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Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Welcome to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. I'm Bailiff Jesse Thorn. We're in chambers this week, clearing the docket. And with me, as always, is the ever-capable, though perhaps not quite so ever-capable as producer Jennifer Marmor, Judge John Hodgman.

John Hodgman: Yeah, I'm only medium-capable at best. That's always been the case. Jennifer Marmor, she's the most capable. And what about you, Joel? You're Cape Codable, right? Originally?

Jesse Thorn: (*Laughing.*) Oh no.

Joel Mann: Yes. How'd you know?

John Hodgman: Ah! I made Joel crack. Yeah, I'm here. I'm here in Maine still, at the solar powered studios of WERU in Orland, Maine.

Jesse Thorn, it's nice to see you. I don't know if you can see on your camera here in the—check it out on our YouTube page and our TikToks and everything else. My hair's a little wacky today.

Jesse Thorn: Oh, look, it's got like a little cowlick.

John Hodgman: Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: You look like a cool 12-year-old in a TV show about the '50s.

John Hodgman: (*Chuckles*) I look like a member of the *Little Rascals*, the one—that kid that had the beard.

(*Jesse agrees with a chuckle.*)

In any case, yeah, I got a little cowlick going, because I drove here in a vehicle without a roof with wet hair that I put moose in to see what would happen. And if you want to see the before or after, make sure you check out our socials, [@JudgeJohnHodgman](#) on Insta, [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](#) on YouTube and TikTok or whatever. It's a plug. It's a plug for my hairstyle. But then I got a little late, didn't I Joel? Because there's some—Jesse, I need to tell you there's some roadwork being done on Route 1. Did you know that, Jesse?

Jesse Thorn: Oh, wow. I had no idea.

John Hodgman: Did you know that, Joel? Roadwork.

Joel Mann: Yes, I did know that.

John Hodgman: Oh, you noticed that, did you?

Joel Mann: I have to go through it every day, twice.

John Hodgman: Right, okay. My advice, Joel? Take Backridge Road.

Joel Mann: I could do that.

John Hodgman: You could take Backridge Road. Yeah, that's what I'm going to do on the way home. Backridge Road, Jesse. That's the workaround.

Jesse Thorn: Joel, that's a little advice from a local.

(Joel laughs.)

John Hodgman: That's me. I'm your Judge John Hodgman, representing team From Away, here in Maine today, as we roll into another rollicking docket. We have a docket today, Jesse? That's what's happening? We're clearing the docket?

Jesse Thorn: We're clearing the docket. What happens is the cases build up. We can't address them all in a full court session.

John Hodgman: No.

Jesse Thorn: We just don't have the time and resources. You know how impacted the court system is. So, once in a while we just try and blaze through the docket and take care of business.

John Hodgman: We gotta pack the court with a rollicking docket. Hey, before we get into that business—I forgot. Joel Mann, when I walked in here today, what did you say, Joel? You said, “Do you like it hot?” Right?

(Joel confirms.)

And I was like, “I'll see you later. I'm leaving.” But no, what he meant was some hot salsa, right, Joel?

Joel Mann: Yes, this was in the refrigerator here at community radio, and it had a label on it in big, red letters: “hot”. Hot.

John Hodgman: This is some hot salsa. Now, when you said, “I want you to try some hot salsa,”—because we did a bunch of fun food fights with Justices the last time I was in. When you said, “I want you to try this hot salsa, because it's really hot,” I thought you meant that it

was like commercially prepared salsa from the Hannafords. Instead, you're telling me this is just something from a weird jar in the break room fridge?

Joel Mann: Well, it's pledge drive week right now, so people bring in food.

John Hodgman: (*Stuttering.*) Is this homemade?!

Joel Mann: No.

John Hodgman: Okay, this is store bought.

(Joel confirms.)

But it has been sampled already. It was in the break room fridge.

Joel Mann: Yes, I like salsa very hot. And when I tasted this, I went, “Wow. I gotta get John to try that.”

Jesse Thorn: (*Cackles.*) Sorry, Joel, what? What did you say?

Joel Mann: Wow! ‘Cause all that food he made me eat at Christmas time; I still haven't forgiven him for that.

John Hodgman: That's true. We did do that holiday party where I made Joel eat a lot of weird food.

Joel Mann: So, this is payback.

John Hodgman: So, this is revenge. Yeah. You say this is pledge drive time for WERU?

(Joel confirms.)

And if people want to support the station, they go to WERU.org.

(Joel confirms.)

Right. Member and community supported.

Alright, I'll try it out, and I'll tell you what I think.

Joel Mann: Hot, huh?

John Hodgman: Wow. Whoa!

Joel Mann: *(Laughing.)* Yeah, it has an after kick, too.

John Hodgman: Well, it's like—I feel like it's crawling its way down my throat via the roof of my mouth, like Toni Collette in *Hereditary*. You know, when she's up on the ceiling. That's a spoiler. Wow. Now, instant hiccups.

(Joel laughs.)

Joel, you're supposed to be a professional. Why are you allowing me to do this?

Joel Mann: Payback.

John Hodgman: Holy wowie! *(Burps.)*

Joel Mann: Isn't that something?

John Hodgman: Okay. Well, I'm going to have the hiccups throughout this doc.

Jesse Thorn: There has never been a more compelling case for people subscribing to our YouTube channel, [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](#), than the faces John has been making for the last 75 seconds or so. *(Laughs.)*

John Hodgman: Joel, we're rolling, right?

(Joel confirms.)

I need you to go get me some water.

Jesse Thorn: Okay, here's a case from Nisha in Portland, Oregon.

[00:05:00]

“My husband, John, regularly takes cookware from our kitchen to go camping with. Then, he will dump said dishes—soiled with mud and food—into the sink. Please order my husband to stop taking our regular dishes on his camping trips.”

John Hodgman: *(Strained.)* Okay, Joel's out of the studio now. *(Clears his throat.)* I feel like maybe I should nail the door shut and not let him back in.

(Jesse laughs.)

Jesse, you ever go camping? You ever go camping?

Jesse Thorn: I have been—I went camping once. I'll tell you what happened. It was before I had children. My wife and I bought a tent and went to a state park, you know, near Los

Angeles with our then dog Coco. And we put up the tent, we ate something, we cuddled with Coco.

John Hodgman: Cuddled with Coco, of course.

Jesse Thorn: Hugged and kissed.

John Hodgman: Yeah. Ooh!

Jesse Thorn: Went to sleep, woke up, remade the fire, made some bacon and eggs or something, and then I got so mad and bored that we left.

(They laugh.)

I was like, “We already cooked! What else is there to do?!”

John Hodgman: Yeah, once you have that bacon and eggs on the fire, you might as well go home.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. I wasn't ready to wait a further 12 hours for the next hugging and kissing. *(Laughs.)*

John Hodgman: Yeah, exactly. Time to go home after that. You've had the whole experience. Joel, you ever go camping in Maine?

Joel Mann: Uh, Motel 6.

John Hodgman: We got a situation here where Nisha's husband, John, regularly takes their regular, old cookware and regular, old dishes from their kitchen on camping trips. Like, what are we even talking about here? Like, your Joseph Heller plastic plates or your Rowantrees? Like, real China? Bone China, maybe?

Jesse Thorn: I didn't know about this type until recently, as a city boy—a lifelong city boy—I did not know about this type of camping where you like put a refrigerator into your car and then you like sleep under the car or something. I don't even know how it works exactly. Like, you bring a volleyball net. And—you know what I mean?

Like, this whole thing was completely foreign to me until recently. I learned about the depth to which it goes. Mostly, I think I learned about it by like wandering past something in Costco and being like, “Wait, that's for camping?!”

John Hodgman: Yeah, no. My one experience with camping was when my wife, who is a whole human in her own right—right after we first started coming up here to Maine, she's like, “You are gonna go camping.”

And I'm like, "I went camping once as a youth. I hated it. I chopped a stick in half; I was done. That was my whole thing."

And she said, "No, you're gonna come."

So, we drove all of our equipment over to her dad's house on the lake. And then we put that all in a canoe, and we canoed over to a campsite, and we set up our tents. And it was already terrifying, because our daughter—who was younger then, not yet an adult—was like, "I don't understand why I can't have several open candles in my tent. It'll be fun!"

(They chuckle.)

Like, no, you can't set yourself—this is terrifying to me. I like it's going to be hard enough for me to sleep, A) because of fear of ghosts and haunts and specters and bears. B) because I'm afraid you're going to set yourself on fire, and C) because my wife, who's a whole human in her own right, told me, "No, you don't need any kind of pad to lie on. You don't need a cot. You just sleep on the ground. That's how I always did it."

And you know what, Jesse? You need a pad or a cot.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah.

John Hodgman: No one sleeps on the ground. They sell these things. They're good. And after one night of sleeping in pure pain on the ground, on the floor of the forest, my wife—whole human being, etc.—has banned camping from our lives.

Jesse Thorn: There's an appeal to—do you remember a case on *Judge John Hodgman* that we had where people essentially built like a full-scale post-apocalyptic tent village ever summer?

John Hodgman: I'm so glad you—yes, I do remember, and I'm so glad you brought it up. These people had a real setup. They would drive out their big, old van. And then they would put up several different like—it was a whole Burning Man situation. They had a whole geodesic dome just for putting on band aids or whatever. They created a whole campsite that was—it seemed like a semi-permanent living situation.

The gear is the fun! That's why there was that John Glaser show, *Gear*. So, the idea that you're going to take your fiesta wear—your big, heavy fiesta wear—out to your campsite not only goes against, I think, the spirit of camping, but also you're putting Nisha back there at home in the city of Portland, Oregon, at a disadvantage, because they don't have the plates and cups that they need to use in order to live. There's no point. There's no point in any of it. I'd like to go back, but I would want to do it with the gear.

Jesse Thorn: It's like John Muir said—

John Hodgman: Famous naturalist.

[00:10:00]

Jesse Thorn: “Are you really communing with nature if you're not using one of those Swiss army knives, only instead of a Swiss army knife, it's like a fork, a spoon—?” You know that thing I'm talking about?

(John confirms.)

Gosh, that is the coolest thing.

John Hodgman: Yeah. But what's the point of camping if you don't have the fun toys? And those fun toys are things to put your beans on.

Jesse Thorn: Here's something from Tim in Los Angeles. Why, that's the city in which Jennifer and I live!

“I use a blank Google document to keep track of all of my to-dos and upcoming events. I can add and delete things quickly and use color coding, images, links, and bold text. Everything I need to keep a neat and orderly life. I do not impose this system on anyone else. My husband, Mike, wants me to get rid of this document and instead use a personal or shared calendar. This is extra work, and I don't want to do it.”

John Hodgman: Jennifer Marmor, we often use—look, it's not buzz marketing one of the major monopolies. We often use Google Docs to organize, to write our scripts and organize ourselves, here on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

(Jennifer confirms.)

I guess that's an invitation to hackers now, to find that stuff.

Uh, I think you would agree with me, it's not a perfect system, right?

Jennifer Marmor: Yeah, very imperfect.

John Hodgman: Very imperfect. A bunch of glitches, wouldn't you say?

Jennifer Marmor: I would say.

John Hodgman: Like, for example, this script that you sent me via email: the link gets me to the script, but I can't find it in my shared folders anymore, because something changed. You know what I'm talking about?

Jesse Thorn: I hate that part! I hate that!

Jennifer Marmor: That's wild.

John Hodgman: Like, it was shared with me. Why isn't in the “shared with me”? They changed their mind about something. I get it. It's not perfect. But Tim has a system that works for Tim, it seems to me. Right? I mean—

(Jennifer agrees, but Jesse makes conflicted noises.)

Oh! Jesse Thorn, please.

Jesse Thorn: Tim is in a romantic relationship with his husband.

John Hodgman: Mike.

Jesse Thorn: They share a household. And I'm sure that they share many tasks, many appointments, and many priorities which have to be distributed between the two of them. And Tim's system is not interoperable with his husband's system. I don't think that Tim's husband is saying, “Sweetheart, I want you to use my system, because I think my system is better.” I think he is saying—“and I think it's better for you.” I think he is saying, “Sweetheart, we need to have a way to organize our priorities and schedules that works for both of us and that allows us to communicate with each other.”

John Hodgman: Well, what could be more simple than sharing a Google document? Obviously, all you need to do is create a unique link.

Jesse Thorn: What kind of insane person keeps their schedule in a Google document?!

John Hodgman: I'm just saying!

Jesse Thorn: Google makes a calendar product!

John Hodgman: You print out the link, and then you bring it to the town office for approval, and five days later you can walk it over to their personal inbox. And then they can type in the link, and then they can get an opportunity to request access to it. It's simple. It works for us!

Jesse Thorn: Judge Hodgman, I keep my calendar—again, sorry to plug a monopoly that is just, you know, selling my mother's maiden name on the Silk Road, along with scripts for *Judge John Hodgman* episodes. *(Chuckles.)* But I keep my schedule on a Google calendar. My wife doesn't. My wife uses an app called Cozi. It's like a family app. It has a variety—you know, it's a little suite of software, not unlike Google Suite.

John Hodgman: Yeah. Suite and cozi.

Jesse Thorn: But the two of them are interoperable. So, Cozi can import my Google Calendar. And when my wife creates something in Cozi, it shows up on my Google Calendar if she tells Cozi to put it on my Google Calendar. And that I think is fine. That's an example of two people who prefer different systems, but the systems communicate with each other, so

we know. I know, John, that you've mentioned that you and your wife share your grocery list in your notes app.

John Hodgman: Yeah, well now we use Reminders, which is an Apple product. Not to—well, very much to buzz market a technological monopoly, because I love Apple, and I want to go back. Take me back, Apple. I love you still. I'm a PC forever. Anyway, yes, we use that. And it works good. It works pretty good.

Jesse Thorn: And the reason that you use it is because it is a lot easier to have a shopping list that is shared between the two of you.

John Hodgman: And I love getting notifications aaall the time.

(Jesse laughs.)

I love being on a phone call and then getting a beep going like, “Oh! No, are we the middle of a new natural climate calamity? Or is there something happening in the political realm?” And it's like, no, your wife—who is a whole human being in her own right—has added beets to your shopping list.

[00:15:00]

None of these systems are perfect, but I see your point, Jesse Thorn—that when you are sharing a life with someone, it is reasonable to find some reasonable integration of at least your calendar, so you can know what each of you is doing. I don't think that Tim needs to give up his system, but I do think that it should be a fair—there should be a fairly seamless way for him to put things that Mike needs to know about into a shared calendar at the same time. Or just grant Mike full access to your weird document, Tim. I mean, I hope you are anyway. What are you hiding? And then Mike can just add the stuff that he thinks is important to the calendar, or something like that.

But yeah, I'm sorry, there is extra work. You say, “This is extra work, and I don't want to do it,” Tim, but you know what marriage is? The definition of extra work.

(Joel chuckles.)

Ah! I got Joel again. Ha-ha-ha! Point, point, point! Tim, you got to eat the hot salsa. Now I'm kind of thinking I want to have another bite of that salsa, but it's mostly because I'm just hungry. So, I'm going to leave it alone. *(Gutturally.)* And you're going to hear what it did to my voice.

Jesse Thorn: You know what? I'm going to give you a shot to have another bite, because we're going to take a quick break. We'll be back in just a second with more cases on the docket.

John Hodgman: (*Gutturally.*) Alright, Jesse, I'm going to have just another bite, and I'll be right back. Mm.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

(*ADVERTISEMENT*)

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Welcome back to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. We are clearing the docket this week. And we have a case from Julie in Mansfield, Massachusetts.

“I have self-published two novels. When it comes up in conversation, my husband, Steve, refers to these books as published. I believe there's a clear distinction between published and self-published. Whenever Steve says my books are published, I believe he is lying. If I don't correct him, I am lying too. If I do correct him, the conversation turns to the publishing industry. Then, instead of feeling proud of my books, I end up depressed. I'd like the judge to order my husband to stop referring to my books as published in conversation.”

John Hodgman: Mm! This is interesting. You know, I used to work at a literary agency. And there was a lot of stigma at the time assigned to self-publication.

(*Jesse confirms.*)

Because there were no—there was no electronic publication at that time. Either you had a book printed and put into bookstores, or you didn't have a book published. And there were companies that would—that were disreputable, that would take money from aspiring authors—usually middle-aged weird dads who had always wanted to write the great American novel or whatever, but spent their whole lives working middle management at the widget company or whatever. And now we're finally going to do it and realize that there was no way for them to get an agent or get an inroad at a major publishing house. And they would be preyed upon by these companies that would claim to publish your book—what they call vanity publishing—where you had your book, your manuscript, and the company would say, “Pay me several thousand dollars, and I will technically print up your book. And then you get it in a box.”

Jesse Thorn: With weird margin sizes!

(*John agrees and they laugh.*)

As a guy who has received a lot of self-published books in the mail over the years, because I host a public radio show, there's nothing weirder than a self-published book's margins.

(*John laughs.*)

I don't know what they're getting wrong. I can't put my finger on what's wrong about them, but—

You know, Judge Hodgman, I was in that industry at one point.

John Hodgman: Really?

Jesse Thorn: Well, I was in that industry adjacent. I found a—I was on a middle path. Our friends in the Kasper Hauser comedy group were performing sketch comedy in San Francisco, and a person saw them performing. Obviously, they're geniuses. Go listen to the Kasper Hauser comedy podcast. Total geniuses, right? And at the time, I was doing some work with Kasper Hauser. I was actually helping them with the publication of their first book, *Sky Mall*, which is one of the funniest things in history.

John Hodgman: A truly published book.

Jesse Thorn: And two of the guys from Kasper Hauser got this job working for a publisher promoting a new novel. And they did on the street happenings. They like wrote sketches that they performed at Book Expo or whatever. It was like this whole involved thing that paid very well, and I was on some sort of—I got some kind of job on some sort of like focus group or something that, again, I was getting \$3- or \$500 or something for an hour. I couldn't believe it. It was amazing.

John Hodgman: Yeah. Incredible.

Jesse Thorn: And it turns out that this book was written by this tech millionaire. And this tech millionaire had taken his tech millions—

John Hodgman: Who shall remain unnamed and unloved. Well, I don't know.

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Jesse Thorn: Yeah. (*Laughs.*) He wrote this novel, and it was truly like—it was like the world's worst—I don't know, it had a very like strong late-'60s vibe of like personal—it was very Burning Man-y. And he wrote this novel, and then he took his millions and started a publisher. Like, he couldn't get it published, so he founded a publishing house. Like, hired industry veterans, multiple—many industry veterans to publish this novel. And then he had read, or someone there had read, that the way Dan Brown made *The Da Vinci Code* a huge hit was by seeding the book, by giving it away to many people. And then it had, you know, become popular and fascinating and—

John Hodgman: Word of mouth spread. Sure.

Jesse Thorn: Word of mouth spread. And so, I—to this day—find this book in thrift stores. Constantly, because they gave away like 25,000 copies or something. 'Cause he figured, well, I might as well just spend \$1,000,000 on printing copies of the book to give away. And a big

part of Kasper Hauser's job was like figuring out ways to get people to take his book for free. (Laughs.)

John Hodgman: So, they were part of the unnamed tech billionaire's street team?

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. The book was called *Wild Animus*, I just remembered. *Wild Animus*.

John Hodgman: *Wild Animus*.

Jesse Thorn: Now our listeners are going to be sending us pictures to the *Judge John Hodgman* Instagram of when they find it in the bookstore shelves of their local thrift store.

John Hodgman: Oh, here we go! It's "a story of one man's journey through the '60s and into adulthood." Yeah, two stars on Goodreads. I'm not going to name the guy.

(*Jesse agrees.*)

And I trust that he is loved by the people who care about him. And was a rude thing to say.

Jesse Thorn: I love him! I needed the money bad.

John Hodgman: So—right. I mean, that kind of self-publishing is something that gets you sort of talked about and made fun of on podcasts years and years later. And there was no end of people who—not only was there a stigma attached to self-publishing, but because there was, a lot of the self-published authors who were sending us copies of their published books were very—they liked to say that they were published authors. They were not the way Julie is presenting herself down there in Mansfield, Massachusetts.

So, people who self-published their books weren't necessarily presenting themselves the way Julie in Mansfield, Massachusetts is. They were usually older guys who wanted to write a book, because they wanted to have written a book. And publishing that book, even if they paid for it themselves—either by creating a publishing company or paying money to a vanity publisher—they needed that to complete the loop of their ego, to have published that book.

And so, I really respect Julie. But self-publication, I hope, has less of a stigma now. Because a lot of great authors have started out their careers by self-publishing, because they can do it. There are ways for you to publish your book electronically and distribute it through various websites. I'm not going to buzz market any in particular. And you can market them and send them around and share them. And they show up in people's e readers, indistinguishable from any other book. And it's a great democratization of the publishing industry, which I think is very, very good and powerful. And there are lots of examples of great authors who have been discovered—and very successful authors have been discovered initially through self-publication. Which is great!

I mean, it's a huge part of the *New York Times* bestseller list now, is these self-published or small, independently published books.

Jesse Thorn: I mean, it was one of the great disruptions of the publishing industry ever that these tech companies realized that they could eliminate the role of the publisher simply by standardizing margins.

John Hodgman: (*Cackles.*) It's true. It's true! And we had a tech genius come by our literary agency and explain in the very late-'90s exactly what was going to happen and why it was going to happen. And you know, look, the literary agency still thrives, and it has adapted. But the initial reaction was "that's never going to happen".

In any case, Julie, you should not be ashamed to have self-published your books. But I applaud you for appreciating the nuance and the uncharacteristic humility of an author to say, "No, I don't want to say that I have published the book. I have self-published the book, and it makes me self-conscious, Steve." You should not feel ashamed of what you've done, but what you have done is you have self-published the book. And I appreciate your commitment to honesty.

Jesse Thorn: I think when you say that your book is published, what you are expressing is not that you wrote a book, or that people bought your book—

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—both of which are entirely possible through self-publishing. But I think like part of what you are communicating is that it has passed through several gatekeepers, right?

John Hodgman: I think that's right.

Jesse Thorn: I think that is a sense—when you say published, specifically—and again, there can be good and successful books that have not been quote/unquote "published" in that way. But I think when you say published, what you are saying is both a literary agent and an editor and an editor's committees and bosses all—and I know that's more than both now—all said, this is worthy of spending a bunch of money on. Because, you know, publishing a book costs a bunch of money one way or the other.

So, think that she is right and sensitive to realize that the message her husband is conveying is not true.

John Hodgman: Yeah, exactly. And that does not mean that those gatekeepers necessarily are virtuous, or that the work is worth more because it passed through those gates. But that is the connotation, as you say Jesse, that you connote when you say, "I've been published." When you say, "My book has been published," that does not mean, "I've hired some young men to try to push it into people's hands on street corners." That's pamphleteering.

Jesse Thorn: Or at Book Expo.

John Hodgman: Yeah, for example. In any case, I mentioned this book, *Wild Animus*, that was self-published by your former boss—two stars in Goodreads—and I'll just go ahead and say, Julie's book is called *Yeshu*. Y-E-S-H-U, and you can find it wherever—well, not

wherever books are sold, but you know where to find it if you're curious about it. And I wish you the best of luck. And Julie's husband—who is a whole human being in his own right—Steve, gotta eat some hot salsa as punishment. (*Three gavel thumps.*) Ow.

Jesse Thorn: Here's something from Michael.

“I have a dispute with my wife, Carrie. We live down the road from a thrift store that's run by a charitable organization and community center. Carrie enjoys shopping there, but I feel guilty about it. I think the store is meant to meet the needs of our neighborhood's lower income residents. We are not their intended audience. Carrie says she wants to support small businesses, save money, and avoid waste. She also says her purchases help to support the store's community initiatives. Is it ethical for us to shop at this thrift shop?”

John Hodgman: Well, since we're buzz marketing things, I'll go ahead and plug this wonderful thrift shop, which is Maison Marie-Louise, in Vanier, Ontario. And well, I mean, what do you think about this, Jesse Thorn? You are an avid thrift and secondhand shopper. Is there such a thing as ethical thrifting in late-stage capitalism?

Jesse Thorn: I have very strong feelings about this, so I'm just gonna out with them. Yes, of course. Thrift stores serve an essential role in our economy, in the reduction of waste. The reality of the situation is that thrift stores receive many, many more donations than they can successfully sell. The big thrift store chains—your Salvation Armies and your Goodwills and even their for-profit counterparts—all make a significant amount of their business by selling—palletizing, and selling overseas excess donations. And a significant portion of their cost is the cost of disposing of goods that cannot be sold on any market, at least efficiently. Right?

I do think that one of the essential roles of a thrift store in the economy is to provide an accessible and affordable source of clothes, in particular, for people in the community who otherwise wouldn't be able to afford them. That function is well served by thrift stores generally, and I don't think that if you are—you know, speaking as someone who has shopped at thrift stores out of economic necessity and in my childhood particularly, it is not—there is not a shortage of product. Right?

If you need a coat to be warm, you will be able to find a coat to be warm at a thrift store. It will not be, you know, taken from your hands by someone who is shopping for themselves out of interest or interest in reducing waste or even interest in moving it through the marketplace, right? Like, I buy a lot of goods secondhand at thrift stores, garage sales, flea markets, every source I can find to stock my store. And I feel—I have no moral discomfort with doing so.

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Because all of those things are being taken out of the waste stream that the profound affluence of first world—so-called first world countries like the United States create. And yeah, I know from experience that thrift stores can serve multiple purposes. You know, I'll also sometimes hear that thrift stores are exploiting their customers by pricing items closer to their market value. And I also feel pretty strongly that thrift stores, especially nonprofit thrift

stores, are absolutely within their rights to do that. You know, they are trying to keep the lights on like anyone else is. Whether you agree or disagree with their mission or believe that they are the most efficient, charitable organization in the world is a separate issue.

You know, I think—for example—that a lot of people have objections to the mission of the Salvation Army, because of their faith-based underpinnings. Which I think are reasonable objections. But yeah, I just don't think that shopping at a thrift store because you like old stuff better, or because you want there to be less trash in the world, is taking clothing off the backs of anyone.

John Hodgman: Right. And the place like—clearly, just going through this, website for Maison Marie-Louise, and I don't even—I don't even speak a lot of French anymore; I can tell that this is not just a thrift shop or a vintage shop, this is a whole organization that is designed to help low-income families in need to get—they have all kinds of programs for nature outings to get people out of the city. They have programs for helping people get set up in new apartments with the furnishings and cookware that they need. And all of this is supported by the sales of the thrift shop.

So, you are—I think pretty clearly—it's pretty clear to me, Michael, that Carrie's purchases from the thrift shop, as she claims, are supporting the whole suite of services that this one organization is doing. And if you feel guilty about it still, there's nothing stopping you from making a further donation and paying some of those Brooklyn vintage t-shirt prices for those Ontario t-shirts that you're getting at the thrift shop, and that can help alleviate some of the guilt you feel.

But you know, rather than simply coming to a podcast to say that you know better than your wife, who is a whole human being in her own right, just off the top of your dome, another thing to do would be to contact Maison Marie-Louise and ask them how does—what do they think about more affluent members of the community buying stuff in the thrift shop? Is that good for them or bad for them? They're the ones who know—not just you, me, and Jesse Thorn!

Jesse Thorn: You know what they're gonna say? (*In a cartoonish French accent.*) “Hello, it is—we prefer that you not shop in our store, thank you!”

John Hodgman: (*Stammering.*) Look, if they're French speaking Canadians, they very well may say that.

(*Jesse laughs.*)

I mean, they're a pretty feisty bunch. But that's the way to find out for sure.

Jesse Thorn: (*Chuckling.*) Okay, look, we're gonna be back in just a second with more on the docket—including some very hot actuarial goss. Got that actuary goss. We'll be back in just a second on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

(ADVERTISEMENT)

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: The *Judge John Hodgman* podcast is headed out on tour starting September 11th at the City Winery in New York City, then heading westward, across the Northeast, the Midwest, and the West Coast. We're going to have a good old time. And I hope that if you live in one of those places, you've already got your tickets or are about to get them, because I don't want them to sell out on you!

John Hodgman: MaximumFun.org/events. I mean, we are nearing a sellout, I believe, right now in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Maybe by the end of the episode, they may be gone. Meanwhile, New York City, Philadelphia, Washington, DC, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Addison, Wisconsin, St. Paul, Minnesota, Burlington, Vermont, Portland, Maine, Turner's Falls, Massachusetts, my hometown of Brookline, Massachusetts! Vancouver, Canada, Seattle, Portland, Oregon, Los Angeles, and stay tuned for the San Francisco Sketch Fest.

They're all available to you now at MaximumFun.org/events, and if you live in one of those cities, we need your disputes! Because we hear them live on stage. Every show's a little different thanks to you and your disputes, which you should submit as soon as possible to the tune of now at MaximumFun.org/jjho. Let us know if you've got a dispute for one of the cities we're on tour, and we'll consider it. MaximumFun.org/events.

[00:35:00]

MaximumFun.org/jjho, MaximumFun.org/judge-john-hodgman-road-court. That is all!

Jesse Thorn: Guess what, John?

John Hodgman: What?

Jesse Thorn: I'm so excited about this tour that I learned how to put a capo on my ukulele. (*Chuckles.*)

John Hodgman: (*Applauds.*) People don't know necessarily, if they only listen to the show, that you play the ukulele and sing songs during these shows. And I'm going to sing a song too, and you only see it if you see it live on stage. MaximumFun.org/events, MaximumFun.org/jjho to submit your disputes. And that's everything you need to know about the *Judge John Hodgman* road court. It's about to hit the road.

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

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Welcome back to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. Here is a case from Lawrence in Sandy Spring, Maryland.

“I often have to be in Zoom meetings with fellow senior citizens. One regular attendee uses a doctored photo that is at least 25 years old in his profile. So, when he turns off his video, he looks really great and makes the rest of us look bad. (*Chuckling.*) Please order him to use a photo that shows what he looks like now.”

John Hodgman: Is this a professional Zoom meeting or a social Zoom meeting? Does it say one way or the other?

Jesse Thorn: It doesn't say.

John Hodgman: I'm just, you know, I'm not a fan of pranks necessarily. But if this is just among friends, I just think a solution might be to get the message across is that when he sets his profile image as himself 25 years ago, what you do is—Lawrence in Sandy Spring, Maryland—you take a screenshot of him as he is now, preferably like having a funny look on his face like he just ate some spicy salsa or whatever, and then you distribute that to the entire group, and then the entire group changes their profiles to him as he is now. And just turn off your camera simultaneously, so he just sees himself as he is now, the way he is now. That would get the message across. Don't you think, Jesse Thorn?

Jesse Thorn: I was thinking maybe you just change your profile picture to like George Clooney.

John Hodgman: Oh! Okay, very good. Maybe even George Clooney from 25 years ago, even. Like, *ER* George Clooney.

Jesse Thorn: The honest truth is that I don't think it makes everyone else look bad. I think that's a picture that this person likes, and we all choose photographs that are flattering of ourselves. This isn't—he's not like entering a youth contest with a false photograph. (*Chuckles.*)

John Hodgman: Alright, Jesse Thorn, but he's like on a dating app—

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, if you're—like, if he was representing himself as “that's how I look now,” then it would be a problem. But he's not. He's saying, “This is a picture of me.”

John Hodgman: What about the fact that I routinely use as a headshot a picture that I took of myself in 2015? (*Chuckles.*)

Jesse Thorn: I support it. This is showbusiness, baby.

John Hodgman: Yeah, flash that up on the YouTube channel. Flash a—Daniel Speer, our video editor, make sure you flash a picture of my 2015 headshot next to me now, having eaten some hot salsa. Yeah, you know what, Jesse Thorn? You have turned my judgment around. I agree. If he is not misrepresenting himself, but rather representing himself in a light that he finds flattering to him, we all deserve that! We all deserve to represent ourselves in the light that feels most flattering. We get to choose our own lighting on Zoom. We get to

choose the light in which we represent ourselves. And so, we should also get to choose our setting, and we should feel comfortable. Like, in real life and in Zoom.

Like, I don't understand why people don't find a spot that has good lighting, that they wear some nice clothes, maybe they use a nice microphone so that they sound good, and they look good. And therefore they will feel good as they're communicating via virtual teleconferencing. So, sorry about that, Lawrence. You gotta eat some spicy salsa. Take a picture of yourself and send it in. (*Three gavel bangs.*) Ow.

Jesse Thorn: Okay, I want to hear this actuary gossip.

John Hodgman: Oh, Le-Goss Show? Let's do it. So, if you're a new listener, you may not know that a little ways back, in episode 658, "Cease and De-List", we had two wonderful litigants, Tyler and Abby. And Abby complained that Tyler's top-five-list-making hobby was too annoying. But she also told us some hot gossip from her work as an actuary. She told us off mic, I remember. She didn't want to reveal the actual gossip, but she told it to us privately. And so, we love that hot goss, and we put out a call for more hot actuary gossip, and we got some. I can't wait to hear this update.

[00:40:00]

Bailiff Jesse, what's Le-Goss Show in the world of les actuaire?

Jesse Thorn: Matt says, "I am an actuary working in the pension sector in Canada. I'm writing in response to your request for hot actuary goss. Our CEO recently made an internal feel-good town hall speech. To prepare, we did a deep dive into the data." By the way, if you work at an actuarial company, that's how you prepare for literally anything.

(*John laughs.*)

You're like, "Well, tomorrow's Easter! Let's prepare by doing a deep dive into the data."

John Hodgman: Deep dive into the data. Triple D!

Jesse Thorn: "We discovered a 100-year-old survivor was actually collecting two survivor benefits. She had been married to a plan member who retired and subsequently passed away at age 73. She was left with a survivor pension. She then remarried to another retired member from our plan. When he died a few years later, also at age 73, she began receiving a second survivor benefit. Note that while this makes the goss less hot, it is totally legal."

John Hodgman: Wow!

Jesse Thorn: "Our little old lady just so happened to have the first name Ivy. So, when our CEO shared her story in the town hall, the legend of Poison Ivy was born. Sadly, she recently passed away at the age of 102."

John Hodgman: Look, I have a dispute with the adverb sadly there. She had an incredible life.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. We don't even know about husbands that she murdered that weren't part of this retirement plan!

John Hodgman: Well, you know, she was just waiting for them to turn 73, apparently.

Jesse Thorn: Exactly.

John Hodgman: Well, that is an incredible—not only an incredible story, but also it may be my new retirement plan, now that I know that it's legal to become a black widower in Canada.

Jesse Thorn: God, I would love for my mom to marry a soon to die 73-year-old with a good pension. She could really use some survivor benefits.

John Hodgman: Hey, if you're an older Canadian, and you're feeling lonely, and you're in the market for an incredible life partner, like Jesse's mom—I mean, specifically Jesse's mom, one of the smartest, funniest, and kindest, and most interesting people I've ever met, who's got an eye for the antiques, I dare say, as well—maybe she's got an eye for you, you old antique. Why don't you send your photo in, and we'll send them over to Jesse's mom. And I want real photos, up to date photos, please. Don't send in your 2015 headshot of me. That would be weird if you sent in my 2015 headshot. Send in a recent photo of yourself. And get ready to sign that pension right on over. Because Jesse—

Jesse Thorn: Jesse's mom has got it going on!

John Hodgman: Jesse's mom has got it going on, and she needs some financial stability!

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. *(Laughs.)* I can only do so much.

John Hodgman: Some of that Canadian style financial stability. You know what I'm talking about.

Jesse Thorn: With three disabled children.

(They chuckle.)

John Hodgman: Speaking of Canadian—

Jesse Thorn: Marry my mom, please!

John Hodgman: And by the way, if you're coming to our Vancouver show, go to MaximumFun.org/events for that. And you're an elderly Canadian fellow who's looking for a good time and a life partner, let us know. We'll say hi to you there. Send some pictures.

Jesse Thorn: Alright. The docket is clear. That's it for another episode of *Judge John Hodgman*. *Judge John Hodgman*, created by Jesse Thorn and John Hodgman. This episode, engineered by our pal Joel Mann, the Maine Mann, at WERU Community Radio in Orland, Maine. Our social media manager, Nattie Lopez. Our video editor, Daniel Speer. This podcast, edited by AJ McKeon. Our producer is Jennifer Marmor. Photos from the show are posted on our Instagram account, at [Instagram.com/judgejohnhodgman](https://www.instagram.com/judgejohnhodgman). We're also on TikTok and YouTube, [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](https://www.youtube.com/@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod). Follow and subscribe to see our episodes and video-only content there.

John Hodgman: Yeah, you can see me eating this hot, hot salsa that Joel made me eat on behalf of the WERU Pledge Drive, and guess what? I'm gonna have another bite. This is my contribution to the Pledge Drive. But if you like community—we know that you like community-supported media, and you're probably and wonderfully a member, a listening member and contributor to [MaximumFun.org](https://www.maximumfun.org), which we encourage you to do. But if you've got a little extra time and attention you want to pay to WERU, go ahead and get it. Here we go, hot stuff coming in.

(Chip crunch.)

Why did I do that? It was terrible.

(Joel laughs.)

Jesse Thorn: Did I just get off my shift at the factory, or is John's head a steam whistle?

Sound Effect: Steam whistle.

John Hodgman: Wowie zowie. Okay.

[00:45:00]

Joel Mann: It's a hit and a miss.

John Hodgman: I'm going to power through this. Thank you so much, by the way, to Steve VMD on Apple Podcasts for your wonderful review and five-star rating. Steve VMD said, "This is an all-timer. This is what got me hooked on podcasts years ago, when I thought they all would be as interesting and informative as *Judge John Hodgman*. It is. And it's also funny, warm, and insightful. A true gem. Thank you so much, Steve VMD.

Look, we only exist because of your support. So, if you're listening on Apple Podcasts, give us a little review, spread the word wherever you listen to podcasts. Leaving a review and leaving a few stars around, maybe up to five even, can really help people discover the podcast—as does sharing our videos on YouTube, as does sharing our social media posts on Instagram and elsewhere, as does just telling a friend about it. Hey, Joel, you're a friend of mine, even though you made me eat this stuff. I hear WERU is good to listen to. Have you ever heard of the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast?

Joel Mann: No. Sounds interesting.

John Hodgman: Well, give it a try sometime. Maybe when you're stuck in traffic on Route 1, and you forgot to take Backridge Road.

Hey, we're just a few weeks away from the beginning of the *Judge John Hodgman* road court tour, and it's not too late for you to send us your cases for the road. Are you a New Yorker fighting with a cab, because you're walking over here?! I'd like to get that cab into the City Winery and hear its side of the story. What about Philadelphia? What can we solve for you that doesn't involve throwing a battery? I know Washington, DC, is our nation's capital, but this is the highest court in internet land in Pittsburgh. We've never brought our show to your city before, or should I say in city? Bring your French fry laden sandwiches and all your other hot beefs to us. And if you live in the other cities that we're going to—

Jesse Thorn: Wait, hold on. I have to clear something up here. I gotta clear the air about Pittsburg.

John Hodgman: Uh-huh. Okay, you gotta clear the air.

Jesse Thorn: We recorded some pre-roll announcements that are broadcast locally to some of the cities that we're visiting, or the areas that we're visiting.

John Hodgman: Local jokes get you local work.

Jesse Thorn: We recorded them all in a row. And apparently in recording the Pittsburgh one, accidentally said Ginzers instead of Yinzers. I don't—I know that Yinzers are what Pittsburghers are called, so I don't—it must've been me misspeaking or something.

John Hodgman: I remember this going really well, and I didn't hear you mispronounce it. But we did get a letter from a Yinzer saying, "He said Jinzer or Ginzer." And maybe you were speaking about Pittsburghians who only drink gin? I don't know.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. But anyway, I just want Pittsburghians to know that I know that you call yourselves Yinzers, which is why I was so excited to say Yinzer. I also know that there is an outfielder, now mostly designated hitter, for the Pittsburgh Pirates named Andrew McCutchen. He's a legendary Pittsburgh Pirates player, sort of one of those near Hall of Fame level players. Really great player and a really lovely guy.

John Hodgman: Cutch.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, Cutch. He played for the Giants for three quarters of a season, and he's still beloved in San Francisco just because of what a charming guy he is. Many years ago—the Big Furry Con is in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. And many years ago, the Pirates had a game the same day as the Furry Con. And I think they were sort of intermingling, the crowds were intermingling there in the downtown Pittsburgh area, where the three rivers connect. And Andrew McCutchen tweeted word furies.

John Hodgman: (*Snorts.*) Just that word.

Jesse Thorn: Just the word furies. This became an internet phenomenon, that Andrew McCutchen had just tweeted the word furies. People realized, especially in the furry community, that the big Furry Con was going on in Pittsburgh that day, so they knew what he was talking about. And since that time—

John Hodgman: Furry Con, they got it going on.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, that was five or ten years ago. And since that time, every year when the Furry Con rolls into Pittsburgh, Andrew McCutchen tweets “furies”.

(*John snorts a laugh.*)

And he's really embraced his role as a non-furry icon of the furry community and a hero of that portion of the Venn diagram that is furies and Pirates fans.

John Hodgman: So, if you're a furry or a pirate, you know you're welcome at our show in Pittsburgh. If you're a Yinzer of any kind. And that's right, I said Yinzer. And speaking of which, we also know the official names of all these other cities. So, if you're in Ann Arbor, Michigan, you're an Arborian. If you're a Madisonian of Wisconsin, if you're a St. Paulite of Minnesota, if you're a Burlington Vermonti, if you're a Portlando from Maine, if you're a Turner there in Turner Falls, and if you're a Commonwealthian child of Brookline—we'll be in Brookline, Massachusetts.

[00:50:00]

If you're a Vancouverite, a Seattlean, or a Portlando of Oregon, orrr a Riceronian from San Francisco or a sweet, sweet angel from the Angels, AKA Los Angeles, you should come see us on *Judge John Hodgman* road court. Get your tickets at MaximumFun.org/events, and get your cases to us for the road court at MaximumFun.org/jjho.

Jesse Thorn: Jennifer, we've got some live episodes from our last tour coming to the feed soon, right?

Jennifer Marmor: That's right!

Jesse Thorn: I think—and people listen to the live episodes. I think *Judge John Hodgman* live episodes are pretty much the only live episodes ever to hit a podcast feed to acclaim.

(*John laughs.*)

I don't, have never—we have gotten so much positive feedback about live episodes of *Judge John Hodgman* and the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. It is a different show every single night of the tour, featuring folks from the place where we are performing. It is a thrill ride for us and the audience every single time, as any of you who have heard one of those live shows

can attest to. Plus, it has a lot of secret stuff that you only get to see if you come to the show. It is a really great time, and I hope that folks in all of those places will go to MaximumFun.org/events and get their tickets now. By the way, John, we announced Ann Arbor. Ann Arbor's full!

John Hodgman: Sold out.

Jesse Thorn: Sold out in one day.

John Hodgman: Ann Arborians are no longer called Ann Arborians. They're called Sold-Outios. Don't let that happen to you. Get your tickets at MaximumFun.org/events. Get your cases in, MaximumFun.org/jjho. And by the way, as long as you're over there at MaximumFun.org/jjho, that's where we get all of our disputes from you. They all go directly to my eyes and ears, and I'd love to hear from you about any dispute you might have. Because after all, if we don't have your disputes, we don't have a show. So, keep your beefs up and get your disputes in at MaximumFun.org/jjho. And I did all that through a big mouthful of spicy salsa, and I feel pretty good about it.

Jesse Thorn: MaximumFun.org/jjho, no matter what your dispute is—but especially if you're in one of those places. And we'll talk to you next time on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Transition: Cheerful ukulele chord.

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