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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, "Judicious Minds". Karen brings the case against her husband, Ryan. Ryan has a large piece of art that he loves. He wants it in their living room. But Karen says it should only be displayed in a dumpster, because it's trash!

*(Karen giggles quietly.)*

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 paintings belong in a gin mill, not in a museum. If this modern crap is art, then just call my paintings beautiful. Don't call them art."

Thorn, swear the litigants in.

**Jesse Thorn:** Can I ask what's going on with you, John, before I swear the litigants in?

**John Hodgman:** Y-yeah. So—oh, this?

**Jesse Thorn:** I'm a little—so, people who are watching on YouTube can see this; we're in the same room today. You're in Los Angeles.

*(John confirms.)*

You appear to be dressed as a—

**John Hodgman:** Well, here's the thing, Jesse. I'm in Los An—I came into town for a lovely wedding. And then I was like, well, let me stay over Monday, and I can record in person with my friend Jesse Thorn. This is a treat that we don't always get to enjoy. Unless we're on the road with that *Judge John Hodgman* road court! [MaximumFun.org/events](https://MaximumFun.org/events).

And I was like, "Oh, great!" And so, we set it all up. And then when I arrived in LA, I realized that I forgot my judicial robes at home. Luckily we're in the season of scary, so I was able to go to a Halloween store. And I'm like, "I need some judge's robes right away!"

And they said, "Well, we don't have any. We have two choices for you. Death or Plague Doctor."

*(Jesse laughs.)*

**John Hodgman:** Now, death is the ultimate judge. You know what I mean? But it's a little grim. And I gotta tell you something, Jesse. I've always wanted a plague doctor mask. And it came with the robe for free! So, I'm a plague doctor.

**Jesse Thorn:** You can write it off on your taxes,

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. I also forgot my gavel. Which, really, amateur-hour here at *Judge John Hodgman*. On my side; not yours. But as I was checking out the point of purchase area, the checkout, they had these pop-pops. You know these pop-pops? These are these little— little snappers.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, little snaps that you might buy at a souvenir store in Chinatown.

**John Hodgman:** So, I was like, “Well, that's better than a gavel, I guess.” I mean, this is gonna be my gavel today. (*Snapping sound.*) There we go. That's the sound of a gavel! But I guess maybe I'll put on my glasses, so I can do the show.

Alright. Why don't you swear them in while I disrobe.

**Jesse Thorn:** I honestly thought—

**John Hodgman:** Well, not disrobe, but dis-mask.

**Jesse Thorn:** Karen and Ryan, 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 the only decoration in his office is a big, weird poster that Ken Plume gave him?

(*They agree.*)

Judge Hodgman, you may proceed.

**John Hodgman:** A very kitschy poster.

**Jesse Thorn:** It's a very kitschy poster from our friend Ken Plume, producer of *We Got This*.

**John Hodgman:** Of a Persian knockoff of *E.T.* film. *Badi*, it's called. B-A-A-D-I? Or B-A-D-I? Anyway. Karen and Ryan, you may be seated for an immediate summary judgement in

one—one—of yours favors. Can either of you name the piece of culture that I referenced I entered the courtroom? Well, Karen, why don't you go first?

**Karen:** (*Uncertainly.*) Sssure. Uh—

**John Hodgman:** Do you want to hear it again?

**Karen:** Yes, please.

**John Hodgman:** Alright. “My paintings belong in a gin mill, not in a museum. If this modern crap is art, then just call my paintings beautiful. Don't call them art.”

Okay, it's your turn now, Karen. I spoke, now you do.

**Karen:** Sure. Um, let's say Andy Warhol.

**John Hodgman:** Andy Warhol.

**Karen:** In an interview with a magazine.

**Jesse Thorn:** Famous art hater, Andy Warhol.

(*They chuckle.*)

**John Hodgman:** Andy Warhol. Well, I mean, you know.

**Jesse Thorn:** Who knows? He's said different stuff.

**John Hodgman:** I mean, yeah, right? I mean, controversial. Controversial artist. It took some time before he was fully accepted into the art world, because he was just painting—I mean, he was just sort of replicating popular culture. Right? Controversial.

**Jesse Thorn:** And filming flies crawling on naked ladies.

**John Hodgman:** That's right. Ryan, what's your guess?

**Ryan:** Oh, geez. Um—(*sighs*)...

**John Hodgman:** Daniel, when we're editing this video, do a flip, and then just put it on a caption here “five days later” when—

(*Ryan laughs.*)

And then Ryan can...

**Ryan:** I think that the quote may actually be from one of Elvis Presley's unreleased tracks.

[00:05:00]

**John Hodgman:** One of Elvis Presley's unreleased tracks. Was Elvis Presley a painter? “My paintings belong in a gin mill” is how it began.

**Jesse Thorn:** I know he did karate.

**John Hodgman:** He certainly—well, I mean, he was a master of karate.

**Ryan:** Yeah. I mean, I think that his karate was his art. It was his—his—you know.

**John Hodgman:** Okay. It was a physical painting.

**Ryan:** Yes!

**John Hodgman:** You know, Jesse, I can't remember. We're just back now from our Midwestern leg, and it was either in Ann Arbor or Madison—I don't think it was in St. Paul. It was either Ann Arbor or Madison where there is a plaque outside of the site of a former gas station where Elvis Presley broke up a fight.

*(Jesse confirms with a laugh.)*

He was being driven by, and he saw two guys starting to mix it up. And Elvis Presley was like, “This cannot stand.” And he got out, and he did a bunch of karate poses even!

And they were like, “Okay, we won't fight anymore.”

And Elvis Presley was like, “That's right, because I know karate.”

And it's like, no, it's not! Because you're Elvis Presley, and it's just weird.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah. It would be weird to defy the anti-fighting orders of Elvis Presley.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. Anyway, Karen and Ryan, you're both wrong. The correct answer was Edward Leeteg, who was the pioneer of a certain style of painting that had difficulty being taken seriously, even though it was wildly successful in what we call the mid of the last century. He was a German national who moved to French Polynesia and died at the age of 49 in a motorcycle accident in 1953. His works were highly collectible. And I don't want to get into details of them yet, because it's going to come out in the case. Highly collectible. And what was the style of painting? Well, let's just say that with all of his money, he bought himself a villa in French Polynesia and named it—truly—Villa Velour. Villa Velour. It'll all make sense once we hear the case.

Who seeks justice in my courtroom?

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

**John Hodgman:** Karen, you have a dispute with your husband, Ryan, about a piece of art that he wants to hang in the home you share. Is that correct?

*(Karen confirms.)*

Thank you. Could you please describe, in as much detail as possible, what this piece of art is? And feel free to go into great detail.

**Karen:** It's a velvet Elvis, and it stinks.

*(Jesse cackles.)*

**John Hodgman:** I guess that's all we need to know. And you sent in a photo of the velvet Elvis. And what we're talking about here, a velvet Elvis—it is a painting of Elvis on black velvet, correct?

**Karen:** Yes.

**John Hodgman:** And obviously, I think folks have put it together that Edward Leeteg pioneered the art of painting on velvet and specifically started painting local scenes in French Polynesia for bars and hotels on black velvet. And it became a huge phenomenon in the midcentury. And then people started painting Elvis on black velvet, and it was like two forms of kitsch that go great together. It was the Reese's peanut butter cup of kitsch.

**Jesse Thorn:** This is a famous combination here in Southern California, as having been Northern Mexican, having been the Tijuana style.

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

**Jesse Thorn:** You go to Tijuana for your affordable dentistry, auto glass, and velvet paintings. Yeah.

**John Hodgman:** Your velvet Elvis. Okay. Can we take a look at it? You sent—you obviously sent in a photo, correct?

**Karen:** Right. Yes.

**John Hodgman:** Let's take a look at that. This is definitely Elvis painted on black velvet. It is falling out of its frame. I don't know who's responsible for that. But it's—I'm going to say it's of higher artistic quality than I expected.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, it's a pretty compelling rendering.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. And obviously, you can check out this image on our show page at [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) and as well as on Instagram, at [@JudgeJohnHodgman](https://www.instagram.com/JudgeJohnHodgman) on Instagram.

**Jesse Thorn:** This is a later period Elvis. This is a Las Vegas Elvis.

**John Hodgman:** Here, let me ask Ryan, because he's the expert. He owns this velvet Elvis. Ryan, are there depictions of young Elvis on black velvet? Or is it—? It tends to be later period, it feels like to me. Sort of sequined Elvis.

**Ryan:** Yeah, you typically find them—like, if you look for them on eBay, if you see them out in the wild—which is kind of rare, I think, at this point. But if you look them up, they are typically—yeah—later era, you know, the '68 *Comeback Special* era Elvis.

**John Hodgman:** Right. Okay. That makes sense. And when did you get this velvet Elvis? How did it come into your life?

**Ryan:** So, I got this—I was in high school. I want to say it was about '96 or '97, I think.

**John Hodgman:** (*Under his breath.*) Oh boy. Young people.

**Ryan:** So, I've had it since then. I grew up in a very small town,

**John Hodgman:** Go on.

**Ryan:** The kind of town where, twice a year, the entire town will have like garage sales. Like, everybody just has garage sales one day set aside on a Saturday.

[00:10:00]

And I had been hanging out with a friend of mine from high school all day. And it was kind of getting later in the day, early evening, and we went back to her place. And her parents were breaking down their garage sale with things that hadn't sold. And they had this painting. And I saw this majestic painting with a price tag on it that said \$5. And I went to her mom, and I'm like, "I will give you five dollars for this."

And her mom's response was, "Just take it. Just get it out of here."

(*John "whoa"s.*)

(*Laughing.*) So, I had been to their place. I had never seen it displayed before. I don't remember if they had ever had it up before. I think this was the first time I saw it. But immediately, I was like, "I must have this."

**John Hodgman:** So, where are the places has this curse-ed—‘cause they obviously want to get rid of it ‘cause it has a curse.

**Ryan:** *(Laughs.)* So, I took it home. I hung it in my bedroom in high school. I took it with me to college. It hung in two different dorm rooms. It hung in—

**John Hodgman:** Sexy.

**Ryan:** Oh yeah. No. It was—it was— Yeah. *(Laughs.)* It was a magnet.

**John Hodgman:** Potential romantic partners would just swoon the moment they saw.

**Ryan:** Well, the problem is they would see it, and they would no longer be interested in me.

*(John “ohhh”s knowingly.)*

Because they would, you know—

**Jesse Thorn:** “GOD DAYUMN,” they said. *(Chuckles.)*

**Ryan:** So, it was a bit of a curse. But then, yeah, every apartment—three different apartments in college I had it in. After college I moved to Chicago, lived in the same apartment for 15 years in Chicago, and it hung there. And it's—so, it's—

**John Hodgman:** Where in your apartment in Chicago did you display this piece, this treasure?

**Ryan:** Yeah, my apartment in Chicago was in—it was in a little hallway between the living room and kitchen.

**John Hodgman:** Transitional piece.

**Ryan:** Yeah. But yeah, the kind of thing that you would come into the apartment, and you would immediately see it. Like, it was always sort of in an area of prominence, for obvious reasons. Because it is obviously quite a conversation piece.

**John Hodgman:** Karen is shaking her head. Let me ask you this question, Karen. When I first asked you to describe this piece of art, you said, “Something-something, and it stinks.” You mean that literally, right?

**Karen:** Yes, I do.

**John Hodgman:** It smells bad.

**Karen:** It smells bad. Ryan is a smoker. And while he does not smoke inside our shared home, but he does smoke. And he smoked in his apartments, where it hung for many years. And it smells how you would expect.

**John Hodgman:** What do you smoke? You smoke tobacco?

**Ryan:** Yeah. Yeah, it looks and smells like the '70s.

**John Hodgman:** Ryan, first of all, I got to get out a pop-pop here for a snap judgment, a pop-pop judgment. I order you to stop smoking immediately. (*Snap.*) Okay? It's not good for you.

**Karen:** That's great.

**John Hodgman:** Stop it. Stop it already. No good. It's no good, and it's not cool. And also, it stunk up your Elvis. So, you're talking about at least a dozen years of smoke is in that black velvet, and it smells bad, right?

**Ryan:** 15 years, yeah. Yes.

**John Hodgman:** 15 years. Alright. And so, when did it come down? When you started dating Karen? You guys have been dating for ten years, living together for—married for two, living together for four. That's what I understood from our conversation earlier.

**Ryan:** Yeah. So, in 2020 when I moved in with her, moved into the place that she owned at the time. And it was a small place. You know, pretty small for two people. And a lot of my stuff, just there wasn't room for it. So, it was among the many things that just went into a storage unit for four years.

**John Hodgman:** Did you—? I mean, first of all, good for you for not imposing a velvet Elvis into a home that you do not own. She had taken you in. Did you propose to hang it initially in that home?

*(Karen and Ryan both confirm.)*

And what happened?

**Ryan:** And she said no. And I said, "Well, okay, this is—you know, you're letting me move in with you. This is your home."

**John Hodgman:** Good thinking.

**Ryan:** That's understandable. But yeah, I mean, the plan was always for us to eventually move to a bigger place.

**John Hodgman:** Pop-pop judgment, you're a good guy. (*No snap.*) Oh well. Imagine that it went. Thank you, Jesse.



**Ryan:** Yeah. Yeah, I did not want to impose my things, you know, where there wasn't gonna be room for it anyway. And like I said, I was already putting a lot of other stuff in storage. So, it sat in a storage unit for four years. And we recently bought a bigger place, the two of us together now. So, now that this is our home—this is no longer just her place. This is our place.

**John Hodgman:** Congratulations.

**Karen:** Thank you.

**Ryan:** (*Overlapping.*) Oh, thank you.

I was unloading stuff out of the storage unit, I said, “Oh, let's revisit this.”

And she said, “Let's let someone else revisit this.”

And that's how we ended up here. So. (*Laughs.*)

**John Hodgman:** Well, Karen, you say that you want to put this in a dumpster. And indeed you sent in some evidence that says, “Exhibit B”, captioned, “Why the Elvis is a”—quote—“good candidate for the dumpster.” Let me look at Exhibit B here. Uh, okay! Well, it's two photos. One is—the frame seems broken. Is that what you're trying to highlight here, Karen?

[00:15:00]

Tell me about these photos.

**Jesse Thorn:** Those look like the stretchers!

**Karen:** Yeah, the stretchers are broken in at least two places that I could see.

**John Hodgman:** What are the stretchers? You seem—everyone's talking about stretchers like they know— What are you all, framing experts?!

(*Karen laughs.*)

**Jesse Thorn:** That's what the velvet is mounted on. So, the frame goes around the painting, but the—

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

**Jesse Thorn:** But the painting is actually mounted on wooden stretchers.

**John Hodgman:** The velvet is stretched across an inner wooden frame. That's how it gets taut.

**Jesse Thorn:** Exactly. Exactly.

**John Hodgman:** Right. Okay, gotcha. So, the stretchers are broken.

**Karen:** Mm-hm. And the frame is broken, so it's kind of not in good shape. You know.

**Jesse Thorn:** So, it's probably a good idea to have it re-stretched and have a new frame made.

*(They laugh.)*

**John Hodgman:** You feel that Elvis has left the building, as it were. It's come to the end of its useful life as a piece of art. Right?

**Karen:** Yes, and I feel like—you know, hearing the origin story—that it might have been garbage for a very long time. *(Chuckles.)*

**John Hodgman:** Might have been garbage the moment that this cursed thing came into Ryan's hands.

**Karen:** That's right.

**John Hodgman:** Ryan was the case of the garage sales like every year they would have the garage sale just to sell off this Elvis to someone else? Like, it just hit every garage in town?

**Ryan:** Not that I know of, but I would not be surprised if they had it on more than one garage sale.

**Jesse Thorn:** I think it became garbage the moment it was deaccessioned from the collection of the Chicago Institute of Art.

*(They laugh.)*

**John Hodgman:** I just happened to scroll down here to Exhibit C, which is a chair that Ryan likes. A chair that Ryan likes. And there is a cute dog in this photo too, isn't there?

*(Jesse "aw"'s softly.)*

Who's this cutie?

**Karen:** Yeah. His name is Q.

**John Hodgman:** What do you want to say about this chair? It looks a little dated, shall I say. Like, both old and dated in style. How would you describe this chair, Karen? Stinks?

**Karen:** It doesn't actually stink. Because it is, in fact, brand new. This is something that Ryan purchased for our new home, uh, without telling me. And it arrived one day, and I don't like it. I think it's pretty silly. It's—you maybe can't tell from the photograph, but it is like of a plush material.

**John Hodgman:** I was gonna say it looked a little velour-y, a little velvety, a little furry. It's a metal frame with basically—it looks like someone killed a stuffed animal spread it over this metal frame. And it's also got a mushy ottoman that goes with it. Why are you sharing this evidence of this chair?

**Karen:** Because I want to demonstrate that I'm not—I haven't refused any other decor that Ryan has decided to display. Even stuff—

**John Hodgman:** Well, you didn't have a choice. He bought it without your knowledge and just put it there.

**Karen:** Fair enough, but we're not here to litigate about the chair, because I've accepted it.

**John Hodgman:** So, your point is, “I have accepted your ugly chair. It's time to get rid of your stinky Elvis.”

**Karen:** (*Chuckles.*) Basically, yes.

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

(*ADVERTISEMENT*)

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**John Hodgman:** You love Ryan.

(*Karen confirms.*)

You've been dating for 10 years. So, this Elvis has been in your life for a while. What did it feel like when you first saw it?

**Karen:** I thought it was pretty stupid.

(*Jesse laughs and agrees.*)

But it wasn't up to me, you know. It was his in his apartment, so.

**John Hodgman:** Well, you're right. The decor of his apartment was not up to you, but your choice to hug and kiss him was up to you.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, to do it before Elvis.

*(They laugh.)*

**John Hodgman:** I mean, but you could have looked at this thing and said, “This guy's not for me,” but you didn't. Because... Ryan has other qualities.

**Karen:** Right, he's more than just an Elvis-haver.

**John Hodgman:** What other qualities does Ryan have that you love?

**Karen:** Oh, he's really funny; he's really smart; he's very sweet. He's great guy.

**Ryan:** Great taste in art.

**Karen:** Well.

**John Hodgman:** Well.

**Jesse Thorn:** *(Laughs.)* I feel like if this was Reddit, this painting being up on the wall of a prospective boyfriend, just—it would just be—all the replies would just say “red flag, red flag, red flag, red flag”.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, just images of red flags. Flag, flag, flag, flag, flag, flag, flag, flag. But you saw past it; you saw beyond it.

**Karen:** I did, yes.

**Jesse Thorn:** Ryan, how had other people reacted to this painting in the 15 years that you'd had it—or decade that you had it—before it went into storage?

**Ryan:** It's the kind of thing that everybody reacts to. Most people pretty positively; most people think it's an amusing piece. It's obviously very kitschy. It's the kind of thing that when people see it, they're—people that know me see it, they say, “Yeah, that seems like something that you would have.” If that makes any sense.

[00:20:00]

**Jesse Thorn:** I'm wondering if your apartment, before you moved in with your partner, was like a B-52's music video set or Cory Doctorow's house—somewhere where this kind of kitsch would fit in with a bunch of, you know, atomic coffee tables shaped like amoebas and stuff.

**John Hodgman:** Right. I mean, I guess we're trying to figure out just how Googie were you.

**Ryan:** Yeah, so in my old apartment, I cannot say that I had a very specific aesthetic. It was—well, my old apartment, the living room—where this was kind of over in a hallway just past that—it was a couple of movie posters. I don't even remember what they—horror movie posters. I had a lot of—

**John Hodgman:** Why does that not take me by surprise?

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, not a stunner.

*(Karen agrees and Ryan laughs.)*

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, well, let me guess. *Evil Dead 2*, *Dead by Dawn*.

**Ryan:** No. I think I had—what did I have? *Friday the 13th*, part three. I had *Nightmare on Elm Street*, part three.

**John Hodgman:** In 3D, with the knife coming forward.

**Ryan:** Yeah, exactly. I had *Nightmare on Elm Street* part three.

**Karen:** One of the *Halloweens*.

**Ryan:** I had the original *Halloween*.

**John Hodgman:** *Halloween 3: Season of the Witch*.

**Ryan:** I did not have that one. No, I just had the original.

**Jesse Thorn:** My daughter was just telling me about how good *Halloween 3: Season of the Witch* is.

**John Hodgman:** It's wild. You ever watch *Halloween 3: Season of the Witch*, Ryan?

**Ryan:** Oh, god, many times. It's a masterpiece.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, obviously. Obviously.

**Jesse Thorn:** No Michael Myers in that one.

**John Hodgman:** No, it's a completely different storyline. They were trying to turn it into an anthology series with different—and then it didn't work, did it?

**Ryan:** Yeah, nobody saw it. And then for the fourth one, they just brought Michael Myers back.

**John Hodgman:** Karen, let me ask you this question. Hearing me and Jesse and Ryan talk about *Halloween 3: Season of the Witch*, does it get sexier?

*(Karen and Jesse laugh.)*

Three white guys talking about kitschy horror movies? This is it more—is it very exciting?

**Karen:** I, uh, would like to take the Fifth Amendment. *(Giggles.)*

**John Hodgman:** I think that's fair. Ryan, it says here that you also have a wall of Taylor Swift.

**Ryan:** Yes. So, that—the Taylor Swift wall is kind of—it's kind of two separate things. I guess maybe three. One is because at one point she had said, “Well, can't you just put Elvis up in your room?”

And I said, “Well, there's no room because that's where Taylor Swift is going to go.” And I've put all that up now, since then.

**John Hodgman:** And by Taylor Swift, you're talking about your collection of Taylor Swift—? Well, let me take a look at the photo, and we can all take a look together.

**Ryan:** Yeah, sorry. Yeah, it's—

**Jesse Thorn:** What I'm seeing...

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, describe—tell me what you're seeing, Jesse.

**Jesse Thorn:** What I'm seeing here is a display that features about eight Taylor Swift record albums, LPs, in frames surrounding a Taylor Swift poster. Sort of LeRoy Neiman style Taylor Swift poster—speaking of anti-art artists. And then below that, two needlepoint wall hangings, one of which says, “All's fair in love and poetry”. And one of which says, “A lot going on at the moment.”

**John Hodgman:** Those are Taylor Swift parables, right? Aphorisms?

**Jesse Thorn:** I presume the one that says, “Give me the chocolate, and nobody gets hurt” is at the dry cleaners.

*(They laugh.)*

**John Hodgman:** Are those Taylor Swift lyrics, Ryan? Or what's going on there?

**Ryan:** Yes, yeah. Those are—yeah. Mm-hm.

**Jesse Thorn:** Forgive me.

**John Hodgman:** Do you love Taylor Swift, or do you love Taylor Swift? Is this sincere or ironic?

**Ryan:** No, this is very sincere.

**Karen:** Oh, he loves her.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. Karen, do you confirm that?

**Karen:** I do.

**Ryan:** Yeah, the fact that we just bought a home is the only reason that I am not spending \$1,500 to go see her on tour, because I cannot afford it right now.

**John Hodgman:** Good.

**Ryan:** I would not spend that much money on anybody else that is around right now. It is a genuine—it is a genuine love for her. It is also just sort of like I said—the other thing about this display here is like I said, it's just sort of—and the way it relates to the Elvis, I think, a little bit is the fact that just music is a very big part of my life. I mean, I go to a lot of live music. That's kind of one of my favorite things to do. I mean, three quarters of my wardrobe is just shirts that I have bought at concerts, at shows.

So, like I said, the Elvis—the complication of it is that it's not just—you know, I do like how kitschy it is and kind of how silly and fun it is and how it's kind of—like I said, kind of a fun conversation piece. It is also—you know, I like Elvis. Like, he's absolutely—he's not my favorite, but I like Elvis a lot. I think he's a really important musician, and like I guess just music has always been kind of a really big part of my life. You know, my—

**John Hodgman:** You don't just love Elvis ironically; you actually love Elvis.

*(Ryan confirms.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** Elvis isn't his favorite though. His favorite's Paul Anka.

*(They laugh.)*

**John Hodgman:** Right. Of course. Karen, does Ryan love Elvis or love Elvis? Does he sincerely—? I mean, here's the thing, Karen, because I have to rely on you. Because your beloved is—I'm looking at him here on the screen, and he's got kind of longish hair anyway.

[00:25:00]

I mean, I can't quite tell how long your hair is, but you're wearing chunky glasses, kind of longish hair. You're wearing a t-shirt with a—I guess it's a hoodie over it, but it almost looks like a lime green cardigan. And you know, Halloween's coming up. This guy looks like he's dressed as Ghost of the '90s a little bit. And so, I'm just trying to figure out—you know.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah. We can't see what's on that t-shirt from this distance, but I presume it says *Reservoir Dogs*.

**Ryan:** No, it's actually—it's Green Day. So.

**John Hodgman:** Okay, fair enough. Alright. So, Karen, you will affirm that when Ryan says that he loves something, he's not being '90s sarcastic loving of bad things. But he actually loves the good things that are Taylor Swift and Elvis. Because I agree with you, Taylor Swift and Elvis are genuinely good.

**Karen:** Yeah. I don't think I've heard him listened to very much Elvis, but he has mentioned outside of the context of the—like when an Elvis song comes on the radio, and I'll be like, “Eeh, I don't know.”

And he'll go, “No, what do you mean?! This song's great!” So. I think he does—

**John Hodgman:** Does he give you a long monologue about the history of the song and its importance in culture and where Elvis was in his career at that time?

**Karen:** (*Laughs.*) No! Usually, no. No.

**Ryan:** No. No.

**John Hodgman:** Ryan, Karen owned the home where you first cohabitated. Now you're married, and you're living in a home together. And do you co-own that home?

(*They confirm.*)

You each have a financial stake in the home that is equal, right?

(*They confirm*)

And as you're fusing your lives together—and your belongings—is there anything of Karen's that belongs in the dumpster?

**Ryan:** Not that I can think of, no. And like she said before, you know, her first home was always supposed to be kind of a starter home. Like, there isn't a lot. We've actually—I know there's some more evidence that we'll get to later. But I have far more things to put on the walls than she does. No, there isn't anything that belongs in the dumpster, but there also isn't a lot.



**Karen:** I would like to get some things that will...

**John Hodgman:** You would like to contribute some decor to your home.

*(Karen confirms.)*

And do you feel like—that you're locked out, because he's got more Taylor Swift stuff to put up? Or what?

**Karen:** Not completely, but I do—we have talked where he has mentioned things like, “Oh, I think I want to put some of my posters over here. And then I think I want to put, you know, some of this stuff over here.” And then I feel like, well, wait a minute. I need—I’ve got some things in mind that I want to get that I don’t have yet.

**Ryan:** Yeah, but when you have brought that up, I've said, “Oh, okay. Cool.” Like, I have no objection to that.

*(Karen confirms.)*

And I cannot think of anything that you would put up—just knowing you—that I would object to. You know?

**John Hodgman:** So, we have Exhibit E here, which are some posters that are not hung. One of them is a poster for—it says North Lakeshore Drive, 1990. It's like a watercolor, and then there's a picture of a dog wearing a bowler hat with a monocle. May I presume that this dog wearing a bowler hat with a monocle is yours, Ryan?

**Ryan:** No, that is Karen’s.

**John Hodgman:** Oh, wow!

**Jesse Thorn:** Holy cow. He also has a pocket watch being worn as a pocket square, and he's wearing one of those like military medals around his neck, like some sort of Viennese royalty.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, or a wompier (*vampire*). Karen, tell me about this dog—oh, the head of his walking stick is a cat's head!

*(Karen laughs.)*

Tell me about this guy, Karen. Who is this dog, and what does this piece of art mean in your life?

**Karen:** Yeah. I call it the Mystery Dog.

**Jesse Thorn:** Uh-huh, sure.

*(They laugh.)*

And why wouldn't you?

**Karen:** And it's actually—it was a gift from my brother. There is a game that has a whole deck of cards that have paintings of really whimsical and fantastical things on them. And you know, the idea of the game is you put some cards down, and you have to describe the card without—and get other people to guess the card you're talking about. And this was always my favorite card. And yeah, I talked about it for years and how much I liked it, and everybody knew that was the one I picked whenever I played it.

*(John “oh!”s.)*

And so, last year for Christmas, my brother surprised me with an enormous print of the mystery dog.

**John Hodgman:** Wait, forgive me. I have to go back, sorry. How old were you when you were playing this card game? And what is the name of the card game? I don't mind buzz marketing it.

**Karen:** Sure. I don't—it's called *Dixit*, I think. D-I-X-I-T.

**John Hodgman:** Right. Not *Dicktown* on Hulu, co-created by David Rees and John Hodgman. *Dixit*. Okay. I misheard for a second. Got it.

**Karen:** *(Laughs.)* Yeah, and no, this is just in the last, you know, three to five years.

**John Hodgman:** You've been playing *Dixit*? So, this is not a this is not a teenage obsession.

[00:30:00]

**Karen:** No.

**John Hodgman:** Like Ryan's teenage obsession.

**Jesse Thorn:** How large is this dog wearing formal clothes?

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, how big is your mystery dog?

**Ryan:** I think it's 24x36.

**Jesse Thorn:** Pretty sizable.

**John Hodgman:** How big is velvet Elvis?

**Karen:** Bigger than that.

**Ryan:** Little bit bigger than that; not much.

**Jesse Thorn:** Oh, wow!

**John Hodgman:** Whoa.

**Karen:** Yeah, it's real big.

**John Hodgman:** Ryan, what do you think about this mystery dog?

**Ryan:** I think he's great! When her brother got her this, I had seen the picture before. Because when she was playing this board game with her brother and with her friends, you know, several years before, she had sent me a picture of it. And I was like, "Oh my god, that's great!"

**Karen:** *(Laughing.)* Saying, "Look at this dog."

**Ryan:** Like, just look at this dog. Look at it. This is an amazing picture.

When her brother gave it to her, I was not upset about it at all. I was like, "That's great. We have to hang that in the living room."

**John Hodgman:** This is a piece of art that enhanced your love for Karen rather than a piece of art that you... that you love Karen in spite of.

**Ryan:** Oh no. Yeah, no. I very much like this thing.

**Jesse Thorn:** John, you're more of a cat guy, but I think I could help explain. So, dogs rarely wear any clothes at all, much less formal garb.

**John Hodgman:** *(With faux surprise.)* Oh! Oh, really?

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah. They're rarely invited to state dinners.

**John Hodgman:** I always imagined that most bulldogs wore bowler hats and smoked cigars.

**Jesse Thorn:** I understand why you would think that.

**John Hodgman:** And that they wore tight sweaters with turtlenecks, and they walked down the street going, "Yeah, I'm gonna go beat up a cat!"

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, you're thinking of the ones that you've seen depicted in velvet paintings.

**John Hodgman:** Oh, okay. My mistaking. Have you considered having the velvet cleaned, Ryan? I mean, it stinks.

**Ryan:** Oh, absolutely, yeah. I mean, the fact that the frame is—you know, it's out of the frame. The stretchers are broken.

**John Hodgman:** Busted.

**Ryan:** Yeah, I mean, it's been in—it was in my apartment for 15 years, and it's been in storage for four years now. Yeah, no, if we were gonna—if this does go in my favor, I would definitely want to have it cleaned, have it repaired.

**John Hodgman:** And where is your proposal for hanging it in the apartment?

**Ryan:** Well, I think it should go somewhere in the living room. We've got a much bigger living room space now than we did at her old place. I mean, I honestly think—I'm looking at velvet Elvis, and I'm looking at the mystery dog here, and I'm thinking how well do these two things complement each other.

**John Hodgman:** Let's not get ahead of ourselves. You think I haven't thought about that already?

**Ryan:** *(Laughs.)* That's a fair point. Fair point, fair point, fair point.

**John Hodgman:** You think I haven't thought about that already?

**Jesse Thorn:** They could live together in some sort of nightmare room.

*(They laugh.)*

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. I mean, I don't know. I haven't been—Chicago has some sizable apartments. Do you have a nightmare room, Karen, in your condo?

**Karen:** No, not exactly.

**Ryan:** Not yet.

**Karen:** Not yet.

**John Hodgman:** And you're saying that there's no room in the Taylor Swift—in your office, on the Taylor Swift wall, for Elvis?

**Ryan:** There isn't, no.

**John Hodgman:** Like, physical room or emotional room?

**Jesse Thorn:** Well, Elvis is four feet long!

**Karen:** (*Chuckling.*) It's pretty big.

**Ryan:** Yeah, physically there is not the space for it. Just with the layout of the room and where the window is and the closets, there's—the Taylor Swift wall would have been the only wall that had the space, and she already had to go there. So.

**John Hodgman:** If Taylor Swift asked you to get rid of velvet Elvis, what would you say?

**Ryan:** (*Sighs.*) I think—I-I—that would make me look at her a little differently, honestly.

**John Hodgman:** You would tell Taylor Swift, “No”?!?

**Ryan:** Uh, yeah.

**John Hodgman:** Karen, is he telling the truth, or is he being the ghost of the '90s irony?

**Karen:** I don't know. I think he might be—he would give it some serious thought at least.

**Ryan:** I think I would say, “Well, look. Taylor, let's at least talk about this.”

**Jesse Thorn:** Taylor Swift lives in a world far beyond irony.

**John Hodgman:** I know. It's a very different—

**Jesse Thorn:** She's dating a football player!

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. It's a very different vibe. Ryan, you've lived without velvet Elvis for four years.

**Ryan:** Correct.

**John Hodgman:** Velvet Elvis was in storage.

**Jesse Thorn:** Velvis.

**John Hodgman:** Velvis, if you will. Thank you. And we will. Tell Karen how you felt for those four years when Velvis wasn't in your life. I mean, tell me too, but tell Karen.

**Ryan:** I mean, it definitely felt like something was missing, you know? There was this thing that had been with me my—you know, like I said, my entire adult life. It was—like I said, it's a piece that I really like, that I really—was very me. Yeah.

**John Hodgman:** Well, you've made these arguments already, Ryan. I understand that. I want you to focus on that emotion. Picture Velvis in the storage container. In the dark.

**Ryan:** It makes me a little sad to think about him sitting there alone, in the dark, in isolation. You know? I mean, I tried to get out to the storage unit as often as I could to check on things. We had things to get there. We kept Christmas decorations there. And you know, every time I would see him, I'd think, "You know, you're coming home soon, buddy." You know?

*(They laugh.)*

**John Hodgman:** *(Impersonating Elvis.)* Thank you. Thank you very much.

**Jesse Thorn:** How does it make you feel to picture Karen, your wife, gazing through her mind's eye at velvet Elvis in a storage unit, saying, "We're never, ever, ever getting back together"?

[00:35:00]

**Ryan:** *(Laughs helplessly.)* It's hurtful!

**John Hodgman:** Has your attitude towards Velvis ever changed, Karen?

**Karen:** No.

**John Hodgman:** Let me ask you. Picture velvet Elvis in the dark, in the dumpster, with like a can of crushed tomatoes splattered on him.

**Jesse Thorn:** Maybe the bones of a fish.

**John Hodgman:** Maybe the bones of a fish.

**Jesse Thorn:** A banana peel, all the classic trash.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, exactly. And also, I want you to picture Mystery Dog in his bowler hat with his monocle, looking in the dumpster going, "*(Chuckles menacingly.)* I win!" I see you laughing and smiling. How does that make you feel?

**Jesse Thorn:** Another victory for the ruling class.

*(They laugh.)*

**Karen:** I mean, I wouldn't delight in it being destroyed. I just don't want to look at it all the time.

**John Hodgman:** Okay. Or smell it.

**Karen:** Or smell it, importantly.

**John Hodgman:** Would you accept it in Ryan's office, knowing that it's there?

**Karen:** Yes.

**John Hodgman:** You would accept it. That's a pretty good compromise being proposed there, Ryan. I have to say. Why—I mean, why can't you find room in your office? I'm only seeing one wall of Taylor Swift memorabilia. I would imagine that if it's a full room—unless it's what you call a nightmare closet. Or what do you call it? A demon room?

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah.

**John Hodgman:** Anyway, there are probably other walls.

**Ryan:** Unfortunately, like I said, just the layout of the room—where the closet is, where the windows are—there are not. I will say though—

**John Hodgman:** Does it have a ceiling? Can you put him on the ceiling?

**Ryan:** It does have a ceiling. I suppose I could put him on the ceiling. That's...

**Karen:** (*Laughing.*) No.

**Jesse Thorn:** You'd have to take the mirrors down.

**Ryan:** Yeah, see, this is going to be the reaction here.

**John Hodgman:** Remember that Lionel Richie song, “Oh, What a Feeling, Velvis on the Ceiling”?

Let me ask you, what's the thing you dislike about Velvis the most? Is it—and it's a three part question. Option one) It stinks. Option two) It literally stinks. Option three) It symbolizes Ryan's inability to grow up and put childish things behind him and move on with his dual life together in a home that you share. I'll remind you're under fake oath.

**Karen:** (*Laughs.*) I know. Uh, I have to genuinely say number two. It literally stinks. Because—

**John Hodgman:** It literally stinks. Really? That's the thing that most annoys you about Velvis.

**Karen:** I have not put very many childish things behind me either. *(Laughs.)*

**John Hodgman:** What is your velvet Elvis? What is your velvet Elvis? Text it to Jennifer Marmor. Ryan, you give it some thought. I'm gonna go into my chambers. I'm gonna consider my verdict. I'll be back in a moment for the answer and my decision. Here's some *(inaudible)* music. *(Hums a jaunty tune.)*

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

Ryan just turns a card around, and it says, "In the butt."

*(They laugh.)*

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

**Ryan:** *(Sighs.)* I feel good about my chances of not having to throw it away.

**Jesse Thorn:** Karen, how are you feeling about your chances?

**Karen:** Given that we're discussing techniques for fixing up Velvis, not feeling too good.

**Jesse Thorn:** Okay, well, have you decided—have you sent something to our producer, Jennifer?

**Karen:** I have, yes.

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

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**Promo:**

**John Hodgman:** Et ego sum John Hodgman.

**Janet Varney:** Et ego sum Janet Varney!

**Music:** Relaxed, playful guitar.

**John:** And we're the hosts of *E Pluribus Motto*, a podcast dedicated to exploring the mottos of every state in the Union.



**Janet:** Every episode, we will spotlight one state and discuss its official symbols—the motto, flowers, birds, beverages, songs, and even official state muffins.

**John:** Plus, we'll hear from guests whose lives have been inspired by the state's iconography and from residents who call that state home.

**Janet:** Bring some snacks, a map, and your travel journal. Because this podcast is a virtual journey like no other!

**John:** Audi nostrum *E Pluribus Motto*, quaeliba talia lunae du Maximum Fun!

**Janet:** Aaand for the Latin challenged among you and us, listen to *E Pluribus Motto* every other Monday on Maximum Fun.

### **Promo:**

**Music:** Exciting, upbeat music.

**Ify Nwadiwe:** Since 2017, *Maximum Film* has had the same slogan.

**Alonso Duralde:** The podcast that's not just a bunch of straight white guys.

**Drea Clark:** Ooh, we've learned something over the years. Some people out there really do not like that slogan!

**Ify:** Listen, we love straight White guys.

**Drea:** Well, some of them.

**Alonso:** But if there's one thing we can't change, it's who we are.

**Ify:** I'm Ify, a comedian who was on strike last year in two different unions.

**Drea:** I'm Drea. I've been a producer and film festival programmer for decades.

**Alonso:** And I'm Alonso, a film critic who literally wrote the book on queer Hollywood.

**Ify:** You can listen to us talk movies and the movie biz every week on *Maximum Film*.

**Alonso:** We may not be straight White guys, but we love movies, and we know what we're talking about.

**Drea:** Listen to *Maximum Film* on Maximum Fun or wherever you listen to podcasts.

*(Music ends.)*

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**Jesse Thorn:** Judge Hodgman, we are taking a quick break from the case.

**John Hodgman:** *(Hands cupped around his mouth.)* Low ticket alert. Low ticket alert.

Do you hear that, Jesse?

**Jesse Thorn:** I did. I could tell that you were operating a radio by the fact that you put a finger to your ear.

**John Hodgman:** I'm getting a low ticket alert for our *Judge John Hodgman Road Court* tour in Turner's Falls, Massachusetts. That's western Massachusetts where I spent a lot of my time growing up. You may have read about it in *Vacationland*. And if you want to see me there, and you want to see Monte Belmonte, and you want to see Jesse and Jennifer and everybody, you better get your tickets now! Because it's a low ticket alert. It's about to sell out. You already missed out on Brookline, Massachusetts, everybody. Sold out! But we do have shows coming up as well in Portland, Maine, and Burlington, Vermont. And where else, Jesse?

**Jesse Thorn:** Well, in January and early February, we are headed to Vancouver, Seattle, Portland, Oregon, and of course, Los Angeles—alongside *Jordan, Jesse, Go!*, which is a show I've heard is pretty good.

**John Hodgman:** That'll be the last show of this tour.

**Jesse Thorn:** Exactly. All of that information is online at [MaximumFun.org/events](https://MaximumFun.org/events). We have been having such an awesome time on the road. I had such a nice time in Madison, Wisconsin. Beautiful day, 78 degrees outside.

**John Hodgman:** Gorgeous, gorgeous. Blue, sunny skies.

**Jesse Thorn:** I went down to the lake. Went down to the lake, FaceTimed with my family, took a little bicycle ride, went to some nice vintage shops, bought myself a vintage Chris Mullin t-shirt.

[00:40:00]

It was just a—we had the nicest time. And then of course, in Minnesota, I got to pet capybaras.

**John Hodgman:** You know, where I had a nice time, Jesse, on tour?

**Jesse Thorn:** Where?

**John Hodgman:** On stage, presenting comedy, song, justice, and companionship, and friendship—with you and to all of the audience members in all of the wonderful places. Every show is different. Every show is a surprise, even to me. And I couldn't be more excited to get back out there and hit Burlington, Massachusetts—my home Commonwealth. Maine, my adopted state. And then in January, all the other places. The West coast—Vancouver, Los Angeles, Seattle, Portland, Oregon, and... (*whispering out of the corner of his mouth*) soon to be announced, San Francisco Sketchfest, giving you a heads up. Watch this space.

Because tickets will go, and they are already disappearing at [MaximumFun.org/events](https://MaximumFun.org/events). So, please get on over there. Do we need disputes?

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, we need disputes for all of those places, and of course everywhere. But if you are specifically in those northeastern places—which is to say Burlington, Vermont, Portland, Maine, Turner's Falls, Massachusetts, and Brookline, Massachusetts, or environs thereof—please go to [MaximumFun.org/jjho](https://MaximumFun.org/jjho), submit your cases, and let us know in that submission that you are near one of those places.

We always need disputes. Often we need disputes right up to showtime. (*Laughs.*)

(*John confirms.*)

Like, we'll be locking them in a few days in. We'd love to lock them in early. So, submit them now at [MaximumFun.org/jjho](https://MaximumFun.org/jjho). It's a really nice time being on the show. You come hang out backstage—again, full access to our crudités. And you hang out with Jennifer Marmor. She shows you how to do it. You don't have to be worried about it. It's really fun and easy.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah! We all have a good time together.

**Jesse Thorn:** We have a great time on stage. And no case is too small. So, go to [MaximumFun.org/jjho](https://MaximumFun.org/jjho) to submit those, and make sure to get your tickets to all of those places.

**John Hodgman:** Sincerely, if you like cherry tomatoes, you can have all of my backstage cherry tomatoes, 'cause I hate them.

**Jesse Thorn:** And I want to drop a plug this week. We've been laying off plugs other than for our tour, because we've been on tour.

**John Hodgman:** Right, we've been on tour.

**Jesse Thorn:** Uh, there is an interview right now in the feed of the *Bullseye* podcast, *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn*, with André 3000 of Outkast.

**John Hodgman:** Incredible conversation.

**Jesse Thorn:** Of which I'm really proud. He's one of those people that was at the top of the list for literal decades now, and he couldn't have been lovelier or more fascinating, talking about making flutes and when you're too old to rap and all kinds of—and what kind of art you should make as you get older, and how you should appreciate art, new art, as you get older—that were profoundly moving to me. And he's just such a charming, fascinating guy. And we also talked about outfits some. If anybody's worried we didn't talk about outfits, don't worry; we talked about outfits.

**John Hodgman:** If you want to hear Jesse Thorn's dream come true as he talks to André 3000 of Outkast, go to *Bullseye* right away, and listen to all of the incredible conversations that you've had. I mean, I've said it before, and I'll say it again: I have been introduced to more artists, creators, musicians, comedians who have thoroughly enriched my life. I've heard them first talking to you on *Bullseye*.

**Jesse Thorn:** I'll tell you this, we have an interview with the rapper MAVI, M-A-V-I—wonderful, brilliant young rapper—that might be better than the André 3000 one. It's either just out or just about to come out on the Bullseye feed.

(John “wow”s.)

He is one of the most eloquent and fascinating people who has ever been on *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn*, MAVI. Just a really incredible guy. I hope that sometime he will come join us on *Judge John Hodgman*.

**John Hodgman:** That would be lovely!

**Jesse Thorn:** Because of what a brilliant and interesting man he is. But I would recommend go search out *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn*. If you're not an André 3000 person, find somebody that you love, and hit that subscribe button, download that episode, see what you think. Very proud of the show.

**John Hodgman:** You will! You will find someone you love.

Hey Jesse, how old is too old to rap according to André 3000?

**Jesse Thorn:** He has mixed feelings about it.

**John Hodgman:** Uh-huh. I'm 53. Am I just under the wire? Great, (*rhythmically, sort of*) my name's Judge John, and I'm here to say: check out an episode of *Bullseye* every day.

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

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

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

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

**John Hodgman:** *(Singing.)* “Dog, I ride. Monocle and a hat. Dog, I ride. Walking Stick with a cat. He's a mystery dog, and I'm in love with that.”

[00:45:00]

That's the song “Mystery Dog” by Elvis Presley.

*(They laugh.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** I just assumed it was “Velvet Elvis” by Weird Al Yankovic.

**John Hodgman:** Alright, we're back from the break. Before I go into my verdict, we have to finish the game show portion. Ryan, I asked you what was Karen's equivalent of velvet Elvis? Do you have an answer?

**Ryan:** I do.

**John Hodgman:** And I want the answer. And Ryan, it has to be one thing. Are you ready to reveal it?

**Ryan:** Yes.

**John Hodgman:** What is it?

**Ryan:** I think it is her collection of Minnie ears from Disney World.

**John Hodgman:** Minnie Mouse ears from Disney World is on the board! Karen—hang on, Jennifer Marmor. Oh, well, she's not on mic, right?

**Jennifer Marmor:** I can be.

**John Hodgman:** Jennifer Marmor, Karen sent you her velvet Elvis. What did she write?

**Jennifer Marmor:** She wrote, “*World of Warcraft: Wrath of the Lich King* signed poster.”

**Jesse Thorn:** Whoa! You got the Lich King's autograph?!

*(They laugh.)*

**Karen:** The man himself!

**Ryan:** You met the Lich King?

**John Hodgman:** Unfortunately, your answers did not match up. You did not get the ceramic leopard or the trip to French Polynesia to visit the manor, Villa Velour, of the creator of velvet paintings. But I do have, instead, some parting gifts for you, which are judgements. And orders.

Alright. Here's the thing. I have become convinced in talking to both of you that, despite your '90s attire, you do have sincere preferences and affection for each other—obviously—and also for certain things in your life. And what I've become convinced of is that Ryan's affection and connection to velvet Elvis is as sincere and heartfelt as Karen's aversion to it is. And Karen did not take option three, which I extended to her. Which I kind of thought that—I mean, I was—this is what we call forwarding the crux. Which is that she thinks that the big problem with Velvis is that it literally stinks, as opposed to it symbolizes Ryan's inability to leave childhood behind and start to fuse his life in a new way in a new home with you. Which I mean, you know, that's kind of what I thought was going on here.

But you didn't choose that. If you had chosen that, my verdict might have been different.

**Karen:** I couldn't lie. I couldn't lie to you.

**John Hodgman:** I appreciate it. And now and you know now that I've gotten the chance to know both of you a little bit more, and I know about the weird video games that you both like— But I mean to say, like I believe that there is—that your aesthetics are more aligned than not, shall we say. And yet, that there is this outlier. There is this Velvis. Was I thinking that Velvis and Mystery Dog should sit side-by-side in a place of prominence to represent the synthesis of your relationship as it has grown? Yes, I did consider that very seriously! And I know that would make Ryan very happy, but I am not convinced of two things. One) That it would make Karen happy at all. And B) That that thing isn't going to smell.

And the smell of it is truly the most compelling element of this case. I doubt very much, after 12 to 15 years of smoking in front of this velvet, that it's ever gonna smell okay. I don't think there's enough Febreze in the world to get to a point where Karen's not going to be able to smell it. And that is because—if I may, Ryan—I'll tell you a little story. There is another guy who sort of lived an ironic life in the '90s. Another guy who dabbled in kitsch. And another guy who smoked cigarettes in the '90s, because he thought it was cool and that somehow he was invincible. And that guy was your judge, John Hodgman!

And I'll tell you what: I'm going to let you keep velvet Elvis in your life on the condition that you freaking give up smoking. Because that's kids' stuff that has got to go away at your age. Sorry. I loved smoking cigarettes. It definitely was cool, but it is the worst. It is a bad, bad thing. And that is the one childish thing I'm going to ask you to set aside as you move forward into adulthood. And as far as velvet Elvis is concerned? If you do that, and you invest in repair of the stretcher—not make Karen happy, but to respect Elvis. And you—

**Jesse Thorn:** Respelvis.

[00:50:00]

**John Hodgman:** What's that?

**Jesse Thorn:** Respelvis.

**John Hodgman:** Respelvis. Yeah.

*(Karen chuckles.)*

Respelvis. And you get it cleaned, so that maybe it'll smell fine. If at some point you are able to get it clean to the point where Karen's like, "It doesn't smell that bad," maybe he can be next to Mystery Dog in the den or the living room. That's fine. But if Karen still smells that smoke, it's gotta be in your office. Taylor and Elvis must find peace together. If it's not Taylor, something's gotta come down in order to put Velvis in there.

As far as the rest of your décor? My recommendation is, measure the wall space, get the square footage, divide it evenly. Each person gets half of that wall space to do whatever they like, but velvet Elvis has to be in your special place until such time as Karen decides it doesn't stink anymore. And maybe, on her—it's her choice, but maybe she can— You know, Jesse, in some cultures, when a judge pronounces sentence—particularly when it's a harsh one—they cover their heads, and they put like sunglasses on, or they cover their eyes. And so, before I pronounce sentence, I'm going to put my plague doctor hat back on and obviously cover my eyes. *(Beat.)* People can see this on the YouTube that I'm not making it up. You can also probably—my audio is now muffled, 'cause I'm talking through a plague doctor mask.

But here's my sentence. I order that velvet Elvis be restored and taken care of and given a place of prominence somewhere within Ryan's office, where it belongs. This is the sound of a gavel.

**Clip:**

**Speaker:** You get up into a girl's face. Y'know, very close. And you say, uh, YEAH-UH-HUH! And it blows their hair straight back—whew! You know.

*(Distant audience cheers.)*

**John Hodgman:** Judge John Hodgman rules. That is all.

**Jesse Thorn:** Please rise as the plague doctor exits the courtroom. *(Laughing.)*

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

**John Hodgman:** Where was I? I just came—I feel like I've been dreaming. What—where am I? In Los Angeles? How did I get here?

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

**Karen:** Pretty good. I think that's good and fair, and I'm excited for Ryan to stop smoking most of all.

**Jesse Thorn:** Ryan, are you ready for this?

**Ryan:** Oh. I mean, ready to quit smoking? I mean, I've wanted to for years. We actually were—

**Karen:** Talked about it recently.

**Ryan:** Yeah, talked about it very recently. About like, look, it is time for me to put a serious, concerted effort into this. And yeah. I mean, it's costing me a lot of money. I am not getting any younger. Like, yeah, no, it's something I should have—in a world where I can't go back and say, “I should have never started,” it's definitely something that I—like I said—have thought about a lot recently that I need to put a real, serious effort into.

**Jesse Thorn:** Well, Ryan, you'll be glad to know I got a dry cleaner recommendation that's gonna clean Elvis right up. RAVE FabriCARE.

*(Karen chuckles.)*

**Ryan:** Alright.

**Jesse Thorn:** Unbelievable. They do breathtaking work at RAVE FabriCARE.

Karen, Ryan, thanks for joining us on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

**Ryan:** Thank you.

**Karen:** Thank you.

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**Jesse Thorn:** Another *Judge John Hodgman* case is in the books. In just a second, we'll have Swift Justice. But first, thanks to Redditor u/Mishnak.

**John Hodgman:** u/Mishnak. Thank you, u/Mishnak.

**Jesse Thorn:** For naming this week's episode “Judicious Minds”.



**John Hodgman:** (*Singing to the tune of “Suspicious Minds” by Elvis Presley.*) “We can go on together with judicious minds.”

**Jesse Thorn:** (*Harmonizing.*) “Judicious minds.” You know what? I like that song.

**John Hodgman:** That's a great song. You know what? I like Elvis.

**Jesse Thorn:** Wow! There's some Elvis that I like.

**John Hodgman:** Oh, boy. Wow.

**Jesse Thorn:** (*Laughing.*) I mean, I'm here with Ryan on this one.

**John Hodgman:** The faintest of praise.

**Jesse Thorn:** No! There is Elvis that I like. For example, I do like that song, “Suspicious Minds”!

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. It’s a good one. “Mystery Train” is good too.

**Jesse Thorn:** If you want to watch this episode, you can do so on YouTube. Just search for *Judge John Hodgman*. Smash those like and subscribe buttons! Smash, smash, smash! (*Banging on the table.*)

**John Hodgman:** And I dare say, smash the share button.

**Jesse Thorn:** Smash that share button! Send it to somebody.

**John Hodgman:** Leave a comment even!

**Jesse Thorn:** You can also find us on TikTok and YouTube, [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](#), where there's a lot of fun stuff. You want to see some videos of me meeting animals?

**John Hodgman:** All that Capybara footage is over there on the visual social medias, the YouTube and the TikTok.

**Jesse Thorn:** And John? If you follow us on Instagram or on TikTok or on YouTube—

**John Hodgman:** I do! I do that too.

**Jesse Thorn:** I've got great news for you.

**John Hodgman:** Tell me.

**Jesse Thorn:** You're going to see the video of me meeting capybaras. (*Laughs.*)

**John Hodgman:** Can I tell you something? You're talking about when we visited Sensible Safari?

**Jesse Thorn:** Sustainable Safari.

**John Hodgman:** Excuse me, Sustainable Safari.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah.

[00:55:00]

**John Hodgman:** Which is an incredible animal encounter area within a—in a mall in Maplewood. It's the Maplewood mall outside of St. Paul.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, shockingly large and pleasant. Yeah.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. And you went to have the capybara experience.

**Jesse Thorn:** I did.

**John Hodgman:** I got to enjoy some goats and some coatimundis and stuff. But I had to leave before you petted the capybaras, so I haven't seen you burst into tears as you pet those capybaras. I can't wait to see this video. Where do I go?

**Jesse Thorn:** John, there were baby capybaras.

**John Hodgman:** I do know that there are two baby capybaras. Their names were Potayto and Potahto.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, and then there was Uno, the dad capybara. The mom capybara was keeping to herself.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, her name was Joan.

**Jesse Thorn:** But Uno was a real ham.

**John Hodgman:** (*Snorts.*) I can't wait to see that footage. Where can I see it?

**Jesse Thorn:** [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](#) on your various social medias.

**John Hodgman:** YouTube, TikTok, you know where to go.

**Jesse Thorn:** I also want to—look, we have a five-star rating to thank this week. But I want to thank Quimby Mouse from Reddit.

**John Hodgman:** Oh?

**Jesse Thorn:** There was a post on a subreddit that I shan't name, but suffice it to say that this subreddit is a toxic impulse.

*(John “ohh”s worriedly.)*

It was about a series of television commercials that starred Justin Long.

**John Hodgman:** Ohhh! My friend!

**Jesse Thorn:** And someone said, “In retrospect, the PC guy looks like someone who would actually help you if you had a problem.” There's a lot of talk about how the PC guy was more sympathetic than the other guy. And that person, Quimby Mouse, replied, “He does.” And linked to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

**John Hodgman:** Wow! Thanks Quimby Mouse!

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah. So, thanks to Quimby Mouse and The Mind Taker, who replied to Quimby Mouse, among others. And thanks to everyone who recommends the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast, whether it's on Reddit, on your own social media, or elsewhere—such as in real life. It means a lot to us.

**John Hodgman:** And by the way, Justin Long will help you out in a problem.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, Justin Long seems like a really good dude.

**John Hodgman:** He's a really nice guy. He's a really terrific fella. But thank you, Quimby Mouse. And thank you—I have here, brand-new member of the five-star club, over there on Apple Podcasts. Five stars from Jstyons—J-S-T-Y-O-N-S. They wrote, “I have been listening to this podcast since it first came out. It's the kind of thing you can listen to for over a decade and not get tired of it. Never fails to be funny, and there's a surprising amount of wisdom mixed in.” Thank you, Jstyons.

If you're listening on Apple Podcasts, why don't you go and leave a review if you care to? It helps people find the podcast. And go over to Pocket Casts, where you can leave a review now too. If that's where you listen to your podcast, leave a review there. Or simply leave a review by talking to a friend. Or sharing one of our social medias, or leaving a comment. All of this stuff not only gives me something to do and read and feel better about myself, but also it really does help get the show out there and help people discover the show. Which is really, really great. So, thank you.

**Jesse Thorn:** *Judge John Hodgman* was created by Jesse Thorn and John Hodgman. This episode, engineered by Max Fabian at Tightrope Recording in Chicago, Illinois. Thank you to Max.

**John Hodgman:** Chicago, Illinois!

**Jesse Thorn:** What a cheerful man Max is. Made us feel special.

*(John agrees.)*

Our social media manager is Nattie Lopez. The podcast is edited by AJ McKeon. Our ever-capable producer is Jennifer Marmor. Our video editor is Daniel Speer.

Now, let's get to Swift Justice, where we answer small disputes with quick judgment. *(Stammering.)* SockQuirky70—7056.

**John Hodgman:** Well, let's get their last name right. 7056.

**Jesse Thorn:** “My sister pronounces the word ‘narrator’ with four syllables, like ‘nare-ruh-ray-tor’.”

**John Hodgman:** Nare-ruh-ray-tor?

**Jesse Thorn:** “She insists that this is how it must be pronounced. Please help.”

**John Hodgman:** Well, I don't know the name of your sister, SockQuirky7056. Maybe it's Donna7056 or Theresa7056.

**Jesse Thorn:** Sure. Sally7056.

**John Hodgman:** Sally7056. All my love goes out to the entire 7056 family, but your sister's wrong. It's nare-ray-tor. It has three—now I'm saying it weird, nare-ray-tor. Narra-ter. Narrator. That's what I say, nare-rator.

**Jesse Thorn:** I say nare-rator, too.

**John Hodgman:** I would never say nar-rar-rar-tor. Sorry about that, sis. Speaking of words—

**Jesse Thorn:** Oh, great transition.

**John Hodgman:** I want to hear some more disputes about language. We haven't done one of those in a while. Does your loved one use a word or a phrase that you cannot stand? Does a sibling use a word?

You know what phrase I hate?

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

**John Hodgman:** "Use your words."

**Jesse Thorn:** Oh yeah.

**John Hodgman:** You know, that pops up a lot online.

**Jesse Thorn:** You know what I can't stand? When like school administrators or like childcare people call children kiddos. The kiddos.

*(John agrees.)*

Oh, I can't bear that.

**John Hodgman:** Here, you want to hear something I can't stand?

**Jesse Thorn:** What?

**John Hodgman:** I'm gonna set the internet on fire right now.

**Jesse Thorn:** Okay.

**John Hodgman:** There are a lot of people who like this word, a lot of people who don't. You give something to someone. You don't gift them something. A present—I received this present. It was not gifted to me by whatever.

[01:00:00]

It's awkward, and it's wrong.

If you have a dispute with me or with someone else about that phrase or any other, obviously send it in. [MaximumFun.org/jjho](http://MaximumFun.org/jjho). I will say it again. [MaximumFun.org/jjho](http://MaximumFun.org/jjho). I think we also need some disputes in New England. Right, Jesse?

**Jesse Thorn:** Indeed! We are headed on the road court tour to, of course—

**John Hodgman:** Burlington, Vermont.

**Jesse Thorn:** Burlington, Vermont. Western Massachusetts. We're headed to—we are headed to Brookline, Massachusetts.

**John Hodgman:** My hometown!

**Jesse Thorn:** And we need—and to Portland, Maine, as well.

**John Hodgman:** Portland, Maine!

**Jesse Thorn:** We need your disputes in all of those places or wherever you are in the world. Go to [MaximumFun.org/jjho](https://MaximumFun.org/jjho). And if you're in the Northeast, make sure to let us know if you are within driving distance of one of those places, because we might need to feature you on stage in the *Judge John Hodgman* Road Court Tour.

**John Hodgman:** We might just need to feature you. And I'll say again—I've mentioned this before—big hometown show in Brookline, Massachusetts, at the Coolidge Corner Theater, where I worked as a teenager. One of my favorite places in the world! And yet it is sold out. There's no way to get in. No way at all. Unless! You have a dispute that we choose to feature on stage. Then you're going to—not only do you get into the show, you get VIP treatment.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, absolutely.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, you're past the velvet rope. Wherever you are, whatever your dispute, it's what makes the show go. [MaximumFun.org/jjho](https://MaximumFun.org/jjho) to submit those disputes. And of course, I have to say [MaximumFun.org/events](https://MaximumFun.org/events) again, to get those tickets for the last shows of the year in Vermont, Massachusetts, and Maine.

**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!