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Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Welcome to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. I'm Bailiff Jesse Thorn. This week, "A Turning Client Privilege". Ethan brings the case against his mom, Chris. Chris doesn't like to use GPS when she's driving. She says driving without it is better exercise for her brain. But Ethan says that when she needs directions, she calls him. He doesn't want to be her personal navigation device! 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: My daughter and I were visiting a college in Bangor, Maine. After a nice trip, we had our GPS take us back to the car rental agency. Except, it just didn't seem like it was taking us the right way. We were in the middle of nowhere, and the GPS said, "You have arrived at your destination." We had pulled up to a graveyard. We did end up having a pleasant walk around a beautiful cemetery, however.

Bailiff Jesse Thorn, please swear them in.

Jesse Thorn: Ethan and Chris, please rise and raise your right hands.

(Chairs squeak.)

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

(They swear.)

Do you swear to abide by Judge John Hodgman's ruling, despite the fact that he's never lost?

(They swear.)

Judge Hodgman, you may proceed. That one was like a complimentary one.

John Hodgman: I like it! I liked it. Not all who wander are lost, as they say in the *Lord of the Rings*.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, or on bumper stickers in Berkeley.

John Hodgman: That's right. I'm never lost, because I'm never going anywhere.

Jesse Thorn: Indeed Judge Hodgman, visualize world peace.

John Hodgman: I've got it right there in my brain. Let the folks listening to the podcast go over to YouTube to see me pointing at my little brain.

Jesse Thorn: What if the army had to have a bake sale, Judge Hodgman?

John Hodgman: I wish I remembered a bumper sticker right now. Oh, I do remember one. it says WERU.org. That's where I'm at. Bumper sticker central here in Orland, Maine—as well as a solar powered community radio station where we're broadcasting. And we're here with our summertime engineer and Operations and Programming Director, here at WERU: Joel, The Maine Mann man, right, Joel?

(Joel confirms.)

Joel, you know, I had a hot dog from the gas station today.

Joel Mann: How was it?

John Hodgman: I enhanced the experience. Before eating it, I accidentally poured gasoline on my hands.

(They laugh.)

Joel Mann: Didn't need any mustard then, I guess.

John Hodgman: No, no, it was very spicy. Okay. Ethan and Chris, you may be seated for an immediate summary judgment in one of yours favors.

(Chair squeaks.)

Can either of you name the piece of culture that I referenced as I entered this courtroom? Ethan, you're here with your mom. Chris, I've got to give it to Chris first. Chris, what's your guess?

Chris: So, my guess is the 2010 movie *GPS*, starring Rob Carbone, inspired by Alfred Hitchcock's *Lifeboat*.

(Ethan "wow"s.)

John Hodgman: Whoa!

(Chris laughs.)

That's an incredible guess. Would you repeat the title of that?

Chris: Just *GPS*.

John Hodgman: *GPS*. That's a movie. Why didn't I think of that? *GPS* movie—*GPS the Movie*? Or *GPS* movie.

Jesse Thorn: I don't think it's called *GPS the Movie*. I don't think they like licensed it from the satellites.

John Hodgman: And now, Ethan, do you have a sincere guess?

Ethan: I do have a sincere guess. Given the Maine reference, I'm going to go with one of your books. And I can't get—but I'm going to try *Medallion Status*.

John Hodgman: The one that is least about Maine! That's alright, flattery will get you everywhere, except correct. All guesses are wrong. I bet you weren't expecting me to quote Alan Willett, were you? And you probably don't know who Alan Willett is, and that's because I don't either.

(They laugh.)

I know he's from New York, and I know that this GPS gone wrong story was quoted among several GPS gone wrong stories on Geico.com's online magazine, *Living Geico*.

(Jesse cackles.)

Which I didn't know existed. Or *Geico Living*, perhaps? I don't know. It's Living.Geico.com/home/technology/oh-the-wacky-places-youll-go-with-your-GPS. That is the URL if you want to look it up and verify that I'm quoting that. I did change the order of things, 'cause Alan Willett—as great a dad as he probably is for taking his daughter on a college tour to Bangor, Maine—he's not a natural storyteller. He should have ended with the graveyard. But he buried—or he didn't bury the lead. He kind of foisted in the middle. He stuffed the lead in the middle of the story. Anyway.

Jesse Thorn: He failed to bury the graveyard the graveyard lead!

John Hodgman: Yeah, exactly. He failed to bury the graveyard climax of that horrifying story of a GPS, appropriately in Maine, taking you to a graveyard instead of the Bangor International Airport. Which is where I presume they were headed.

Alright, let's get into it. Who brings this case against his mother to me? Is it you, Ethan?

Ethan: Yes.

[00:05:00]

John Hodgman: What kind of son are you, Ethan? What does your mom do that's so annoying that you would bring her onto a podcast?

Ethan: Well, it's more what she, well, doesn't do—first is she doesn't use GPS. But more importantly, when she doesn't use GPS, when she's traveling to places that she is less familiar with.

John Hodgman: And what happens when she does this?

Ethan: When she inevitably gets lost or is running late—

John Hodgman: When she is unfamiliar.

Ethan: —will call one of us, my siblings, to talk through what's the remainder of the instructions. And then we have to help her.

John Hodgman: How many siblings do you have?

Ethan: I have four siblings.

John Hodgman: You're one of five.

(Ethan confirms.)

Oh, and she calls one of you every time she gets lost?

Ethan: Well, whoever she's meeting, usually.

John Hodgman: *(Sarcastically.)* What a burden to help your mom out.

Chris: Thank you.

John Hodgman: You're welcome, Chris. Why won't you use the GPS?

Chris: So, I don't use GPS, because—not that I haven't. I have experienced the Garmin back in the Garmin days. I have used that. But I am old enough to be in the generations where you didn't have that technology. It was back in the day when you were going to direct somebody to something, you—kind of like when Sven is directing a passerby to Ole and Lena's farmstead, he would say, *(in a Scandinavian accent.)* “Well, yeah, you go down the road 10 miles or so. And you'll go around four or five curves, and then you'll get down a big hill, and then you'll go up another hill, and then you'll get down to what's a pasture. And usually Ole has a couple cows out there. And if you see the cows, then you know that you've gotten to Ole and Lean's house.”

John Hodgman: Have you ever considered recording a regional humor record album and going on tour?

(Chris laughs.)

Jesse Thorn: You know, Todd Barry tours Northern Europe. I think we've got another candidate!

John Hodgman: I really—I want to hear the Ole and Lena directions character for longer than I heard it just then. This is some top-notch mom humor. Some top notch mommery in general, Ethan. I don't understand. What's the complaint? How did this conflict start?

Ethan: Well, there was one kind of precipitating incident I can talk about. But generally this lies on two main arguments.

John Hodgman: Can you about it, or did you sign an NDA? You're allowed to?

Ethan: I am legally allowed.

John Hodgman: Okay, good. *(Laughing.)*

Ethan: My brother-in-law allows me to talk about it. But my bigger case rests on two arguments: safety and planning and time spent.

John Hodgman: Wait a minute. What was the inciting incident?

Ethan: We were meeting my mom who was watching our daughters for a few days.

John Hodgman: You and your brother-in-law, you both have kids, and your mom was watching them for a few days. Go on.

Ethan: That's correct. And we were all going to meet in kind of the perfect central city that's kind of equidistant between all of us. Dubuque, Iowa.

John Hodgman: Dubuque, Iowa, also known as the perfect central city. Dubuque.

Ethan: The perfect central city. *(Chuckles.)* And we were planning to meet, and we were all leaving. Scott, my brother-in-law, was going to leave a little earlier, because he's coming from Milwaukee. So, a longer drive. And we were—of course, Scott arrived. Of course, I arrived. And then, usually how it goes is about at least 30 minutes to wait on the others. Yes.

And she then—while we're waiting, Scott and I find a spot to meet. We found a brewery there in Dubuque and said, “Okay, why don't you plan to meet us here?”

And we get a call. And it's—first, I get a call from my mom. And she says, “So, I'm about to come into town here. Tell me again, what exit do I take?”

And I have no idea. She's coming into a different side of the town. And so, I said that explicitly. I said, “I don't know. I told you where we're meeting. I don't know how to get you to—where you're at to us.”

John Hodgman: Did you remind her of Dubuque's famous motto, “Dubuque, the town that has two sides.”

(They chuckle.)

Ethan: And so then, it progresses to Scott pulling up his GPS and then taking the phone from me, and then navigating my mom to this brewery through the phone, looking at his GPS. And she would be calling out what intersection she had met. And he would say, “Okay, so your next intersection, take a right.”

And so, she'd go. And she says, “Now I'm taking a right.”

And then he would call out, “Okay, in three blocks, I need you to take a left.” And it went like that until he got her directed to us.

John Hodgman: Jesse Thorn, are you familiar with the cinematic concept of the guy in the chair?

Jesse Thorn: No, I'm not!

John Hodgman: That's when the hero is in contact with a guy in a chair in a dark room somewhere who's got 17 computers open and is telling him—or her, or them—what to do. Like, “Okay, next you're gonna go this way, and now you gotta go up, and now you gotta climb down.”

Jesse Thorn: I just watched *Mission Impossible*. What's really special about that film is that there's two guys in a chair.

John Hodgman: Two guys in one chair!

(They laugh.)

Jesse Thorn: Yeah.

John Hodgman: Like that internet video that was so controversial.

Jesse Thorn: They already—they had Ving Rhames, but they wanted to bring in Simon Pegg.

[00:10:00]

John Hodgman: Yeah, why not? If you could get both Ving Rhames and Simon Pegg, why wouldn't you? Sounds like it was fun. What was your concern? That your mom was driving distractedly with her children in your car?

Ethan: I think that's the biggest piece of this. And it's not just our children. I love my mom, and I want her to be safe. And when she is relying on (*inaudible*), some confusion about where she's at or her navigation, that concerns me. Right? And she has her printout maps, but she's holding those up, and those can be distracting. I would prefer she just have her GPS that's telling her when she needs to take her turn, so she can focus on the cars and the pedestrians and the road.

John Hodgman: Okay, so Ethan, let me ask you—let me put it to you this way. So, obviously your mom and your respective children reached you safely at the brewery, and everyone had a nice beer and toasted to the success that you had at that point, right?

Ethan: Sure. Yeah.

John Hodgman: Is that the worst thing that has happened so far with your mom refusing to use the GBS?

Ethan: I would say that is one of the more comical pieces of this—right?—the lateness piece and the getting lost piece adds up quite a bit.

John Hodgman: Yeah. Chris, what went wrong, and what's your side of the story?

Chris: Well, thank you. So, the day of the incident—July 26, 2023—I had had three girls, ages six, five, and almost three, with me for two days. Okay? This is a picture of me driving. Well, we're stopped. Just let it be known I took this picture while I was stopped. It wasn't while I was on the road.

Jesse Thorn: And let it also be known that you're just a simple, country lawyer.

(They laugh.)

John Hodgman: For those of you who are listening to the podcast rather than watching this on YouTube, I must break in to say: Chris has come with her own visual aids. And just like she will print out a map rather than look at it on a phone, instead of sending us digital images, she has not only printed out the images, but seems to have put them and mounted them on poster board, which is really fantastic.

Jesse Thorn: She's indicating them with a pointer device.

Chris: I wish I had like one of those red laser things.

John Hodgman: A laser pointer!

Chris: And I could have shown each of the girls and named them. But anyway, so. Dubuque, Iowa was where we were going to meet. But when my last—my actual couple of conversations with Ethan, he yet did not know where we were going to meet in Dubuque. We knew we were going to Dubuque. It's kind of like when you get invited to a wedding, and you know that you're going to Minneapolis, but you forget to look where the church is located or where you're going. And so, anyway—

John Hodgman: Or in this case, the church hadn't even been—you'd gotten a save the date card as it were, but the formal invitation telling you where exactly to go had not only not been sent, but not even been decided.

Chris: Yes. And so, I have a place—a business in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, and that's about an hour north of Dubuque. And so, I know how to get to Dubuque. But I yet did not know where we were going to be meeting. And I had these three little girls with me. I had an opportunity to be able to print out the map, the directions to Seven Hills Brewing Company in Dubuque, had I known where we were going. So, this is a copy of that map that would have given me explicit, detailed directions to that brewery had I had time to print them out. But I did not, because I did not know where I was going.

And I will remind you that I had three little girls in the backseat that can be a distraction whether I'm looking at printed printouts or a GPS or a Garmin or whatever we have. So.

John Hodgman: You're saying the only thing that could have cut through the stimulation and the visual and audio clutter of those girls and everything else would be the comforting sound of your son or son-in-law telling you how to go.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

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Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Chris, what was your plan when you departed? Was your plan to stop at a gas station and ask for directions? Or did you always expect that when you got to Dubuque, you would ask your son and son-in-law to do the GPSing for you?

Chris: Well, I'm going to address your gas station remark first, because I actually have that on my list of what used to be. It used to be, when we travel, you did stop at a gas station and ask them, "Well, where is the school? Where is that church?" But now—and they would tell you! They would know! Now you'd stop and ask that, and they would look at you like, "Huh?"

[00:15:00]

John Hodgman: You're let down by humanity in general. Would that be correct, Chris?

Chris: A little bit. But it all goes back this—

John Hodgman: You have this wild theory that for some reason we've all become idiots, because we've become addicted to our phones.

Chris: Well, yeah, and I won't say all.

John Hodgman: It's almost like there's a massive social engineering time bomb that got set off when smartphones were introduced that no one knew what was going to happen. And instead, we've all become wild addicts, and we can't drive properly, and we can't talk to each other properly. And it's making all of our teenagers engage in horrible bouts of—a crisis of loneliness and self-loathing. It's a bad situation. Wouldn't you say, Chris?

Chris: Yes, and you can be on my panel when I write my book, when I go on my book tour. Then I will have you be on my panel, because you explained it actually beautifully.

John Hodgman: I'm sorry; I'm going to be too busy playing the *New York Times* spelling bee. I love every story that you have to tell, Chris. But we do need to reach our destination here, which is for me to determine what should happen next, which direction we're going to go in with this GPS thing here. And I do need to ask some questions.

One, when you were calling Ethan and his brother-in-law, your son-in-law, at the brewery: were you holding your phone or were you using hands free mode?

Chris: Holding.

John Hodgman: Chris.

Chris: I know.

John Hodgman: What are you doing to me here? You know I want to find in favor of a mom. You're holding your phone up to your head? You've got three kids in the back.

Chris: I sure do.

John Hodgman: You showed me a picture of them; they were really cute.

Chris: They are.

John Hodgman: Ethan. Do I understand this correctly? You said, "We're gonna meet in Dubuque," 'cause it's well known as the best meeting place. But you didn't decide on the final destination of this brewery until after your mom was already on the road. Is that correct?

Ethan: That is correct. Scott was already on the road when I called mom, and we discussed that we hadn't heard from him. So, once I got a hold of him and met him in Dubuque, I let him know where we convened at.

John Hodgman: How does it make you feel when you hear that your mom was not only calling you for directions, but actually holding the phone to her head while she was doing it?

Ethan: I have to be honest here, and that did not immediately come to mind.

John Hodgman: Now that you're learning it for the first time, how do you feel?

Ethan: I am okay with that.

John Hodgman: Why?! Chris, do I understand correctly that you were not hands-free, you were hands full of phone? Yes or no?

Chris: That is correct. I will answer yes to that. Yes. But what I want to say is: why is that different than picking up my water cup or a Big Mac I picked up at the drive thru?

John Hodgman: Well, I don't think that—I think that it is pretty dangerous.

Chris: It's all distracting.

John Hodgman: Well, sure. Well, I do think it's pretty dangerous to eat a hamburger in your car. And while I have done it, including most recently while driving in Maine, I discovered that I became the Big Mac. So, much of that Big Mac fell all over my clothing.

Chris: Yeah. Yeah, lettuce all over.

John Hodgman: I bet you driving's different in Iowa, though. I bet you there's a lot of straight—there's a lot of straight shots.

Chris: It depends on which side of Iowa you're on. The west side is a lot straighter. The northeast side, where we live, has more hills and curves and such. So.

John Hodgman: What's it like around Dubuque? I want to know.

Chris: The road that I was on, for the most part, was straight. So, going from Prairie to Dubuque was a straight shot.

Jesse Thorn: Plus, depending on what side you're on, you use a different exit.

John Hodgman: Ethan, our producer Jennifer Marmor says that she received an email from you describing one of the times when you were waiting for your mom in which you claimed

that your mom had accidentally gotten on a scenic route, and that she had to drive around for a while in search of a McDonald's. What was happening in that situation?

Ethan: Sure. So, I'm going to focus on the McDonald's piece, and that is: it was another time that we were meeting—my mom was driving back with my daughter after being in Milwaukee, and we were going to meet. And I arrived on time to our planned destination, and she informed me that they were running late. Because one) she had gotten onto a—accidentally gotten onto a, quote, “scenic route”. Which I don't know what that quite means.

But then more importantly, they had to drive around in search of a McDonald's. And this gets back to GPS. Had she just stopped, put McDonald's in her GPS, she would have found that right away and got their food and then continued on and probably been more on time.

John Hodgman: Chris, you needed to find a McDonald's, so you could get two Big Macs to eat with both of your hands while you drove with your niece?

(They laugh.)

Chris: I was buying Zoey, his daughter, some chicken nuggets and fries and a milk for our ride home.

[00:20:00]

And yes, I told him scenic route, because I knew he'd give me a hard time if I said I was lost.

But! I was not lost. And this is what happened. I was recalculating. So, I was familiar with the area to a certain extent, because our daughter, Brooke—that's where we were, was at our daughter, Brooke, in Milwaukee. And I was—I knew that there was a McDonald's a short distance on the road that I've been on before to go to some of the other stores in that area.

That was the scenic route that I had told him I was on, but it was not because I was lost, per se; I just wasn't on the right path yet.

Jesse Thorn: To be fair, you specifically said you were lost at the beginning of that story.

(They laugh.)

Chris: I did?

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, you did.

Chris: Could you run that back for me? *(Laughs.)*

John Hodgman: But when you used the term scenic route, you were referring mostly to—it was more of a euphemism for you got off your regular track. It wasn't like a literal national seashore or something.

Chris: Right.

Jesse Thorn: John, I have to tell you, this whole case has given me the heebie-jeebies. And I'll tell you why.

John Hodgman: How come? I don't want you to have the heebie-jeebies.

Jesse Thorn: One of the last times that my father came to visit me in Southern California—My father in the later years of his life had, let's say, reduced mental acuity. I did not realize the extent to which he had until—he like, he had lived his teenage years in Glendale, California, which is not very far from where I live. And he liked to come visit us and stay in a motel in Glendale. That was like his greatest passion was to stay in a motel in Glendale. And he was like, “I know the territory.” And he refused to use a GPS.

John Hodgman: Well, you gotta know the territory. Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: Well, in Iowa, certainly! *(Laughs.)* But in Glendale, he did know the territory. And so, he would come; he'd stay in this motel, and he'd drive down and visit us. He'd rent a car. And this one particular time, the last time he came to visit us, he was at the motel. He called us on his cell phone. He said, “I'm going to come visit.” It was like 11 o'clock in the morning. And then he showed up at our door—15 or so minutes away—four hours later.

And during that time, we were calling him, and receiving no response. Calling my stepmother in San Francisco, asking if she'd heard from him. We were terrified. It turned out that he just hadn't noticed that he was driving around in circles that whole time. And when he got there he said, “Oh, I'm sorry! My phone went under the passenger seat, and I couldn't reach it.”

(They laugh.)

And so, all these stories to me just sound like my dad saying, “Oh, I'm sorry! My phone went under the passenger seat, and I couldn't reach it,” while he just drives around various Southern California freeways for four hours.

John Hodgman: Looking for something familiar?

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, looking for something familiar, and being unbothered by the whole thing!

John Hodgman: Yeah. Ethan, your mom raises a good point, which is that the GPS is not always reliable. I think we all have a story about a time that we were taken somewhere by the GPS that we shouldn't have gone to. Do you think that—do you worry that your mom might get misdirected by GPS if I were to order her to use it?

Ethan: I don't, for a couple reasons. One, I know inevitably she would always still have her handy maps in the back, as a backup. Right?

John Hodgman: Right. Which she can read while driving and steering with her knees.

Ethan: Exactly. She can always pull over, check out her maps, get resituated. So, I don't—

John Hodgman: Would she, though? Would she pull over? That's my concern.

(They chuckle.)

Ethan: That's a good question. I do think she has a good navigation sense about her, as well. So, I do think that she can lean on all of these skills. And I want to get back to like the losing our mental faculties if we're using GPS, for example. I don't think that would apply to my mom in this sense. In fact, I think where—if she wants to exercise her brain—it would actually be learning how to use GPS, and plugging it into her system, and her *(inaudible)*.

John Hodgman: Well, you anticipated my next question, which was: do you think that she is capable? I mean, you know that your mom has a resistance to using the smartphone at all, because people might be listening. And as well, she doesn't want to plug it in to use the hands-free feature. Do you think that she can get that GPS working on her car without some help?

Ethan: I think I could assist her with getting the initial setup, and absolutely she has the capacity to utilize GPS. She might say she doesn't, so that you rule in her favor. But absolutely, she does.

[00:25:00]

John Hodgman: And yet, Ethan, you use GPS, do you not?

Ethan: I do.

John Hodgman: So, your brain is already mush. How could you help your mom?

(They laugh.)

Yes, Chris, go ahead.

Chris: And that was kind of one of my points is—

John Hodgman: That your son's brain is mush?

(They laugh.)

Chris: We have a daughter that lives in the Milwaukee area. We have a son that lives up in Baraboo, Wisconsin. Ethan lives in Iowa City. Well, we have one son that lives in London, but I can't drive there. So, I'm only using these three as examples right now. I can drive—

John Hodgman: Boy, oh boy. We do not need a GPS to triangulate where your whole family is. Ethan, you and your siblings just got doxxed.

(They laugh.)

Chris: I can drive to each one of those three that I mentioned without any map, without any—and I would like to challenge, or at least ask, if Ethan and the other siblings could all do that without any kind of guidance. Map or otherwise!

John Hodgman: Ooh. Ooh.

Chris: I don't use a map either. I go there now, because I have looked—the first time, I would have went with a map. But I don't have to do that anymore. And I drive in pretty packed areas. You know, a lot of roads.

And back to the point of can she do it: I'm a little insulted by that. But you guys wouldn't know my background. I've had a photo lab for 20 years. I printed pictures. I've dealt with technology. I deal with everybody's now phone. They come in—I mean, you think I'm the lady that can't do it. I'm the lady that gets their pictures off. I'm the lady that gets them—you know. So, I can do technology. I can take advantage of it. I can print things out. I will utilize the technology. I just don't want *(inaudible)*.

John Hodgman: You printed out maps in 2004.

(They laugh.)

Jesse Thorn: Judge Hodgman, she's familiar with technology. She sells phonograph records for a living!

John Hodgman: Well, no—I mean, I got to give you credit, Chris. Because, you know, if you've run a photo lab for 20 years, then you definitely have adapted to and seen your whole professional world transformed by technology,

Chris: Thank you.

John Hodgman: Which would go to motivate why you hate phones so much. Ethan, your mom has laid down a gauntlet, which is she believes that you could not drive to her home without the aid of a GPS. Do you accept that challenge? Yes or no?

Chris: He can drive to my house. That's not the—it's the ones that are in the city type areas. It's: can Josh drive to Iowa City without a GPS? Can Brooke—can Ethan drive to Brooke's in Milwaukee without a GPS?

John Hodgman: Ethan, can you drive to Milwaukee without a GPS?

Ethan: I would not be able to drive to my sister's without a GPS.

John Hodgman: There we go. Brain mush. That's all I needed to hear.

Ethan: Your honor?

John Hodgman: Yes?

Ethan: I drive to my sister's in Milwaukee far less often than my mom.

Chris: That's not true!

Ethan: And two, I would refuse to because it updates for things like construction that often always—well, not “often always”—often make her late.

John Hodgman: Well, that's a good point, Ethan. You know, Chris, those maps that you printed out in 2004 probably should go into the shredder at this point. Because they're not valid anymore.

Chris: Well, yeah. I just found it last night. It was last minute evidence that just appeared last night. I must have been just driven to go to open that file cabinet, and there that was. But I just—it was kind of—I chuckled a little bit.

John Hodgman: Very serendipitous. Yeah. Well, I mean—but it's true that GPS can provide real-time information about construction, traffic stops, traffic slowdowns, and other things like that. Oh! She's holding her hand up, telling me she's got a response to that too, and pulling out a printout!

Chris: My Mango Mustache Media directions. In line number seven. It says, “Take the ramp on the left for US-20 East, and head toward Dubuque.” In red print underneath, it says, “Lane closed on US-20 East from Iowa-282, blah, blah, blah, blah, and lane closed going the other direction.” And there it is, right there. So, I printed this out—

John Hodgman: You printed out updated information.

(Chris confirms.)

And did you—we started on time today. So, Ethan, Mango Mustache Media, can either of you confirm that Chris showed up when expected?

Ethan: She did show up on time today.

Chris: I was here before he was!

John Hodgman: Well, that could have just been out of spite, ma'am.

(They laugh.)

Chris: Well, I was getting a little nervous, because I did miss the one turn. It was kind of set back here. So, I did have a little panic mode, but I found it. But in regards to kind of something also with this—and that can go back to when my husband was working yet, he traveled and would go into—

[00:30:00]

He was buying grain from farmers. Okay?

John Hodgman: Sure.

Chris: So, the farmer says, where are you now? Mark says, “I don't know. I'm just following the GPS.” But this would come after—he's around trying to find him. He calls the farmer. The farmer wants to give him the old-fashioned directions of where he's supposed to go. But Mark would ignore it, totally ignore it. He would not even listen, because he had the GPS. But then in the end, he had to call the farmer to get directions, because the GPS would never get him to where he needed to go.

John Hodgman: Ethan, you wanted to say something?

Ethan: Just to note that my dad to this day still uses GPS when he travels.

John Hodgman: Ohhh, your own husband is brain-mushed, Chris?

Chris: He is. Oh, definitely.

John Hodgman: What do you think about Chris's brain mush?

Chris: Actually, he's admitted it himself. And really with what I just said on that first one, when the farmer said, “Where are you now?” And he said, “I don't know. I've just following the GPS,” and he literally told me that—he said at those moments, he had no idea what road he had been on. He had no idea at all, even, what he had even been by.

And this would lead me up to what our daughter just sent on Saturday of this last weekend. They had been up in Michigan on their way home, and she said, quote, “Mom, you'll be very proud of us. Scott wanted coffee on our way back from Michigan, but I didn't feel like looking for a shop on my phone. Eventually, we saw a sign that took him right to a delicious coffee shop.”

So, my point being is that sometimes we miss—we don't know where we've been, we don't know where we're going, we don't even see what's around us. You know, there's a lot of stuff that people miss. So, I think that can enter into the brain mush.

John Hodgman: Until you get lost, you don't know what you're missing is what you're saying. Like, you could miss out on a really nice coffee shop, or you could get stuck in the

middle of a meadow and a masked killer is there. You never know what you might be missing!

Chris: That's true! (*Laughs.*) That is true.

Ethan: She brought my sister into this, your honor.

John Hodgman: A-alright?

Ethan: I said, "Brooke, should mom use GPS?"

She responded, "Yes."

John Hodgman: Wow, a full quotation. From memory, by the way. I'll note that you don't have any printouts, Ethan. That's a quotation from memory.

Ethan: That's on my phone.

John Hodgman: It's on your phone!

Chris: He just read from his phone!

(*Ethan laughs.*)

John Hodgman: Of course! Is there—you have five children, is that right, Chris?

Chris: That is correct.

John Hodgman: Is there a number of child votes in favor of GPS that you would accept and change your ways? If they, all five, voted that you needed to start using GPS, would you listen to them then? Or would you say that the election was rigged?

Chris: I don't know if I would, actually. Because—

John Hodgman: You wouldn't listen, because they're all a bunch of brain mushes.

Chris: I would continue to do this. I might do it—I mean, I would probably do it in an emergency situation where I had to. But—because I know most of the places where I go! I mean, that's the thing. I can drive to them and be at Ethan's, Crosby Lane. I can go there.

John Hodgman: Ethan, how long do you usually—when your mom is late, what percentage of the time would you say your mom is late to meet you?

Ethan: 80%.

Chris: WHAT?!

John Hodgman: 80% of the time. And when your mom is late, how long are you usually waiting? Roughly speaking.

Ethan: It can go, as an average, from 10 minutes to an hour. I'll be generous there.

John Hodgman: 10 minutes to an hour. And would you say—and if you were to text Brooke right now, would you say that her experience is the same?

Ethan: Yes.

John Hodgman: And your other three siblings, same deal?

Ethan: Two, I can't speak to. But one, who would be the other person she referenced driving to, has also said yes.

John Hodgman: Has also said 80% of the time late, from 10 minutes to an hour?

Ethan: Yeah. Maybe not those specific stats, but the general premise.

John Hodgman: Now, I don't have the transcript in front of me, so this is all off my memory. But when you said your mom is late 80% of the time, Chris, I believe you said, "WHAT?!"

(Ethan laughs.)

Would you care to explain your reaction? Do you think that that is an exaggeration?

Chris: I do think it's an exaggeration. And the last time I was at Brooke's—I believe it was the last time I was at Brooke's—I got there before they got home.

John Hodgman: Anecdotal evidence, ma'am. That's one point of data. If not 80% of the time, what percentage of the time would you say you are late?

Chris: I don't even comprehend that it can get to that number. I mean, I'm just like—I will admit, years ago, that I could have been—they would have accused me of being late. I don't think it's so much now. But I used to be, when the kids were little—we had five kids. And that was back in the day when I'm the one that got five kids and a husband and myself ready to go someplace.

John Hodgman: Right.

Chris: I would always be at the birthday party. I would be at whatever we were going. I'd get them to the church on time. They're on time.

[00:35:00]

John Hodgman: So, what you're saying is that Ethan is wrong, due to brain mush. You are not late 80% of the time. But if you were, hypothetically, you deserved it; because you used to get them to where they needed to go on time, and it was a real hassle.

Chris: So, I was getting accused of that all the time. So, finally, I was just like, “Well, okay then.” And then—so, if I can't beat them, join them. And if they don't believe me, I'll just be late. So, I will admit that years ago, but I don't really believe it's current. So.

Jesse Thorn: So, you're saying—again, to summarize, that you're not late. You used to be late years ago, but because you got a reputation for being late, you now don't care. So, you are late.

Chris: I always was on time, years ago. Then it, I started getting accused of being late. And so, then I was just like, okay. I guess I'll be late, then. *(Laughs.)*

John Hodgman: Can't beat 'em, join 'em. Yeah. Ethan, between you and your mom, whose brain is mushier?

Ethan: *(Laughs.)* I would say mine.

John Hodgman: That's the smart answer. That's the non-mushy answer. That's the sharp answer.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, for folks who aren't watching on YouTube, there are currently lasers coming out of your mother's eyes.

(They laugh.)

John Hodgman: I have a question for you, Chris. Let me just make sure—back up for a second here. Beep, beep, beep. Okay. As you're coming into Dubuque—the town that has two sides, the town that everybody knows—and you're realizing, oh, I don't know the way to get to this brewery, you call up your son-in-law, and you tell him to open up his GPS to guide you in, correct?

Chris: I did not give him that instruction. I only said, I said, “Am I on the right side?” I told him where I had turned, thinking I knew the general area of where this was. I knew it was going to be right as I came into Dubuque. It wasn't going to be hard, although it is hard when you have one-ways, and you have this and that, and all that. So, I was actually—even my initial exit that I took was on the correct side that the brewery was, but I drove around there a little bit. I had called Ethan and said, “Is it here?” I was naming the buildings, you know, that were around it.

John Hodgman: But you did not instruct them to go to the nearest gas station and ask directions and/or buy an atlas and gazetteer.

Chris: I couldn't even find a gas station, or I would have stopped.

John Hodgman: You let your son and son-in-law's brains turn to mush, so that you could reach the brewery. Yes or no, ma'am?

Chris: Yes.

John Hodgman: Thank you. *(Beat.)* I don't know why I'm being the prosecutor in this situation.

(They chuckle.)

Chris: Just to answer the question.

John Hodgman: Ethan, your mom is taking care of your kids. Who cares if she's a little late? She's doing you a favor.

Ethan: I bring it back to also the safety discussion. I would prefer that she has that GPS, so that—again—it can update; it can keep her out of high-risk areas, including congestion or accidents.

John Hodgman: Is it just a thing that people are driving around with their phones to their head in Iowa that this isn't upsetting you more, Ethan?

Ethan: I might be—just—and you—*(conceding)* well, it's my mom.

Chris: *(Chuckling.)* Slightly guilty as well.

Ethan: I don't, but I also—I haven't—I admit, I have not given that much thought.

John Hodgman: Chris, when talking to our producer, Jennifer Marmor, you said that you appreciate Ethan's desire for an estimated time of arrival. But, quote, "It's refreshing to have mystery." Unquote. Do you remember saying those words?

Chris: *(Laughing.)* I know I say it. So, yeah.

John Hodgman: Tell me what that means.

Chris: It kind of goes along with this whole missing out on the world, going on a vacation, and kids look at movies the whole way. And I'm not ever going to say that there isn't a time when that is good, because I've done it myself. I put my kids in front of the TV when they were little and cartoons, and then I could get the house cleaned. So, I know there's times. But we also have a lot going by in the world that I think people miss because—or that we are so controlling. We're so controlling by that GPS telling us we're going to be there right at that time.

John Hodgman: One of the things that you say that Ethan misses out on is nice conversations with his own mom when she needs help arriving at the brewery. How would you describe the nature of the phone call as he's guiding you in, or he and his brother-in-law are guiding you in? Is it a fun conversation?

Chris: No, because—I mean, I could sense the frustration. But I would take myself out of the—replace the mom with the old lady trying to cross the street.

[00:40:00]

And how would they talk to the old lady crossing the street that is maybe lost, wants to know where to go? Are you going to say, “Well, I know they have walking GPS, ma'am. You know, you could get your phone and guide yourself home. Why do you need me?” But they would talk to her a lot differently.

John Hodgman: Are you familiar with the apples and oranges metaphor?

(They laugh.)

Apples and oranges is a metaphor used to describe two things that are basically the same, because apples and oranges are both delicious hand fruit. But what you're talking about here is opposites. Apples and carrots. Non-comparables. If your son and son-in-law were guiding an old lady across the street using GPS, yelling at her as she's trying to reach the brewery just across the street; or if they were yelling at her like, “Just use your phone, ma'am!”

(They laugh.)

Now, one comparison would be if they got a random call from a little old lady who's like, “I can't find the brewery. Can you help me, please? I don't know how to use my GPS.” Probably they would not be frustrated. Probably they'd be worried about being scammed somehow. But I see what you're saying. Okay.

Ethan, you want me to order your mom to use a GPS in the car, correct?

Ethan: Correct.

John Hodgman: Brooke wants me to order your mom to use the GPS in the car, correct?

Ethan: Correct.

John Hodgman: Your third sibling that you can speak for also would like me to order that your mom use the GPS in the car, correct?

Ethan: Correct.

John Hodgman: That's 60%. That's definitely a majority of the children want you to use a GPS in your car, Mom.

What would you have me rule if I were to rule in your favor, Chris? They should buzz off and mind their own business?

Chris: Oh no, I would like each of the kids to carry a road atlas in their car and think of me.

John Hodgman: *(Chuckles.)* Well, I'll definitely order that before I even go into my chambers. But now, I am going to go into my summer chambers here at WERU.org in Orland, Maine. And I will maybe—you know what? I'm actually going to go out into my car, Joel. That's a good place for me to think it over. Okay?

(Joel affirms.)

So, make sure you let me back into the station. 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.)

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

Chris: Um, pretty good. I do feel like I've entered a lot of good stuff that would help—is helping.

Jesse Thorn: Chris, no one—I promise you; no one is questioning the volume of your printouts.

(They laugh.)

Chris: Okay, so, yeah. I feel pretty good. The pressure of the kids that want it is—you know, it's like, uhhh, well! Maybe. But maaaybe it'll go the other way.

Jesse Thorn: Ethan, how are you feeling?

Ethan: I'm feeling good as well. I feel like I stuck to the two points on safety and time or planning. And we have a precedent in this court about not creating inconveniences for others.

Jesse Thorn: Well, we'll see what Judge John Hodgman says after he finishes recalculating in just a moment.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Promo:

Brenda Snell: Have you been looking for a new podcast all about nerdy pop culture? Well, I have just the thing for you!

(Voice echoing.) Secret Histories of Nerd Mysteries!

Music: Upbeat rock music.

Austin Taylor: *Secret Histories of Nerd Mysteries* in a weekly pop culture history podcast, hosted by me: Host Austin.

Brenda: And me! Host Brenda. We've already tackled mysteries such as: What happened to the puppets from *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*? Is Snoopy Mexican? And why do people hate Barney so much?

Austin: From theme parks to cartoons; to '80s, '90s, and 2000s nostalgia, we tackle it all!

Brenda: Check us out every Tuesday on MaximumFun.org and wherever you get podcasts.

(Music fades out.)

Promo:

Music: Fun rock music.

Mike Cabellon: Hey, this is Mike Cabellon.

Ify Nwadiwe: It's Ify Nwadiwe.

Sierra Katow: And Sierra Katow.

Mike: The hosts of *TV Chef Fantasy League*.

Sierra: Where we apply fantasy sports rules to cooking competition shows.

Ify: We're not professional chefs or fantasy sports bros.

Sierra: Just three comedians who love cooking shows and winning.

Mike: We'll cover *Top Chef*, *MasterChef*, *Great British Bake Off*, whatever's in season really.

Sierra: Ooh, you know chefs looove cooking whatever's in season.

Ify: We draft a team of chefs at the top of every series.

Sierra: And every week we recap the episode and assign points based on how our chefs did.

Mike: And at the end of the season, we crown a winner.

Sierra: You can even play along at home if you want.

Ify: Or you can just listen to us like a regular podcast about cooking shows. That's cool too.

Mike: Subscribe to *TV Chef Fantasy League* on MaximumFun.org or wherever you get your podcasts.

(Music ends.)

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: It's time for a tour, my friends. With a capital T, that rhymes with P, that stands for podcast.

John Hodgman: I can't wait to hit the road. The *Judge John Hodgman Road Court*, coming to a town near you, if the town near you is New York or Philadelphia, Washington, DC. But hang on! Record scratch, hit the brakes! Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, sold out. Ann Arbor, Michigan, sold out. We've still got shows and tickets available, but they're going fast in Madison, St. Paul, Burlington, Portland, Turner's Falls, Massachusetts, Brookline, Massachusetts, Vancouver, Seattle, and Portland, Oregon, plus Los Angeles, and San Francisco Sketch Fest.

But I'm telling you, when you're hearing this now, it's late in August. But when we're recording it, it's early in August. And already shows are selling out, so it's imperative—I dare say—that you go head over to MaximumFun.org/events to get your tickets to join us in the road court. It's going to be a lot of fun. It's a whole big show. We don't just sit at a table and do a podcast. We stand up in wonderful costumes. We sing. We dance for you. We have special guests. We have all kinds of surprises. And we feature brand-new, never before heard cases from people in your town right there up on stage. And you get to hear things and see things that you don't even get to hear or see when we broadcast the live podcast later on the feed. There's stuff that happens that is known only to those audience members, and I want those audience members to be you.

So, don't delay. Pull over your car now, get out your phone, go to MaximumFun.org/events, and get those tickets now.

Jesse Thorn: Right around the corner, John: New York City, September 11th. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, September 13th.

[00:45:00]

And September 14th in Washington, DC. As of this recording, not quite sold out, but filling up fast. So, don't delay, go get your tickets. That's the first and next leg of our tour, and it is going to be a whiz-bang.

John Hodgman: That's absolutely true, Jesse; an absolute whiz-bang. And by the way, if you're coming to the show, and you'd like us to consider your dispute for adjudication on stage, just let us know. Won't you? At MaximumFun.org/jjho. Let us know if you're in New York, or if you're in Philadelphia, or if you're in Washington, DC. And I'll tell you what—if you're in Pittsburgh, and you missed your chance to get tickets to see us, there's only one way in. Come up with a dispute and send it to us, and we'll sneak you in the back door. MaximumFun.org/jjho for your disputes on the road court. And your tickets for the road court, of course, are at MaximumFun.org/events, where you'll also see live shows that are being put on by other MaxFun friends. It's a fun place to go!

Jesse Thorn: MaximumFun.org/events. We'll see you on the road.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

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

John Hodgman: Chris and Ethan, you're both delightful, and it's fun to talk to you out there in Iowa. I wish I could come back there soon and perform at the Englert Theater in Iowa City. Love that theater so much. It's the most *Muppet Show*-y theater I've ever performed in, in terms of size and decor.

Chris, you are correct. Your brain is not mush. We are living in a different world. We had phones unleashed upon us by technology companies, and the technology that the phones contain is distracting and addictive. So, many of the services that phones provide for us now, so much of the technology we use is—I think—purposefully designed by introverted tech guys to create scenarios in which we no longer need to speak to humans and avoid human contact whatsoever.

I think there's a lot of benefits to the kind of interconnected world that we're living in now, not least of which is the vast ability of many, many, many more people to be able to air their viewpoints of the world. But there are obviously some real psychological effects that people have lost confidence in just going up to someone and saying, “I need some help,” or “I need some directions.”

And obviously, you know, as we proceed through the world with phones in non-driving situations—whether we were on the plane, the bus, or the subway; even when we're walking around, and we have our phones in our faces; our face are not up looking around and seeing

what is discoverable here in this marvelous world around us. It's sort of like the difference between driving the same route frequently—like, say, driving once a week from one town in Maine to Orland, Maine, in order to record this podcast here at WERU, and only knowing and remembering the road in front of you, versus when you are driven there as a passenger. And all of a sudden you're like, “Oh, there's another gas station where I can get hot dogs. I didn't even see that one before.” Or not even noticing that you can skip the traffic on Route 1 by taking Backridge Road, which I learned from talking to a human being named Joel. Right, Joel?

(Joel confirms.)

Joel, you're not AI, are you?

(He denies it.)

I believe you.

So, there is a lot that we lose. And with regard to GPS in particular, as you have established through anecdotal evidence that comports with mine, the GPS—particularly GPS 10 years ago—is not foolproof. It will send you places from time to time. It will choose the wrong route. It will suggest shortcuts that it shouldn't, from time to time. And I absolutely agree with you that having that ETA clock at the bottom of your phone GPS that's telling you when you're going to arrive, that is a scourge.

That is a feature I would absolutely love to erase from my Google Maps or Apple Maps or whatever you're using to get around in the world because it gamifies your road trip. Which is bad. That's really bad. Like, I don't want to be playing a video game when I'm trying to get to someplace safely. And when I see that number, and I see it getting later—because traffic down the road is getting worse or whatever—it creates anxiety in me that I know makes me a less safe driver.

But here's the other thing about it. It's accurate. I mean, it's uncannily accurate most of the time. To the minute, that ETA is absolutely right. And the fact is that even though GPS—we have some funny stories, Alan Willett does in New York, about driving to a graveyard instead of the airport in Maine, or whatever.

[00:50:00]

That evidence is just anecdotes. For the most part, this technology works. And to the degree that it is sapping your enjoyment of the world outside of you, that is a bug. But it is true that for the most part the technology is really effective, and it works.

Now, I think that your advice to your children is very good and one that I should take too. Which is to memorize certain numbers, right? In the same way, it's really good to not rely on the GPS so much that you have no sense of where you are in the world at all, much like your brain mushed husband, Mark. But I would also say that it is equally irresponsible to eschew technology that could be lifesaving. And you don't, but I'm just putting it out there. Like, you

do have a phone. Which is good, because there's an alternate universe in which your principles were so firmly held that you wouldn't even have a phone on a road trip at all. And that is a bad situation to be in if you get stuck in the middle of the road. Like, nostalgic is a toxic impulse, because it is a dual fantasy that the past was better, and it is recoverable.

The past isn't always necessarily better, right? You get stuck in the middle of the road in Maine without a phone in 1975, you've got a real problem. In 2024, that problem is mitigated—depending on your service, obviously. And I absolutely agree with you. It is a great pleasure, honestly, to study maps and to learn—without relying on the GPS, to learn over time how routes connect with one another, where things are in relation to each other. It's called orienteering, and it's God-or-Whatever darn fun. And it makes you more reliable as a driver when you aren't looking at that screen all the time. It's better.

That said, you got to take some advice too here, Chris. There is one job when you are driving a car. There is one thing that you have to do. And that is first and foremost, listen to podcasts, specifically the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. And then after that, it is to get you and your precious loved ones to your destination safely. Look, we've had conversations with people in the Midwest before who are eating chips and dip while they drive on the road. And that's unacceptable in Maine. But in North Dakota? When there's not many people around, and it's a straight shot, and you have miles of visibility, and you've got cruise control with lane assistance? You can probably get away with it.

But I'll tell you something. If you're getting your son to navigate—or your son-in-law—to navigate you into an unknown city, or a route that you don't know to a brewery that you've never been to before, and you're driving with one hand? That's not okay. You can't do it. You absolutely have to learn how to use your hands-free telephoning. I know that you probably think you don't have to. But I, Judge John Hodgman, am telling you, you do. You can call and get directions, alright? But you can't do it while holding the phone up to your head. It's just dangerous. I'm sorry. Does that mean you have to start using a GPS? I'll hold on that for a moment to say:

Look, Chris, you did your job right. You raised five kids. They love you. They want to see you. They know the way to your house. You know the way to their house. You've got grandchildren. You're a total delight. You're wonderful. And I don't even mind if you're late. Like, as far as I'm concerned, Ethan, you and your siblings should just figure out like, yeah, mom's always gonna be half an hour late. That's just the way it is.

But you can't leave the house without—if you're not gonna use a GPS, you gotta figure out what your destination is and not wait 'til the last minute. That's on Ethan too, for not telling you, not deciding till the last minute. You know what I mean? But if your system is going to work—and I think it's a workable system of printing out the maps ahead of time—you got to know where you're going, and you got to study those maps pretty well. So that you know, before you get out of that tunnel, that you got to take that right turn.

I think that it is very, very possible to get through this world safely and smartly and even on time, if you choose to be, without using GPS. I don't think you're quite there yet, Chris. Because if you're not going to use GPS, then you got to know where you're going. And you got to insist on knowing where you're going. And you can't call from the road, particularly if

you're holding that phone, at the last minute. Should you keep your children waiting for you half an hour? I don't know. Sometimes mystery is refreshing. Maybe they should—maybe they just need to deal with it. Is it polite? I don't know. Who cares? You're doing them a favor.

[00:55:00]

But this thing of not using GPS until you force your son and/or son-in-law to do it for you? That's—look. We try to like a lot of hay these days about hypocrisy. Like, “Well, you said one thing, but you did another!” It's like, yeah, guess what? We're all complete hypocrites, all the time. Have I ever driven around with my phone up to my head in my life? Yes, of course. I'm a hypocrite too. Right? But I do think that if you want to commit—right?—to a non-GPS lifestyle in your car, then you have to endeavor to make sure that you are not in a situation where you have to call in the middle of driving, particularly unsafely, in order to get there.

You have to commit to it. You have to print out those maps. You have to know where you're going. You have to insist that Ethan make up his mind as to which brewery he's going to get drunk at before he sees his kids again. You have to do it; you have to do it consistently and correctly. And. Once you've hooked up that phone, then you have a backup GPS system in case you get lost. Only—and only in case you get lost. Pull over, reorient yourself, look at the map—whether it's your physical map or whatever—and then continue driving safely.

I am ruling in Chris's favor with all of these strong, urgent warnings regarding distracted driving. Knees are not driving equipment. And I will also, Chris, order your children to each get a road atlas to put in the back of their car. Ideally 2014 or later.

(Ethan chuckles.)

But that said, you gotta—if you're not going to play the GPS game, you got to improve your own GPS-less game, Chris. This is the sound of a gavel.

Clip:

Outdated, electronic AI Voice: Calculating road.

Judge John Hodgman: Judge John Hodgman rules, that is all.

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

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

Ethan, how are you feeling?

Ethan: I'm feeling good. Even though I lost the case, the resolution was that at least do not create work for others. So, I'm happy with the resolution.

Jesse Thorn: Chris, how do you feel?

Chris: Pretty good, actually! Pretty good, yeah. Yeah, no, and I thank you for your words, and I will do my best to—well, if I know ahead of time, and it's some place I've never been before, I will always print out the map. Okay?

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

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. But first, our thanks to Redditor u/Banjo_Solo for naming this week's case. If you want to name a future case, join us on Reddit at [MaximumFun.Reddit.com](https://www.reddit.com/r/MaximumFun) where we chat about every week's case. And that's also where we ask for those name suggestions. And honestly, Judge Hodgman, just seeing the thread of stupid name suggestions is payoff enough for going to [MaximumFun.Reddit.com](https://www.reddit.com/r/MaximumFun), as far as I'm concerned.

John Hodgman: I mean, they're brilliant. They're all so funny and brilliant. And even I, who notoriously—I get a little snobby about wordplay. I'm just like, “Where do these—where do they pluck this stuff from?” I love it.

Jesse Thorn: Unbelievable. It's a magical mystery where these puns come from. If you want to join us on Instagram, please do. [Instagram.com/JudgeJohnHodgman](https://www.instagram.com/JudgeJohnHodgman). John is [@JohnHodgman](https://www.instagram.com/JohnHodgman). I'm [@JesseThornVeryFamous](https://www.instagram.com/JesseThornVeryFamous). We share evidence from the photos on the JJHo Instagram account as well as lately a lot of dank memes. If you have a dank meme, by the way, get into our DMs, [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](https://www.instagram.com/JudgeJohnHodgmanPod). That stands for dank memes.

John Hodgman: That's the DM channel, the Dank Meme channel.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, exactly. You can also join us, of course, on YouTube! Just search for *Judge John Hodgman*. We've got full video of every episode—thanks to Daniel Speer, our video producer.

John Hodgman: Yeah. If you wanna see all of Chris's many papers as they're pulled dramatically out of her folio, where you want to go is our YouTube channel. Which is [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJmKw0p0p0p0p0p0p0p0p0p). Which is also, I believe our TikTok account, [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](https://www.tiktok.com/@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod).

Jesse Thorn: John, we got any Apple reviews this week?

John Hodgman: Yes, absolutely! I want to say thank you to StumpHF. StumpHF wrote just a couple of days ago that this podcast is, quote, “My favorite podcast.” That means StumpHF's favorite podcast. And they wrote, “Activates both your judgy-ness and sense of humor. The best.” And if you're listening on Apple Podcasts, why don't you give us a little rating? Drop some stars, let us know what you like about the show. I love reading those. I love reading them on the podcast. And they really do help people find the podcast, as does all

of your efforts to subscribe, like, and share all of our social media posts and our YouTube videos.

[01:00:00]

There's a lot of really fun YouTube-only content that's going on over there on the YouTube channel right now. Any way that you listen to the show, if you share it—just by saying to somebody, “I like it,” that's doing a huge favor to us, and we're very grateful.

Jesse Thorn: *Judge John Hodgman* was created by Jesse Thorn and John Hodgman. This episode, engineered by Alex Schult at Mango Mustache Media in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. By the way, at the end of our recording, Alex let us know that he's a big MaxFun fan. So, thank you, Alex. He kept it secret—

John Hodgman: Thank you, Alex.

Jesse Thorn: Kept it secret until the end, and then dropped it on us. It was very, very sweet. Thank you, Alex.

John Hodgman: Mango Mustache Media, I'll never forget it.

Jesse Thorn: And of course, by Joel Mann at WERU Community Radio in Orland, Maine. Our social media manager, Nattie Lopez. Our video producer, Daniel Speer. AJ McKeon edits the audio. And of course, our ever-capable producer is Ms. Jennifer Marmor. You know what I thought about that case that we just heard, John?

John Hodgman: Yeah. What'd you think about it?

Jesse Thorn: In Iowa, they could stand nose-to-nose for a week and never see eye-to-eye. (*Defensively.*) Yeah, that's right! There's a lot of *Music Man* lyrics up here in this head!

John Hodgman: You gotta know the territory.

Jesse Thorn: You gotta know the territory.

Okay. Swift Justice, where we answer your small disputes with quick judgment. u/JustPlainToast on the Maximum Fun subreddit says, “My partner folds blankets and towels into quarters. I fold them into thirds. We need consistency!”

John Hodgman: Well, I agree with that. You have to pick one. Pick one lane and stay in it. That's some GPS humor, right there. But folding them into thirds—I mean, I feel like I could see hand towels folded into thirds. But we're getting into bath sheets, never mind blankets. I gotta call it, Jesse. It's quarters all the way. That's your consistency. Sorry, u/JustPlainToast.

Jesse Thorn: (*Chuckles.*) Thirds is a math problem.

John Hodgman: Yeah. Quarters, quarters, quarters. I love them. You use them to play *Pac Man*, and that's how you fold your blankets from now on. Consistency. Ugh! I don't like reading this sentence. "As of this episode's release date, summer is coming to an end"?! Come on. It'll never end. This is the endless summer, Joel.

Joel Mann: Yes. Endless.

John Hodgman: Right. But sometime in the far-distant future, autumn will come. And we're ready to start considering your autumnal cases. Do you want to enjoy pumpkin spice without being called basic? Has your partner said, "I'm buying a 12-foot skeleton," and you are opposed? Hopefully they aren't already sold out for the 2024 season! I mean, honestly, Joel? I saw Halloween candy at the Hannaford's.

Joel Mann: I already have my costume picked out.

John Hodgman: What is it?

Joel Mann: I can't tell you.

John Hodgman: Good.

Jesse Thorn: The costume is "local taciturn man".

(They laugh.)

John Hodgman: We need your fall themed disputes, so send them on over to MaximumFun.org/jjho. Anything to do with fall, leaves, leaf-raking, leaf-piling, jumping into leaves. That's all I can think about for fall. Apple cider, apple cider doughnuts, apple picking. You know what fall is! Just give us some disputes. MaximumFun.org/jjho. That's where we take all of the disputes. Right, Jesse Thorn?

Jesse Thorn: Absolutely! And you know what else, John?

John Hodgman: What else?

Jesse Thorn: Fall's not all bad, because that's when the *Judge John Hodgman*—

John Hodgman: Oh, you're right.

Jesse Thorn: The road court is hitting the road! And guess what? If you live in one of the many places we're visiting on our road court tour, wanna go to MaximumFun.org and submit a dispute? Indicating that you live in one of those places! Because we will get you into the show, we'll get you on stage, we'll be glad to greet you backstage. We've already offered to share our crudités.

John Hodgman: That's right. That offer stands. You can have as many cherry tomatoes as you like from that tray. 'Cause I don't like cherry tomatoes.

Jesse Thorn: MaximumFun.org/jjho. Yeah, I don't want to just eat straight cherry tomatoes. It's fine in a salad or something, but like just popping them in your mouth?!

John Hodgman: Some people like them.

Jesse Thorn: Some people like to do that. That's not me.

John Hodgman: I know a whole human being that I happen to be married to who likes just popping them in her mouth and just eating them as a snack. But to me, it's just like, ugh, eyeballs. Can't wait to see you all on the road! It's better when you're there. MaximumFun.org/events for tickets. MaximumFun.org/jjho for your fall themed disputes, your road court disputes, and any old disputes that you happen to have wherever you are in the world. We love your beefs, because they make the show go.

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

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Transition: Cheerful ukulele chord.

Speaker 1: Maximum Fun.

Speaker 2: A worker-owned network.

Speaker 3: Of artist owned shows.

Speaker 4: Supported—

Speaker 5: —directly—

Speaker 6: —by you!