

[00:00:00]

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**Jesse Thorn:** Welcome to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. I'm Bailiff Jesse Thorn. This week, "Claw and Door-der". (*Suppressing a chuckle.*) Matt brings the case against his partner, Maddi. Matt says their cat screams if it's on either side of a closed door. To keep the peace, Matt would like to sleep with the bedroom door open, but Maddi says she can't stand sleeping with an open door. The cat screams aren't that bad. 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:** He's my cat. He's not God-or-Whatever's cat! Let God-or-Whatever have his own cat. Let God-or-Whatever have all the damn old cats he wants! And kill them all! Church is mine.

Bailiff Jesse Thorn, please swear them in.

**Jesse Thorn:** Matt and Maddi, 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 his favorite rapper of all time is MC Skat Kat?

*(They swear.)*

Very well. Judge Hodgman, you may proceed.

**John Hodgman:** Well, it is true that opposites attract. Isn't that right, Joel?

*(Joel agrees.)*

Alright. I'm here with Joel Mann at the summer chambers [WERU.org](http://WERU.org) in Orland, Maine. There's Jesse Thorn over at Maximum Fun HQ. And there are our litigants, Matt and Maddi, in Mesa, Arizona. A lot of M's! The M Squad down there. You may be seated for an immediate summary judgment in one of your favors.

*(Chairs squeak.)*

Can either be named the piece of culture that I referenced as I entered this courtroom? Uhhh, how about Maddi? You go first.

**Maddi:** So, it seems very distant, but at least in my dreams, I feel like this is something that would be said in the *Magic Schoolhouse*—not the *Magic Bus*, but *Magic Schoolhouse* books. *Mummies in*—or, yeah, *Mummies in*—I want to say *Manhattan*. It was one of the early ones, but it had cats!

**John Hodgman:** *Mummies*—look—in *Manhattan*. It's possible. Listen, I don't think that that's—that's not what I'm quoting from.

**Maddi:** But it could be.

**John Hodgman:** But it could be word-for-word in that book for all I know.

**Matt:** I'm just gonna go with my prepared guess, which is the episode of *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia* where they're recording the fake documentary where Dennis was accused of killing his ex-wife who was trying to become a cat.

**John Hodgman:** That's a pretty good prepared answer. I appreciate that. I've not seen that episode, so it is unlikely that I would be quoting from it. Joel, you want to take a guess?

**Joel:** *Cats the Musical*.

**John Hodgman:** *Cats the Musical*. You would think I might. I mean, there's a lot of—this is a cat-themed dispute. There's a lot of cat content out there. So, I had to—I tried to find something a little bit more obscure than *Cats the Musical*, no offense, Joel.

All guesses are wrong. The correct answer, or the answer I was looking for, was *Magic Tree House* number four, *Mummies in the Evening*! So close!

**Maddi:** (*Gasps.*) I knew it. I know.

**John Hodgman:** No, it's from a novel called *Pet Sematary* by Maine-native Stephen King. And it is the young boy, Gage, is sad about his cat for a reason that I don't want to get into. 'Cause you know what? You ever read *Pet Sematary*, Joel?

**Joel:** No.

**John Hodgman:** Don't read it. Look.

**Joel:** I've never read a Stephen King book.

**John Hodgman:** (*Softly.*) Okay Joel. It's fine.

It's fine not to read that one. Because it is traumatizing. And Stephen King knew it too! He put it away. He's like, "I can't publish this." And then one day like—because it was too—not just too scary, but too upsetting, Joel.

**Joel:** He is very upsetting.

**John Hodgman:** Very—well, this one in particular was very upsetting. Matt, you ever read *Pet Sematary* by Stephen King?

**Maddi:** I have it on the bookshelf, but I haven't read it yet.

**John Hodgman:** Have you ever read a Stephen King?

**Maddi:** Oh, yeah.

**John Hodgman:** Okay. So, you see, Joel? They're in Arizona, and they've read one.

**Jesse Thorn:** Judge Hodgman, I've never read *Pet Sematary*, but I really like the Errol Morris movie *Gates of Heaven*. Have you ever watched that?

**John Hodgman:** I have seen it. It's one of his first ones, right? It's about a pet cemetery.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, it's really great.

**John Hodgman:** That's a great one. You can watch that, but you don't have to read *Pet Sematary*, even if you're a Stephen King fan. Because it's very upsetting. Stephen King himself was like, “This is too upsetting to publish,” and he put it away for a while. And then he woke up one day, I guess, and he was like, “Oh, shoot, I'm only gonna publish five books this year. I better put this one out, too.” And it's truly upsetting.

And just the other thing you don't have to do is watch Frank Darabont's movie of *The Mist*, which is a great movie until the end, which—he makes it darker than the actual book. And it's really, really upsetting. And I tried to warn Aaron Franklin about this at Franklin Barbecue. And he didn't listen to me, and he watched it, and he was like, “You were right.”

You don't have to engage with stuff that is upsetting to you. That's my message to everyone listening. It is mandatory that you listen to this podcast. Absolutely. But if you know there's a piece of news that's just going to be upsetting to you, and you know that by consuming that news or that story you're not going to affect the outcome, you can take a break from it.

[00:05:00]

You don't have to read *Pet Sematary*. There are a lot of other Stephen King books to read. That's just my public message for today. Now let's get into the case.

Okay. You live there in Arizona, and you have a dispute. Who comes seeking justice in this case?

**Matt:** I do.

**John Hodgman:** Oh, okay. What is—? And that would be Matt.

**Matt:** Yes. So, as long as Maddi and I have been together—we've been together for just shy of six years—she can't stand sleeping with a door open. So, like I have the largest bedroom in the house. So, like we have the ensuite bathroom. So, if that wasn't closed when, you know, we went to bed, I had to get up and close that. We have to close our bedroom door. And then about a year later, we got a cat that can't stand if he can't go through a door. So, he will scream at it, and then— So, he would get locked up in a room at night, and he will—not every night, but he will scream at the door, either when I'm trying to fall asleep or wake us up, because he wants out.

**John Hodgman:** You want to give your cat full access to your bed and your bedroom. You want an open bedroom relationship with your cat, is that right, Matt?

**Matt:** That is correct.

**John Hodgman:** And the cat's name is Isaac. I almost called you Isaac by accident. I apologize.

*(Maddi laughs.)*

**Matt:** You can call me Isaac. I like our cat.

**John Hodgman:** All cool names. Maddi, you wanna you want that door to be closed, and we're gonna get into all the reasons that one would reasonably want their bedroom door closed in a moment.

So, first let's—before we get into that, if you don't mind, we gotta pay the pet tax, as they say on the subreddits. We gotta take a look at this cat. You sending some evidence and photos of this cat, Isaac?

*(Matt confirms.)*

Okay, these photos are obviously gonna be available on the Instagram, and as well as on the YouTube and the TikTok, I presume. Everywhere you find *Judge John Hodgman*, visually, you can find these photos of this nice cat, Isaac, who is an orange cat. And apparently, according to this photo, a podcaster. Is that right?

**Matt:** A little bit. I had to take that photo, because it was too great. That was my microphone for work, and the photo was too great not to share.

**John Hodgman:** So, Isaac doesn't currently have a podcast yet.

**Matt:** No, it would be a lot of screaming.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, well, I still think you would have many more subscribers than we have.

*(Maddi chuckles.)*

**Matt:** Alright, I'll get on that.

**John Hodgman:** Very cute cat. I mean, why wouldn't you want to sleep with this cat, Maddi?

**Maddi:** So, he actually does sleep with us. He's stuck in the room, which is what he doesn't like. Because, as Matt mentioned—

**John Hodgman:** Right, okay. I see. You're not trying to keep the cat out. You just want the door closed when you're sleeping. And the cat is like, “Uhh, you're not the boss of any of us. I'm the boss. Open this door. Meow, meow, meow.”

**Maddi:** He certainly does think that. And we had roommates. You know, that was kind of expected, because you never know who's doing what, so just keeping the door closed. But there's also a safety sense to it.

**John Hodgman:** Talking about hugging and kissing.

**Maddi:** There we go.

**John Hodgman:** Are you—you're married, or what?

**Maddi:** Just dating. But serious.

**John Hodgman:** Just dating? But living together?

**Maddi:** Yes.

**John Hodgman:** Which is totally cool. Maddi, what do you do all day down there in Mesa, Arizona?

**Maddi:** Yeah, I work at a plasma collection facility, so I'm basically a certified vampire.

*(John “whoa”s.)*

But the reverse of it.

**Jesse Thorn:** That's a good job. Right, Jesse?

**Maddi:** Yeah, it involves a lot of blood.

**Jesse Thorn:** John, a lot of people think Draculas have to have that job, but it's not the case. Draculas can have any job.

**John Hodgman:** Oh. Well, but you're not a vampire, are you, Maddi?

**Maddi:** Oh—no, I don't like red meat.

**John Hodgman:** Mm, I didn't like that pause there!

**Matt:** She did point out my veins while we were sitting here, waiting for set up.

**John Hodgman:** Alright, daywalker. Matt, how did Isaac come into your life/lives?

**Matt:** We adopted him in December of 2019. Our friend worked at a—you know, a pet rescue. He was like, "Hey, I'm not supposed to tell anyone this, but all of his fees are paid for." So, we kind of showed up and adopted a cat.

**John Hodgman:** You got a bargain cat.

**Matt:** We did, and he was very calm and loving in the shelter. And then we got him home, and like a week later, he was screaming and running through the house and having a great time.

**John Hodgman:** And this was—Maddi, was this a mutual decision to adopt Isaac?

**Maddi:** Relatively. At that time, I was still in college. So, we weren't officially living together, because I went out of state. So, I supported it, but I didn't have any claim to the house. I wasn't paying rent or anything, so.

**John Hodgman:** Did you feel like you couldn't oppose having the cat, if you wanted to? Because of that?

**Maddi:** I mean, I wouldn't. I've been voting for a cat since day one. So.

**Matt:** She's actually the cat person.

**John Hodgman:** Have you been voting multiple times? Has it been vote fraud for cats?

**Maddi:** Yes, just constantly in the morning.

**Jesse Thorn:** And you are out of state, so you were (*chuckling*) voting by mail.

**Maddi:** Sent a quick text, email, you never know.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, we gotta get on the line with the attorney general in Arizona there, Jesse. We need to start an investigation.

**Jesse Thorn:** We're gonna need you to find some cats.

**John Hodgman:** Look, you can't vote too many times for cats. That's the thing. That's the thing of it. Go ahead and vote as much as you want.

**Maddi:** Nine lives, nine votes. Something like that?

**John Hodgman:** I think that sounds great. So, you feel good about this cat. You like Isaac alright?

**Maddi:** Oh, from day one.

[00:10:00]

Especially the person who we got it from happened to be—they are friends with Matt, but they have been my close friend for a very long time.

**John Hodgman:** So, a good provenance for a cat.

**Maddi:** Oh, absolutely.

**John Hodgman:** I neglected to mention that this—I observed with my very keen eyes that this cat is orange. A marmalade cat. And only recently have I come to understand that orange cats have a rep for being a little wacky. Matt, what do you want to—can you tell me a little bit about that? Do you know what I'm talking about?

**Matt:** Yeah, sometimes he's really smart on top of it. And sometimes he's... not. Like, he screams at doors. He will get really fixated on something silly. Like, above our bed is a window, so we actually had to like tuck behind the drawstring, because in the middle of the night he'll start attacking that. He absolutely hates other cats. So, our neighborhood has a good amount of stray cats, and you will watch him sit in front of the patio door and get into a fight with a cat outside. Like, full on charge the glass sliding door and start screaming and like trying to attack a cat. And we had one that would just sit outside and just stare at him while he's losing his mind trying to, you know, break out and kill this other cat.

**John Hodgman:** He's full of beans.

*(Matt agrees.)*

Is that typical for an orange cat in particular? Do you understand what I'm talking—? I mean, have you heard what I've heard about orange—? I don't know what the reputation is for orange cats. Maddi, do you know?

**Maddi:** Just their general insanity and goofiness.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. Goofy.

**Maddi:** Yeah. No, he fits that to a T. When we describe him, we just say, “He’s an orange cat,” and people are generally understanding of what we go through.

**John Hodgman:** Watch this incredibly pro social media management I’m about to do. Hey, if you’re listening on YouTube, why don’t you still drop a line in the comments about the wackiest thing your orange cat ever did?

**Matt:** We’ve bought him several cat toys that have all been a waste of money. His favorite toy is if you go to the grocery store, just ball up the receipt and throw it. He’ll chase that around, and if he’s in the right mood, he will play fetch. He will bring it back to you. And you have to keep throwing it for—I don’t know—four or five throws, then he loses interest and walks away.

**John Hodgman:** And he’s a—it sounds like he’s a kind of a young guy, like a teenager cat.

**Matt:** He’s like eight or nine.

**John Hodgman:** Oh! Oh boy. He’s never going to slow down then.

*(Maddi laughs.)*

**Matt:** Probably not.

**John Hodgman:** Alright. So, Maddi feels good about Isaac. Matt, how do you feel about Maddi? You’re in love. How long have you been dating? And tell me about the avocados.

**Matt:** *(Laughs.)* We’ve been dating just shy of six years; our anniversary is in September. The avocados, yes. So, we met while she was on her spring break. She lives here. She was going to school out of state, and I lived here. So, we met playing *Dungeons & Dragons* at a game store. And over the summer, her summer break—I can’t remember exactly why it came up, but as a power move, she was trying to intimidate—I think it was me, or just someone. She loves avocados. She decided to bite into a whole avocado, like skin and all. Like you might like an apple or something.

**John Hodgman:** Whoa. That is some chaotic neutral stuff right there.

**Maddi:** It’s a really good power move.

**John Hodgman:** I like it. Go ahead. So, you bit into that avocado. Obviously, you fell immediately in love, Matt.



**Matt:** A little bit there. For our last like, you know, meetup of the summer before she went back to school, I was supposed to bring an avocado. Because she was going to do it in front of someone else. And I was coming straight from work, and I completely forgot. So, then she went back to school, and she was giving me a hard time that I forgot.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, well you blew it, honestly.

**Matt:** I did. So, this was before like Instacart and all that was much easier to do, so I found a website of like an avocado farm in like California. I mailed her five pounds of avocado from California to Alabama, where she went to school. And yeah, so she got five pounds of avocados.

**John Hodgman:** How were they when they arrived, Maddi? Did you take a nice big bite out of each of them?

**Maddi:** None of them were spoiled yet, and they took at least one full day to spoil. Instead of the ten minutes that's normal.

**John Hodgman:** How did it—did you fall in love when your guy, Matt, sent you 50 avocados or whatever it was? Five pounds of avocados?

**Maddi:** Well, of course. On top of that, though, I was in college. So, it was just like the most grand gift, as if somebody gave me like a Fabergé egg or something.

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

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**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**John Hodgman:** So, let's get back into your cohabitation then. Matt, when do you go to bed?

**Matt:** Most nights I'll go to bed between like 11 and midnight.

**John Hodgman:** 11 and midnight. Maddi, same question.

**Maddi:** Like, 8PM and 9PM. (*Chuckles.*)

**John Hodgman:** Oh, okay. So, you're going to bed first.

**Maddi:** Oh yeah.

**John Hodgman:** Okay. And are you a sound sleeper?

**Maddi:** (*Laughs.*) Apparently, no.

**John Hodgman:** Uh, what do you mean?

**Maddi:** I wake up so much that I kind of don't realize it sometimes.

**John Hodgman:** How do you know this? Is Matt taking videos of you while you sleep?

**Jesse Thorn:** Did you walk through a plate glass window in a La Quinta Inn?

**John Hodgman:** Are you attacking—are you sleepwalking and attacking stray cats through the sliding glass door?

**Matt:** So, Maddi has a sleeping disorder. So, she falls asleep a lot and doesn't realize she's sometimes waking up. So, we will have conversations where she'll ask, "Am I asleep?" And then in the morning we'll talk about it, and she doesn't remember that we had a conversation.

**John Hodgman:** Is there a name to the sleeping disorder that you have?

**Maddi:** Narcolepsy, essentially.

**John Hodgman:** Narcolepsy, essentially. Right. So, getting good sleep and protected sleep is probably important to you.

**Maddi:** Fairly, yeah.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. And Matt, are you a sound sleeper or no?

**Matt:** For the most part. Once I'm out, I'm fairly...

**Maddi:** Dead. Yeah.

*(Matt agrees.)*

**John Hodgman:** Okay, got it. Tell me about the bedtime routine then. You're going in first, Maddi, and you're settling down for an evening's rest. And then, Matt, what happens next?

**Matt:** Yeah. So, I usually tuck Maddi in most nights. It started on a day she was having a bad day, and then she wanted to be tucked in every night.

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

**Matt:** I then close our bedroom door like most of the way, and then we have a thing that props it open. 'Cause his litter box and food are in our bedroom. Which isn't ideal, but when we first adopted him, we had roommates at the time.

**John Hodgman:** Uhhhhh... no, it would not be ideal. But we'll get into it. We'll get into it.

**Matt:** But when we adopted him, we had roommates and there was no like other good spot to put it. So, it's in there, near an air purifier and all of that.

**John Hodgman:** So, you tuck in Maddi, are we talking about a full, genuine, literal tuck in, or just a goodnight kiss on the forehead?

**Matt:** Depends on the night, but I usually, you know, cover her with the blanket, turn off the light. You know, say goodnight.

**John Hodgman:** Do you bring her a glass of water and an avocado?

*(Maddi cackles.)*

**Matt:** Sometimes water, not an avocado. I don't like eating in bed.

**John Hodgman:** You know, after you've been together for six years, Maddi, they start to give up. They don't bring you avocados anymore. Okay, so you tuck in Maddi, and then you go out and you paint some miniatures until 11 or whatever. And then time for bed, and you get in bed.

**Matt:** Yep. So, then Isaac is usually either asleep nearby me or more often than not asleep on our couch. He's got—there's like a folded-up blanket like on the edge of the couch, and he likes sleeping on top of that. So, I have to go get him to get him to bed. And he's always very upset with me. He makes the most like pitiful, like annoyed sounds.

**John Hodgman:** Uh-huh. Go ahead and make those sounds.

**Maddi:** Go for it, Matt. *(Laughs.)*

**Matt:** You're better at imitating the cat than me. Uh—

**John Hodgman:** Sorry, Matt, you brought the case. You gotta make the cat noise.

**Matt:** I did. Like, mrrrr. So, he's just like whining.

**John Hodgman:** That was pretty good. How did that sound, Maddi? Is that about right?

**Maddi:** That was solid five out of ten for effort. So.

**John Hodgman:** Whoa. How—alright, well, let's blow him out of the water then. What does Isaac sound like when he's a little annoyed?

**Maddi:** *(Laughs.)* Uh, kind of like mrraaawr.

**Matt:** Yeah, that's better.

**John Hodgman:** It is a little bit better, Matt.

[00:20:00]

But you know—but Matt, I appreciate your ability to just say, “Yeah, that's better.” That's good. That's a good quality you have.

Why are you disturbing this cat to bring him into the bedroom?

**Matt:** Because I have to close the door to make Maddie happy, and his litter box and his food are in our bedroom.

**John Hodgman:** Right. So, he has to be in there, because of this disastrous food and poop box arrangement that you have.

*(Matt confirms.)*

Right. And when the door is closed—he's not mad about being locked out, he's mad about being locked in.

**Matt:** He'll be mad any time the door is closed.

**John Hodgman:** He just hates closed doors.

*(They confirm.)*

Alright. Maddi, you say—in this affidavit that was presented to me—that when the door is open, the vibes are off. Tell me more.

**Maddi:** Yeah. So... I don't know. I always grew up like—door closed; that meant it was my space; I'm good to be— You know, that sense of safety, privacy. And then also, our hallway is just particularly ominous.

**John Hodgman:** Did you grow up with a litter box in your bed?

**Maddi:** In my bed? No.

**John Hodgman:** Is this what you saw for your future?

**Maddi:** No. *(Laughs.)*

**John Hodgman:** Oh, it's not in your bed? Just near your bed?

**Maddi:** (*Chuckling.*) No, thank goodness, yeah.

**John Hodgman:** Did you grow up with any cats or pets of any kind?

**Maddi:** Oh, yeah. We were always a cat household. It took a little convincing to get dogs, but we had those too. So, very pet friendly.

**John Hodgman:** How did you handle—I mean, surely cats and dogs wanted to come into your bedroom all the time, if the door was closed. How did you handle it?

**Maddi:** Everybody just had their own pet. Mine was the cat, so the cat slept with me. My sister had one of the dogs, so the dog would sleep with her. Everybody just had their little spots, and they liked it.

**John Hodgman:** And your cat would just sleep with you all night and not want to leave?

**Maddi:** Not really. There was maybe a couple nights, but you know, for the good eight years with her—

**John Hodgman:** I'm gonna say that that's an unusual cat. Atypical cat.

(*Maddi concedes.*)

Because cats are nocturnal, and they also hate the status quo. So, if something's closed, they want it open. If something is open, they want it closed. If something's on a counter, it should be on the floor. If they could lift things, they would. Or maybe they wouldn't. I don't know. I'm not a cat. Point is, are you sure your cat, your childhood cat, was alive?

**Maddi:** To the best of my knowledge, yeah. She makes really worrying breathing sounds, but that's completely normal. We've checked. So.

**John Hodgman:** I think it might have been one of these *Pet Sematary* cats, Joel.

(*They laugh.*)

I think—did the cat pass away, and then you buried it in an old pet cemetery? And then it came back to life?

**Maddi:** No, she's still kicking at 16. So.

**John Hodgman:** Whaaat?! Still alive? An (*inaudible*) cat?! There can be only one! What is the name of this Highlander cat?

**Maddi:** Her name is Iris.

**John Hodgman:** That's a good name. That's a great name for a cat, I would say. I really like it. Alright.

So, you're bringing Isaac into the room and locking him in. How long does it take before he starts making the sound?

**Matt:** He doesn't do it every night, but there's a whole like process to get him into our bedroom. Sometimes he'll cooperate, but then he'll like walk a few feet, flop on the floor, you know, roll on his back, and show me his belly. Because he just wants me to pet him as he's trying to distract me from, you know, going to our bedroom. Or sometimes if I'm sleepy, I just pick him up, and I end up getting ever so slightly clawed. Not like aggressively; he's just trying to get out, and I get a claw in the shoulder.

And then, if he decides he's gonna have a meltdown, he'll do it within the first ten minutes or so of being there. Or sometimes if Maddi wakes up really early and then like immediately takes a shower—like, she doesn't like leave our bedroom right away. So, she gets out of bed. He decides, no, that's time the door needs to be opened. And he will have the same meltdown in the morning.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, because there might be food involved. Someone's getting out of bed, maybe it's time to get some food. Oh no, the food's in the bedroom! Oh god, I keep thinking about that. (*Sighs.*)

(*Maddi cackles.*)

**Matt:** It's a fairly large bedroom; we have an air purifier. It doesn't smell.

**John Hodgman:** Look, I wish I could say I'm not judging you. But it's in the title of the show. I mean, people like what they like.

(*Jesse chortles.*)

And I respect that you're making the decisions that work for your household, but I'll get more into this in the verdict, I have a feeling. Well, I don't care about when Maddi's getting up to take a shower; I'm talking about Maddi's sleep being disturbed. Like, you wrestle the cat into the room, and within the first ten minutes, if he's going to have a meltdown, Isaac starts yowling. What does it sound like to you, Maddi? Can you do the sound?

**Maddi:** Didn't warm up, so if my voice cracks, nobody's allowed to laugh. Okay?

**John Hodgman:** Don't laugh, Joel. Stop it, Joel!

**Jesse Thorn:** We can warm up. (*Sings scales.*)

(*John joins the scales, except with meowing.*)

[00:25:00]

**Maddi:** It's kind of like MROW! And then he has this like weird growl where it's like rr-rr-rrr.

**John Hodgman:** (*Gasps.*) That was great! 10 out of 10!

(*They applaud.*)

**Jesse Thorn:** That was tremendous. Loved that.

**John Hodgman:** No one's laughing, we're just happy with joy!

**Maddi:** Thank you.

**John Hodgman:** We do have a clip of Isaac yowling. Can we hear it? And compare and contrast?

**Clip:** A disgruntled cat meows unhappily several times.

**John Hodgman:** You're better at it than Isaac.

**Maddi:** Thank you. At least right now, which I will take.

**John Hodgman:** So, Matt, how long does this go on for? The recording you sent was about three minutes long.

**Matt:** Yeah, so he'll have meltdowns for like 30 to 45 seconds, and then pause for a little bit, and then it'll go on and off for—I don't know, 5 to 10 minutes.

**Jesse Thorn:** And then that's the end of it after 10 minutes?

**Matt:** He scratches at the door, and he will sometimes like run around and start batting at something in our bedroom. And then until recently, there was a trash can right near the door. Just like a little—you know. But he would knock it over and find something to start playing with. And so, he'd be batting at the trash can, and then you'd have to like get up and put things back or take whatever.

**John Hodgman:** This seems unbearable. This seems an unbearable way to live. Maddi, does this wake you up?

**Maddi:** Sometimes, but I have a weird sleeping schedule where I almost always wake up like three-ish hours after I go to bed. So, it usually coincides with that perfectly.

**John Hodgman:** That's not particularly weird. And for centuries, that was the human sleep pattern. Until the advent of electricity, you would fall asleep for a while, be up awake for a number of hours, and maybe do some arts and crafts or visiting your neighbors. Or hug and kiss. And then you would go back to sleep for second sleep. You're the normal one, Maddi. The rest of us are weird.

**Maddi:** Just a few years too late.

**John Hodgman:** Just a couple of centuries too late, yeah. Unfortunately, yeah. So, how do you make this stop? Because this can't go on all night long.

**Matt:** Sometimes I will like pick him up and bring him back to our bed. He has a little bed on top of our bed that he sleeps on, so I'll bring him there. Or we've had a squirt gun that sometimes calms him down, or sometimes you just have to let him basically tire himself out.

**John Hodgman:** (*Laughing.*) A squirt gun that calms him down?! What is—?

**Matt:** It scares him?

**John Hodgman:** What is this, an opposite day cat?!

**Matt:** It scares him, I guess.

**Jesse Thorn:** A squirt gun full of chloroform.

(*They laugh.*)

It's an ether squirt gun.

**John Hodgman:** How does the squirt gun calm him down?!

**Matt:** Calm down is maybe the wrong...

**Maddi:** Phrase?

**Matt:** The wrong phrase. You don't have to like spray him. He just has to know you're getting it. And then he will like kind of run away.

**John Hodgman:** Right, because it's adverse training. You are terrorizing him with this squirt gun. He doesn't want to be squirted with water. So, when he sees it happening, he resets his behavior to avoid that. I mean, couldn't you just open the door a crack? Isn't that enough to let him go in and out and do his thing, Maddi?

**Maddi:** So, there's something—like, I still see the door open. And suddenly, not safe again.



**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, bad stuff could come in, John.

*(Maddi agrees.)*

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, no, believe me—I saw Whitley Strieber’s *Communion* in theaters, and I read the book several times. And I did a podcast about it with Ross and Carrie as a bonus content episode for Max Fun members. That’s another plug. I did a good job plugging today.

You know, you don’t want to have that—hey, I’m with you, Maddi. I don’t want to have that door open even a little bit for a gray alien to peek around the corner like it does in that movie. Scary.

**Maddi:** You ever seen *Babadook*? Spooky.

**John Hodgman:** I did see it, and I got scared.

So, you would prefer to have this cat going bananas in your room all night long rather than figure out a way to let it get in and out on its own.

**Maddi:** So, if we owned the house, we’ve agreed that we would have gotten a cat door.

**John Hodgman:** Obviously. I mean, that makes sense.

**Maddi:** ‘Cause it solves all the problems. But we don’t. So, yeah, I don’t think about it for like five to ten minutes a night. And then it’s usually over and done.

**John Hodgman:** So, you’re okay with it.

*(Maddi confirms.)*

Matt, you’re not okay with it. Otherwise, there would be no dispute here. What’s going on?

**Matt:** Well, like a lot of younger people, we’re very attached to our cat. So, I want him to be happy. I want to give him—

**John Hodgman:** Hey. Hey, hey. Ageism. I’m not young; I’m old. And I’m attached to my cat. You think you Millennials are the first people to like cats? Let me give you a little history lesson. Check out ancient Egypt.

**Maddi:** *(Laughs.)* Back to *Mummies in the Morning*!

**John Hodgman:** Mummies in the morning? Mummies all night long wanted those cats buried with them. *(Scoffing.)* “We’re young; we like cats.”

**Matt:** I will retract my statement.

**John Hodgman:** I should say So, sir. I'm gonna bang my spindle of CDs at you! (*Clumsy, clattery thumping sounds.*) There. Order in this court.

[00:30:00]

I almost held you in contempt. Go on and make your whatever case you were making.

**Matt:** I just want him to be able to walk around and explore and not wake us up.

**John Hodgman:** Wait, are you a cat?!

**Matt:** No.

**John Hodgman:** Oh, I thought you said, "I just wanna be able to walk around and explore all night."

**Matt:** No, I want him.

*(John laughs and affirms.)*

So, I want him to be able to walk around. And I don't wanna go through the nightly ritual of getting him into our bedroom.

**John Hodgman:** And when you're hearing this, you—look, you're a young person, so you love cats. You have an emotional connection to the cat. So, when you're hearing him go MRAH— What's he do again? Maddi, how would you do it? You're warmed up now; you can do it.

**Maddi:** Yeah, I'm warmed up, so we're good. Um. Mroawr!

**John Hodgman:** How does that make you feel when you hear that noise? That's a good imitation. How do you feel?

**Matt:** I feel bad that he doesn't get to—he just wants to go check on the house, and then he comes right back. And then I'm a little annoyed that I'm either not sleeping, or I'm being pulled away from whenever I'm reading at the moment.

**John Hodgman:** So, you're a little annoyed. You're getting up and letting him out, and then letting him back in again. Is that what's happening? You're the door person for the bedroom?

**Matt:** No, we just don't let him back out. He's trapped in there. Sometimes I have to get up and like move him away from the door. Like, bring him back to bed or just—I'd have to calm him down.

**John Hodgman:** I've got an idea. This is a great thing for a relationship, which is to keep secrets from each other.

**Maddi:** Good.

**John Hodgman:** What if Maddi falls asleep, and then you just open the door, and then just let him do whatever. And then when Matty says to you, "Was the door open?"

And you're like, "Oh, my narcoleptic darling, you were just dreaming again. Here, let me turn down the gaslight."

*(Maddi laughs.)*

**Matt:** No, I don't want to gaslight her. But what I will say is this past Friday was a weird, abnormal situation for us, where I went to bed first. She had gone out to a concert, and she wasn't exactly sober and ready to go to bed yet. So, she went to bed after me, and then I woke up with our door open, because she didn't feel like wrangling him up and bringing him to bed.

*(John "wow"s.)*

**Maddi:** *(Chuckling.)* Okay, so to be fair, as Matt had mentioned, this was a concert. I went to it with a friend.

**John Hodgman:** What was it? What was the concert?

**Maddi:** AJR.

**John Hodgman:** I'm sure it's great.

**Maddi:** So—and we don't get to go out together all that often, so we imbibed in some lovely cocktails.

**John Hodgman:** Responsibly, I'm sure.

**Maddi:** Yeah. And thus, the door was not my concern. Getting in bed with my teeth brushed was my biggest concern.

**John Hodgman:** Sure. Yeah. Look, you're allowed to have fun one night and to fall asleep with the door open by accident. What's the point of your argument here, Matt? That Maddi is a horrible hypocrite and deserves to be punished?

**Matt:** Uh, I mean—no.

*(Maddi giggles.)*

**John Hodgman:** So, you're mad at her because she didn't do your job, what is normally your job, which is to wrangle this cat into its nightly prison with you.

**Matt:** I'm not mad, I'm just pointing out that we went a whole night with the door open. Nothing bad happened, and the cat was happy.

**John Hodgman:** It's not like grey aliens are coming in to abduct you every night!

**Matt:** They might be.

**Maddi:** They're not. They're smart like that.

**John Hodgman:** No, they're not. That's not how they operate. Maddi, are there any other reasons you'd like to keep the door closed?

**Maddi:** Yes. So, Matt missed that previously when we did have roommates—as we've discussed, Isaac is a bit of a troublemaker. And he did, in fact, previously knock over a PS3, which was not ours.

**John Hodgman:** Oh. Was it damaged, and did you have to replace it?

**Matt:** Yes, it was our roommate's PlayStation. That's probably the most egregious thing he does. And like, right now, while we're away, he has free reign of the entire house. And...

**John Hodgman:** You don't know what's going to happen when you get back there.

Matt, what's it like in the—what does Isaac get up to during the day? What's the daytime schedule for you guys?

**Matt:** Yeah, so he wakes up, and then he usually wants attention and a look around the house. And then about the time Maddi leaves for work and I start, you know, going about my day, he usually takes a nap until close to 10 when he starts begging me for food; coming into my office; running around my feet; jumping on my desk, until I finally feed him.

**John Hodgman:** So, it's just the two of you home together.

**Matt:** Yeah, he and I spend a lot of time together. And then after he eats, he naps until the afternoon, where he starts bothering me just for attention.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, he sounds like a real handful, this cat. This Isaac, the cat. Wouldn't you say, Maddi?

**Maddi:** I would say at least two handfuls.

**John Hodgman:** Two handfuls. But you like him? I mean, you could get rid of him.

**Maddi:** Oh, of course. We love him! He's—

**John Hodgman:** No, why don't you just get rid of him? Then you'll solve the problem. Yeah, you're right. No, no, I think that's right. That's the verdict. Get rid of the cat. Goodbye.

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

[00:35:00]

**Maddi:** (*Laughs.*) To be fair, our next pet is hopefully going to be a frog, which we've already decided cannot live in the same room as Isaac.

**John Hodgman:** Uhh... well, sure. But tell me more about your choice of frog as pet.

**Maddi:** They're just really cool creatures.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, no, no. I love a herp, but like what do you—what—do you have a kind of frog in mind?

(*Maddi confirms.*)

I mean, when I go to even an exotic pet store—and I like to walk through them, of course—I rarely see like frogs for sale. But I'll see a bearded dragon and a bunch of snakes or whatever, even a floating axolotl from time to time. But frogs are things I feel like you find in the back pocket of kids in the 1930s. Not something you find as a pet.

**Maddi:** I was deprived of that experience. All my friends had the like experience where they picked up frogs in the mud and dirt. I never did, so instead I became attached to the idea of frogs, and then I got to hold one. Yeah.

**John Hodgman:** The concept. The concept of one. Wait, you got to hold a frog?

**Maddi:** Yes!

**John Hodgman:** Where?

**Matt:** Just a few months ago.

**John Hodgman:** At the frog museum?

**Maddi:** It was alive. (*Laughs.*) The Arizona Herpetological Society.

**John Hodgman:** I was gonna say the Herpetological Lending Library in Arizona. We were thinking the same thing. That's gonna make a lot of noise at night, isn't it?

**Maddi:** Maybe.

**Jesse Thorn:** Judge Hodgman, I had a pet frog. As a child, I loved my pet frog. His name was Boutros Boutros-Froggy.

*(John snorts a laugh.)*

And he got out, and then like a year later, we found him in the closet.

**John Hodgman:** Oh, not alive, I presume.

**Jesse Thorn:** No, frogs don't like closets. Frogs don't live in closets.

**John Hodgman:** This is the thing. If you bring a frog into your house, don't you think you're going to have to make sure that it's safe? How are you going to keep a frog away from Isaac?

**Maddi:** So, that's what that room is going to be for. It's going to be my craft room/frog room.

**John Hodgman:** I like it. But that door's gonna be closed?

**Maddi:** Predictably, yes.

**John Hodgman:** Well, if you can close one door, you can close another.

**Jesse Thorn:** When life closes one door, it closes another. That's what they say.

**John Hodgman:** Would it be easier if Isaac were locked out at night rather than locked in?

**Matt:** No.

**Maddi:** Absolutely not.

**Matt:** That would make things worse.

**John Hodgman:** Why?

**Maddi:** He dislikes all closed doors. But specifically when Matt is behind a closed door, he hates it more.

**John Hodgman:** Does he love Matt more than he loves you, Maddi?

**Maddi:** It pains me to say this, but yes. *(Laughs.)*

**John Hodgman:** Yes. It's a special bond between these two.

**Maddi:** Yes. And don't get me wrong, him and I have made great strides together. But he's still Matt's cat.

**John Hodgman:** So, ideally, Matt, you would like me to find in your favor. And that is to say you're going to keep the door open, despite Maddi's misgivings about it, so that Isaac can sleep where he wants and go through the house. Correct?

**Matt:** That is correct.

**John Hodgman:** Alright. And Maddi, you want to keep that door closed. But you also say that you will take care of squirting the cat, so Matt doesn't have to worry about it. You're saying you're going to take on the chores that Matt currently takes on in terms of squirting the cat?

**Maddi:** To the best of my abilities, knowing that I'm not the one that goes to bed last. But yeah, because of how often I wake up, it doesn't faze me that much. So, I'm happy to do that.

**John Hodgman:** Let me ask you a question I think I know the answer to, Maddi. But I have to ask anyway. If you put in like a curtain—if you kept the door open, but there was a floor to ceiling curtain on a tension rod or something.

**Jesse Thorn:** Just imagine the adult section of a video store.

**John Hodgman:** Well, those are usually swinging saloon doors, too. That's maybe an option, another option.

**Jesse Thorn:** My experience is floor-to-ceiling beads.

**Maddi:** Better.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, what about a bead curtain, Maddi? Would that do it for you? Would that be enough coverage?

**Maddi:** Bead curtain, maybe in front of like a blackout curtain I could see. I would just have to not look at the space between the curtain and the floor.

**Matt:** The curtain's not a bad idea. My office has a curtain, because if—I was on a lot of video calls, so if I had to close the door, you would hear the cat. So, it became a curtain, like a somewhat sound-blocking curtain. So, it would keep some echo down, because our house is like all concrete. And the cat could then walk in and walk out. So, people would get to meet my cat on a lot of Zoom calls.

**John Hodgman:** But would you be willing to try a blackout curtain or a similar curtain?

**Maddi:** I mean, I'd try it.

**John Hodgman:** That's very nice of you.

**Maddi:** Gotta get over my fear somehow.

**John Hodgman:** Alright, so we just gotta figure out the greatest door arrangement for you humans, and your cat, and your disappearing roommate. Alright, I got it figured out. 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.)*

Matt, how are you feeling about your chances in this case?

**Matt:** I'm not entirely sure.

[00:40:00]

I think the judge understands not wanting to keep the cat stuck in a room all night, but Maddi being afraid of the hallway might be a stronger argument.

**Jesse Thorn:** Maddi, how do you feel?

**Maddi:** I feel like I explained myself better than just the vibes are off. So, that was my goal coming in here. I'm excited to see what happens. Maybe Isaac will be a little happier, but he'll still be himself, and he'll still be loved. So, at the end of the day, whatever.

**Jesse Thorn:** Maddi, I'm afraid of the hallway too.

**Maddi:** Thank you.

**Jesse Thorn:** Now, in my case, it's because I'm from the hood. And one time a junkie broke into my house and threatened my mom with a knife. But, uh—

**Maddi:** That'll do it.

**Jesse Thorn:** But my mom also chased him out of the house and down the street, so. My mom's awesome.

**Maddi:** Amazing.

**Jesse Thorn:** My amazing mom. She seemed completely unchanged by the experience, too. *(Laughs.)*

**Maddi:** Yeah, I don't want to know what would happen if I was the person in that situation.



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

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**Promo:**

**Hal Lublin:** Alison Brie was the star of the Netflix series *GLOW*.

**Danielle Radford:** Being a gorgeous lady of wrestling isn't easy.

**Lindsey Kelk:** Especially when it's time to get in the ring.

**Alison Brie:** Wrestling is so interesting in that you can't do anything halfway. Okay, so now it's time to run at that woman's body and dive over her, headfirst. Like, you can't do that halfway. You can't do that in slow motion.

**Hal Lublin:** Alison Brie on *Tights and Fights*.

**Danielle Radford:** Max Fun's perfect wrestling podcast, available now.

**Lindsey Kelk:** And if you don't listen:

**Alison Brie:** I'll see you in the ring! (*Chuckles.*)

(*Musical stinger.*)

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**Jesse Thorn:** Hey, *Judge John Hodgman* pals. We are going out on tour. The road court is coming your way. I am really excited about this, John. I just booked a lesson with my ukulele teacher, Nico.

**John Hodgman:** Oh! You're working up a new song for the show?

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, two new songs, baby.

**John Hodgman:** Two new songs?! Alright, then I'm going to learn one new song. And we're going to bring a whole bunch of disputes live on stage. We're going to wear our robes. We're going to wear our bailiff's uniform. We're going to have a real good time. And we're going to open up the court to something you never hear on the podcast: audience members yelling their disputes at us. And us solving them in real time. It's the *Judge John Hodgman* road court.

A wonderful mix of new cities and old faves as we go from New York to Philadelphia to Washington, DC. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Ann Arbor, Michigan, free show at the library. Good old Madison, Wisconsin, good old St. Paul, Minnesota. Burlington, Vermont, Portland, Maine, Turner's Falls, Massachusetts, Brookline, Massachusetts, Vancouver, Seattle, Portland, Oregon, Los Angeles. Ooh! You can get them all. All the details and all the tickets are over there at [MaximumFun.org/events](https://MaximumFun.org/events). You ought to go quickly, because the tickets are definitely selling fast.

**Jesse Thorn:** We also have VIP tickets this time around. So, if you want to get a free poster that we will gladly sign for you, and we'll shake hands with you and meet you after the show, those are available as well. All the information, all the ticket links at [MaximumFun.org/events](https://MaximumFun.org/events). We had a great time meeting those VIPs last time around. Really nice to meet folks.

**John Hodgman:** And if you live in these cities, and you're thinking of coming to the show, and you've got a dispute that you'd like us to consider for live adjudication on stage—boy, oh boy. We wouldn't have a show without you. Go to [MaximumFun.org/jjho](https://MaximumFun.org/jjho). That's where you submit all your disputes for the show.

But just make sure say, “Hey, Hodgman, I hear you're coming to your hometown of Brookline, Massachusetts to do a show at the Coolidge, where you used to rip tickets as a teenager. I've got a dispute with XYZ or maybe even with you. Hey, Hodgman. I hear you're going back to hang out with Monte Belmonte in the Pioneer Valley of Western Massachusetts, doing a big show at the Turner's Falls Shea Theater. I've got a dispute with Perry Von Vicious, the famous wrestler.” That would be fun. Perry, if you've got a dispute, let me know. ‘Cause maybe we'll wrestle it out.

Burlington, Vermont. I haven't been there for many years. Ann Arbor, we're excited to go, ‘cause it's a free show. All the shows are going to be terrific. All the shows are going to be great. And by the way, those city winery shows that we're doing in New York and Philadelphia and Pittsburgh? We're going to have our own branded bottle of wine you can buy even. It's fun! It's *Judge John Hodgman Road Court*. Go and get your tickets now. [MaximumFun.org](https://MaximumFun.org). And go and submit your road court disputes at [MaximumFun.org/jjho](https://MaximumFun.org/jjho).

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

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

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

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

**John Hodgman:** So, I'm very excited for you two, because you're both wonderfully adorable and terrific, and you seem to really like each other. And you've got a house with some very hard floors and a wonderful cat, and you're gonna get to inhabit that house and make it your own very soon, I hope. Or relatively soon—

[00:45:00]

—once you've moved past this roommate phase of your relationship and into this “we have a house” stage of your relationship. And I'm going to say the first thing that you need to do is get that litter box out of your bedroom. Get it out!

*(Maddi laughs.)*

I mean, and then you're gonna have to do a whole like burning sage, you know, exorcism of the spirit of memory of cat pooping in the place where you sleep and hug and kiss. Got it?

I mean, when I was—you know, my main goal—what I thought adulthood meant once I was living on my own was being able to sleep in a room that did not have a refrigerator in it. That is to say, you know, where I couldn't hear that thing running the whole time. You know, in a studio apartment, very small in New York city, that's where I was—those were my first few apartments. I could listen to that thing hum all night long, and I'm like, “Ugh, the vibe is off.” You know what I mean?

*(Maddi affirms.)*

And then, you know, then I took in a cat. I rescued a cat from the street in that same, tiny, one-room apartment. And it's the first time I've ever been woken up by a smell, because the cat's litter box was just in the bedroom. Or you know, in the room (*chuckles*) where I was sleeping. And I don't know what it had been eating all that time. But I mean, I just remember waking up like the smell grabbed me by my nostrils and said, “Wake up, emergency. This poop smells really, really bad.”

Now that's not necessarily what's going on with Isaac. But you know, he deserves—as much as you deserve—a little bit of elbow room to do your different businesses, you know. You need your frog room; you need your bedroom. I order you to find a neutral spot or a nonintrusive spot. And honestly, I gotta say that guest bathroom is probably the best place for it. You know, it's just kind of probably the best. But you'll figure it out. But it cannot, it cannot—that's intolerable. As is this arrangement that you—non-arrangement that you have where you and Isaac are both all kept prisoner together all night long. And you have to shoot water at one member of your household in order to try to get things calm enough to sleep.

But you know, when you hear your beloved Isaac making those noises, even if you're sleeping, I can only imagine that it is not the best. It is not the most sleep-hygienic situation to hear your cat going rrrrow, rrrra, rrrr! Or whatever it was. The worst sound you ever want to hear. Jesse, do you know what it is? This is the sound, it goes like this. Rrrwowowowow. Rowowowow. Because then you know puke is coming.

*(They laugh.)*

That's usually what's happening next.

**Jesse Thorn:** And then just pray that you got another animal to eat the puke.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, that's why you have two cats most of the time.

**Jesse Thorn:** YouTube comment, "Goodbye."

*(They laugh.)*

**John Hodgman:** Point is that this is not—and it's not happy for Isaac either. Isaac is a cat full of beans. A mischief cat. And all cats deserve and need to wander around and explore and expand their territory, such as it is.

Now, Isaac can be conditioned right to stay out of your bedroom. And quite honestly, I mean—and I know that he loves you, Matt, and you love him and everything else. But you know, I do have the feeling rare among pet-havers that the humans do come first. Like, if you came to the determination that the best thing for your relationship, your human relationship—which is to move the cat box out of the bedroom and close that door and just force Isaac to deal with it, just like he can't go into the frog room, that's something that you could do over time. He would get used to it, right? He would be upset, and he would do it outside the door, which is frankly preferable for him doing it inside the door and then having a poop while you're trying to dream. That's no good. None of this is okay. It's gotta change.

Now, I feel bad for Isaac, and I feel bad for Matt and Isaac's special relationship. He probably will want to sleep with you, and you don't hate sleeping with him, and you both love him. So, maybe you don't want to lock him out completely. So, where does it leave us? Well, it leaves us with compromising on Maddi's fears and preferences, which is not a fun thing to do. I feel you. I don't like seeing the hallway. And in fact, here in Maine, it's been unseasonably hot, and we've had to put a big fan in the doorway to the bedroom.

[00:50:00]

And I've had to have that door open in order to not, you know, suffocate with heat and sweat. And it has been a couple of terrible nights of sleep for me, because even though I'm physically much cooler and more comfortable, the mental load of knowing that door is open, and a gray alien can poke its head around at any time has been really hard for me to bear. I really, really—I want you to understand that I feel for you. Your fears are understandable. They're human. They're justified. I validate them, and I appreciate that Matt validates them too.

But this situation has to be changed. And I'm going to offer you—I mean, I guess what I'm doing is ruling with many caveats in Matt's favor. Because you need to either kick Isaac out or you need to make that door passable for Isaac, so that you can move on with your lives. Here are my recommendations, a list of things to try before you settle on a final outcome, right? Whatever it's gonna be.

If you don't wanna lock Isaac out with his food and his poop box, try a heavy curtain that he can navigate. Try a beaded curtain. Which, I mean, I had one when I was a teenager, and it was hot.

*(Maddie chuckles.)*

And here's another thing that I would suggest is if you have this kind of relationship or you want to develop one with your landlord, say, "Hey, look. Can we install a door with a cat door? We'll keep the real door in a safe place, and we'll put it back. But you know, can we get permission to put in a door with a cat door because of this reason that we have?" And that landlord might say no, but they might say yes! This is one of the rare situations where it doesn't hurt to ask. Most of the time, I feel it does hurt to ask.

*(Maddi laughs.)*

It does hurt to ask people for favors and stuff. But this is , business relationship. It's totally fair for you to say, "How would you feel about this?" And maybe the landlord would completely understand. It's weird how much can get done when we are willing to just talk to people about stuff and talk to them, especially. Like as opposed to text or email or whatever. Like, Google review. In any case, you're gonna have a lot of fun. Try the blackout curtain, try the bead curtain, try talking to your landlord. Test out where your comfort level lies, and see if you can make room. You know, and if you can't, you can't. And then you just gotta sleep in separate bedrooms for the rest of your life.

*(They laugh.)*

This is the sound of a spindle of CDs passing for a gavel.

**Clip:** The Meow Mix jingle.

*Meow, meow, meow, meow*

*Meow, meow, meow, meow,*

*Meow, meow, meow, meow*

*Meow, meow, meow, meow*

**Jesse Thorn:** 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.)*

Maddi, how are you feeling?

**Maddi:** Honestly, pretty good. I hadn't thought of curtains, silly enough—even though one of our rooms already has curtains that close it. And I'm kind of excited to try and put bead ones in and see how Isaac loses his mind. (*Chuckles.*)

**Jesse Thorn:** Isaac, how are you feeling? (*Beat.*) I mean—excuse me.

(*They laugh.*)

**Maddi:** I was like I'd like to think he's sleeping and doing great.

**Jesse Thorn:** Well, he's supposed to be on mic.

(*Maddi laughs.*)

Matt, how are you feeling?

**Matt:** I'm feeling pretty good. I also didn't think of the curtain. I think it's a good call. The bead curtain is definitely going to get ripped down by the cat, because he's going to see little things to attack.

**Maddi:** We definitely are going to get the beaded curtain one though also, just for fun, and see what happens.

**Jesse Thorn:** Well, Matt, Maddi, thanks for joining us on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

**Matt:** Thank you.

**Maddi:** Thank you, guys.

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**Jesse Thorn:** Another *Judge John Hodgman* case is in the books. We'll have Swift Justice in just a second. First, our thanks to Redditor u/ShotTomorrow7663 for naming this week's episode “Claw and Door-der”. The Maximum Fun subreddit at [MaximumFun.Reddit.com](https://www.reddit.com/r/MaximumFun) or r/MaximumFun, if you prefer. That's where we ask for our title suggestions. And if you just want to check out other people's title suggestions, it's always a fun list of stupid puns.

**John Hodgman:** Jesse, you know what I like to do?

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

**John Hodgman:** Check out other people's title suggestions, 'cause they're a lot of fun. Matt Long's in there.

**Jesse Thorn:** It's a lot of fun right there at [MaximumFun.Reddit.com](https://www.maximumfun.com). Evidence and photos for the show are posted on our Instagram account, [@JudgeJohnHodgman](https://www.instagram.com/judgejohnhodgman), as well as on the Maximum Fun website on the episode page for this week's episode. We are also on TikTok and YouTube, [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJmHodgmanPod).

*(John echoes "pod" haughtily.)*

Follow us there. That's the perfect place to comment, goodbye.

*(John cackles.)*

John, you usually read the five-star reviews, but I've got one for this week.

**John Hodgman:** Let's hear it.

**Jesse Thorn:** It's from TheAlien1234.

**John Hodgman:** Ooh, aliens? You know how I feel!

**Jesse Thorn:** From July 5th of 2024, 5-star review.

[00:55:00]

Subject line "EEEEEE!" And then the body of the review is—"EEEEEEEEEEEE-EEEEEE!"

**John Hodgman:** You know what? I bet if we played that into a fax machine, it would print out a thing saying, "Good job, John and Jesse."

**Jesse Thorn:** I bet that's true. Okay. *Judge John Hodgman* created by Jesse Thorn and John Hodgman. This episode, engineered by Tyler Douglas at Podcast Studio AZ in Mesa, Arizona. And of course, by our pal Joel Mann at WERU in Orland, Maine. Our social media manager is Nattie Lopez. Podcast edited by AJ McKeon. Our video editor, here in person this week, Daniel Speer. He's wearing a cow hat, actually, now that you mention it. No, it's a zebra hat. It's a zebra hat. It's a rollie zebra— Daniel Speer wears some wild outfits to the office. I support it strongly.

**John Hodgman:** Well done.

**Jesse Thorn:** Our producer, the ever-capable Jennifer Marmor. And ever chic. Jennifer always—oh, yeah, Jennifer always looks great.

*(John agrees.)*

Now, Swift Justice, where we answer your small disputes with quick judgment. Baltanerdist says, "When my wife says, 'I want chips,' I think it's perfectly reasonable for me to go get

her some chips, even if we don't currently have them in the house. I seek an injunction against her protestations when I go get her the thing she wants.”

**John Hodgman:** There's part of this story that's missing.

*(Jesse agrees.)*

I feel like when she says, “I want chips,” and he just gets up, walks out of the house, grabs his car keys without a single word, and then drives to the supermarket and gets chips.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, I think that's how my parents ended up getting divorced.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, I was going to say. And then—and he also decides to just stop in briefly at the corner tavern for five hours on the way home.

**Jesse Thorn:** This feels like a very special episode of *Judge John Hodgman*.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah.

*(They chuckle.)*

Communication is everything. If your wife says, “I want chips,” you can only believe what comes out of her mouth. She wants chips. If you want to go get her chips at the store, ‘cause there aren't chips in the house, you have to say, “I would like to go get you chips at the store.”

And if she says, “I don't want chips that much; I prefer your company,” you have to believe that too. Believe what people say to you and communicate, if you please. And probably you should just have chips around all the time.

We're in the middle of summer, and I bet a lot of our audience is traveling right now. If you're listening to us on a road trip or on your summer destination, I'm glad you get a little time off. It's nice. Thanks for taking us with you. But what if you're not traveling by car? What if you're flying? Do you have, I bet you do, airport-based disputes? Does your partner want you to get TSA PreCheck and you refuse? Does your family member cut it too close when planning arrival to the airport? Here's one, if you have TSA PreCheck, and someone in your party does not, do you go through security without them and leave them in your dust? Or do you stay with them and take your shoes off? Does your family member cut it too close when planning to arrive at the airport? Do you want to browse the shops in the terminal and treat it like a mall? But your travel companion just wants to sit at the gate?

Send us your airport disputes at [MaximumFun.org/jjho](http://MaximumFun.org/jjho). I want to hear them. It's the site of many a dispute, let me tell you.

**Jesse Thorn:** Judge Hodgman, you know who I bet doesn't have TSA pre checked despite traveling all the time?



**John Hodgman:** No, who?

**Jesse Thorn:** Our friend and *Judge John Hodgman* listener, Cory Doctorow, because he doesn't believe in giving your information to the security state. I'm projecting here. I'm making presumptions.

**John Hodgman:** We know that Cory Doctorow changes into pajamas on overnight flights and has made a case for that being the epitome of coziness, and I support Cory in that. I don't know. Cory, let us know. Do you have TSA PreCheck or not?

**Jesse Thorn:** No, no, no. Cory, don't let us know. Someone who has to travel with Cory, let us know that you have a problem with the fact that Cory won't get TSA PreCheck, and so you have to go through the TSA PreCheck line and then wait on the other side of security while Cory goes through the “I've never been on an airplane before” line, because he won't give his information to the security state.

**John Hodgman:** You know who I want to tell us whether or not Cory has TSA pre check or not? The US government. Hey, if you're the US government, let us know if Cory has TSA PreCheck or not.

**Jesse Thorn:** Or just Mark Frauenfelder from *BoingBoing* and the two of them have to fly together sometimes or something like that.

**John Hodgman:** Any case. Send us your airport disputes at [MaximumFun.org/jjho](https://MaximumFun.org/jjho). We're also looking for disputes for our upcoming *Judge John Hodgman* road court tour this fall and January 2025. We're doing—well, you've heard about it already, so I won't get into it, but we do need your disputes for those different locations. So, if you have one that you want us to consider adjudicating on stage, remember: send it to me as well at [MaximumFun.org/jjho](https://MaximumFun.org/jjho). Tell us where you are.

And if you have any other dispute, I guess just throw it away, right, Jesse? We only want airport disputes and road court disputes, right? Is that correct?

**Jesse Thorn:** We'll take any dispute, and we're grateful for them.

[01:00:00]

‘Cause we use them in our Membo mailbags. We use them here in live cases on the show. We use them when we're clearing the docket. We use them on social media. We love to hear from you. So, go to [MaximumFun.org/jjho](https://MaximumFun.org/jjho) and submit that dispute, no matter how big or small. We'll talk to you next time on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. YouTube comment, “Goodbye.”

**John Hodgman:** YouTube comment, “Goodbye.”

**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!