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Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Welcome to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. I'm Bailiff Jesse Thorn. I'm here with Judge John Hodgman.

John Hodgman: We are just back from our Midwest run of our road court tour. We're on a little bit of a Mid-rest, if you will. But we're about to hit the road again! We're going to Burlington, Vermont, Brookline, Massachusetts, Turner's Falls, Massachusetts, and Portland, Maine. Where, by the way, we recorded this episode!

Jesse Thorn: We visited Portland, Maine, last year, had a great time talking about outdoor cats, parallel parking, and dog walking. Also, we had a special case involving our very own Maine Mann: Joel.

John Hodgman: That's right, Joel Mann, Program and Operations Director at my summertime chambers at WERU in Orland, Maine, was there—as well as the other two members of the Night and Day Trio playing some of that Maine-style jazz for the entire audience at the State Theater. And they will be coming back, joining us once again on November 7th at that same State Theater in Portland, Maine. Please get your tickets now at MaximumFun.org/events. Please get your tickets now at MaximumFun.org/events. I said it twice because I mean it twice.

Alright, now let's go to the stage from the Van Freaks Roadshow in Portland, Maine.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: People of Portland, Maine: you asked us for live justice, and we are here to deliver it. The court of *Judge John Hodgman* is now in session!

(Cheers and applause.)

Let's bring out our first set of litigants. Please welcome to the stage Anthony and Elise.

(Cheers and applause.)

Transition: A lilting intro from the Night & Day Trio.

Jesse Thorn: Tonight's case: “Toxoplas-Motion to Dismiss”. Anthony brings the case against his wife, Elise. Anthony wants to put his personal phone number on the collar of their cat, Salem. Elise wants to keep Salem unlisted. Who's right? Who's wrong? Only one can decide. Please rise as Judge John Hodgman enters the courtroom and delivers an obscure cultural reference.

John Hodgman: (*Singing in a Tom Waits impersonation.*) “Inside a broken clock, splashing the wine with all the Maine dogs! Taxi, we’d rather walk, huddle a doorway with the Maine dogs, for I’m a Maine dog toooo!”

(*Cheers and applause.*)

“Oh, how we danced!”

Jesse Thorn: Oh, always—there’s always a second verse.

John Hodgman: “And we swallowed the night! (*Taps the microphone rhythmically.*) For it was alright for dreaming, boom-boom, donk-donk-donk-donk. Oh, how we danced away all of the lights! We’ve always been out of our minds! Dun-dun-dundun!”

Bailiff Jesse Thorn, swear them in!

(*Cheers and applause.*)

Jesse Thorn: Don’t encourage it. Anthony and Elise, please rise and raise your right hands. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God-or-Whatever?

(*They swear.*)

Do you swear to abide by Judge John Hodgman’s ruling, despite the fact that we may not make it through this frigid winter?

(*Laughter.*)

(*They swear.*)

Judge Hodgman, you may proceed.

John Hodgman: Anthony and Elise, you may be seated for an immediate summary judgment in one of yours favors. Can either of you name the piece of culture that I referenced as I entered this courtroom here in Portland, Maine? Elise, why don’t you guess first?

Elise: I want to say it’s *Cats*. I just want to put it out there. I feel like it’s appropriate.

John Hodgman: You wanna say it’s *Cats*?

Elise: I want to say it’s *Cats*. The musical, *Cats*. Not just cats in general.

John Hodgman: The musical with the little—

Elise: Oh! Can I put in cats in general?

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: Sure. Cats... in general.

Jesse Thorn: That's just the animal, cats.

John Hodgman: It covers a lot of ground. It probably is a wise—

Elise: Yes. *(Chuckling.)* Any cat.

John Hodgman: Very interesting strategy. *Cats*. What about you, Anthony? What's your guess? Aaall this tour, I have been performing cultural references in homage to this one musical artist.

Anthony: Well, that's consistent with my line of thinking, which is that—

John Hodgman: Good for us.

Anthony: My thought is that it might be the B side to Blondie's "Call Me"?

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: Our lines are inconsistent, actually.

(Laughter.)

Come on! You're wearing a little black beanie, you know this! *(Beat.)* No? You're wearing checkered Vans! Well, alright, all guesses are wrong. Although, the idea of songs by *Cats* performed by Tom Waits is very intriguing to me.

(Scattered cheers.)

Jesse Thorn: I'd like to hear the songs of Tom Waits performed by MC Skat Kat from Paula Abdul's "Opposites Attract" video.

John Hodgman: *(Impersonating Tom Waits.)* "One step forward, two steps back!"

[00:05:00]

Elise: I should have shouted it out.

John Hodgman: In any case! That was the Tom Waits song “Rain Dogs”, from the album *Rain Dogs*, as interpreted by me. I made a little change. I changed rain to Maine, ‘cause that’s where we are.

Elise: John’s version.

John Hodgman: Yeah, and it wasn’t about cats; it was about dogs. I kept saying dogs in the song. If I were you—if you had said “dogs in general”.

Elise: You’ve never changed the lyrics to anything you’ve ever used as your cultural reference. (*Chuckles.*)

John Hodgman: Are you gaslighting me?

(*Laughter.*)

I guess I’ve never understood any of this. Well, anyway, here we are. We have to hear this case. Who seeks justice in my fake court?

Anthony: I do, your honor.

John Hodgman: That would be Anthony. What is the nature of your dispute?

Anthony: So, your honor, this case is about security: safety and security of a feline.

John Hodgman: Okay, this is a cat named Salem.

Anthony: Yes, this is a cat named Salem.

John Hodgman: And you want to put your telephone number on the collar of Salem the Cat.

Anthony: Yes, that’s correct.

John Hodgman: Because he is an outdoor cat.

Anthony: He is an outdoor cat.

John Hodgman: He gets around.

Anthony: He—yes.

(*Laughter.*)

John Hodgman: We’ll go into more detail, but that’s the basics.

Anthony: That is the basics, yes. Correct.

John Hodgman: And you don't want him to do this, correct, Elise?

Elise: I want Salem to be able to go outside. I would like my number to—

John Hodgman: This whole theater is lit by gaslight now!

(Laughter.)

Jesse Thorn: As long as I can warm my hands by it, I'm happy.

Elise: That's how we keep warm, guys! I would like my phone number to go on Salem's collar. We've both agreed that we want to get a collar that says, "Outdoor Cat" and then one of our phone numbers. Anthony says it should be his New Jersey number. I say it should be my Massachusetts number.

John Hodgman: Whoa!

Elise: I want to be up front with the crowd.

(Boos from the crowd.)

Jesse Thorn: You want people that find the cat to believe that it's on an incredible journey?

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: Or that it's buying up property to turn into Airbnbs.

(Laughter and applause.)

Now, we'll go into some details to why Salem the cat might need such a collar. But first of all, the full name of Salem is what, Elise?

Elise: Salem Meowsachusetts.

John Hodgman: Salem Meowsachusetts. And you are from Massachusetts and New Jersey respectively.

(They confirm.)

How long have you been living here in Portland? Seven minutes?

Elise: Yeah, we drove up here. *(Chuckles.)* No, we both moved here in 2013.

John Hodgman: Well, welcome to Maine; I hope you're enjoying it. Anthony, Salem gets—Salem's an outdoor cat. Salem gets up to some journeys, is that correct? Tell me about where Salem roams.

Anthony: That is more than correct. So, this cat, upon—almost immediately when we got him, insisted on being outside. And then he has journeyed all across the Portland Peninsula.

John Hodgman: Did you not want Salem to be outside initially?

Anthony: No!

John Hodgman: It's a controversial decision.

Anthony: It was! And our intention was not to let him outside and kill.

John Hodgman: I can hear the teeth of many birders and small animal fans grinding in the audience right now. But Salem wanted to get out.

Anthony: He did. And he wanted initially to go to Portland Glass Company, which is on Congress Street.

John Hodgman: Is this a business that you own that you're buzz marketing?

Anthony: No, not at all! In fact—

Elise: No. They are very nice, though, about this in particular. (*Chuckling.*) We have never used them for the glass services, just the pet sitting.

John Hodgman: Is it—do they replace windows, or do they blow glass?

Anthony: No, they replace windows.

John Hodgman: They replace windows.

Anthony: At least as far as I can tell.

John Hodgman: Okay, right. I mean, maybe you should put a little camera on Salem and see what they're up to over there.

Anthony: Yeah, perhaps.

John Hodgman: So, Salem likes to—how far away is the Portland Glass Company?

Anthony: As the crow flies or the cat wanders, perhaps 300 yards from our backyard. Yeah. It's not too far.

John Hodgman: Oh, okay, alright. How did you discover that Salem was hanging out with other people?

Anthony: They would call me, because my number is the number on the little hang tag that he currently has.

John Hodgman: The little hang tag right now. Okay, I got you. And where's the weirdest place that Salem has ever ended up?

Anthony: Weirdest place is probably Sacred Heart Parish. He was on the altar. And this is a black cat.

(Laughter.)

The deacon called me and said—

Elise: Sunday morning. Sunday morning.

Anthony: Sunday morning, I get a call from the deacon. “This is the deacon of Sacred Heart Parish. Your cat, Salem is here.”

John Hodgman: Right.

Anthony: I said, “Well, is he outside?”

“Oh no, he's inside.”

I said, “Where?”

They said, “Well, currently he's on the altar.”

I could not have grabbed my keys faster to try to capture a photo of this black cat on the altar.

John Hodgman: Did you manage it?

(He did not.)

No, I would think that we would have that photo if...

[00:10:00]

Elise: He was too busy wandering through the pews, getting pets from the nice folks.

John Hodgman: From the congregants. Yes, absolutely.

Elise: He's the best.

John Hodgman: Yeah. Salem was getting pets from the congregants and converting them to Satan's army.

Anthony: We can only hope.

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: Yeah. I would imagine we would have a photo of Salem on the altar if you had captured it, but you did capture a video. Is that correct?

(Anthony confirms.)

Now, we can't show the video here in the state theater, so I need you to describe it.

Elise: So, I used to work for Maine Medical, and I had a couple of friends who work for security. And they had met Salem; he had come outside the hospital. And one day I got a text message of closed-circuit television, which showed a doctor walking down the hallway, texting.

John Hodgman: Well, hang on one second. I have the video. I'm going to show it to Jesse Thorn, and maybe he can describe exactly what he sees in a non-biased way.

(Laughter.)

Elise: Very fair.

Jesse Thorn: So, this is—this looks like a phone recording of a security display is what I'm looking at.

(Elise confirms.)

If you imagine like the movie, *Sneakers*, or something. *(Chuckling.)* And the cat is—it's a hospital, and the cat is having a little—*(laughing)* is going around. Everybody's like, “Whoa!”

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: It's a cat just walking—like, do you remember that footage of the Senator Josh Hawley running away?

(Laughter.)

Running across a hallway, running away from the army of lunatics that he unleashed? I'm not saying that your cat is a January 6th truther or anything. But I am saying it's very—if you imagine a hospital hallway and a cat just suddenly walking across the hallway into one of the examination rooms.

Jesse Thorn: There's also like presumably a nurse or someone that works there chasing the cat going—(*breathes heavily*).

John Hodgman: So, this has become an issue. And so, you've decided you want to give Salem a collar that says, “Outside Cat”. Why do you need to feel the need to advertise that in particular?

Anthony: So, people call the number on the collar all the time.

John Hodgman: On the tag.

Anthony: Yeah, on the tag, now all the time, because it doesn't say Outside Cat. And for whatever reason, they assume that he's lost. And so, I have to have that conversation continuously.

John Hodgman: Right. Yeah, why—I mean, it's bizarre that if you were working in a hospital trying to perform surgery, and a cat came in, to be like, “Oh no, don't worry about it. It's an outside cat. It belongs here. That cat's not lost. It's fine.”

(*Laughter.*)

Jesse Thorn: It just wants to spend some time with Christ.

Elise: Your honor, he has actually—since he's stopped going to Portland Glass, the hospital—he has frequented some corner stores and bodegas. But—

John Hodgman: Sure! That's where cats belong.

Elise: It's not that. It's really—it's people on the street. So, people have gotten used to him. Holy Donut, he's a regular there; they just send him on his way. It's folks I think visiting, often, who are very worried to find a cat who approaches them running. He will run towards people.

John Hodgman: Oh, right. Yeah. Ignorant people from away.

Elise: No! (*Laughing.*) They just haven't seen him yet. And he's very loud.

John Hodgman: Sure. Oh, those tourists and newcomers who moved here in 2018 rather than 2017. Look, I'm a monster. I'm a monster. I don't live here all the time. I'm like you, a terrible person.

Elise: He has a very specific meow.

John Hodgman: Let me hear it.

Elise: Rrrrow! Rrowww!

Anthony: I can't top that.

(Applause.)

That's accurate. That is really accurate.

John Hodgman: Wow! So, Salem, the black cat is wandering around Portland alarming people who don't know that this cat is not a witch, but is in fact just a cat.

Anthony: So, if you're familiar with the film *A Nightmare Before Christmas*, the cat alarm in that film is very similar to the noise that he makes.

(Elise meows again.)

John Hodgman: Go ahead and do it.

Elise: *(Laughing.)* I don't know if I can. RrrroooOOW! That one.

John Hodgman: From Henry Selick in *Nightmare Before Christmas*. Yeah. Do it again, because I talked over you.

(Elise obliges.)

Alright, now do it again just 'cause it's fun.

(Laughter.)

(Elise tries but bursts into laughter.)

Jesse Thorn: Okay, now do a helicopter landing.

(Laughter.)

(Someone on mic immediately obliges with an impressive helicopter imitation.)

Jesse Thorn: Ladies and gentlemen, Michael Winslow!

(Applause.)

John Hodgman: Okay, so you want the caller to announce that this cat is knowingly outside on purpose.

(Anthony confirms.)

That this is the cat acting upon its own will, and no one should be worried. But if they are worried, they should call someone. And you believe that they should call you, Anthony.

Anthony: That's correct.

John Hodgman: And they have been calling you.

Anthony: They have been calling me, yes.

[00:15:00]

John Hodgman: So, what is Anthony doing wrong, Elise, on these calls such that you want to put your own number on there?

Elise: So, Anthony is very kind. And so, when he receives the phone call, he allows the person to do the talking and lets them direct the conversation. When I answer the phone—and sometimes I'll be with Anthony and answer for him—I say, “Oh, you found Salem? Is he bothering you?” And when they say no, because he's awesome, I say, “Great! You can let him outside if he's in your house. Thank you for checking on him.” And then we're done. It's over. Anthony often has to go rescue Salem from God knows where, whatever street, whatever he's doing. He's left work; he's stopped, you know, whatever.

John Hodgman: So, his big error and sin in your mind is that he cares about the cat and wants it to be okay and come home.

(Laughter.)

Elise: He's fine! And I have another thing. Anthony loves to surf and travels for work. For example, he will be traveling abroad in December, and he's traveled abroad for several different conferences. And he's traveled throughout the United States. So, he's often gone, which limits the amount of time—

John Hodgman: Now, look. I just want to clarify for the audience, because Anthony is sitting here—he's got checkered Vans, he's got a little beanie on, he's got a hoodie, you've indicated that he likes to surf, and he's traveling a lot abroad. He is not a loathsome tech bro. He's an environmental lawyer, correct?

(He confirms and the audience applauds.)

Alright, just so you know. You're giving a lot of loathsome tech bro, but you're an environmental lawyer.

Anthony: I'm sorry that I—(*laughs*).

John Hodgman: No, no! I just—look, I just worry for you walking around Portland. Like, you should have a collar that says, “not a loathsome tech bro; environmental lawyer; call Elise for confirmation”.

(*Laughter.*)

So, why can't he handle the calls? Because he's got to go out and get Salem? He worries too much? Oh, he's going away.

Elise: He can't receive the call if he's in the ocean, or he's in Dubai.

John Hodgman: Right. But that's temporary, you understand. His travel. Are you suggesting that he's going to go away and not come back?

Elise: No! I hope not!

John Hodgman: Do you have a plan?

Elise: My thinking is, is that any—Salem loves being outside. It is really, truly—it makes him happy. It calms him down. He feels just better when he comes home. I don't know if that makes sense. Like, he just feels more himself after he's had a day outside.

John Hodgman: It says here that if I were to rule in your favor, Elise, that not only do you want your number to be on the collar, but if I rule against you—if it's Anthony's number on the collar, you want to write him a script and practice what he should say, so he knows how to respond when people call.

Elise: You really don't love talking to strangers if you don't have to, right?

John Hodgman: You're doing a great job tonight, Anthony, I have to say.

Anthony: Thank you.

John Hodgman: I mean, you didn't make the cat noise, but that was a good judgment on your part. I've heard how you would handle a call. Let's say I'm calling you. (*Immidates a chiming ringtone.*)

Elise: Hello?

John Hodgman: Oh yeah, hi. Is Anthony there?

(*Laughter.*)

Elise: Yeah.

John Hodgman: Am I speaking to Anthony?

Elise: Yeah.

John Hodgman: Great. There's a cat here with a collar on it, and it's got this number on it. And I just want to make sure—the cat is currently sitting on the altar of my church. The crucifix is spinning around at great speed. People are vomiting blood. There's some chanting that I'm hearing. It's like a meowing chanting.

(Elise does the meow again.)

Yeah, that's it! That's exactly it. And mice are crawling out of the walls and writhing on the floor. Is this your cat? Is there something I need to know about it?

Elise: Oh, oh. I'm coming right now! I'll be right there!

Anthony: I mean, it's somewhat accurate.

John Hodgman: Alright.

(Laughter and applause.)

Do you want to make a positive argument for why your number more than Elisa's should be on the collar?

(Anthony confirms.)

You're going to be traveling around the world. You're not always going to be able to run to save your cat from a witch trial.

Anthony: I understand there are moments in time, discreet, where it makes more sense. Because I'm not here in Maine, but most of the time my job allows me to actually show up and pick him up. And there have been times where—

John Hodgman: Right. But Elise is saying he doesn't need to be picked up.

Anthony: Well, but there have been times where he needs to be picked up. So, let me just give a few examples. In more than one instance, people have brought him into their homes. And then at least intimated that they might not return him, during the phone call.

John Hodgman: Sure! Well, because they're under hypnotic power.

Anthony: Right. Or they're overly concerned about him being outside, or whatever it may be. That might result in them saying, “Well, I'm just gonna keep him for a while.”

[00:20:00]

Which is a very—

John Hodgman: Has that happened, or is that—?

Anthony: That has happened, although I've convinced the person to allow me to come and take him from them. But Elise, her job would not allow her to leave in the middle of the day to do that kind of thing. We've had another person tie him up to a pole outside, which for a cat is very traumatic.

John Hodgman: What is happening in Maine?!

Anthony: I don't know!

John Hodgman: Are you anxious for Salem's safety? I mean, not just from human intervention, but there are cars. There's other misfortune that can befall an outdoor cat.

Anthony: I'm not anxious for his safety with respect to cars or other things that might be out there, because he is a very savvy operator when he's outside. In fact, so savvy that this is part of the problem—that he is able to manipulate humans into feeding him, bringing him into their abodes, petting him.

John Hodgman: So, he's less at risk from cars and more at risk from Portlanders who think they know better about how your cat should be raised.

(Anthony confirms.)

That sounds about right. Okay, I think I've heard everything I need to in order to make my decision. I'm going to go into my chambers. I'll be back in a moment with my verdict.

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

Anthony, how are you feeling about your chances?

Anthony: Not good.

(Laughter.)

Jesse Thorn: Why is that?

Anthony: I think I haven't come across as the most sympathetic person in this interaction.

Jesse Thorn: I think you're adorkable!

(Laughter.)

Elise: Yeah! Babe, you seem very sympathetic to me. You don't want me to have to worry about it. And sympathetic to the cat who you're worrying about, so—

Jesse Thorn: Elise, stop trying to curry sympathy.

(Laughter.)

Elise, how are you feeling about your chances?

Elise: Good. I also did ask for a verdict that feels okay to me. I want to support Anthony doing this. And I guess some of it comes from just wanting to be able to help more with the cat. So, I feel good. I think that him being stuck in the ocean, or class, or another country is helping my case a little bit.

Jesse Thorn: Well, we'll see what Judge Hodgman has to say about all this! Please rise as Judge John Hodgman reenters the courtroom and presents his verdict.

John Hodgman: Anthony, I have a tremendous amount of sympathy for you. You obviously care for this cat, and you should have a measure of care! Because Salem is out in the world. Look, it's a somewhat controversial decision to let your cat roam free outside. There are a lot of people who don't approve of that decision and a lot of people who would love to take your cat away from you as a result of that decision. In many ways, I worry that putting a collar on it that says, "I am an outdoor cat on purpose" may put more of a target on Salem's back than he already has.

But I don't know. He's a savvy operator, as you say. I absolutely believe that you care about him. I do not see any evidence that your desire to go and get Salem and bring him home causes any damages whatsoever to Elise. So, I'm not really sure what her standing is. Unless.

Now, when we record a live podcast on stage, the listener at home is not privy to some of the things that I can see and observe in person. We all heard Elise's uncanny imitation of a cat. What you cannot see at home is that she is wearing a leopard print blouse. And cat socks. Moreover, *(chuckles)* when she was making her imitation of the cat, there is a ukulele on stage that Jesse will play later. And it fell over, seemingly of its own accord.

(Laughter.)

Given that we know that Salem the cat is demonic by nature, and there are concerns of it being a shapeshifting familiar, and given that I have seen no—Salem is not here, and you never see Salem and Elise in the same place at the same time, then I wonder if indeed Elise might be making advocacy for a certain freedom that she would enjoy in her other form, as a cat.

(Elise laughs.)

Her witchly form, her meowing form, and her psychic powers that allow everyone to take her in, to live in different homes and feed her food and makes her able to knock over ukuleles at will without touching them. It may be that she doesn't want your number on the collar, Anthony, because she doesn't want to come home.

(Sad noises from the audience.)

Anthony: Ouch.

John Hodgman: Well, she wants to come and go as she pleases, which all humans should be able to do. And I think Salem should be able to do as well. I think the thing that I am most concerned about here is the safety of the cat, demon or not.

[00:25:00]

I think you are wise to make clear that there is a number to call if the cat is out of place. I don't think you should say this is an outside cat. I do think that's going to cause scrutiny upon Salem that Salem does not deserve. I think that your number should be on the collar, because you really want it to be. And you should be able to go and take care of your cat. There's no reason for it not to be. There is nothing about what Elise said in her training video of how to answer the phone that made me feel it would be more effective than you taking care of your own anxiety and your cat by going to get it. I think that that number, however—you should be able—maybe you should have both numbers on the collar.

Or you should create—*(beat)* Wow.

(Laughter.)

Alright, I'll go with them. Or create—use a technology company's—create a number that is just for Salem that rings on both of your phones is another possibility.

(Cheers and applause.)

So—but that's what I would say. But absolutely, Anthony, when the devil calls, you should answer the phone.

This is the sound of a gavel. *(Bangs the gavel three times.)* Judge John Hodgman rules. That is all.

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

(Cheers and applause.)

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: You're listening to *Judge John Hodgman*. I'm bailiff Jesse Thorn. Of course, the Judge John Hodgman podcast, always brought to you by you. The members of MaximumFun.org. Thanks to everybody who's gone to MaximumFun.org/join. And you can join them by going to MaximumFun.org/join.

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Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

John Hodgman: Anyway, we're gonna hear a few cases very quickly! Joel, will you be here to comment if you have any insights to lend?

Joel Mann: I will.

John Hodgman: Okay, very good. Let's put 15 minutes on the clock. Jesse Thorn, when you're ready. Night & Day Jazz Trio, when you're ready. Why don't we welcome the first litigants?

Jesse Thorn: Please welcome to the stage, Emily and Brendan.

Transition: A playful, jazzy intro from the Night & Day Trio.

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: Thank you very much, Night & Day Jazz Trio especially.

(Applause.)

They had to play a little longer while we adjusted the microphone stand for the gigantic man who is standing to my right. I think we had to send out for an extra tall microphone stand during that break there.

Jesse Thorn: I think that's two microphone stands taped together.

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: That's exactly right.

Jesse Thorn: I also think that's one man sitting on another man's shoulders.

[00:30:00]

Emily: It's true.

John Hodgman: I was thinking of—exactly so, wearing an extra-long L.L.Bean pullover, trying to sneak into the movies. So, Brendan and Emily, who seeks justice in this court?

Emily: That would be me.

John Hodgman: Emily. And are either of you from Maine?

Emily: No, I'm sorry.

John Hodgman: Okay. Where are you from originally?

Emily: Originally from Minnesota.

John Hodgman: Minnesota, okay.

(Scattered cheers.)

You obviously moved here for the consistent weather. And you—and Brendan, where are you from originally?

Brendan: Nashville, Tennessee.

John Hodgman: Nashville, Tennessee, cool!

(Scattered cheers.)

What brought you here to Maine?

Brendan: We're in our medical residency at Maine Med, so. There you go!

John Hodgman: Oh, excellent. You ever see a cat wandering around?

(Laughter.)

Emily: Not yet, looking forward to it.

John Hodgman: Okay. Keep an eye out. You know who to call. Who seeks justice in this fake court?

Emily: I do.

John Hodgman: Alright. Emily. What is the nature of your dispute?

Emily: Yeah, so, Brendan and I live in a fairly close by, in downtown Portland. And we park on the street, and we usually have to parallel park to do that. And it's kind of difficult.

John Hodgman: Have you ever heard of that, Joel? Parallel parking?

Joel Mann: Can't do it.

John Hodgman: No, right.

(Laughter.)

Not terribly common outside of Portland, I would imagine.

Emily: Yeah, that's fair.

John Hodgman: You know, I believe, Jesse, that kids growing up in Maine who get driver's licenses don't have to learn how to parallel park.

Jesse Thorn: Is that really true?

(Someone in the crowd screams, "No!" and the crowd boos appropriately.)

Jesse Thorn: I think that's true. Should be true.

(Laughter.)

Jesse Thorn: You know what? You guys should write a letter.

John Hodgman: Okay, so—but you, being from Minnesota, you love to parallel park.

Emily: I weirdly do love to parallel park. It can be kind of difficult to find a place near our apartment. So, it takes—I don't know—like sometimes up to ten minutes for us to try to find a spot, 'cause it's difficult to find. But since I—

John Hodgman: But your issue is not with the city of Portland. Your dispute is with Brendan, because he won't let you parallel park?

Emily: No, so when I'm driving, and I see a tight spot, I usually just go for it. And it works out pretty well. But if Brendan's the one driving, and he sees that same spot, he'll pass it by and won't try. And I would like to be able to switch drivers, so that I can try to parallel park.
(Laughs.)

John Hodgman: He's a less confident parallel parker than you are.

Brendan: It's very true.

Emily: Exactly. It's not the ability; it's the confidence. Yeah.

John Hodgman: Right. But I mean you could appreciate why, you know, his sense of spatial relations might be skewed.

(Laughter.)

Emily: I never considered that.

John Hodgman: I don't think he's seen the ground since he was seven years old. But I'm pretty amazed that you're getting any spots at all, given you must be driving around in a double tall sprinter van. What kind of car do you drive, Brendan? I'm sorry; I keep talking. How tall are you?

Brendan: I'm 6'10".

(John "wowie-zowie"s.)

Yeah, so it's very solidly in the 99th percentile of height. We drive a Kia.

John Hodgman: You've obviously got that stat memorized.

Brendan: Yeah, we drive a Kia Soul, and it works pretty well. You know, it's got some headroom. My legs, you know, I squeeze them in there, so.

John Hodgman: So, Brendan, let's say you and Emily are driving home and you're looking for a parking spot. Walk me through what's happening. Why are you giving up spots that Emily thinks you can get into? Is she wrong or are you wrong?

Brendan: I think that she wants to stop and do this, because I'm getting progressively frustrated as we're not finding a spot.

John Hodgman: But she thinks you are finding spots.

Brendan: She thinks we are finding spots. I think I have a good grasp on what a good spot is, even though she is the superior parallel parker, and that her solution would not be any more efficient than driving to the next spot that we could find that is—

John Hodgman: Her solution being, "Get out of the damn car and let me park here?"

Brendan: Let's switch drivers, yes, exactly.

John Hodgman: Has she ever crunched another car while parallel parking?

Brendan: Not that I know of.

John Hodgman: Not that you know of, no.

Brendan: She's confident, over here.

Emily: I'm pretty good.

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: Do you ever let her parallel park? Have you ever switched before?

Brendan: When she's—we have never switched before.

John Hodgman: But when she's driving and she parallel, do you feel nervous?

Brendan: Not at all. She's got it, yeah. She nails it every time.

John Hodgman: So, why won't you just switch places with her and let her park?

Brendan: I don't think it would be efficient to switch. Like, stopping on a road and switching.

Jesse Thorn: I—okay, Judge Hodgman, I have an idea here. Do you mind? But I will be willing to perform “Yakety Sax”. And what I'd like to see is just how much time it takes you to get out of the car, go around the car, and switch places. Okay? Are we ready?

(Laughter and applause.)

Brendan: Should we simulate it?

John Hodgman: Yeah. You have to sort of—I think you have to sort of pretend to sit down, right?

Jesse Thorn: So, those microphones—take those microphones as your seats in the car. I mean, I would like you to crouch and make that funny.

John Hodgman: Don't take the microphones. You don't want them to hold the microphones.

[00:35:00]

Jesse Thorn: No, I want them to use that as an understanding of where their seats in the car are. So, stand—yeah, okay.

John Hodgman: So, here you are. You're driving. You arrive at a spot.

Jesse Thorn: And Brendan, do do that funny squat thing, because I enjoyed that.

(Laughter.)

Okay, now—

John Hodgman: He's still taller than me. Look at this. It's incredible.

(Laughter and applause.)

Jesse Thorn: Okay, so, now—you see the spot. What do you say, Brendan?

Brendan: Hey, I don't think we can fit there, Emily.

Jesse Thorn: And then what do you say, Emily?

Emily: Oh, we can definitely fit there.

Jesse Thorn: Okay! *(Humming “Yakety Sax” by Boots Randolph.)*

Brendan: Adjust the seat. Yeah. The mirrors too, yeah.

(It ends with cheers and applause, 20 seconds of “Yakety Sax” later.)

John Hodgman: I'll say this. Much to my surprise, that exercise was actually useful to me in appreciating that it takes an extra amount of time not only for Brendan to unfold himself and get out of the Kia Soul or whatever you're driving these days, but also that it will take Emily probably 30 to 45 minutes just to bring the seat forward in the car and to adjust the weirdly adjusted mirrors for this monster that you're in a relationship with.

Emily: 30 seconds tops.

Jesse Thorn: This beautiful monster!

John Hodgman: I'm sorry. You know I love you. That said, you bring no empirical evidence that it would take more time to switch than it would be to find another parking space, and I believe it takes a long time to find a parking space. So, I think you need to do it at least five times, and get a little stopwatch, and see exactly how long it takes so you actually have some data to back up your claims. Until then, let Emily park the car. *(Bangs his gavel three times.)*

(Cheers and applause.)

Jesse Thorn: Thank you, Emily and Brendan. Please welcome to the stage, Peter and Tatia.

Transition: A pleasant, jazzy intro from the Night & Day Trio.

John Hodgman: Peter and Tatia, welcome. Who seeks justice in my court?

Peter: That would be me, your honor.

John Hodgman: Peter, and are you from the state of Maine?

Peter: No.

John Hodgman: Okay. Tatia?

Tatia: No.

John Hodgman: No? Where did you meet?

Tatia: On Martha's Vineyard; I was working there, and he was living—

Peter: I was living on Cape Cod.

Tatia: Across the way.

John Hodgman: Those are both parts of the state of—oh, excuse me, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Tatia: Oh yeah, we did meet in Massachusetts. Yeah, yes.

John Hodgman: Yeah, right, interesting. So, alright, so welcome to Maine. Who—? Peter, you are the one who seeks justice. What is the nature of your complaint?

Peter: So, our dispute is in regards to where it is and is not appropriate for a dog to be walked, in our small coastal tourist town on Mount Desert Island.

John Hodgman: You live in Bar Harbor?

Peter: Yeah, that's the one.

John Hodgman: Sorry, were you trying to get into a secret?

Peter: Yeah, it's fine! (*Laughs.*)

Tatia: There's only so many Tatias in the world.

John Hodgman: So, you have a dog? What is the name of your dog?

Tatia: His name's Buddy.

John Hodgman: Buddy. And you like to walk your Buddy all over Bar Harbor, even places where Buddy shouldn't be?

Tatia: That's, uh, debatable. That's why we're here. But yes, I love to walk him all over town.

John Hodgman: What kind of places is Tatia walking Buddy where you feel it's inappropriate?

Peter: So, throughout our neighborhood, there are a lot of varying—sorry, there's a variety of different lawn signs with varying degrees of specificity. This can range from a neon sign that says “no poop and pee” with a crossed-out picture of a dog pooping, and then a picture of a police badge and a security camera on it. All the way down to what I find to be the most tasteful, which is a demure little, iron dog in the shape of a dog pooping that says “no” emblazoned on it. And I think that if one of these—

John Hodgman: What, iron? Like, wrought iron? Like, a wrought iron (*inaudible*).

Peter: It's either wrought or cast. I don't know which one it is.

John Hodgman: It's a classy town, Bar Harbor.

Peter: Yeah, they're very small. They're like just a couple inches off the ground. But you see them if you're walking the dog.

Jesse Thorn: It's enameled cast iron. It's a Le Creuset.

Peter: (*Giggles.*) My thinking is that if one of these signs exists, just don't walk the dog near the signs or on the lawn with the signs. It's better safe than sorry.

John Hodgman: But Tatia, you love those signs. You like to get right up near them.

Tatia: (*Laughs.*) I take a sign at face value, right? So, those metal signs with the dog pooping and it says “no”, that sign says no pooping. So, I don't let Buddy poop on their yard, but like he can go sniff some grass. He can—

John Hodgman: Nowhere in the rulebook does it say a dog can't play basketball while shitting on this lawn!

(*Laughter and cheers.*)

That's the hair we're splitting today in Bar Harbor?

Tatia: (*Laughs.*) So, if you don't want dogs on your lawn, why would you elect to purchase a sign that has a silhouette of a dog pooping? I feel like it's very unappealing to look at. But you bought it!

[00:40:00]

John Hodgman: Do you think the intention is, “Please let your dog poop here?”

Tatia: No, no, no! They don't want your dog to poop there, so I don't—I know when he's gonna go.

John Hodgman: You're walking Buddy on other people's lawns.

Tatia: No, no, no! We're on the sidewalk, and like he goes, you know, two feet off the sidewalk into their—

John Hodgman: Into their there. Is the pronoun. Pronoun? Look, I know that property is theft and criminal, but it is the system that unfortunately we live in. Yeah. So, you believe that the rules don't apply to Buddy?

Tatia: No, no, no! I don't think that what they're trying to say is like, “No dogs on my lawn.” I really think that people in that town, Bar Harbor—like, all winter long, they just let their dog poop on lawns and don't pick it up.

John Hodgman: Joel, you have a dog?

Joel Mann: Yes, I do.

John Hodgman: What's the name of your dog?

Joel Mann: Sweetie Pie.

John Hodgman: Sweetie Pie the dog. I got a picture of that dog. I'm gonna show it to Jesse Thorn here if I can find it real quick.

(Jesse “oh”s excitedly.)

Sorry, should have had this one queued up.

Jesse Thorn: Is it a nice dog?

Joel Mann: He's a miniature dachshund, long hair.

(The audience “aw”s.)

Jesse Thorn: I'm excited about this!

Joel Mann: And he's a boy named Sweetie Pie.

Jesse Thorn: Well, I'm a boy who's a sweetie pie! AWW!! Ohhh, ohh! He is a Sweetie Pie! I wish I could share him with all of you.

John Hodgman: Where does Sweetie Pie go to the bathroom, Joel? On other people's lawns?

Joel Mann: Living room.

(Laughter.)

Tatia: That's very cute. A classic Maine beach, right there.

John Hodgman: That's right. So, have you ever been chased off a lawn before? Has anyone ever complained about Tatia, Peter?

Peter: No. Not to my recollection.

John Hodgman: No. Tatia, not something that happened in secret that you're withholding right now?

Tatia: *(Chuckling.)* No. No, your honor.

John Hodgman: So, what would you have me rule, Peter?

Peter: I would say just if there is a sign that indicates no dog—whether it's no pooping or any degree of anti-dog sentiment, to keep the dog off the lawn, so that I don't have to have anxiety about it.

John Hodgman: Tatia, you know what these signs mean. You know what the intention is. They would rather not have a dog on their lawn.

Tatia: It's a really unclear sign then. That's all I'm saying. I will happily keep him off their lawn. But that's a bad sign if that's what you mean. There's so many other ones! In the neighborhood, there are—there's a dog, the exact same silhouette, that says “please keep off the grass”—that's very clear! I will happily follow that. But the sign says no pooping, he's not pooping there. So.

John Hodgman: Alright. Here's what I'm gonna say. You're arguing in incredibly poor faith.

(Laughter.)

That's—and much like the arguments that people make about whether or not it's okay to go and refill your soda from a fountain machine in a restaurant, and they're like, “Is that okay? Is that okay?” All you have to do is ask. Do you know what I mean? Like, you can find out if it's okay. I imagine if you were to knock on the door and say, “Can I walk my dog across

your lawn? I know you got that sign there, but I'm going to do it anyway. Cool? Because I said on stage in Portland that—”

But you haven't been chased off a lawn yet. And here's the thing, I'm going to allow you to keep doing this, even though it makes Peter very uncomfortable, and even though you're arguing in terribly bad faith. Because I want to—when I come back to Bar Harbor, I want to see you getting yelled at.

(Laughter.)

I want—this confrontation is inevitable. I don't care enough about assholes who own property in Bar Harbor's lawns to do anything about it.

(Cheers and applause.)

But I do look forward to the reckoning that you will eventually face. And I love Bar Harbor, and I love visiting. And someday I'm going to be up there; I'm going to be going to that weird movie theater where they put an intermission in the middle of *Nope* for no reason to sell their bad pizza. I'm going to be taking a little break, and I want to see like, “Oh, there's Tatia. Oh, and she's being yelled at finally!” And she's holding her own, I don't doubt! Maybe you'll win the battle. Maybe you're right, maybe I'm wrong, but I want to see the confrontation. This is the sound of a gavel. *(Bangs his gavel four times.)*

Jesse Thorn: Thank you, Peter and Tatia.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Promo:

Music: Cheerful, chiming music.

Alexis B. Preston: Hi, I'm Alexis.

Ella McLeod: And I'm Ella.

Alexis: And we're the hosts of *Comfort Creatures*.

Ella: We could spend the next 28 seconds telling you why you should listen. But instead, here's what our listeners have said about our show. Because really, they do know best.

“The show is filled with stories and poems and science and friendship and laughter and tears, sometimes. But tears that are from your heart being so filled up with love.”

Alexis: “A cozy show about enthusiasm for animals of all kinds, real and unreal. If you greet the dog before the person walking them, or wander around the party looking for the host’s cat, this podcast is for you.”

Ella: So, come for the comfort, and stay for Alexis's wild story about waking up to her cat giving birth on top of her. So, if that sounds like your cup of tea—

Alexis: Or coffee, Ella. We're not all Brits.

Ella: (*Chuckles.*) Then join us.

Alexis: Every Thursday, at MaximumFun.org.

(*Music ends.*)

[00:45:00]

Promo:

Music: Fun, jazzy music.

Mike Cabellon: Hey, this is Mike Cabellon.

Ify Nwadiwe: Ify Nwadiwe.

Sierra Katow: And Sierra Katow.

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

Sierra: Where we are currently using fantasy sports rules to watch *Great British Bake Off*.

Ify: Or *The Great British Baking Show*, as it's known here in America.

Sierra: We've drafted the bakers onto our teams, and now those bakers are earning us points based on how they're doing on the show.

Ify: And at the end of the season, one of us will win the prestigious *TV Chef Fantasy League*... trophy? Crown? What is the—?

Mike: Yeah, I don't know. I keep forgetting to order something. Probably just dinner. Anyway, subscribe to *TV Chef Fantasy League*, and play along with us at home.

Sierra: Or just listen in as we cry over our bakers' (*in a posh English accent*) soggy bottoms.

Ify: On MaximumFun.org or wherever you get your podcasts.

(Music ends.)

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Well, we're right in the middle of the fun in Portland, Maine. We are actually headed back to Portland, Maine, shortly—as well as much of the rest of New England, whatever that is.

John Hodgman: Yeah, I got a message. It's a region of Southeastern Canada. I got a message, though, from my friends and family in Brookline, Massachusetts, who didn't get tickets to the show. Too bad! It's sold out in Brookline! But guess what? Not very far away—take a little weekend trip to Portland, Maine, or Turner's Falls, or even beautiful Burlington, Vermont. We'll be there in early November, performing for you and bringing justice finally to these regions of New England. And then early in the new year, we'll be going to Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, Seattle, Washington, Portland, Oregon, San Francisco, Los Angeles.

Come visit the road court and see us on tour. MaximumFun.org/events for tickets. And of course, MaximumFun.org/jjho for disputes that you might want adjudicated live on stage in any of these places.

Jesse Thorn: That's MaximumFun.org/jjho to submit those disputes in all of those places and grab those tickets at MaximumFun.org/events.

John Hodgman: Let's get back to the stage in Portland, Maine.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Let's welcome to the stage Joel and Michelle!

Transition: A cheerful jazz intro from the Night & Day Trio.

John Hodgman: Hello!

Michelle: How are you, your honor?

Jesse Thorn: That was Joel and Michelle.

John Hodgman: Joel. Okay. Should—should there be someone with you?

Michelle: Yes, sir.

Jesse Thorn: It says Joel and Michelle here.

John Hodgman: Joel and Michelle. Oh.

Joel Mann: Hi, honey.

Michelle: Hi, honey.

(Jesse cackles.)

John Hodgman: It's Joel Mann as the other litigant!

(Cheers and applause.)

Oh no. Oh no! Michelle, it's so nice to meet you. As many of you may know, during the summertime, I will go and record the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast in the solar powered studios of WERU Community Radio.

(Cheers.)

Which you can listen to, and I often do, at WERU.org, wherever you are in the world. Joel, you are the program director, operations manager?

(Joel confirms.)

Everything. Joel's—well, okay, program director, let's say. What is it, Joel?

Joel Mann: Program and Operations Director.

John Hodgman: Program—oh wow! P-A-O-D. Top job.

Joel Mann: Tough job. Tough job.

John Hodgman: Love it.

Jesse Thorn: Director of Scallop Procurement.

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: Yeah. Director of evening out the CDs on the shelf. So many CDs. While I was there over the summer, I met your son-in-law, Brieç?

(Joel confirms.)

From that region of France that I don't remember. I've not yet met his wife, your daughter, but it's nice to get to know another member of the family. You bring the case against Joel Mann.

Michelle: I do.

John Hodgman: How could you be angry at him? Come on.

Michelle: Oh, I'm not angry.

John Hodgman: Okay. Vengeful.

(Laughter.)

What's the nature of your dispute?

Michelle: Well, for 18 years since we built our house, I've wanted not a fancy pool, just an above ground pool—for me, and eventually our grandchildren, and for my dog, Sweetie Pie.

(The audience "aw"s.)

John Hodgman: You want a swimming pool for your dog and your future grandchildren.

Michelle: And for my girlfriends, so we can have cocktails and swim.

(Laughter and cheers.)

John Hodgman: And you have to admit, Joel, we are reaching a point in Maine's climate where it might be comfortable to be in a swimming pool at some point.

(Michelle agrees.)

Why have you denied your wife a swimming pool, Joel?

Joel Mann: I just don't think I'd go in it that much. Because it is cold up there, and maybe you go—I mean, we don't even go in the water.

Michelle: We? We?!

John Hodgman: Well, there's a difference between the ocean and a swimming pool.

Joel Mann: Well. I got her a pool, okay?

John Hodgman: You got her a pool?

(Joel confirms.)

Describe the pool that you got her.

[00:50:00]

Joel Mann: Well, it's not huge. It does have a big screen TV and a wine bar. And—

John Hodgman: I have a photo of it.

Joel Mann: I don't know why she doesn't.

John Hodgman: I have a photo of it, and I might venture to say that it's because it's a kiddie pool on a deck.

(Laughter.)

Jesse, you want to take a look at this?

Michelle: It's five inches tall.

Jesse Thorn: So, when—*(laughs)* so, what I'm seeing here is I'm seeing a temporary kiddie pool, I'm gonna guess five feet across. The big screen TV appears to be—I'm gonna say a 21-inch computer monitor.

(Laughter.)

And the wine bar is a compact igloo cooler with a box of wine on top.

(Laughter and applause.)

Joel Mann: Sweetie Pie liked it.

Jesse Thorn: There is, to be fair, a rubber lobster in there. Which is fun.

John Hodgman: Sure. Very much on brand. I'm sure Sweetie Pie loves it a lot, but what about your other sweetie pie? How long have you been asking for a pool, Michelle?

Michelle: 18 years.

John Hodgman: 18 years!

Michelle: And I'm not getting any younger, so—

John Hodgman: Strange, I am.

(Laughter.)

Michelle: We don't really like to go to the beach that much and expose—

John Hodgman: No, why would you? I know where you live.

(Michelle laughs.)

Joel, do you think that Michelle's expectation of what she wants out of a pool is more grand than she represents?

Joel Mann: Oh, no, absolutely not. I just—I don't want to have to clean a pool, fill up a pool, empty a pool.

Michelle: Pay for a pool.

Joel Mann: Pay for a pool.

Jesse Thorn: Come on, how big a deal can it be to pay for this pool? You run a community radio station.

(Laughter.)

Joel Mann: Very true, very true.

Jesse Thorn: Spend a few of those jazz bucks.

John Hodgman: Yeah, maybe sell a couple old Joe Bird & the Field Hippies records, get some money for the pool that way. Can you make any argument whatsoever why I shouldn't rule in Michelle's favor? Obviously, she's been patient, obviously you love her, obviously Sweetie Pie and the future grandchildren would all be very happy in there. What about her girlfriends? Why not do it? Why not splurge?

Joel Mann: Really doesn't seem a good reason, does it?

John Hodgman: No. You better come up with one.

Joel Mann: It's cold in Maine.

(Jesse laughs.)

We have friends who have one, and we go over there maybe three times a summer. I mean, about three days in the summer you can swim in Maine.

John Hodgman: Yeah, but you know that's gonna change. I think prepare for the future. Get your wife a pool, Joel. Sorry. (*Bangs his gavel six times.*)

(*Cheers and applause.*)

Jesse Thorn: Thank you, Joel and Michelle.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: That's it for this episode of the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. Thanks to Redditor u/KingStork for naming the case in this episode. You can follow us on Instagram, [@JudgeJohnHodgman](#). We're on YouTube and TikTok, [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](#).

John Hodgman: And speaking of Maine, I have to send a special thank you to Matt, who gave us a nice rating and five stars over at Apple Podcasts, saying, "Sorry to buzz market, but I finally tried Moxie, and I didn't even have to go to New England." A region of northeast United States of America. Matt says, "It's not bad! Thanks, Judge John Hodgman." Thank you, Matt, so much.

And if you, the listener, enjoy the show, why not leave a review over there on Apple Podcasts? You can also leave a review over there at Pocket Casts now! So, if you're listening there, leave a review over there. And/or why not share one of our YouTube episodes with a friend? Or save and share our Instagram posts? Hitting all those little hearts and thumbs ups, and especially shares on all of our platforms really does help people discover the show. And we're really grateful for it.

Oh, and by the way, if you hate computers, and you don't use any of that stuff? Hooo, you must be living a wonderful life. Good for you. But it's still a great day to tell a friend or a family member about the show using your own mouth. Or as I say, bring them to one of our live shows. Check out our schedule at MaximumFun.org/events. We're coming to New England soon.

Jesse Thorn: The *Judge John Hodgman* podcast was created by John Hodgman and Jesse Thorn. Our touring producer on that tour was Laura Volk. This episode, recorded by Stephen Colon. Nattie Lopez is our social media manager. AJ McKeon is our podcast editor. Daniel Speer is our video producer. Our producer is Jennifer Marmor. 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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