

[00:00:00]

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**Jesse Thorn:** Welcome to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. I'm Bailiff Jesse Thorn and with me, of course, Judge John Hodgman.

**John Hodgman:** This week's episode was recorded live in Washington, DC.

**Jesse Thorn:** That's our nation's capital. And we had some amazing litigants talking about mice, baseball, men's accessories. That's the big three for me, by the way: mice, baseball, and men's accessories.

**John Hodgman:** We also got to talk to our friends and yours, Griffin and Rachel McElroy from the *Wonderful!* podcast, among other great fine McElroy products. And we have Leila Dunbar from GBH's *Antique Roadshow* in the house to appraise a very old ham. (*Chuckles.*) Oh, that ham was so old. And I'm going to tell you something—I put my mouth on it.

**Jesse Thorn:** Oh my gosh. This was one of the most—look, I always have a great time in Washington, DC. It's my mom's hometown. I spent a lot of time there. I lived there myself on my own several times. I spent a lot of time there as a kid, my relatives get to come out to the show. I love all of that. And you know, I like to go to the National Portrait Gallery, John.

**John Hodgman:** I know, you love it.

**Jesse Thorn:** (*Chuckling.*) You know how I feel about those portraits.

**John Hodgman:** You love those national portraits.

**Jesse Thorn:** Gotta get in on those portraits. But it is—this was an especially special one with the ham coming out on stage, with Rachel and Griffin, two of our favorite people in the entire world. Let's get to the stage of the Lincoln Theater.

**John Hodgman:** Get me that ham!

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**Jesse Thorn:** People of Washington DC! You asked for live justice, and we came to deliver it. The court of Judge John Hodgman is now in session.

(*Cheers and applause.*)

Let's bring out our first set of litigants. Please welcome to the stage: Annie and Pete! Tonight's case, "Breville's Advocate". Annie brings the case against her husband, Pete. They got rid of their toaster over the summer. Pete wants a new one. Annie says never again. Who's right? Who's wrong? Only one can decide.

Please rise as Judge John Hodgman enters the courtroom and delivers an obscure cultural reference.

*(Cheers and applause.)*

**John Hodgman:** *(Singing in a gravelly Tom Waits impersonation.)* Mary's on the blacktop. There's a husband in the doghouse. In the middle of a shakedown, I got quiet as a church mouse. Blow and blow, wherever you may go. Put on your overcoat, and take me away. *(Beat.)* You gotta take me on into the night, take me on into the night. Bloooooow me away. *(Beat.)* Blow me awayyy.

*(Scattered cheers.)*

Bailiff, Jesse Thorn, please swear them in.

**Jesse Thorn:** Every stop on the tour. Okay.

**John Hodgman:** I don't know what you mean. I just pick a different cultural reference every time. Whatever comes to me.

**Jesse Thorn:** Annie and Pete, please rise and raise your right hands. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God-or-Whatever?

*(They swear.)*

Do you swear to abide by Judge John Hodgman's ruling, despite the fact that he's already pretty toasted, bruh?

*(They swear.)*

Judge Hodgman, you may proceed.

**John Hodgman:** It's been a long time since I've had a five-hour energy drink. Why? What was I thinking?

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah. It's a lot of hours. Many more hours than the course of our program runs.

**John Hodgman:** My favorite part of that cultural reference was when I was singing it, I was watching the bar at the back of the theater slowly close the iron gates, as though there was a problem brewing. We may all be locked in here forever now. Annie and Pete, 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?

Let's try Annie. What's your guess?

**Annie:** I'm pretty sure it is a song by Tom Waits.

**John Hodgman:** Oh, interesting! I guess that's a possibility. I hadn't thought of that.

*(Laughter.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** I mean, it would be a real stunner.

**John Hodgman:** Any particular song that you had in mind?

**Annie:** Alas, no.

**John Hodgman:** Okay, that's not a Tom Waits song, but fine.

**Jesse Thorn:** You could just say like something about tin cans or whatever.

**John Hodgman:** *(Singing again.)* Alas, no! The rain has poured into my trumpeeet!

*(Speaking.)* Go ahead.

**Pete:** I can't remember the song. But yeah, it's definitely a Tom Waits song.

**John Hodgman:** Are you Tom Waits?

**Pete:** No. *(Laughs.)*

**John Hodgman:** I mean, let the record show you're wearing a sort of paperboy's cap. And you have a gruff and gravelly voice.

**Pete:** Yeah, well, thank you.

**John Hodgman:** Any guess whatsoever?

**Pete:** No.

**John Hodgman:** Okay. It was kind of a gimme. "Blow, Wind, Blow" was the name of that song. By Tom Waits, *Frank's Wild Years*.

[00:05:00]

I'm singing Tom Waits songs every stop on this tour, because I love Tom Waits, and it annoys my friend Jesse. So, who seeks justice in my court?

**Annie:** I do, your honor.

**John Hodgman:** Annie, what is the nature of your dispute?

**Annie:** Okay. So, we live in a 100-year-old rowhome in Baltimore.

**John Hodgman:** Okay. Thank you for making the trip.

**Annie:** Oh, it's our pleasure. So, we regularly experience mouse problems. And usually they're only in the winter. But after our beloved 20-year-old cat passed away in July—

**John Hodgman:** Oh, I'm sorry.

**Annie:** Thank you very much. So, we started—

**John Hodgman:** What was the name of your cat who passed away?

**Annie:** His name was Mr. Cat.

**John Hodgman:** Mm-hm.

*(Laughter.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** Awesome name.

**Annie:** He was the best. He was the best.

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

*(Annie thanks him.)*

And he passed away in July?

*(Annie confirms.)*

Are you thinking about getting another pet sometime? In the future?

**Annie:** We actually—so, we actually do have two cats now. We did get two cats.

**John Hodgman:** Wow. You moved on fast.

**Annie:** I know. I know. Well, there's a reason. It was because of what I'm about to tell you. We had—

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. What are the names of the new cats?

**Annie:** Okay, um.

*(Laughter.)*

Their names are The Dread Pirate Morton McScallywag.

**John Hodgman:** Okay.

**Annie:** He has one eye.

**John Hodgman:** Uh-huh.

**Annie:** And the other one's name is Potato.

*(Cheers and applause.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, no notes on that one. A+!

**John Hodgman:** Why did you need to dance on Mr. Cat's grave so swiftly and get these two new cats? The mice? Was that the issue?

**Annie:** Yes. Because immediately after Mr. Cat passed away, we had a scourge of mice.

**John Hodgman:** I see.

**Annie:** And they were... they were everywhere.

**John Hodgman:** Really? For example, in any appliances?

**Annie:** They were in the toaster.

**John Hodgman:** They were in the toaster.

**Jesse Thorn:** Wait, hold on. So, I know what it is to be in a toaster. But like toast is in a toaster often. When you say there were mice in the toaster... how do you know that fact?

**Annie:** Because—

**Jesse Thorn:** You inferred it, right? You tell me that you inferred it.

**Annie:** No. No, no. We saw them walking on the toaster, and we saw their little tails sticking out of the little slot where you pull the lever down to toast your toast. Their little tails sticking out.

*(Disgust from the audience.)*

**John Hodgman:** That's pretty damning evidence, I must say. I don't know how those mice would have faked it otherwise. That's probably real mousetails. Why didn't you just hit the lever right then? Boom. Problem solved.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, I feel like it's evidence—

**Annie:** Well, I'm a vegetarian, so we—that's the other part of the issue. We only use the humane live traps. So, I'm transporting these mice to the park daily. I'm catching them, and driving them in my car.

**John Hodgman:** Do you know what's not a humane mouse trap?

**Annie:** A cat? Yeah.

*(John confirms.)*

But that's natural. *(Laughs.)*

**John Hodgman:** Fair enough. Mandatory carnivores. You can't get in their way. They're going to eat the mice. They're going to bring them to you and offer them to you for your breakfast and teach you how to hunt. Do they leave mice for you anywhere?

**Annie:** Not yet.

**John Hodgman:** It's not a possibility that Mr. Cat left a mouse in the toaster as a treat for you, right?

**Annie:** I mean, not—no.

**John Hodgman:** Perhaps his ghost?

**Annie:** Perhaps. *(Laughs.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** Wait, Annie, are you telling me that the one-eyed cat and the cat named Potato aren't the best mousers?

**Annie:** I think they're acting as a deterrent. I think just like their scent—

**John Hodgman:** Their presence. Yeah, okay.

**Annie:** Yeah. Because since we got them—I will admit, since we got them, we have not seen any evidence, either.

**John Hodgman:** No mouse sign?

**Annie:** No mouse sign.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. Okay, I understand.

**Jesse Thorn:** Peace through superior firepower.

**Annie:** Yes.

**John Hodgman:** Got rid of the toaster, obviously.

**Annie:** I threw away the toaster.

**John Hodgman:** Did not replace it.

**Annie:** Did not replace it.

**John Hodgman:** Got the cats.

**Annie:** Yes.

**John Hodgman:** Everything's in equilibrium. Except for you, Pete. You've got an issue, because you love toast so much.

**Pete:** I'm a huge fan of toast, yes.

*(Scattered laughter.)*

**John Hodgman:** Make a note that Pete is a huge fan of toast.

**Jesse Thorn:** So noted.

**John Hodgman:** Alright, thank you.

**Jesse Thorn:** I've entered an entry into the toast journal.

**John Hodgman:** Thank you, I wanted that on the record. So, what is your response to this dispute? What is your counter complaint? You want a toaster?

**Pete:** Yeah, now that we have the cats, why not just get a toaster?

**John Hodgman:** Why not indeed, Annie?

**Annie:** Because we saw several mice. When you see one mouse, there's at least ten mice. How could we ever be confident that there had not been mice in the toaster? And—

**John Hodgman:** How can you be confident that there are not mice currently in your oven? Or in your couch, or in your hair right now? How do you know I didn't sneak a mouse in there when you were coming on stage?

**Annie:** That is true. That's true!

**John Hodgman:** I couldn't have done it; I was out here. But our producer, Laura, might have done it for a joke.

**Annie:** That is true.

[00:10:00]

But when you use an oven, you generally use some kind of baking tray or baking dish. When you use the toaster, you're just putting your bread or your bagel right in there.

And there are so many terrible mouse-borne illnesses that can be aerosolized.

**John Hodgman:** You don't need to convince me that I don't want to make bread in a toaster where a mouse has shat.

*(Laughter.)*

**Annie:** Yes. Well, I did a lot of research.

**John Hodgman:** Like, I'm not a disease denier. You're just saying there's no way to secure the toaster from—

**Annie:** There's no way to secure the toaster. I did a lot of online shopping research into like containers that could go around a toaster, but they're all like fabric, which just seems pointless to me.

**John Hodgman:** They're called toaster cozies. Yeah.

**Annie:** Yeah, yeah. And I don't really understand why that would be a thing, because like the mouse would, I mean, just go right through that.

**John Hodgman:** Pete, how is not having—when did you get rid of the toaster, Pete? Or when did Annie get rid of the toaster, I should say?

**Pete:** Probably mid-July, I would think.



**John Hodgman:** And was it a traumatic event for you?

**Pete:** No, it was not. I was not there.

**John Hodgman:** Right. Right. You just came home and all of a sudden—

**Pete:** Where's the toaster?

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, there was just a square spot of crumbs on the counter that had never been cleaned.

**Jesse Thorn:** You were at work, and you suddenly felt a sick emptiness in the pit of your stomach where toast should be.

**John Hodgman:** *(Laughs.)* How has not having a toaster affected your life?

**Pete:** Well, I have a—I work for the airline, so I have a very strange schedule. So, toast in the morning—

**John Hodgman:** Does that mean you're a spy?

**Pete:** No.

**John Hodgman:** Okay, just thought maybe.

**Pete:** No, but yeah, I just—it's a quick, easy breakfast to pop some bread in there. I put it on a paper towel. It just—

**John Hodgman:** Right, and now you're not having any breakfast?

**Pete:** Sometimes, no. Sometimes I eat just raw bread, like some sort of weirdo.

*(John “wow”s, and the crowd “ooh”s.)*

Yeah. I don't like it either.

**John Hodgman:** The risk there is that if you don't have—breakfast is an important meal. If you don't have breakfast in your stomach, it's possible that the airport could be an inefficient place.

**Pete:** Right, exactly. *(Laughs.)*

**John Hodgman:** I mean, we have to fly tomorrow. I'm nervous about our flight now, knowing that you might be there messing things up, because you've been eating raw bread all morning.

**Pete:** I'll eat one extra slice for you.

**John Hodgman:** Annie, is there any other way to toast bread in your house?

**Annie:** So, currently what we're doing is either toasting bread in the oven or on the stove top.

**John Hodgman:** Right. And when you put it in the oven, what are you putting it on?

**Annie:** So, on like a cookie tray with some parchment paper.

**John Hodgman:** What makes you think that the mice are not into that parchment paper and those trays and stuff? You're right, they can get anywhere.

**Annie:** I know they're not on the parchment paper, because the parchment paper is in the pantry, and I keep an eagle eye on the pantry for mouse droppings.

**Jesse Thorn:** Sounds like a fun afternoon in your house.

**Annie:** It's great. It's great.

**Jesse Thorn:** I'm starting to wonder, John, if you're ready to rule in favor of getting a new toaster, but one that's broken that will burn the house down?

*(Laughter.)*

**John Hodgman:** You do not want to get a new toaster.

**Annie:** I do not. I think that we can toast our bread adequately using the stove.

**John Hodgman:** People do like oven toast, Pete. Why is it insufficient for you?

**Pete:** It takes longer.

**John Hodgman:** It's probably energy inefficient, I would imagine.

**Pete:** It generally isn't efficient, yeah. So.

**John Hodgman:** You'd like to get a new toaster?

**Pete:** I'd just like to get a new toaster.

**John Hodgman:** Do you have your eye on one?

**Pete:** No, I haven't—

**John Hodgman:** You've been up late scanning the websites, watching and drooling, just thinks—?

**Pete:** No.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. Imagining that you can smell the toast. That's usually a warning sign.

**Pete:** She's a researcher. So.

**John Hodgman:** Okay. I understand. Why can't Pete just have his own toaster, and you just don't use it? You can always have oven toast whenever you want. Have an extra 45 minutes? Make a piece of toast.

**Annie:** For two reasons. One, I don't want him to get hantavirus either. And also—

**John Hodgman:** I think that was part of your vows when you got married.

**Annie:** It was, yeah. (*Laughs.*) But also, the toaster collects crumb, so it draws mice in. And the other thing is like living where we do, mice are just part of the environment. You know? Not necessarily in our house, but in the houses around. We live in a rowhome, you know? So, we have to—

**John Hodgman:** They don't honor property lines.

**Annie:** They do not. And so, we have to make our house as unattractive to mice as possible. So, having a vessel on the counter that is full of crumbs, you know, no matter how often we clean it—and they're very hard to clean—is just attractive to mice. So, it's even—I don't want them to—

**John Hodgman:** I understand your argument, but there would be strategies—right, Pete?—where you could keep a toaster. Like for example, she doesn't believe that you're capable of cleaning a toaster. Is that true?

**Pete:** Our toaster was also very—it didn't have like a tray to pull out.

**John Hodgman:** It didn't have a crumb tray?

[00:15:00]

**Pete:** No, it didn't have a crumb tray.

**John Hodgman:** When did you buy this toaster? In the medieval—?

**Pete:** It was a wedding gift, I think. Right?

**John Hodgman:** Wow. You threw away a wedding gift!

*(Laughter.)*

**Pete:** Yeah, we didn't pick it. We didn't pick it very well. Yeah.

**John Hodgman:** Who gave it to you?

**Annie:** *(Chuckles.)* I don't remember.

**John Hodgman:** You don't remember. Do you think they listen to this podcast?

**Annie:** They probably will to this one. *(Laughs.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** We mentioned we have special guests tonight! Please welcome—

**John Hodgman:** Annie's aunt, Mr. Potato! It's the only name I could think of in that moment. So, what would you have me rule if I were to rule in your favor, Annie?

**Annie:** I would want you to rule that we do not replace the toaster.

**John Hodgman:** Even if the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast were to offer you a brand new, high class, Breville brand toaster?

*(“Oooh!”s from the crowd.)*

The personal choice of both Judge John—I know, it's turned into *Wheel of Fortune*. The personal choice of both Judge John Hodgman and Bailiff Jessie Thorn. Even if we were to give you one of those, you wouldn't want it.

**Annie:** I would certainly be willing to compromise.

*(Laughter.)*

**John Hodgman:** Wow. She really called our bluff there. We don't have any damn toaster for you!

**Jesse Thorn:** No, I mean, earlier we discussed how we should have thought of asking for one of those toasters a few weeks ago.

**John Hodgman:** I know, but I thought you would stick—well, okay, interesting.

**Annie:** Sorry. *(Laughs.)*

**John Hodgman:** If I were to rule—

**Jesse Thorn:** They're expensive toasters! Like, we're in hot water now.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. Pete, if I were to rule in your favor, how would you have me rule?

**Pete:** I think we should get a toaster. I mean, with all the—

**John Hodgman:** I think you've said enough, sir. I think your position is very clear. Well argued, I dare say. I think I've heard everything I need to in order to make my decision. I'm going to retire to my chambers. I'll be back in a moment with my verdict.

**Jesse Thorn:** Please rise as Judge John Hodgman exits the courtroom. Pete, how are you feeling about your chances of sweet, sweet toast in the morning?

**Pete:** No idea. No idea.

**Jesse Thorn:** Annie, how are you feeling?

**Annie:** I think I might have hurt my chances by being willing to compromise. (*Laughs.*)

**Jesse Thorn:** Did you two know there really are toaster nerds?

**Annie:** No!

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, is there any toaster nerds here who love that kind of toast? It's like a Sunbeam or something from the—that was made until like the '70s, and then they stopped making it? Anybody? Yeah, somebody knows. So, there's a toaster nerd. You know if there's a *Judge John Hodgman* show in Washington, DC, there's a nerd of it in there. We'll see what the judge has to say about all this when we come back in just a moment.

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**Jesse Thorn:** You're listening to *Judge John Hodgman*. I'm Bailiff Jesse Thorn. Of course, the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast always brought to you by you, the members of [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org). Thanks to everybody who's gone to [MaximumFun.org/join](http://MaximumFun.org/join), and you can join them by going to [MaximumFun.org/join](http://MaximumFun.org/join).

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**Jesse Thorn:** Please rise as Judge John Hodgman reenters the courtroom and presents his verdict.

**John Hodgman:** Annie, I have great sympathy for you. I have been traumatized by mouse infestation in my life, if anyone has read my book *Vacationland*—still available in paperback!

*(Cheers and applause.)*

You will know that my mom's house, when she passed away in Western Massachusetts, that my wife—who is a whole human being in her own right—when we had a young family, we would go out to this house. And we would open the silverware drawers, and they'd just be full of mouse turds. And our response to that was to simply quietly close them and walk away. We thought that's what living in nature was, and we were right. Those mice will come for you. They are currently—they might be in retreat currently because of Potato and Dread Pirate—what's the name again?

**Annie:** Morton McScallywag.

**John Hodgman:** Right, of course. How could I forget? The Dread Pirate Morton McScallywag and Potato may have them on the run now, but you know that they are somewhere in the walls. And they are plotting against you, and they might have a little mousehole looking through it, waiting for that toaster to come back. I feel you. You don't like—having mice in the house is not a lot of fun. And they are cute, I guess, from time to time. I mean, that's the hard part about mice, right? That's why you don't want to kill them with traps or glue or anything like that, because it's really hard to imagine them suffering. But on the other hand, they want to kill you with their poops.

And similarly, have you ever—do you know what happened? You know, I live in fear of the mice coming back. Just this past summer, I discovered in our basement the remains of a mouse. Do you know what happens when a mouse dies and it's just there forever? Little skeleton, huge pile of fur. *(Laughs.)* Fur never goes away. In life and in death. I know. That's why we must destroy them.

[00:20:00]

Or at least not tempt them with crumbs. I also—I sympathize with you, and I appreciate how once you see mouse tails in the toaster once, that's trauma that you never forget. Even though Pete wants toast. I can see why you are able to maintain your cognitive dissonance to imagine that mice aren't dancing on your bed and on your pillows every day when you're outside. That's what they're doing. You understand that? The toaster is just the one place you remember seeing them. They are everywhere. They are sneaking in all the time. They are laughing at your cats, Potato and The Dread Pirate Mr. Morton Scallywags. They are coming back, and you will not be able to stop them.

The only—denying yourself a toaster is just a salve, a mental salve. It means nothing to them. They'll come back, and they'll find those crumbs. They'll get into those cans. You know this is true. Mice find a way. *(Beat.)* Pete really wants toast though. *(Laughs.)* It's a true comfort food. That said, I was willing to rule in your favor, because I sympathize with your trauma. And they're gross, and the mice are gross, and you had a bad situation. And then I offered you a Breville toaster.

(*Laughter.*)

And you said, “Mm. I might be willing to compromise.” You would compromise with me and the Breville Corporation and not your own beloved husband! Maybe a new Breville toaster is worth hantavirus for him! Marriage vows be damned! Since you did not have the courage of your convictions, I will rule in Pete’s favor.

(*Cheers.*)

But! Pete, this toaster must be clean. You understand?

**Pete:** Oh yeah.

**John Hodgman:** (*Chuckles.*) Okay. You must keep the toaster clean. You must police it for crumbs. It is your job to look for anything that might be a crumb but isn't a crumb. You know what I'm talking about.

(*Pete confirms.*)

I would even consider suggesting that you keep it in the refrigerator.

**Pete:** I actually read that today, yes.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. (*Laughs.*) You might even want to start living in the refrigerator, but that's... And because I made the offer, and you called my bluff—we have no pull with Breville whatsoever.

**Jesse Thorn:** None!

**John Hodgman:** But I'm going into my pocket to get one for you. So, when you use it, Pete, I want you to remember this is the *Judge John Hodgman* gift toaster.

**Pete:** Gotcha.

**John Hodgman:** I'm better than whoever gave you that old toaster for your wedding. I'm your crazy uncle Johnny. Keep it clean, maybe get another five cats. This is the sound of a gavel. (*Bangs his gavel three times.*) Judge John Hodgman rules.

**Jesse Thorn:** Annie and Pete, thank you for joining us on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**Jesse Thorn:** In a moment we'll have Swift Justice, but maybe something before that?

**John Hodgman:** Yes, before we move on to Swift Justice, we have a very special guest. As you may know, we are calling this tour the Van Freaks Roadshow. This is in honor of the mutual love that Jesse and I have for certain vans—specifically, the Japanese market only adventure van called the Mitsubishi Delica. So, we don't have any Delicas here tonight, but maybe we have something else, another special treat. Jesse?

**Jesse Thorn:** A very special guest. She was an appraiser who's been with the *Antiques Roadshow* since its earliest days on WGBH in 1997. She specializes in pop culture memorabilia from sports to entertainment to collectible toys. Please welcome Leila Dunbar.

**John Hodgman:** Leila Dunbar to the stage!

*(Cheers and applause.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** Welcome to the show, Leila. We're such fans.

**Leila Dunbar:** Well, thank you.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, not only are we fans, but these weirdos in the second row exploded when you walked out.

**Leila Dunbar:** Where's the—oh, I see the fedora. *(Laughs.)*

**John Hodgman:** Yeah.

**Jesse Thorn:** Honestly, like if you want a round of applause for a PBS star, Washington DC is your spot.

**John Hodgman:** There you go.

*(Cheers and applause.)*

**Leila Dunbar:** By the way, John?

**John Hodgman:** Yes?

**Leila Dunbar:** I like toasters. I could use a toaster.

**John Hodgman:** I'll give you a tote bag.

**Leila Dunbar:** So close.

**John Hodgman:** *(Laughs.)* Leila, how did you get your start on the *Roadshow*?

**Leila Dunbar:** Oh, wow. We're going back into ancient history now. Okay.



**John Hodgman:** Yeah. Pre hi-def.

**Leila Dunbar:** Days of yore. Indeed. Yes. Pre hi-def. Yes. I prefer low lighting these days, but that's a whole other story. I got my start with *Roadshow*. I did the very first *Roadshow* in 1996 at Concord, Massachusetts.

**John Hodgman:** Oh wow! Concord, Massachusetts.

[00:25:00]

**Leila Dunbar:** They were literally pulling people in off the street to come in. Do you have something? Do you have something? We like your wallet. Come on in. We like that watch.

**John Hodgman:** Did anyone call the police on you?

**Leila Dunbar:** Not that day. It's another story.

**John Hodgman:** So, you were in Massachusetts at the time? Are you from Massachusetts?

**Leila Dunbar:** I am from Massachusetts.

**John Hodgman:** That's what I thought. Massachusetts, Jesse, is the most populous state in an area of New England, it's called. It's the southeast part of Canada.

**Jesse Thorn:** Honestly, not familiar. Never heard of it.

**John Hodgman:** Interesting. So, what were you doing in Massachusetts at that time, and how'd they rope you in?

**Leila Dunbar:** How'd they—oh, well, I was running a business with my dad. We were running an antique shop in Milford, running mail order, and we were doing antique toys, advertising, folk art. And I got a call one day saying, “Hey, they've got this newfangled show. It was started in England. We're gonna bring it over to the States.” I'm like—I'm hoping they speed it up if they're bringing it over to the States. “And we're gonna—we want you to come in and do an interview.” And next thing I know, I'm on the show. And you know, 28 years later, here I am. I started when I was 12. Everyone believes that.

*(Laughter.)*

No one buys that.

**John Hodgman:** Now you specialize in pop culture stuff.

**Leila Dunbar:** Yes. Fun stuff.

**John Hodgman:** Fun stuff. Was there anything that absolutely just took your breath away?

**Leila Dunbar:** I had many things, but I feel very fortunate that—with the *Roadshow*, you know, you never know what's going to come in the door that particular day. I will tell you this, and I'm probably going to regret this is going to be on the podcast, but I'll tell you anyway. This is behind the scenes at the *Roadshow*. One time we had a gentleman come in. I was on the collectibles table, and he said he had Lyndon Johnson's fart in a jar.

*(Laughter. John “wow”s.)*

That did not make it to television. My question was—

**John Hodgman:** Well, how—was there any way to establish the provenance?

**Leila Dunbar:** That was my question! How do we know this is authentic?

**John Hodgman:** Right. And you are not able to.

**Leila Dunbar:** We are not able to.

**John Hodgman:** We have a piece of popular—well, I should say an obscure cultural reference that is associated with the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. Would you mind lending your expert eye to it?

**Leila Dunbar:** I'll lend both of them.

**John Hodgman:** Wonderful. Well, let's bring the people out, shall we, Jesse?

**Jesse Thorn:** Please welcome to the stage Craig and Betty.

**John Hodgman:** Craig and Betty to the stage, please.

*(Cheers and applause.)*

So nice to see you. What a wonderful group. Hi, Craig. Anyway. Feel free to sit down, or if we make you comfortable at all. So, Leila, let me explain to you. Craig and his mom Betty were on the show earlier this year, in a case that we called—what did we call it, Jesse?

**Jesse Thorn:** “Special Prosciutto-cuter”.

**John Hodgman:** That's right. Oh yeah. So, Leila, if you didn't hear this one, Betty had a Virginia country ham hanging in her basement that had been purchased by her husband some 50 years ago. Her husband, sadly, has passed on—though we remember him very fondly. And Craig knew that this old ham was in her basement, and he wanted to eat it. And what did I tell you, Craig?

**Craig:** Absolutely not.

**John Hodgman:** I said no way, you can't eat that ham.

**Craig:** I believe you were concerned that one of your listeners might die because of one of your rulings.

**John Hodgman:** I was mostly concerned that you not get your way.

**Craig:** That's fair.

**John Hodgman:** Sometimes—just to let the curtain down, sometimes that happens, and I'm just like, “No, I'm not going to let him have it.”

**Craig:** That's fair.

**John Hodgman:** And I did let you have it. I let you have it with a verdict. What did I order you to do?

**Craig:** You ordered us to dispose of the ham in one of two ways, which was left to my mother. One of which was to return it to its place of origin, or the other was in a sort of pharaoh-esque disposal to bury it with the generations of dogs that my mother has had.

**John Hodgman:** That's right. And its place of origin, of course, was somewhere in Virginia, right?

**Craig:** Yes. The Smoot's homelands.

**John Hodgman:** Okay. And so, Betty, what ham plan did you choose?

**Betty:** I agreed with your final ruling that we should give the poor little thing some kind of a burial. And the choice was to either return it to Virginia, as Craig said, or bury it with all my dogs. So, we have decided that, if possible, Craig is going to take it on a road trip and bury it in Virginia. I'm not into road trips anymore. I was an Air Force brat, and I've had enough of that road driving stuff.

**John Hodgman:** But you're saying that the ham has not yet been buried anywhere?

**Betty:** Oh no, it's here.

**John Hodgman:** It's here?

**Betty:** It's here! Yeah!

*(Cheers.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** I mean, Judge Hodgman, I'm going to be honest with you—right here, right now—if they really are going to take this artifact on the road, they're going to need to insure it.

[00:30:00]

And if they want to insure it, they're going to need an appraisal.

**John Hodgman:** That's true. They might even need a ham carrying case.

*(Jesse cackles.)*

Maybe an *Antiques Roadshow* tote bag, for example. We'll see. We'll see what kind of merch you get out of this. But I believe that our live producer, Laura Volk, is going to bring the item out. Did we ever name this ham?

Wow. Uh, okay. I asked for a ham, not the mummy of a dead baby. Let the record show for those listening that Craig is now holding a, uh—

**Jesse Thorn:** A wooden—pinewood wine crate.

**John Hodgman:** That's right. A pinewood wine crate with a small object wrapped in white cotton muslin. Looks like to me. Betty, will you tell us again precisely when this ham was purchased?

**Betty:** I don't remember exactly, but I'm thinking—we think it was the early '60s.

**John Hodgman:** The early '60s. And I can say that I have seen the provenance. There is documentation that goes with the ham, the original bill of sale, et cetera. So, do you accept that I have established the provenance? I'm not lying to you.

**Leila Dunbar:** I think the authenticity is strong enough to proceed. Yes. *(Laughs.)*

**John Hodgman:** Let's let the ham speak for itself. Let's finally—

**Craig:** It may very well literally be able to do so.

**John Hodgman:** Let the record show that he is unwrapping—okay, so.

**Craig:** This is just the bag, folks.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah. Hooly cow.

**John Hodgman:** The white shroud has come off, and now it is in its burlap bag. I'm just gonna take this over to Leila Dunbar to take a look at.

**Jesse Thorn:** Just the enthusiasm with which everyone is handling this ham is really freaking me out.

**Leila Dunbar:** I can smell the authenticity! *(Laughs.)*

**John Hodgman:** Now it says dry cured in Virginia, packed for—and there's a blank space where perhaps your husband's name could have gone.

**Betty:** It could have, yes.

**John Hodgman:** It smells... it smells like basement bacon. There's a certain musty patina to it. Let's go ahead and take it out of the bag.

*(A less than enthusiastic response from the crowd.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** Oh wow. I did not know this was happening. I knew the other parts.

**John Hodgman:** Betty, now that this is happening, how does it feel to see this old ham again?

**Betty:** Well, I just saw it this morning.

*(Laughter.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** Oh man, Craig, are you gonna plonk it out?!

**Craig:** No, it has fallen once. I'm afraid it will disintegrate. I'm removing it from the bag.

**John Hodgman:** And it still has, now—oh wow.

**Craig:** Now, there is a—

**John Hodgman:** That's a real letdown. It's also wrapped in paper. This is like a Russian nesting doll with meat at the center.

**Craig:** It is. Also, a pamphlet fell out. Hold on.

**Leila Dunbar:** You want to hold on to that.

**Jesse Thorn:** It's so much more valuable with the bag and documentation.

**Craig:** This is the mail order card, which we discussed on the show.

**John Hodgman:** Yes. In case you wanted to order another one.

**Craig:** The absolutely incomprehensible instructions, which are greased together. And then the interior, which says, “Please mail me,”—insert number—“hams like the one I have just enjoyed.”

*(Laughter.)*

Now, I'm not sure how this would affect the evaluation, but your honor, I know that you had enjoyed this. If—

**John Hodgman:** I don't want to touch any of your—I don't wanna touch your greasy papers.

**Craig:** We were gonna offer you to try to offload some of the portions here.

**John Hodgman:** Oh, no. I don't want to. That's important to stay with the object.

**Leila Dunbar:** Absolutely.

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

**Leila Dunbar:** It has to be complete.

**Craig:** Oh, boy.

**John Hodgman:** Now, when was the last time—Craig, before you open that and take it out, is there any other wrapping inside? There's no—?

**Craig:** I don't believe so. There's something that looks like it's either a string or a ligament of some kind attached to it.

*(“Ew”s from the audience.)*

**John Hodgman:** Could it be a mousetail?

**Craig:** It could be some sort of prehistoric rodent tail. It is very large.

**John Hodgman:** I'll take a look in a moment. Betty?

**Jesse Thorn:** Leila, have you ever appraised any food items, or are there any notable like food auction results that we should be aware of?

**Leila Dunbar:** You know, there has been actually a lot of food that has been sold over the years, or even that you could go to eBay today. Old Hershey bars in their original boxes, old Coke bottles. But what I'm thinking of here is in 2004 on eBay, there was a grilled cheese sandwich that had the face of the Virgin Mary on it. And that sold for \$28,000. So, my

suggestion is we can only hope with the theme of the evening that there might be a Shroud of Turin on yours!

*(Laughter.)*

[00:35:00]

**John Hodgman:** What if it was my face?

**Leila Dunbar:** Even better.

**John Hodgman:** Leila Dunbar, having inspected it visually and olfactorily, if you had to put a dollar value on this for insurance purposes—let's say they don't get it to its final resting place.

**Leila Dunbar:** You know, I have to give a value that we don't normally give on the *Roadshow*. It's priceless.

*(Laughter and applause.)*

Priceless.

**John Hodgman:** Craig, do you feel bad that I didn't let you eat it?

**Craig:** You know, your honor, I feel very confirmed in your wisdom as far as your judgment went.

**John Hodgman:** You wanna give it a little lick?

**Jesse Thorn:** Lick the ham! Like the ham!

**Craig:** Is that part of the judgment?

*(The audience picks up Jesse's ham chant.)*

**Craig:** Your honor, I will say—as your honor knows yourself, I am an only child. I am desperate for attention and approval.

**John Hodgman:** I'm gonna I'm gonna give it a little lick, Craig.

*(Cheers and boos.)*

Hang on. This is the last time this ham is gonna see the light of theater. And maybe the light of day. We're sending it on its way home, right? To Virginia. Is that correct, Craig?

**Craig:** Yes, that is correct.

**John Hodgman:** When do you—when are you gonna undertake this journey? As soon as we finish this segment?

**Craig:** *(Laughs.)* Yes, I will head out by the light of the moon.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, can someone give your mom a ride home? Because you're leaving right away. Betty, before this ham goes on to its next life, do you have any last words you want to say to it?

**Betty:** So long.

*(Laughter.)*

**John Hodgman:** Alright, Craig, get in here. Let's give it—just touch tongues.

*(Cheers and boos.)*

*(Muffled.)* One, two, three.

*(Screams.)*

Mm. I didn't taste anything at all, because I coated my tongue in five-hour energy drink before the show. Thank you very much for being here, both of you. Another round of applause for Craig and Betty.

*(Applause and cheers.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** Leila, if people out there have things they need appraised for their museum or for their insurance or just for their own edification, how can they find you?

**Leila Dunbar:** How can they find me? They can go to my website www—four Ws, not three. We have four Ws.

**Jesse Thorn:** Extra W.

**Leila Dunbar:** <http://www.leiladunbar.com>. That's it.

**Jesse Thorn:** Okay. Well, Leila, we're so grateful to you for coming on our program. What an honor it was to have you appraise this legendary ham.

**John Hodgman:** And you know what else, Leila? You get a toaster too.

**Leila Dunbar:** Yes!



*(Cheers.)*

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**Promo:**

**Music:** Relaxed, lo-fi synth.

**Brea Grant:** Oh darling, why won't you accept my love?

**Mallory O'Meara:** My dear, even though you are a duke, I could never love you. You... you... borrowed a book from me and never returned it!

**Brea:** *(Gasp!)* Save yourself from this terrible fate by listening to Reading Glasses.

**Mallory:** We'll help you get those borrowed books back and solve all your other reader problems.

**Brea:** Reading Glasses, every Thursday on Maximum Fun.

*(Music fades out.)*

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**Jesse Thorn:** *Judge John Hodgman* Road Court is getting ready to roll. We're getting there. We bought the Madden Cruiser.

**John Hodgman:** *(Laughs.)* I wish! I wish we were going around in a big tour bus, but we're going to do a whole mixture of planes, trains, and automobiles to bring *Judge John Hodgman* live to you. If you've been listening to this episode—it would seem that you have been!—you know just how much fun a live episode can be. Well, guess what? We're coming to a city near you, I hope. Including New York City, Philadelphia, going back to Washington, DC. First time to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. First time to Ann Arbor, Michigan—which is a free show at a library. We're going back to Madison, Wisconsin, the Fitzgerald Theater in St. Paul, Minnesota. First time in Burlington, Vermont, home of the fish food. Portland, Maine, we're coming back with Joel Mann and the Night and Day Jazz Trio, I hope. Joel, you say yes?

**Joel Mann:** We're in.

**John Hodgman:** Alright, good. Turner's Falls, Massachusetts is a reunion with Mont Belmonte in my old hometown. And my real hometown, Brookline, Massachusetts is welcoming us at the place where I used to work when I was 19 years old, the Coolidge Corner Theater. And then when we skip over into 2025—'cause you know it's coming—we're going to be in Vancouver, Seattle, Portland, Oregon, Los Angeles, and San Francisco as well.

Tickets are on sale now for all of these dates at [MaximumFun.org/events](https://MaximumFun.org/events). Go there for more info, and click those links and get those ticks.

**Jesse Thorn:** [MaximumFun.org/events](https://MaximumFun.org/events). Get those tickets. A lot of those shows are already starting to fill up. I saw, for example—you know, this is our first time in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

[00:40:00]

Right now, Pittsburgh is leading the pack sales-wise. It is getting close in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Grab your tickets for all of these places. It's different in every single place.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, that's right. It's a different show every night, because we have different disputes every night, and that's thanks to you. If you have a dispute that you'd like us to consider for live adjudication on stage, submit it now to [MaximumFun.org/jjho](https://MaximumFun.org/jjho). Make sure you let us know that you want us to consider it for the live show in the city where you live.

And remember, [MaximumFun.org/events](https://MaximumFun.org/events). Tickets are reeeally going quickly. So, get over there, get your tickets, and get us your disputes at [MaximumFun.org/jjho](https://MaximumFun.org/jjho). Let's get back to the case.

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**Jesse Thorn:** Well, it's tough to top that ham, but I think we may have some guests who can top it. Some folks to come on and help us with Swift Justice.

**John Hodgman:** Yes, absolutely. Why don't you introduce them?

**Jesse Thorn:** Okay. You know them, of course, from their own podcast, *Wonderful!*, and from the entire McElroy family of podcasts. Washington, DC's own Rachel and Griffin McElroy. Rachel and Griffin McElroy to the stage, please.

*(Cheers and applause.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** So, what have you desiccated for us?

**Griffin McElroy:** It's so cool to have seen offstage the origin of COVID 2023.

*(Laughter.)*

It's super convenient, because the CDC is right down the street. So, I can pop over there right after we're finished here and be like, "This is where it came from. A very old ham."

**John Hodgman:** That's right. Patient zero and other dumb patient zero licked it at the same time. And now I'm gonna lick you.

**Griffin McElroy:** No, please!

**John Hodgman:** Any disputes that you'd like to air before my court of fake justice?

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, we have couples' cases coming up, and you two do seem like a loving and placid couple. But what's rippling beneath the surface?

*(Laughter.)*

**Griffin McElroy:** We did have a moment this past weekend. We were at a Halloween party that a local pool was throwing, which was really just a few bounce houses overseen by teenagers in a parking lot. And while we were there, we saw a dog that our son Henry, who's almost seven, is just sort of getting over his fear of dogs. He saw this dog, and went up, and very self-guided asked if he could pet the dog. And the woman who was with this dog—it was like a—the dog was like a type of husky, but wasn't a husky. Like, a husky if the hair just goes completely out. Looks like if you put a husky in like a clothes dryer.

**Jesse Thorn:** Like a Samoyed? Maybe a Samoyed?

**Griffin McElroy:** Yes, that's actually, I think, exactly it.

*(Rachel “wow”s.)*

Excellent, excellent dog. I'm not a dog person. I saw this dog. I was like I get it. I understand now.

**Jesse Thorn:** Maybe a descendant of my mom's Washington, DC, Samoyed, Sugar Bear.

**Griffin McElroy:** It's entirely possible.

**Rachel McElroy:** Oh my gosh. Should we get the *Antiques Roadshow* lady back out here?

**Griffin McElroy:** Was Sugar Bear studded, or...? Do you know if there was a breeding sort of apparatus?

**Jesse Thorn:** Uh, Sugar Bear was eventually bedazzled.

*(Laughter.)*

**Griffin McElroy:** Okay! Our son relished the opportunity to pet and eventually hug this dog, which was choice. Our two-year-old does everything the six-year-old does and just immediately went for it too. I'm not a dog person. I still was like, “I'll check it.” And then it was like running. It was like if I was on an airplane, and I stuck my hand out the window while a cloud passed by.

*(John “aw”s and Rachel laughs.)*

It was exceptional. And then I said, “Rachel, you got to get in on this.”

And Rachel said, “No, I’m—no. No.”

To which I said, “No, no, it’s okay. You should come and try it.”

She’s like, “Ah, it’s alright.” And then you didn’t pet the dog.

**Rachel McElroy:** I didn’t pet the dog.

**Griffin McElroy:** And then later, I asked why you didn’t get a hand on the ball. The ball was a dog.

**Rachel McElroy:** What Griffin hasn’t covered is the time that elapsed. I was pretty far away; I would say ten feet away.

**Griffin McElroy:** Not far by most people’s measurements.

**Rachel McElroy:** *(Laughs.)* Henry went in for the pet, and then Gus. And then a little time passed, and then I think you went in there. And then I was—

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, you lost your dog petting window is what you’re saying.

**Rachel McElroy:** That’s my point was that enough time had passed that I felt like if I came in at the very end, it would come across as maybe courteous, but not enthusiastic.

**John Hodgman:** Maybe a little thirsty.

**Jesse Thorn:** So, you decided—

**John Hodgman:** Maybe that dog would be like, “Ew.”

**Rachel McElroy:** So, I said, “Oh, I’m good. I’m good.”

**Jesse Thorn:** So, rather than be courteously enthusiastic, you decided to tell the dog to stick it?

**Rachel McElroy:** *(Laughs.)* My thought was like I’ve touched dogs before.

**Griffin McElroy:** Not this dog.

**John Hodgman:** Well, I guess you’ll never know. Unless you find that dog again.

**Jesse Thorn:** As much as I love petting dogs, it is hard to say that we could make it a compulsory activity.

**John Hodgman:** True. But I guess now you're just going to be chasing that experience for your wife for the rest of your life.

[00:45:00]

**Jesse Thorn:** Okay, we have some Swift Justice to dispense. Shall we put ten minutes up on the clock and see how much justice we can get through?

**John Hodgman:** Let's please do it.

**Jesse Thorn:** Ready, set, begin. Please welcome to the stage Sarah and Tom!

**John Hodgman:** Sarah and Tom.

*(Cheers.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** Sarah and Tom have been married for 25 years. They love to travel and have recently been to Maine. Tom is also an aspiring troubadour.

**John Hodgman:** You're an aspiring troubadour. Now, as far as I know, there is no officiating body over who can actually be a troubadour. Mostly, you can just call yourself one.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, it's not like a motorcycle license.

**Tom:** I was gonna be a busker, but troubadour sounded better.

**John Hodgman:** What do you play? The lute?

**Tom:** I could. A little piano, a little guitar.

**John Hodgman:** Troubadour, you'd have to go around the country. You can't take a piano with you.

**Tom:** Right, right. A guitar you could. A little harmonica.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. What is he talking about? May I ask you, please, Sarah?

**Sarah:** He likes to start playing songs and doesn't totally finish, so we were gonna call him the ADHD busker. He'll just do everything as a medley. And he's planning—he's working on it. I think he can do half of about four or five songs, right?

**Tom:** What's our business before the court today, your honor?

*(Laughter.)*

**John Hodgman:** Thanks for keeping things in order. I appreciate that, Tom. Who does seek justice before me in this court?

**Sarah:** I seek justice.

**John Hodgman:** Sarah, what is the nature of the justice you seek?

**Sarah:** I would like you, your honor, to direct that my loving and beloved husband, that he cannot leave the house unless he is carrying the necessary items he needs to be a law-abiding citizen, to be healthy, to meet his obligations as a spouse and a father. And I think the most easiest and most effective way for this to be done is for him to use a case or bag of some sort of his own choosing.

**John Hodgman:** Tom, do you have a problem walking out of the house with things you need like keys, ID, wallet, that sort of thing?

**Tom:** I don't have a problem with it, no.

*(Laughter.)*

Not at all.

**John Hodgman:** So, what is your solution for carrying these necessary items through the world?

**Tom:** Well, just to cut to the chase. Sarah wants me to wear a murse. And I'm just not gonna do it.

*(An audience member boos.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** Wait, that's not the chase here, sir. Sir. Sarah, what is the issue at hand? Is it an issue of you wanting him to wear a murse, or an issue of him asking something of you?

**Sarah:** He asks things of me. So, first of all, we go out often. And he thinks it's still 1975 and he's a teenager. He doesn't need reading glasses, he doesn't need sunglasses, he doesn't need an extra battery for his cell phone. He doesn't—So, we go out to eat, and he wants to—

**John Hodgman:** It's just him and his flowy shirt and his lute going from Ren Fair to Ren Fair.

**Sarah:** 50 cents in his pockets to buy a soda and a Twizzler, basically. So, I'll say something like, "Can I have a second cocktail, and can you drive home?"

“Oh, I don't have my driver's license; I didn't bring my wallet.”

Or I want to look at the menu, he looks at me, “Can I use your reading glasses?” And so, this is going on constantly.

**John Hodgman:** Does he ever ask you to carry these things for him?

**Sarah:** Not explicitly, but it's implied, right? Because somebody's gotta drive home, somebody's gotta— He says our neighborhood is safe, we don't need a house key.

*(Boos from the audience.)*

So, for a long time he never carried a house key or locked the door.

**Jesse Thorn:** What's your address?

*(Laughter.)*

**Sarah:** I already told them no last names.

**John Hodgman:** Griffin and Rachel, any opinion on this?

**Griffin McElroy:** Have you listened to the show before, Tom?

*(Tom confirms.)*

Okay. You're not going to win this.

*(Laughter.)*

You're going to lose. I don't know. You probably could assume that from just sort of the general vibe on stage and in the audience. But you're going to lose this one.

**Tom:** The punishment has already been meted out, frankly.

**Griffin McElroy:** *(Laughs.)* Okay. I just wanted to make sure you were prepared for the fact that you were going to be—you were going to lose.

**Tom:** I'll never leave the house without my wallet again.

**John Hodgman:** You're suggesting that the trial and the punishment are the same thing. That this humiliation is the punishment for your crime of purposeful and weaponized incompetence.

*(Tom confirms and the audience laughs and cheers.)*

Well, sir, you're wrong. Because punishment is decided by me, not by you. And the trial isn't over yet. Rachel, do you—

**Rachel McElroy:** Can I ask a quick question? Is it an issue of comfort? Do you not like having things in your pocket?

**Tom:** You know, I think I haven't made a very good transition to old age. Like, when I was working, I had a suitcase or a briefcase. I had a messenger bag. I had pants.

*(Laughter.)*

No, no! Um, but—

**John Hodgman:** But those days are over! I'm retired now!

**Tom:** Sort of.

**John Hodgman:** It's just me, my traveling bassoon, and my underwear! Prithee, fair ladies, would you like to hear a bassoon tune?

[00:50:00]

'Tis I, Tom, the traveling double reed troubadour.

**Tom:** Yes, your honor. When you buy a pair of dress pants, you can assume there are gonna be pockets. When you're buying sweatpants, you can't make that assumption. I bought sweatpants, and they come home, they don't have any pockets. So, I'm walking around with my wallet in my hands. And I know that's bad.

**Sarah:** It goes beyond pockets. He needs to carry an EpiPen. He has a food allergy.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, I was gonna say. Wow.

**Sarah:** Sometimes we have to carry an inhaler for our son. I always have the inhaler.

**Griffin McElroy:** It feels like there's an opportunity for a beautiful compromise here.

**John Hodgman:** I'd love to hear it.

**Griffin McElroy:** Which is the gig bag. You have your instrument of choice, probably not the piano, with you at all times—also tucked away in there in the little pouch where you're supposed to put a tuner or a capo. You also have your EpiPen. You also have your wallet, your keys, your phone. Anything else.



**John Hodgman:** And your whatever, your little practice guitar in case you want to do some busking.

**Griffin McElroy:** That's exactly right.

**John Hodgman:** What's the bag that you want him to carry? Do you have—? I see you're carrying two bags, one for yourself and one for Tom.

**Sarah:** So, I saw a lovely Italian leather number and—but this is not it. But this is just a proof-of-concept bag.

**John Hodgman:** Proof-of-concept bag.

**Griffin McElroy:** That's gorgeous.

**John Hodgman:** I'm gonna give this to our menswear expert and men's accessories expert, Jesse Thorn.

**Jesse Thorn:** So, I think what we see here is a convenient utility bag. It has a front pouch. It has a second front zipper, and then it has a central compartment. I think if we open the central compartment, what we'll find—yup—is organizational tools inside.

**John Hodgman:** Oh, I thought it was gonna be a hundred dead mice.

**Jesse Thorn:** There's a lot of places you could put an EpiPen there, reading glasses, whatever you needed to carry on a day-to-day basis.

**John Hodgman:** This may not be your idea of fashionable, Tom. But there is a solution out there for you that I think you will find is useful and is to your taste. And it is your job to find it. And until you do, put it on.

*(Laughter and applause.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** Thank you, Sarah and Tom.

**John Hodgman:** That's the punishment, Tom. Put it on! Walk!

**Griffin McElroy:** That looks cool!

*(Applause.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** You look great, Tom. He looks good.

**Griffin McElroy:** It's a cool look.

**John Hodgman:** It's a cool look, Tom. Thank you very much, Sarah. Thank you, Tom.

**Jesse Thorn:** Sarah and Tom.

**John Hodgman:** May justice go with you.

**Jesse Thorn:** Let's welcome to the stage J.P. and Sharon!

**John Hodgman:** J.P. and Sharon.

**Jesse Thorn:** Sharon is a lawyer specializing in women's rights. J.P. is a birder and a Red Sox fan.

*(Scattered boos from the crowd.)*

**John Hodgman:** Welcome to the—wow, I was wondering whether people were gonna care about sports here.

**Jesse Thorn:** And the answer was three did. A lot.

**John Hodgman:** Who brings the case to me in this court?

**J.P.:** I do, your honor.

**John Hodgman:** J.P.?

*(J.P. confirms.)*

What is your real name, please?

**J.P.:** My real name is John.

**John Hodgman:** John, thank you. What is the nature of your dispute?

**J.P.:** *(Chuckles.)* I would like Sharon to stop blaming me for the 2004 election of George W. Bush.

*(Laughter.)*

**Griffin McElroy:** Did you vote for him a million times?

**J.P.:** Not even once!

**John Hodgman:** Sharon, how is your husband responsible for the second term of George W. Bush?

**Sharon:** Because in the lead up to the election of George W. Bush for the second time, his beloved Red Sox were in the playoffs. And I asked him, “Would you rather have John Kerry win the election or have the Red Sox win the World Series?”

*(Boos from the crowd.)*

And he said, “Well, we had a Democratic president pretty recently.”

**John Hodgman:** Whoaaa!

**Sharon:** He then proceeded to use all of his mojo, which is wrapped up in this blanket.

**John Hodgman:** We’ll to the blanket.

**Sharon:** To help the Red Sox get past the Yankees and win the World Series.

*(Scattered cheers.)*

Yeah, and then we all know what happened in the election.

**John Hodgman:** Wow.

**Sharon:** Yeah.

**John Hodgman:** Before I ask you your reasoning and your moral choices, what did you do to make the Red Sox win the World Series?

**J.P.:** Well, if I sit in a particular position with a particular blanket on my head, the Red Sox tend to do very well in the playoffs.

**Jesse Thorn:** Who knew that all it took for the Red Sox to win the World Series was a weird reenactment of *A Handmaid's Tale*?

**J.P.:** Exactly!

**Sharon:** When he's actually watching it, it's very stressful. He covers everything up besides his eyes and he just peers through.

**Griffin McElroy:** The baseball organs that you need to see baseball happen, yeah.

**P.J.:** 100%!

**John Hodgman:** Look at your husband, this weird wizard that you married.

*(Laughter.)*

Whence come his magical powers? What makes him so powerful, and dare I say, attractive?

[00:55:00]

**Sharon:** It is unclear to me. But if you watch baseball with my husband, he will say something, and ten seconds later, the announcer will say the exact same thing.

**John Hodgman:** “Oh, J.P. is making me say this! Holy cow!”

**Sharon:** It's true.

**John Hodgman:** Wrong team, I know. I tried. Griffin and Rachel, do you have a question for this J.P. fellow?

**Griffin McElroy:** Is there a way you wear your blanket that changes the outcome of presidential elections?!

**J.P.:** That is my argument is that I have very limited powers, exclusively limited to the Red Sox and the playoffs. And so, I couldn't affect the outcome of the election.

**John Hodgman:** Well, why didn't you say that to Sharon when she posed you the choice?

**Jesse Thorn:** I mean, John, you're from Boston. You probably know that for Bostonians, this—many Bostonians other than you, this is the most like—it's possible that John Kerry would have chosen the Red Sox winning the World Series.

*(Laughter.)*

**John Hodgman:** Well, he certainly didn't seem like he wanted to win. Sorry John Kerry, Lieutenant Governor of Massachusetts, then Senator. So, what would you have me rule now that you've aired this grievance, Sharon?

**Sharon:** Well, I would like you to rule that he's at fault, and he should feel bad for this. And I would point out that there were Cubs fans, and the Cubs won, and then guess who won the next election? So, this is actually a problem. And you must stop it. You must tell baseball fans they should do the right thing politically.

**Jesse Thorn:** We have to stand up for these curses!

**Sharon:** Exactly!

**Rachel McElroy:** We should note that he is still wearing the blanket on his head.

*(Laughter.)*

**P.J.:** I'm a rule follower.

**John Hodgman:** If I asked you to entrust me with that red blanket until 2025... in exchange for a toaster.

*(Laughter.)*

**P.J.:** We have had a toaster recently.

**John Hodgman:** I just feel like, as someone who believes in rationality but is also occasionally susceptible to the idea of curses and fated outcomes—because on the night of election night 2004, our daughter was let's say about two and a half years old. And I leaned over her to say goodnight to her on that night, and she said, “What's that on your shirt?” And it was a sticker that said Kerry on it.

And I said, “That's who I want to be president.”

And she just looked at me and beamed, and she said, “Maybe next time.”

*(Laughter and “whoa!”s from the audience.)*

That's how I knew it was over! It's hard not to believe in fated-ness from time to time. And I feel like, for the sake of your relationship—and perhaps, our very republic—we need to get you—we need to break this curse that started in 2004. And I think if you give me that red blanket, if you walk it over to me right now, and I will hold it in trust for you.

*(Rowdiness from the crowd.)*

I rule in whatever favor I just ruled in. I get the blanket. *(Three gavel bangs.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** Thank you, J.P. and Sharon. And of course, thank you to our friends Rachel McElroy and Griffin McElroy from the wonderful podcast, *Wonderful!*. What a joy it's been. Washington, DC, is lucky to have you.

**Griffin McElroy:** Thank you Washington. Thank you, Judge John Hodgman and Jesse.

**Rachel McElroy:** Thank you!

**John Hodgman:** Thank you, Griffin. Thank you, Rachel, so much.

**Griffin McElroy:** Goodbye!

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**Jesse Thorn:** That's it for this episode of the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. Our thanks to Reddit user u/ThisHenryJames for naming the case in this episode. Follow us on Instagram, [@JudgeJohnHodgman](#). We're on YouTube and TikTok, [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](#).

**John Hodgman:** And thank you to podcast listener code named N-J-H-F-R-Y-H-V on Apple Podcasts. Gave us a really nice review saying, "Wonderful show, always fun and funny. Yet Judge John Hodgman invariably brings to his judgments wisdoms—" Well, they didn't say wisdoms; they said wisdom correctly.

**Jesse Thorn:** But we have multiple wisdoms.

**John Hodgman:** Many wisdoms. "—and compassions for his guests." If you're listening on Apple Podcasts, it would be wonderful if you would give us a rating, maybe even give us a few stars, maybe five. That's a suggested number of stars. It really does help new listeners find the show. And wherever you listen to podcasts, if you have a chance to just leave a little note saying, "I liked it," that really, really helps.

But you know what really helps even more? Telling a friend, voice to voice, "Hey, listen to *Judge John Hodgman*." Or share our YouTube episodes, or do whatever you feel like to let people know we're making a podcast, and it's maybe worth five stars.

**Jesse Thorn:** The *Judge John Hodgman* podcast was created by Jesse Thorn and John Hodgman. Our touring producer was Laura Volk.

[01:00:00]

This episode was recorded by Stephen Colon. And this tracking that we're doing right now, recorded by our pal Joel Mann at WERU Community Radio in Orland, Maine. Nattie Lopez is our social media manager. AJ McKeon edits the podcast. Daniel Speer is our video editor. Our producer, Jennifer Marmor.

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!