's a lot of fun. We have a good time there. [Hodgman.Substack.com](https://Hodgman.Substack.com). Jesse Thorn, what do you got going on?

**Jesse Thorn:** I got some really amazing people on *Bullseye*. Many *Judge John Hodgman* listeners know I host the public radio show *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn*, which you can get via podcast. This week's episode is an interview with one of the greatest living American artists, Ed Ruscha. He is 86 years old, I believe. Absolutely 1,000% sharp as a tack. Handsomer than you and I and had just brilliant, insightful, wonderful things to say about Los Angeles and Disneyland and making art and—just one of the greatest painters of our time, and a brilliant genius in many forms. He recently recreated, by the way—he has this piece called “Chocolate Room” and it's just a room that's shingled in paper that's been soaked in chocolate.

**John Hodgman:** Sure!

**Jesse Thorn:** It's just the best. But anyway, that is a really great interview. And speaking of people in their mid to late 80s, there's also a great interview coming up next week with the legendary Billy Dee Williams, who is—talk about guys that are handsomer than us. Hoo boy!

**John Hodgman:** Wowie-zowie! That's right. I saw on social media that you got to spend time with Billy Dee Williams.

**Jesse Thorn:** Billy Dee Williams was in a Broadway show with Lotte Lenya when he was like seven years old.

**John Hodgman:** I'll tell you something. That's something I never knew about Billy Dee Williams before in my life. And I wouldn't know unless I were a listener to *Bullseye*. You're right—a lot of listeners to *Judge John Hodgman* know that you host *Bullseye*, but what are they doing about it? Go and listen to *Bullseye*! It's an incredible show. I've learned about so many incredible people through the show.

**Jesse Thorn:** Also, in our cavalcade of AARP geniuses, next week we have a really great interview and performance from the legendary folk and rock singer songwriter, Richard Thompson. So, if you want to hear Richard Thompson perform solo acoustic, or actually solo

acoustic with backing vocals from his wife, who's a very brilliant musician in her own right, it's pretty special. And I know what you're thinking. "Jesse, at the end, did you make him sing? 'Oops, I Did it Again' by Britney Spears?"

**John Hodgman:** (*Chuckles delightedly.*) Uncanny that you knew that I was thinking that.

**Jesse Thorn:** The answer is yes. I did make him do that. And it was great.

**John Hodgman:** That's incredible.

**Jesse Thorn:** I don't think she wrote the song. I'm sure Max Martin or whatever wrote the song. But.

**John Hodgman:** Made famous by—originally famous, and now made extra famous by *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn* available on radio stations and as a podcast.

**Jesse Thorn:** Okay, 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.*)

[00:45:00]

**John Hodgman:** Now, obviously, you two are—I mean, I said it early on. You know, like great marriage. Very, very tolerant. It's a rare marriage where a spouse who does not have a native desire to look at the cast of *Battlestar Galactica* would allow their spouse, their own mother to frame for their spouse a poster and put it in pride of place above the fireplace. I mean, James, you're getting a lot of tolerance in this relationship. Although I do find your mother, Morgan, in contempt of this court. Because I have a feeling that when she had the poster framed, she didn't cut the corners off *Battlestar Galactica* style. If you're a *BSG* person, you know what I'm talking about. The corners—there are no square pieces of paper. All the corners are cut off. You should have that reframed immediately.

(*They chuckle.*)

I'm also going to sentence you to get a large poster of me as Dr. Gerard in *Battlestar Galactica* and a large poster of Jesse Thorn as—what was your character's name in *Archer* again?

**Jesse Thorn:** Hall of Mirrors Guy.

**John Hodgman:** Hall of Mirrors Guy. And we will sign it for you the next time that we're in the Columbus area, next time we go on tour. And if we're anywhere in the area, you can come to the show, and we'll sign it for you, and you get it framed and put it pride of place. But you notice that I say, poster size. So, these pictures are too small for these walls. I think that's something that Jesse noticed right away and I agree with. 'Cause, look, your style might be small pictures, bare walls.

*(They chuckle.)*

Like, we don't know what your style is. And I am—in an accessory ruling, I'm going to order you to figure out what your style is. Because I feel like you're getting run roughshod here by James's *Battlestar Galactica* and his Judy Garlands and his cues and his grandma giving the photographer the finger, but giving the whole world the finger. I mean, if I were you and I was walking by that grandma, I'd feel like I was getting the finger. Where's my stuff? You're an artist. You've got a visual sense, and you need to—I think both of you—look through some interior design magazines or websites or something. Look at how they're decorating the walls, right? And feel if you vibe to anything. I think that you need a little outside inspiration, simply in terms of making these walls look a little bit more like a home and a little bit less like a posting to the liminal spaces on the subreddit Liminal Spaces.

And I hope that this is not—that you don't take this as an insult. I mean, you're still filling up this home. I mean, two and a half years goes by quickly, particularly if you have kids. Like, the last thing you're thinking about is what's going to go on the walls. But since we're talking about what's going to go on the walls, my primary reason for being inclined to limit James's family photos is they're all the size of like snapshots. You know, they're all like the size of Polaroids. And we'll talk about what we're going to do with those, with that tub of photos, in a second. But in the meantime, you know, like sometimes you need a little outside help. Now we have a wonderful friend named Sarah Reed. And if you want, I can put you in touch with her. She does—I mean, she's an interior designer who has gone back and forth between being a professional interior designer and then just like, “Eh, I just do it for fun for myself.” You can check out her Instagram, [@SmallVictories](#). I didn't mean to buzz market her stuff. This might not be your vibe. Do you know what I mean?

I only brought it up because Sarah Reed came to visit us in Maine one time. And we had a big blank wall behind our sofa in Maine. And we didn't know what to do with it. And we went into an old barn in Maine and—well, I didn't go into it. My wife, who is a whole being in her own right, and Sarah went into this barn while I was doing something in the car. And when I walked into the barn, they're like, “We just bought a painting.” And I was like oh! And it's a ginormous painting of a child who is not mine and is no longer a child, because this painting was painted in like 1977, of a child sitting in a wingback armchair with a bowl cut and looking pressed as F—as though he had just—he was so mad at, presumably, his parents' divorce. It was a very '70s portrait!

**Jesse Thorn:** I've seen it, and I loved it. It's my favorite thing in your house. No offense to you.

[00:50:00]

**John Hodgman:** No, that's fine. That's right. We got to hang out together in Maine, and we got to do that again soon. That boy's name is Charles. And we know, 'cause it's written on the back of the poster—not the poster, but the painting. And we also know that the painting was painted in Brookline, Massachusetts, my hometown. So, I understood why they were both attracted to this. But I was like this kid is haunted, and it's going to bring a terrible energy to this house. But I'm going to give it a try. And over the years, that kid has grown on me. And indeed, the demonic spirit of Charles has entered my body and now controls me five days out of every week. I get older, and Charles gets younger. Anyway, scary big painting that I did not expect to come to love—the painting of someone else's family member. Do you know what I mean? If anything, it felt wildly invasive. But in time, I realized this wall needs a statement. I'm trying to sell this painting to you. I would like you to get it out of my house in Maine.

*(They laugh.)*

No, I'm trying to say that Sarah Reed was right. And sometimes you do need someone else to sort of help you see a space in a different way. And I do think that one of the recurring motifs in your home is small pictures in big, empty walls. And it doesn't—it feels a little off to me. So, you should go, as I say, and check out some interior design websites or something. And you know, I don't know. Buy a copy of *HDTV Magazine* at the airport. Look at a bunch of different stuff, and go through it together. And I'm not talking about the kinds of pictures, right? I'm talking about the size of wall decoration. I'm talking about the arrangement of wall decoration. And see if anything vibes with both of you, right? And that's a fun project for you to do together. And I think then you can—whether you work on this together or whether you get some outside help or whatever—then I think you're going to choose stuff for these walls that's going to make them feel more cohesive, have more flow and a little less random. Which to my eyes, that's how it feels right now.

And to my eyes, the content of the photos doesn't particularly matter. 'Cause it's hard for me to even see them. They're so small. Now I'm encouraging you to think about getting a little bit bigger. I'm also encouraging you, James, to listen to what Morgan has to say. Having extended family photos throughout the house will make her feel like she's living in a grandparent's house, and that's not her vibe, right? There's one thing for sure that Morgan has been clear on from the very beginning in terms of what Morgan's style is: I don't want to live in a grandma house. And I think that means that you—and you deserve to mount and enjoy your extended family photos, you know. And you have a space in which you can do that, multiple spaces. You know. If you can find space in your poster basement and remove some posters or move some around, you could do a whole extended James family museum down there. Which, you know, honestly, if you do it in that way, if you do it in a themed wall, then it's contained. And I hope that Morgan won't feel that she's wandering around a grandma house. That she's just like, “Oh, yeah, this is James's weird room.” Which arguably she feels already.

*(James laughs.)*

You got to pick your spot, and you've got to maybe make some sacrifices yourself. But ultimately, you can't keep putting up all the photos all throughout the house. Because one thing's for sure is Morgan's vibe is not that. You both have to work on figuring out—and I know it's hard, particularly if you have two little kids. Like, the last thing you tend to think of

is like wall decoration. But you will feel better in your own house if you both figure out what kind of vibe you want and what you're going to put up there. And I think for Morgan, we're talking about more art pieces, maybe more of Morgan's art, if there's any more to put up. And you're going to find out some new arrangements to make the wall just feel a little bit more aesthetically pleasing to both of you. You're going to figure out what your vibe is. But one thing that we know for sure is Morgan's vibe is: extended family throughout the house? Nuh-uh. And I'm going to side with Morgan on that. You're going to redo that. You're going to get all your family photos into one place where you can do a rotating exhibit of the extended family, James.

[00:55:00]

And that dining room, you're going to figure out your vibe together, and you're going to solve this problem. Okay. This is the sound of a gavel.

**Clip:**

**Derek Zoolander:** (*Whispering*) What is this?

(*A crashing sound.*)

A (*robotic voice insert*) PICTURE for ants?!

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

**Jesse Thorn:** Please rise as Judge John Hodgman exits the courtroom.

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

James, how are you feeling about this verdict?

**James:** I agree that we definitely need to redesign the dining room, but I am disappointed that the family gets pushed down to the basement.

**Jesse Thorn:** Family belongs in the basement.

(*James laughs.*)

Morgan, how are you feeling?

**Morgan:** Good! I think it's a good ruling.

**Jesse Thorn:** James, Morgan, thanks for joining us on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

**James:** Thank you.

**Morgan:** Thank you for having us.

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**Jesse Thorn:** Another *Judge John Hodgman* case is in the books. Our thanks to Redditor u/DrColossusofRhodes for naming this week's episode "In Photo Parentis". If you want to name a future episode, join us on the Reddit at [MaximumFun.Reddit.com](https://www.reddit.com/r/MaximumFun). You can also check out other people's suggestions. It's always fun to see just a list of dumb puns. A lot of fun. [MaximumFun.Reddit.com](https://www.reddit.com/r/MaximumFun). If you want to see the evidence from this week's show, you can, go to this episode's page on [MaximumFun.org](https://www.MaximumFun.org), or follow us on Instagram. That's [Instagram.com/JudgeJohnHodgman](https://www.instagram.com/JudgeJohnHodgman). There's video of this and every new *Judge John Hodgman* episode on YouTube. So, go to YouTube, search for *Judge John Hodgman* pod, and hit like and subscribe.

**John Hodgman:** We discovered a website called YouTube. It allows us to put up videos. *Judge John Hodgman* pod. You can check out my new hair haircut there too. People are also asking like should I be watching the video? Should I be listening to the podcast? How do I support the show? We're thrilled for you to enjoy the program, whatever way it works best for you. All you need to do to pay us back is to spread the word. You know, share it with somebody, maybe leave a review. I want to say thank you to STCGuy on Apple Podcasts. STCGuy left a five-star rating over there on Apple Podcasts. Quote—and this is STCGuy talking—"I love this show. I recommend it to the folks on my team. It's a beautiful example of how to take a disagreement and deconstruct it into something that's easier to understand and negotiate to a solution." End quote. STCGuy, this is a team leader! We've got team leaders listening to the show.

Leave a review, press a like button, press a share button, share the podcast, tell anyone you know who you think might like it any way you can. It really does help people discover the show, and it really, really helps us continue to bring it to you. So, thank you very much for all of that.

**Jesse Thorn:** *Judge John Hodgman*, created by Jesse Thorn and John Hodgman. This episode, engineered by Steve Musa at the Sycamore in Plain City, Ohio. Our social media manager, Nattie Lopez. The podcast is edited by AJ McKeon. Our video editor is Daniel Speer. Our producer is Jennifer Marmor.

Now, Swift Justice, where we answer small disputes with quick judgment. u/CTRexPope on the MaxFun subreddit asks, "My toddler will only go to sleep if I sing 'American Pie'. I demand that they at least let me sing the Weird Al *Star Wars* version them having a tantrum."

**John Hodgman:** (*Sarcastically.*) Yeah, sure. I'm going to go ahead and tell your toddler what they like. Obviously, I wish I could make your toddler go easier on you at bedtime and allow you to sing the weird Al *Star Wars* version of "American Pie", if only for a little variation in your life. But I can't change a toddler's mind any more than you can. And let's face it, CTRexPope, you brought this on yourself. You started singing "American Pie". You know

where this was going to go! I find in your favor, but it's not going to mean anything to you. Good luck.

And hey, speaking of songs, I love a song dispute. Best songs, worst songs, good songs, bad songs. Let's hear some more of them. It's been a while. It doesn't have to even be songs; it can be any kind of music. A few weeks ago we heard from Dorin and her husband, the pianist Hsiang, who pretty much called Mendelssohn trash.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, pretty much said Mendelssohn was a garbage pile.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, he said it was a garbage pile. Called Debussy a kind of a dumpster fire too. Do you agree? Do you disagree? Does a member of your folk band want to go electric, and you think that you should stay acoustic? Do you happen to have a Rolling Stones cover band, and your lead singer doesn't wanna sing "Start it Up"?

**Jesse Thorn:** Shut it down!

**John Hodgman:** If you submitted that case to me at [Maximumfun.org/jjho](http://Maximumfun.org/jjho), you know which episode I'm holding it for.

[01:00:00]

So, hang in there. But get all of your song and music disputes to me at [Maximumfun.org/jjho](http://Maximumfun.org/jjho). your ire at one another is the fuel that makes the podcast go. [Maximumfun.org/jjho](http://Maximumfun.org/jjho).

**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!