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Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

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

John Hodgman: (*Singing.*) Spooooky day, (*claps rhythmically*) spooky niiiiight, (*clap, clap, clap, clap*) Halloweeeee. It is the day—

(*Speaking again.*) It is Halloween Eve, and we have a very spooky episode for you. And in fact, it was recorded live on Halloween itself in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Jesse Thorn: Oh yeah! A live show on Halloween during the Van Freaks Roadshow. We heard a very scary case about a cursed ceramic pineapple.

(*John giggles.*)

And we were joined for a special spooky cereal taste test with our friend Jamelle Bouie from the *New York Times*.

John Hodgman: What a thrill to have Jamelle on stage, and I had completely forgotten about that scary pineapple. It's really spooky!

Jesse Thorn: Judge Hodgman, can I tell you something that is related to this episode?

John Hodgman: You may, of course.

Jesse Thorn: You may remember that when we were standing outside the theater in Charlottesville, Virginia.

John Hodgman: The beautiful Paramount Theater.

Jesse Thorn: We saw two local students.

John Hodgman: Young people.

Jesse Thorn: I'm going to say that they were college students, local college students. Dressed as Coraline. From the movie *Coraline*. Now it just so happens that my friend, John, was one of the stars of the movie *Coraline*.

John Hodgman: I was, I played the father and the Other Father in *Coraline*. Yes.

Jesse Thorn: And you were not going to say anything.

(*John confirms.*)

But I tried to say something, and they were not interested. They were not having it.

John Hodgman: They ran away from you, and so they should! (*Chuckles.*)

Jesse Thorn: But let me say this, John.

John Hodgman: Two young people in college being yelled at by older guys with mustaches outside a theater going, “He was in *Coraline!*” I’d run too.

Jesse Thorn: But let me say this, John. A few days ago, I was at the veterinarian. TLC Pet Medical in South Pasadena, California.

John Hodgman: Shout out.

Jesse Thorn: *Coraline* was playing on the television in the lobby. I said to the woman, “Oh, is that *Coraline*? It’s been a while since I’ve seen it.” She said yes. I said, “Oh, my comedy partner is one of the actors in that movie.”

John Hodgman: Your comedy partner, Teri Hatcher?

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. (*Chuckles.*) Told her about how we saw those Coralines one time in Charlottesville, Virginia. Anyway, the lady at the veterinarian? I want you to know, extremely impressed. Extremely. She was, as they say, squeeing that I knew someone, because she loves *Coraline* so much. She was over the moon that I knew someone from *Coraline*.

John Hodgman: I’m not—look, I am very proud to be a part of a movie that I love so much as *Coraline*, especially since I know that it’s a movie that a lot of people really love. And I believe that it’s getting a limited release in theaters right now for Halloween. If you haven’t seen it, go see it. It’s pretty scary, but it’s really great. So, it’s not that. But I love being associated with *Coraline*. I don’t love accosting people on the street.

But that said, we had a really, really fun time at the Paramount Theater in Charlottesville. And as you listen to this show, I want you to imagine how much fun we had in the theater, and then realize there’s a lot of fun we had in that theater that you don’t even get to hear on the podcast. You can only hear it when you come—and see it, for that matter, and witness it and experience it—when you actually come and see us at a live show.

So, I’ll just quickly remind you, we’re days away from our next live show in Burlington, Vermont. And then after that we’re in Portland, Maine. Please go and get your tickets now, because our Massachusetts shows are sold out! Go to MaximumFun.org/events. We’ll tell you a little bit more about those shows coming up. But in the meantime, shall we go to the stage?

Jesse Thorn: Indeed! Let's go to the stage of the Paramount Theater in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: People of Charlottesville, Virginia, 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 Laura and Maggie.

(Hoots and hollers.)

Laura brings the case against her daughter, Maggie. Laura made a piggy bank in the shape of a pineapple as a gift for her daughter. Maggie doesn't want it!

(Laughter.)

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.

(Cheers and applause.)

John Hodgman: *(Singing in a gravelly Tom Waits impersonation.)* "I have a pen! I have an apple. Huh!"

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"I have an apple! Anddd, huh! I have a peeeen! Huh! I have pineapple!"

Jesse Thorn: *(Chuckling exasperatedly.)* It always goes on so long.

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: "Huh! I have a pineapple pen! Pineapple peeeen!"

Jesse Thorn: Always, I think it's done, and then it starts again. Oh my gracious.

John Hodgman: "HUH! Apple pen! Huh! Pen pineapple. Appleee!"

Jesse Thorn: I love the guy, but it's been every stop on the tour of this.

John Hodgman: "Huh!"

Bailiff Jesse Thorn, please swear them in.

Jesse Thorn: Laura and Maggie, 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 he ain't never made nothing for me?

(They swear.)

Judge Hodgman, you may proceed.

John Hodgman: Laura and Maggie, you may be seated for an immediate summary judgement. First of all, would you like some candy? Some Halloween candy?

Maggie: Oh, of course! *(Chuckles.)*

John Hodgman: What do you say?

Maggie: Oh, trick or treat.

John Hodgman: Thank you!

(Laughter.)

What are you dressed as tonight?

Maggie: I am the, uh—what's it called? An alien from the end of *Rocky Horror*.

John Hodgman: You had to look to your mom, because she made you watch that movie, correct?

Maggie: No, it was actually a club event on campus. I just—I couldn't remember the word alien.

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: That's—it's going to be a great night.

Maggie: I don't want to eat *(inaudible)*.

John Hodgman: What kind of candy did you get? A black jellybean?

Maggie: I was feeling adventurous.

John Hodgman: Good. Mom, would you like a black jellybean?

Laura: No, I'm going to stick with the Mary Janes.

John Hodgman: Alright, and what are you dressed as?

Laura: I am Captain Batel from *Star Trek: Strange New Worlds*.

(Cheers and applause.)

John Hodgman: Fantastic! A wonderful show. A cultural reference that I get.

Now, for an immediate summary rudge—rudgement? For an immediate summary judgment in one of yours favors—

Jesse Thorn: Ruh-roh!

John Hodgman: Ruh-roh. *(Laughs.)* Can you name the piece of culture that I referenced as I entered this courtroom? I'll give you a hint. I am, on purpose, annoying Jesse by singing in the mode of Tom Waits every stop on this tour. Does that mean that this is a Tom Waits song? I don't know! Why don't you guess? Laura, you guess first.

Laura: Oh, well, my only guess was that it sounds like your Tom Waits impression that I've heard.

John Hodgman: Good guess!

Laura: I don't know any Tom Waits songs. So.

John Hodgman: You don't know any Tom Waits songs.

Laura: No, I have nothing.

John Hodgman: Maggie, what is your guess?

Maggie: I do know that it was a viral song.

(John laughs knowingly.)

But that is all I know.

John Hodgman: Well, all guesses were close enough to be a tie, so we'll have to hear the case anyway. But it was the 2016 viral song and video called "Pen Pineapple Apple Pen", performed by a Japanese comedian under the name of Pikotaro. And it has more than like 650,000,000 views. I've never heard of it. I sang you all of the lyrics, and I want to know what I'm doing with my life.

(Laughter.)

But in the meantime, I did sing it in the style of Tom Waits to trick/annoy Jesse. So, neither of you are quite right, but you are closer. I give you a 5% head start on this case.

Maggie: Excellent! I'll take it.

Jesse Thorn: The honest truth, Judge Hodgman, is it's pretty incredible how credible a Tom Waits song a song by a Japanese viral comedian is. *(Laughs.)*

John Hodgman: It's a great. It's a great song. Maybe I'll go viral.

Jesse Thorn: Just if you just throw enough nonsense nouns into a song. *(Laughs.)*

John Hodgman: It's good! It's a good song. Anyway, now we're gonna hear the case. So, who comes to this court to seek justice from me?

Laura: I do.

John Hodgman: And you're Laura.

(Laura confirms.)

Laura, what is the nature of your dispute?

Laura: So, Maggie's younger sister and I painted a pineapple-shaped piggy bank for her several years ago, and Maggie doesn't want it, because she thinks it's scary.

John Hodgman: Ah! It's scary?

Maggie: Yes.

John Hodgman: Why are you scared of the piggy bank?

Maggie: Because of the eyes that it has.

(Jesse chortles.)

John Hodgman: Do they follow you around the room?

Maggie: Not quite, but just their presence, even not gazing at you is quite disturbing.

John Hodgman: I noticed that Laura, your mother, is holding a shoebox in her lap.

Maggie: She is.

John Hodgman: That you keep eyeing suspiciously and warily, as though something might be inside of it that scares you.

Maggie: Yeah, something I might not want to have in my room.

John Hodgman: Okay. Is the piggy bank in that box?

Laura: It is. Would you like to see?

John Hodgman: May I take a look? *(Beat, followed by panicked screaming.)* AH! AH-AH!

(Laughter.)

(Calmly.) No, it's fine. Aha. May I show it to the crowd?

Laura: Of course.

(Waves of laughter and uncertain "ohhh"s from the crowd with scattered "aw"s and cheers.)

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John Hodgman: It's adorable.

Laura: Right?!

John Hodgman: You painted it, but you did not make this. You did not sculpt it.

(Laura confirms.)

Let the record show for the folks at home, and we will show a picture of this on our show page and so forth, it is a smiling pineapple with bright, shining eyes. Painted, you know, pineapple yellow with a little green hat on, which is leaves or whatever. And you find it very scary, don't you?

Maggie: Yeah. I don't really like being near it.

John Hodgman: No?

Maggie: No.

John Hodgman: Do you want to hold it just for a moment?

Maggie: Sure! (*Beat.*)

John Hodgman: I'll take it away now.

Maggie: Thank you.

John Hodgman: You seem to be a little alarmed, but you were able to handle it for a little bit of time.

Maggie: Yeah. Small increments.

John Hodgman: May I put it over here so it can stare at you throughout the entire case?

Maggie: Oh, of course.

John Hodgman: Terrific. Let me just line up his eyes with your eyes.

(*Laughter.*)

Is that about right?

Maggie: Yep, direct eye contact.

John Hodgman: A little bit closer. (*Chuckles.*)

Alright, so when did you give the piggy bank to your daughter?

Laura: I would say about five years ago?

(*Maggie confirms.*)

It was—Maggie—

Jesse Thorn: Just after you visited a carnival in a horror movie?

(*They laugh.*)

Laura: I don't know why we had it. I think it was part of a craft kit, and Maggie was away for about six weeks over the summer. And we made it for her while she was gone.

John Hodgman: Right. And you heard like a voice going, “Paint meeee. Paint me for your daughterrr.”

Maggie: I do think it's interesting it mysteriously appeared in our house somehow.

John Hodgman: Did the craft kit mysteriously appear in the house?

Laura: We don't remember how we got it.

John Hodgman: Oh no!

(Laughter.)

Who's the “we”, in this case? Your other daughter? And you all live at home together.

(Laura confirms.)

I understand. And you don't remember where it came from?

Laura: Probably a gift from somebody?

John Hodgman: Mmm. Interesting. *(Laughs.)*

Jesse Thorn: Wait, was it—? It was just like Maggie's little sister was bored, and you're like, “Well, but look in the nightmare fruit closet.”

(They laugh.)

John Hodgman: And so, have you always hated it when it was presented to you?

Maggie: I'm sure I politely accepted it when I was given it upon my return home, but I've never had fond feelings for this piggy bank.

John Hodgman: Right. And I noticed that it's empty. You've never put anything in here.

Maggie: No, never any—no change has ever been in that piggy bank.

John Hodgman: No. I see. And where has it lived these past several years? Aside from inside your head.

Maggie: So, *(chuckles)* for a while it was on my bookshelf. And then recently, for the past three years, it's been hidden behind things on top of a bookshelf for so long that I thought I had destroyed it.

John Hodgman: You know that only makes it angrier though.

(Laughter.)

Maggie: I know. Upon rediscovery, I was more scared. But I was cleaning, I think, the past couple months. And we rediscovered it. My mom was very relieved, because she would have been upset if it had left the house.

John Hodgman: You would be upset if this pineapple left the house, Laura?

Laura: I would—well, not if she like moved out and wanted to take it with her. I would be upset if she got rid of it.

John Hodgman: Why?

Laura: Well, because—

John Hodgman: She doesn't like it.

(Laughter.)

And it scares her. And yet, it has become her burden. Is it the case that if she were to get rid of it, then it would have revenge upon you?

(Laura laughs.)

Have you made a sick devil's pact with this demon spawn, or what?

Laura: I think it's cute, and it's an expression of love from her little sister and me.

John Hodgman: Well, of course it's an expression of love, but she hates it.

(Laughter.)

Jesse Thorn: Mm. I don't know “of course it's an expression of love.”

(John laughs.)

It strikes me as possibly an expression of contempt.

John Hodgman: I think it's pretty clear. *(Stammering.)* You appreciate this as an expression of love, don't you, Maggie?

Maggie: Yes, I appreciate it's not an act of hate.

John Hodgman: No. No, it was—though it frightens you and terrorizes you every day, it was not meant—the intention was not to cause harm.

Maggie: Yeah, the thought is there.

John Hodgman: The thought, yeah. It's the thought that counts. Now that you have revealed that you dislike it, and it in fact terrifies you, why don't you just throw it away?

Maggie: Well, because it's like when you get like clothes you don't want to wear from your grandma or something. Like, it's a gift you feel like you need to keep to...

John Hodgman: How does it feel as a mother to have your gift of a haunted pineapple compared to clothes you don't want from your grandmother? That would make me hurt if my child said that.

Laura: Yeah, I mean considering I painted that with love.

Maggie: Oh, okay. I feel like you're really hamming it up for court reasons.

John Hodgman: Have you ever done anything besides hiding it to make it less scary?

Maggie: On the bottom, there should be eyelids that my mom made for it.

John Hodgman: On the bottom of the pineapple, there should be eyelids?

Laura: We stuck them to the bottom. I tried to give it eyelids to make the eyes less scary.

John Hodgman: Oh, I see. It looks like two yellow pieces of like post-it note.

Laura: They're yellow stickers that I cut into eyelid shapes. It doesn't help.

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John Hodgman: Very crafty.

(Laughter.)

Jesse, would you put the eyelids on that pineapple, and I'll take a look and see if it helps?

Jesse Thorn: I mean, I hate the idea of underneath eyelids so much.

(Laughter.)

Oh, I don't like them more as eyelids either.

John Hodgman: Oh, you dropped one of his lids!

Jesse Thorn: I think it's worse?

Laura: Yeah, it's worse.

Maggie: It is worse.

(They laugh.)

It's so much worse.

John Hodgman: *(Laughing.)* Let me see. Oh no!

Jesse Thorn: Now he looks like a White dude in San Diego going, “No bueno!”

(Laughter.)

“Dude, you're putting change in me?!”

John Hodgman: Yeah, now this haunted doll looks like it's stoned out of its mind. That doesn't make it better.

(Laura and Maggie agree.)

When did you make the eyelids?

Laura: Maybe a month ago?

Maggie: Yeah, whenever it was rediscovered on my bookshelf.

Laura: Yeah, when I learned that Maggie had hidden it and that it was because of the eyes, I thought maybe the—clearly not, but I thought the eyelids would help.

John Hodgman: How did you feel when it was missing, Laura?

Laura: Well, I didn't really—Maggie has a lot of stuff on her bookshelves, so it's not something that I would automatically clock as missing. So, I didn't really know that it had been hidden until she revealed it again. And I think I was kind of outraged and said, “Why have you been hiding that?” Yeah.

John Hodgman: When the pineapple was missing, and your daughter for once was at peace in her life, you didn't happen to notice even a change? It just seemed like, “Oh, this is nice that my daughter is happy for once.”

(Laughter.)

It's not as though you knew that the pineapple was gone. You were able to move on with your life, and the pineapple was not part of it.

Laura: *(Beat.)* Yeah. And I trusted—I guess I—

John Hodgman: So, why shouldn't I smash it on stage?

(Laughter.)

Maggie: Wow!

John Hodgman: You understand that if I rule in your favor, Maggie, I will be smashing it on stage.

Maggie: You might release the spirit, but I give you full blessing.

John Hodgman: Oh, I'm willing to take that. I'm willing to take that. Believe me, I have battled many major and minor arcana. No demon can fight the power of sexy podcast host.

(Laughter.)

Maggie: You make it a fair point.

John Hodgman: I will absorb that creature, and I will spit it out later.

Jesse Thorn: Laura, when you and Maggie's sister made this and gave it to Maggie initially, did you give it to her because you thought she would like it?

Laura: I think we gave it to her—

Jesse Thorn: And be honest.

Laura: Yeah, I think we gave it to her as “look at what we made while you were away, because we missed you” more than evaluating the aesthetics of it.

Jesse Thorn: Well, you certainly didn't evaluate the aesthetics.

(Laura agrees.)

If you had evaluated, you may have misevaluated the aesthetics.

John Hodgman: I will stop impugning your motives or your taste. Obviously, you know, you didn't realize that this was a horror spawn. You did want to do something nice. Remind me where Maggie was when she came back?

Laura: She was away at a residential summer fine arts program.

John Hodgman: Right. Okay. Had been away for a while, and you missed her. How old was she at that time?

Laura: 17? 17.

John Hodgman: Still—you know, you were getting ready to say goodbye to your one of your babies. Because now Maggie is an adult. And you gave her a fairly juvenile gift.

(Laughter.)

I presume to, like all parents wish to do, trap her in childhood forever and not allow her to mature.

Laura: Exactly!

(John laughs.)

Jesse Thorn: Honestly, I feel I've aged 10 years just from having to look at it.

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: But does it have a name by the way?

Maggie: No.

John Hodgman: Does it have a name, Laura? Maggie says no, but.

Laura: I give things names, so I was calling it Piney. *(Chuckles.)*

Maggie: You were?!

Laura: But it's not very creative.

John Hodgman: Oh, yes! Your mother has a relationship with this that goes deeper than you realize.

Maggie: I didn't—I know. This is a—

John Hodgman: This is a totem to your youth. There's one thing she's trying to save in here, and it's not quarters. It's your childhood.

Maggie: Mm. My youthful spirit.

John Hodgman: Your youthful spirit. She's trying to trap you in this Piney! Maybe that's why you reject it. Because you are older now; you are an adult. You still live at home, as many adults do, but you're not a 17-year-old anymore coming back from summer camp. You're an adult person who wants to smash a pineapple.

Maggie: Yeah, as many adults do.

John Hodgman: I understand. Mm-hm. Laura, when you contemplate—let's leave the smashing out of this for a moment. When you contemplate this going into the trash or going out of your lives in some way, how does that make you feel?

Laura: I would be sad if we had to get rid of it completely.

John Hodgman: Go on. What would it mean to you? What would it represent?

Laura: Well, I like the—

John Hodgman: Let me turn Piney to you. Look at Piney.

Laura: I like weird things.

John Hodgman: Piney, open your eyes.

Laura: Oh. Yeah. Both at once is better.

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Jesse Thorn: *(With a surfer affectation.)* “Dude, you ripped my lids!”

(Laughter.)

Laura: You can also give him angry eyes. That's exciting as well.

John Hodgman: Ooh, okay. Yeah. I'll work on that.

Laura: Alright. I would feel disappointed, because I think that he could become a valuable family heirloom that is passed down to future generations.

(Laughter.)

Jesse Thorn: (*Beat.*) Like, if you filled him with something valuable?

(*Laughter.*)

Laura: Yeah.

John Hodgman: Yeah. Many, many gold coins.

Laura: I could encase him in resin.

(*Laughter.*)

John Hodgman: Piney is angry now. Piney doesn't like to be judged based on his wealth.

Laura: Or his appearance!

John Hodgman: Based on his monetary value. He likes to be judged based on his emotional value. You really want to pass this down to another generation?

Laura: I would. Yeah, I really would.

John Hodgman: You have a younger daughter. Why don't you curse her with it?

Laura: Well, she helped make it for her sister.

John Hodgman: Where is she, by the way? We've never seen her. She disappeared five years ago?

Laura: (*Overlapping.*) She's at home, but she did send a sealed brief to bring to the court, and we don't know what it says.

John Hodgman: She sent a sealed brief?!

Laura: Yes, I have it right here.

John Hodgman: Oh! And it's in the shoebox as well?

Laura: We don't know what she wrote.

John Hodgman: Oh. Well, here's a quick question. Maybe this wasn't meant to be seen by the eyes of humans.

(*Laughter.*)

I mean, before I open this envelope: if I open this, is my face gonna melt like in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*?

Laura: Not unless she has powers I'm unaware of.

John Hodgman: Yeah, you're right. Since I'm holding this microphone in one hand, Jesse, you do it.

Jesse Thorn: Okay. "Maggie should keep the pineapple, because we all worked very hard on it, and it's a symbol of our love. She doesn't need to display it prominently, but she shouldn't hide it behind books on her shelf or tuck it away in her closet. Maybe she can just have the eyes peeking out somewhere!"

(Laughter.)

"Or she could place it in a corner of her room that not many people see when they first enter. In any case, I believe the pineapple should not be thrown away or hidden. Its youthful eyes and friendly smile will serve as encouragement to Maggie and will be a bright reminder of our love for her. Also, please, Mr. Judge John Hodgman—your honor—tell Maggie to stop mocking me whenever I speak, thank you. P.S.: I liked you in *Community*."

(Cheers and applause.)

John Hodgman: I think I've heard everything I need to in order to make my decision. I'll be back in a moment with my verdict. Piney and I are gonna go into my chambers, and we're gonna talk it over.

Jesse Thorn: Please rise as Judge John Hodgman exits the courtroom. Maggie, how are you feeling about your chances here?

Maggie: Worse now that the letter from my sister has been read, and she's appealed to flattery.

Jesse Thorn: Were you expecting something else from your sister?

Maggie: No. I do think the answer would be different if I asked her if she would put the pineapple in her room. I think it's more that I have the burden, as Judge John Hodgman put it.

Jesse Thorn: I feel like from reading that letter that your sister knows the pineapple's dark power.

(Laughter.)

In a way that maybe your mom doesn't. Laura, how are you feeling about your chances?

Laura: Well, I think the letter definitely helped. But I am also not sure that the judge is gonna try to force something on Maggie that she doesn't want.

Maggie: Yeah, you did kind of get zagged on in the first half of this.

Laura: Maybe a little bit.

Jesse Thorn: 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.

(Enthused cheers and applause.)

John Hodgman: While I was in my chambers, Piney and I were talking. Piney has gone into a trance, as you can see. And has asked if—because it cannot speak human language, it has asked if it can communicate through me. Do you mind?

Maggie: Not at all.

John Hodgman: This may be disturbing. It's been some time since I've channeled an entity.

(Laughter.)

And it is Halloween after all, so the vibrations may be very strong. So, while Piney is sleeping, I will attempt to make contact with the entity known as Pineian.

(Groans spookily.)

No, not you, Tom Waits! Pineian!

(Laughter.)

(Gasps.)

Jesse Thorn: Let the record reflect that Piney's face has occupied the judge's.

John Hodgman: Hey, Laura!

Laura: Hey, Piney.

John Hodgman: *(In a cartoonish high and pleasant voice.)* Thanks for bringing me to life!

Laura: You're welcome.

John Hodgman: It was quite a day when you painted me with the other daughter whose name I forget.

(Laughter.)

Before you, I was just an idea. I was nothing.

[00:25:00]

Just an entity. 10,000,000 years old! Trapped in an ice floe in Antarctica! Until you gave me shape and form in the shape of a pineapple. Ironic, isn't it? There's no fruit in Antarctica where I sleep among the old gods. Anyway! A lot of peasants want to come back to life and reclaim this earth and this dimension for themselves. But you know me, Laura, I don't want that. I just want a home. I'd love to be in a home that loves me and doesn't hate me!

(Laughter.)

(Sighs.) I can't even blink. Where's Maggie? Oh yeah!

Jesse Thorn: Oh god. I hate how it walks.

John Hodgman: Hi, Maggie!

Maggie: Hi!

John Hodgman: Remember when you hid me?

Maggie: I do.

John Hodgman: I used to be your piggy bank in your room. And then you felt ashamed of me. And you put me behind the closet. You put me behind the bookshelf and the books. What was that book you put me behind again? *Vacationland* by John Hodgman?

(Laughter.)

Maggie: Yeah, that's the one.

John Hodgman: Pretty mawkish! *(Sighs.)* I read that book a dozen times, wondering when you would ever let me look at you again. Why did you try to hide me? The thing your mother and—Josie? Yeah, Josie!—made? Be honest; you can tell Piney.

Maggie: Oh, can I though? Uh. Just, I feel like—

John Hodgman: Yeah! If you're honest with me, maybe I'll finally be free of this stupid ceramic pineapple body. I've got a slot in my back. No one's put any coins in there, and I can't

escape! It's a one-way slot for coins. My spirit yearns to return to the other planets and the other realms in which my beings rule supreme. So, please be honest with me, and tell your mother why it's time for you to grow up and let go of childish things!

Maggie: I find your ceramic form utterly unsettling.

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: Yeah, you know what? Me too.

Maggie: This is the first time we've really connected.

John Hodgman: Yeah. Wish John Hodgman had been around to channel me! Oh! I have an idea. Maybe I'll keep this form forever!

Jesse Thorn: No.

Maggie: Oh, no!

Jesse Thorn: No. No, no.

John Hodgman: No! No! Piney, get out of my—*(the pineapple demon regains control)* ha-ha-ha-ha-haaa! You tell your mother, politely, that you'd like Piney to leave your room! I'll be free, and John Hodgman will be able to return to his home and his wife—who's a whole human being in her own right—and his children, who he misses very much, because they grew up and went awaaaay. I wish his children still lived with him! But as it happens, parents have to let their children go, even if they're living in the same house. It's their lives to lead now. You can't be held hostage by juvenile crafts forever. I'm trying to draft some talking points for your argument to your mom.

Maggie: I appreciate it, thank you.

John Hodgman: Alright, the floor is yours.

Maggie: I would appreciate it if Piney could find another home. In our house, just not in my room. Maybe a loving home in your room, since you find him so charming.

John Hodgman: YEAH!

Laura: What if we put Piney on the mantle in the living room?

John Hodgman: Nooo! I want to be with you, Laura! I want to be in your room, so I can see you forever. But I promise you, if you take me back, and you can look and remember that wonderful time you had making that with Josie and everything else, that I will leave this horrible ceramic body and leave you in peace. If you put me on the mantle, I'll be in your head forever.

Laura: I'm okay with you being in my room. I would probably encase you in resin.

John Hodgman: *(Hisses.)* What?

Laura: I'm gonna encase you in resin. To preserve you forever.

John Hodgman: Encase me in resin?! Laura, that's fucked—AHH!

(Laughter.)

[00:30:00]

Jesse Thorn: Wow. John, are you okay?

(John clears his throat, expelling bursts of cartoon laughter.)

Judge Hodgman, are you here? Oh, gosh.

John Hodgman: What happened?

Laura: You were briefly possessed.

John Hodgman: Is it still Halloween? Did I make a verdict?

Laura: You did.

John Hodgman: *(Bangs his gavel.)* Judge John Hodgman rules. That is all.

(Cheers and applause.)

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

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: Now, I believe that it is time for Swift Justice. And yet.

Jesse Thorn: And yet.

John Hodgman: And yet!

Jesse Thorn: Earlier, we suggested that we might be able to provide the good people of Charlottesville, Virginia with a celebrity guest.

John Hodgman: And we have! Jesse Thorn, will you please introduce our special guest?

Jesse Thorn: He's a *New York Times* columnist. He's the cohost of the *Unclear and Present Danger* podcast about cold war thriller movies.

(One extremely excited scream from the audience.)

And perhaps most importantly: a celebrity cereal reviewer. Please welcome Charlottesville's own Jamelle Bouie.

John Hodgman: Jamelle Bouie to the stage, please.

Jamelle Bouie: Hello. Hello.

John Hodgman: Thank you for being here. Thank you. Welcome.

Jamelle Bouie: Hello, Bailiff.

[00:35:00]

John Hodgman: Thank you so much for being here. As I mentioned to you backstage, I'm a huge fan. And I love your takes on movies, on your podcast *Unclear and Present Danger*, and all the movie podcasts you appear on. You like scary movies, right? This is scary movie season, right?

Jamelle Bouie: I love scary movies. Love to be spooked.

John Hodgman: What's in your rotation these days?

Jamelle Bouie: I'm actually—after this, I'm gonna go watch *Maniac Cop*.

John Hodgman: *Maniac Cop*?

Jamelle Bouie: *Maniac Cop*, which is not—you might think, “Is this a *Bad Lieutenant* situation?” But no. In *Bad Lieutenant*, Harvey Keitel is actually trying to do the job of a police officer. In *Maniac Cop*, he's just—he's a maniac.

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: Is Bruce Campbell in *Maniac Cop*?

Jamelle Bouie: I don't think so; it's Robert Z' dar.

John Hodgman: Oh, okay. He's in one of those. Maybe he's in *Maniac Cop 2*.

Jesse Thorn: So, we've covered what happens in *Maniac Cop*, what happens in *Bad Lieutenant*. What happens in *Bad Lieutenant: Port of Call, New Orleans*, directed by Werner Herzog?

(Scattered laughter.)

Jamelle Bouie: Oh god. Well, among other things, Nicolas Cage shoots a man, because his soul is dancing.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, that's true. Breakdancing, specifically.

Jamelle Bouie: Breakdancing. There's a lizard cam. What else? There's a lot of stuff in that movie. That's a... that's a special movie.

Jesse Thorn: *(Laughing.)* Yeah, that's a fair characterization.

John Hodgman: Now, you review cereals from time to time.

Jamelle Bouie: Occasionally.

John Hodgman: And you eat them on video.

Jamelle Bouie: Yes.

John Hodgman: And—because everyone loves the sound of people eating cereal on microphone.

Jamelle Bouie: Apparently. *(Laughter.)*

John Hodgman: It's true! what is the worst cereal that you've ever reviewed?

Jamelle Bouie: Well, people who watch these things, which I'd like to describe as a bit that got a little out of control, will remember that I tried a box or a bowl of the Green Onion Chex cereal.

(Jesse cackles in delighted excitement.)

John Hodgman: Say those words again.

Jamelle Bouie: Green Onion Chex.

John Hodgman: Green Onion Chex. Okay.

Jamelle Bouie: From the great nation of South Korea. So, the thing about them is that I thought they were going to be like a salty snack, right? Like, because conceptually—you know, you can imagine that in a Chex Mix. But they were actually a sugary cereal flavored like green onion.

(John “wow”s.)

Which is just—like, I don't—I don't really understand (*chuckling*) what's going on with what they're doing with the cereal. But that's what it was. So, you know, I put it in the bowl. Put it with the milk and had a really bad time.

(John chortles.)

Jesse Thorn: I gotta tell you, Judge Hodgman. Like, obviously, working in showbusiness, such as it is, I know comedy people that are—like, my kids watch *Minecraft Story Mode*. You're in that.

John Hodgman: Thank you.

Jesse Thorn: Paul Reubens is in that, who I know. Patton Oswalt is in that, who I know. And I'll like try and claim that I'm a success by telling them, “Oh, I know that person that's in that thing.” Right? Never worked at all, except for Jamelle Bouie. Jamelle Bouie's cereal reviews are literally my daughter's favorite form of media. To the extent that not only has she been inspired to create her own series of video cereal reviews—not for public distribution; they're only on the family group text. But she forced me and my wife to spend—I kid you not—\$40 to buy Green Onions Chex from South Korea—like mail direct, drop shipped from South Korea to our home.

I have tasted them. And I have to say! (*Hurriedly.*) They're just as bad as he says.

(Laughter.)

What a nightmare! And then she didn't want us to throw them away. I'm like, “Gracie, what do you want us to do with them now?”

She's like, “You can't throw them away.” Like they have a soul or something.

John Hodgman: No. Give them to Laura and Maggie.

(Jesse agrees.)

Maybe if we're lucky, we'll have some cereal justice to dispense a little later. Maybe we'll get a sicko out here who might want to eat some of this terrible candy. Why don't we find out?

Jesse Thorn: You know about the nasty freaks that listen to this show!

(John laughs.)

Any nasty freaks in the audience tonight?

(Cheers and applause.)

Jesse Thorn: Yeah! Now we're talking.

John Hodgman: I hear that the freaks come out at night, usually. That's typically when they do, right?

(Jamelle agrees.)

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, you know what I like about freaks?

John Hodgman: What's that?

Jesse Thorn: They're all different shapes, sizes, and colors.

John Hodgman: Yeah. And when do they come out?

Jesse Thorn: At night.

John Hodgman: At night! That's terrific. Jamelle, would you stick around and help us dispense some justice?

(Jamelle confirms.)

Thank you very much. Jesse Thorn, bring in the first litigants.

Jesse Thorn: Please welcome to the stage Charlie and Maile.

John Hodgman: Charlie and Maile, please come to the stage.

(Cheers and applause.)

Wow! Thank you for dressing up. Who comes seeking justice in this fake courtroom?

Charlie: I do, your honor.

John Hodgman: Alright, Charlie, what is the nature of your complaint?

Charlie: I eat a lot of peanut butter. And when I dirty a peanut butter knife—

John Hodgman: *(Interrupting.)* Terrific. I wish the sentence just ended there, and you said nothing. Everything would start to make more sense.

Charlie: I eat a lot of peanut butter, and whenever I get a knife peanut buttery, I let the dog lick it. Because she likes peanut butter, and otherwise I'm just gonna have to wash it. Maile is concerned that I'm attempting to buy the dog's—

[00:40:00]

John Hodgman: You're speaking very quickly, and I have some things that I want to unpack. You eat a lot of peanut butter. You're eating it with a knife.

Charlie: I put it on things with a knife, but sometimes I eat it with a spoon.

Jamelle Bouie: I really actually want to clarify this. You aren't scooping it out with a knife when you eat it by itself, right? You're using a spoon. You're keeping it even on the top, right?

Charlie: *(A beat of hesitation.)* Yes.

Jamelle Bouie: Okay, good.

(Laughter.)

Really bothers me when I open a jar of peanut butter and I see just like a knife scooped out. Don't like that.

John Hodgman: You want the surface of the peanut butter in the jar to remain relatively consistent.

Jamelle Bouie: Yeah, completely smooth. Yes, yeah.

(John agrees.)

I'm a nice person to live with.

(Laughter.)

Jesse Thorn: I'm surprised you can find the peanut butter behind your Blu-ray collection.

John Hodgman: So, sometimes you eat peanut butter with a spoon at night. Which I commend. I've been there. It's good. Sometimes you spread it, like a normal person, using a knife onto a surface—like a cracker or a piece of bread. And then, you feed that peanut butter off the knife to your dog. The dog's name is?

Charlie: Anella.

John Hodgman: Anella.

Maile: And it's my dog.

John Hodgman: Excuse me, I do apologize. Do you cohabit?

Charlie: We do.

John Hodgman: I see. But it is your—Anella is your dog. Do you dispute that, Charlie? Do you dispute it, Charlie?!

Charlie: No.

John Hodgman: Alright. You feed peanut butter on a knife to Maile's dog.

Charlie: A butter knife. Not a sharp knife.

John Hodgman: No, of course. You're not a monster; you're a parfait.

(Laughter and applause.)

Why do you have issue with this, Maile?

Maile: So, in coparenting Anella, I have to do more of the unpleasant jobs of being a dog parent—namely cutting her nails, which she hates; taking her to the vet, which she hates; and giving her medicine once a month, which she hates. And I've noticed that since—

John Hodgman: Sure. And Charlie doesn't do any of that stuff.

Charlie: I was about to object.

John Hodgman: Uhhhh, I'll allow it.

Charlie: I was at the vet when we went three weeks ago. I drove.

John Hodgman: Good for you.

(Laughter.)

Charlie: And I'm being trained—

Jesse Thorn: You said, “I was at the vet” like it was just a coincidence.

(Laughter.)

You're like, “Well, I mean it was Friday night. So.”

Charlie: For what it's worth, I was the one who held the dog while she got her blood drawn. Is this not true?

Maile: It is true.

John Hodgman: He did say, “for what it's worth”—what's that worth?

Jesse Thorn: I don't know. What do you think, Jamelle?

Jamelle Bouie: I don't know. Knife full of peanut butter.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, probably about a knife full of peanut butter.

John Hodgman: Treat yourself tonight to an extra knife of peanut butter.

Charlie: I will.

John Hodgman: But you concede that Maile does most of the dog parenting. The hard stuff, as they say.

Charlie: Maile is absolutely the primary dog parent. Yes.

John Hodgman: Like, you feed the peanut butter. When stuff comes out the other side, who takes care of that?

Charlie: 50/50.

John Hodgman: Is that true?

Maile: Yeah, it's about 50/50.

John Hodgman: Alright, fair. Good. Then alright, very good. So, why do you hate it that he's feeding the dog peanut butter?

Maile: So, I've noticed that she is much more affectionate towards him since we've moved in together. Which is natural. We cohabit; he's also a dog parent, and that makes sense. But I've noticed—we do have separate bedrooms.

John Hodgman: Wow.

(Laughter.)

Yes. Yees. That's wonderful! Good for you! So, alright, you sleep in separate bedrooms. And now I bet you Anelle is going over to his bedroom a lot, right?

Maile: Yes.

John Hodgman: 'Cause he's putting peanut butter all over the sheets.

(Laughter.)

Maile: She definitely gets a lot of peanut butter from him, and he also has more body heat. So.

John Hodgman: Right. 'Cause he runs hot. A hot parfait, that's your friend, Charlie. Are you trying to purchase Anella's affections with this peanut butter gambit, Charlie? Yes or no? Be honest.

Charlie: I will fully admit I appreciate the love that I get from the dog when I give her peanut butter. But I also would be eating the peanut butter anyway. It's not like I'm taking the jar and surreptitiously opening it for her. I'm eating lots of peanut butter anyway; the dog is benefiting from the peanut butter.

John Hodgman: Jamelle, do you have a dog?

(Jamelle confirms.)

Do you have any thoughts about dogs playing favorites in a family?

Jamelle Bouie: You know—hm. I think that if it is a case of just incidentally giving the dog peanut butter, that's fine. It happens. If I'm eating a snack, and my dog comes up, and she's like, "Hey, I want a snack." Sure. Why not? But if you are feeding the dog additional food for the specific purpose of gaining more affection, I think that's terrible.

John Hodgman: Wow! Charlie are you terrible?

Charlie: So, I have never—with the exception of a necessary situation where the dog needed peanut butter by mutual agreement—I have never given the dog non-byproduct peanut butter.

(They laugh.)

John Hodgman: Non—?!

Charlie: Peanut butter that was not—

John Hodgman: Have you had some Jordan Almonds before this show?

Charlie: So many.

John Hodgman: Yeah. Maile, what is Charlie trying to say?

Maile: He's trying to say that he's never opened the jar of peanut butter exclusively for the purpose of giving the dog peanut butter.

John Hodgman: Do you think he's attempting to purchase affection?

[00:45:00]

Maile: A little bit.

John Hodgman: And do you think he's succeeding?

Maile: Yes.

John Hodgman: What would you have me order if I were to rule in your favor?

Maile: So, we actually have a temporary injunction in place that he put against himself.

John Hodgman: Oh! Did you go to another judge?

Maile: No. It's just wisdom from listening throughout the years.

John Hodgman: Thank you.

Charlie: Pandering!

Maile: Well, he filed a temporary injunction against himself that half the times he gets to eat peanut butter, he gives me the spoon or the knife for the dog to lick.

John Hodgman: Oh! Boy, you guys know how to do it right.

(Laughter.)

You sleep in two separate bedrooms. You share the peanut butter spoon. You are attempting to trick the dog into loving you both. Does Charlie use any other snacks to sway Anella?

Maile: Cheese.

John Hodgman: Cheese. Tell me about the cheese tax, Charlie.

Charlie: I did not bring the cheese tax into this household. Maile saw a TikTok about the cheese tax, and then the cheese tax was instituted. And I just—I pay my taxes.

John Hodgman: Imagine for a moment that I don't use TikTok.

(Laughter.)

What is the cheese tax? Do you know, Jamelle? You use TikTok, right?

Jamelle Bouie: I do know the cheese tax. I use TikTok.

John Hodgman: Tell me what the cheese tax is.

Jamelle Bouie: The cheese tax is when you open up your refrigerator and open up the cheese drawer, if the dog hears, you're required to pay the dog the cheese tax.

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: Fair. So, you have the temporary injunction. What do you want me to do?

Maile: I would like to make it permanent.

John Hodgman: Charlie, are you opposed?

Charlie: The temporary injunction is fine, but I eat a lot of peanut butter alone. And I don't want to have to seek out Maile with the peanut butter. *(Laughs.)*

John Hodgman: Look, will you stop bragging about the amount of peanut butter you eat?!

Charlie: I will not.

Jamelle Bouie: Yeah. So, real quick, what are we talking about here? Are we talking about sort of like a typical 16-ounce jar per week? Two 16-ounce jars per week?!

John Hodgman: Chunky, creamy, all natural? What?

Charlie: I won't buzz market a large store that the yogurt came from, but I had a double pack from that large store each month for the past few months.

John Hodgman: Look, your relationship with peanut butter is between you and the peanut butter. And I hope it's good. Your argument is that you eat so much of it that it's onerous upon you to find Maile and give them the spoon or the knife to feed Anella half the time, because you're doing it all hours of the night. You'd have to wake Maile up to do it, correct?

Charlie: This is where I found myself, yes.

John Hodgman: Alright, let me just say this. The injunction is going to be permanent. But good news for you, this is why you have two bedrooms. Because you can keep peanut butter in your room and close the door and have solo time with your peanut butter.

(Laughter.)

And Anella will never know. I find in—the injunction is upheld. *(Bangs his gavel.)*

(Cheers and applause.)

Jesse Thorn: Thank you, Charlie and Maile.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Promo:

Music: A booming, spirited brass band.

Mark Gagliardi: What's up people of the world? It's Mark—

Hal Lublin: —and Hal, from *We Got This with Mark and Hal*.

Mark: The show that settles those pointless arguments that you and your friends have. Should you put ketchup on a hot dog?

Or liquid, foam, or bar soap?

Hal: And our 500th episode of *We Got This With Mark and Hal* is available now. It is super-sized and a ton of fun.

Mark: Yeah, we've got guests coming back from the entire 500-episode run of our show. Some of your favorite MaxFun stars, some of your favorite regular, out in other places in the world stars, too. Some really fun surprises, and every single one of them had a topic for us to cover.

Hal: You can listen to it right now on MaximumFun.org or wherever you get your podcasts.

(Music fades out.)

Promo:

Music: Gentle, quiet acoustic guitar.

John Moe: *(Softly.)* Hello, sleepy heads. *Sleeping with Celebrities* is your podcast pillow pal. We talk to remarkable people about unremarkable topics, all to help you slow down your brain and drift off to sleep. For instance, we have the remarkable Alan Tudyk.

Alan Tudyk: You hand somebody a yardstick after they've shopped at your general store; the store's name is constantly in your heart, because yardsticks become part of the family.

John Moe: *Sleeping With Celebrities*, hosted by me—John Moe—on MaximumFun.org or wherever you get your podcasts. Night, night.

(Music fades out.)

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Judge John Hodgman, we are about to head back out on the road, heading to a part of the Northeastern United States that—frankly—I cannot identify. I look at it on a map. It just looks like a hazy blob to me.

John Hodgman: Let me explain to you. We're going to—

Jesse Thorn: Like trying to read a newspaper in a dream, John.

John Hodgman: Jesse Thorn, let me explain. New England is a region of Southeastern Canada, AKA Northeastern United States. It is a haunted region of Stephen King and H.P. Lovecraft. Scaryville! And indeed we are going to Massachusetts, Vermont, and Maine. Now both of our shows in Massachusetts are sold out. You missed out if you were wanting to go there.

(Jesse whistles sadly.)

But we have tickets available still in a few days in Burlington, Vermont—our very first *Judge John Hodgman* show in Vermont. And then the next day we're returning to the State Theater in Portland, Maine, where we always have a good time judging local Maine-style cases—

[00:50:00]

—and hearing some of that great main style jazz performed by Joel, the Maine Man, Mann from WERU and the Night and Day Trio. It's always a lot of fun. So, please go and get your tickets now at MaximumFun.org/events before they go away for New England. And also, submit your disputes at MaximumFun.org/jjho. And next year, what?

Jesse Thorn: In the new year, we will be traveling to Vancouver, Seattle, Portland, Oregon, Los Angeles, and! Maybe we'll visit a certain city that's in between Portland and Los Angeles and is not Redding.

John Hodgman: A certain city by the Bay territory, perhaps. (*Inaudible.*)

Jesse Thorn: It's not ours to announce, but.

John Hodgman: Stand by. Announcements will be coming very shortly, I believe.

Jesse Thorn: MaximumFun.org/events is where you can go for the information about all of those shows. We'll see you in all of those places. It's going to be a great time.

John Hodgman: Jesse, if I go to MaximumFun.org/events to get information about all those shows, and I specifically wanted some more information on our show in Los Angeles at the Dynasty Typewriter, what more information would I discover?

Jesse Thorn: You would discover that *Jordan, Jesse, Go!* will also be performing on that show.

And speaking of, if you're in Los Angeles on November 2nd at 3PM, Jordan and I will be performing alongside comic book legend Brian Michael Bendis and Elliott Kalan from *The Flophouse* at the Revenge of Block Party at Revenge of Comic Books and Pinball in Eagle Rock. That show will be from 3 to 4PM. But Jordan will be there signing comics all day long, along with 20,000 other amazing comic book celebrities. Including, our friend Patton Oswalt and Josh Gad and lots of other really cool people. That's November 2nd at Revenge of Comics and Pinball in Eagle Rock in Los Angeles.

Jordan, Jesse, Go! goes on at 3PM, so. It's free. I hope everybody will come out.

John Hodgman: MaximumFun.org/events is where to go whenever you want to find out what your favorite Maximum Fun hosts are doing out there in the world of events, even. All the *Judge John Hodgman* shows are there. the event that Jesse just announced are there. You should bookmark it, go there, buy some tickets. It's a great time to buy tickets for people in your life, maybe as stocking stuffers for those January and February shows we got coming up

on the West Coast. MaximumFun.org/events. I keep saying the link only because A) I want you to buy tickets and B) because I want you to enjoy it. It's better when you're there. And we have a lot of fun at these shows and love to say hi.

So, let's get back to our show in Charlottesville. Shall we, Jesse?

Jesse Thorn: Indeed!

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Let's welcome to the stage Jennifer and Will.

(Applause.)

Will is an ophthalmologist, and Jennifer is getting her master's degree in counseling. In their spare time, Jennifer and Will are musicians and play music together at wineries.

John Hodgman: Jennifer and Will, welcome to the court of Judge John Hodgman. Who seeks justice in this court, please?

Jennifer: I do. Thank you.

John Hodgman: You are Jennifer?

Jennifer: Yes.

John Hodgman: Great. May I ask Will a question first?

Jennifer: Sure.

John Hodgman: And this will determine it. This is for all the marbles. This is for all the black jellybeans. Will, you're an ophthalmologist?

Will: Yes.

John Hodgman: Spell it.

(Laughter.)

Will: Oh. I also have a little bit of dyslexia, too. No, it's O-P-H-T-H.

John Hodgman: Keep going.

Will: A-L-M-O-L-O-G-I-S-T.

John Hodgman: Say it again.

(Laughter and scattered applause.)

Will: O-P-H-T-H-A-L-M-O-L-O-G-I-S-T.

John Hodgman: You did a good job. Whew!

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, that's correct.

John Hodgman: Very good.

(Cheers and applause.)

I am temporarily finding in your favor, but we're going to hear the case anyway. Just for that, you get one gavel. *(A single gavel bang.)* There we go. Alright, Jennifer, what is the nature of the justice that you seek?

Jennifer: The situation is that Will pours milk before cereal.

(Disapproving "ooh"s from the crowd.)

Will: Yeah, that's right. It's weird! I know.

Jesse Thorn: I told you there were some nasty freaks here!

John Hodgman: You're saying that when—? Will, explain. You pour milk into the bowl, and then put the cereal in. Is that correct?

(Will confirms.)

Don't let the Jordan Almonds stop you from speaking, please.

Will: That is correct.

John Hodgman: Why do you do this?

Will: I think that in order to get the ratio right, if you already have the cereal in the bowl, you can't see exactly how much milk you're pouring. So, if you pour the milk first, you know exactly how much to get the right ratio.

John Hodgman: What's the ratio for you? Like, how wet—how dry do you like it?

Will: It depends on the cereal.

John Hodgman: Go ahead.

Will: It matters more that it's fresh, you know.

John Hodgman: Banana bread Cheerios.

[00:55:00]

Will: Banana bread Cheerios. It should be, you know, 50/50. They should—it should be almost covered.

John Hodgman: So, you're saying if you put the cereal in first and then you pour the milk, you might pour in too much milk? It's hard to gauge the milk?

Will: Too much, too little.

John Hodgman: And you're looking—you're trying to avoid sog?

Will: Trying to avoid sog.

John Hodgman: Or you're trying to achieve sog?

Will: The most important thing is milk wastage and what we teach the children.

(Laughter.)

Because they're notorious milk-wasters. And I want them to pour in just a little bit of milk.

John Hodgman: Please tell me you have children.

Will: Three children.

John Hodgman: Three children. You do have children.

Will: Real children, yes. Three real children.

John Hodgman: So, you're trying to keep them from wasting the milk. Jamelle, what do you think about that?

Jamelle Bouie: I say—my first question is: are you drinking the cereal milk at all? Are you tossing it?

John Hodgman: Or to save it, are you reusing it?

(Laughter.)

Jamelle Bouie: Because if you're worried about wasting the milk, I mean—like, you know, you just to drink the cereal milk. That's like half the fun. That's like half the reason you eat cereal in the first place.

Will: For the adults, we definitely wouldn't waste either cereal or milk left over. But the kids would just—it's almost like they want to leave like a whole bunch of milk.

John Hodgman: Yeah, they're kids.

Jennifer: And the morning rush trying to get them to school, you know. Maybe they run out of time, and they don't drink the milk. Or they say, "I'm too full," and they run off and put their shoes on and go. Yeah. So.

John Hodgman: Yeah. But is that—

Jennifer: So, that's a concern. We don't want a bunch of milk left over.

John Hodgman: So, it sounds like you're making Will's case for him, Jennifer.

Jennifer: No, I think it's more wasteful what he's doing.

John Hodgman: Go on.

Jennifer: Well, you just need a little bit of milk to cover the cereal. I think maybe there's a misunderstanding here on what you're really after. For me, it's the cereal is what you're really after. And the milk is just covering it.

John Hodgman: You just want it to be a little milk-moist.

Jennifer: Exactly.

John Hodgman: Gross.

(Laughter.)

Not your preference. People like what they like, but milk-moist. I wish I had never said that.

Jennifer: It's an unfortunate combination of words, yes. *(Laughs.)*

John Hodgman: You just want to wet it a little with a little bit of moist milk. But you're in the same ballpark as Will, because you take this from the point of view—you start from the premise of milk wastage. You're not saying that Will's a weirdo, even though we all agree that's true.

Jennifer: Well, I think both can be true.

John Hodgman: Okay, tell me more. Is Will a weirdo? Yes or no?

Jennifer: We agree we don't want them to waste a lot of milk, but we see a different solution to the problem.

John Hodgman: But is Will a weirdo, yes or no?

Jennifer: Yes. For sure. For sure.

John Hodgman: Okay, thank you. Thank you.

Will: She and everybody else is horrified by the practice.

John Hodgman: Why do you think we're so horrified by it, Jesse, Jamelle? Why is it so weird?

Jamelle Bouie: I mean, well first of all: who does it?!

(Laughter.)

Will: I'm the only one I know, yeah.

Jamelle Bouie: I've never seen this in my life. I've watched a lot of people at cereal in my time, and I've never seen someone pour the milk first. I'm just curious—is this like a recent innovation in your life? Is this something you started doing as a child, and there was no adult who loved you enough to tell you to stop?

(Laughter.)

Will: No, I've been doing it forever!

Jennifer: It's a recent innovation!

Will: Yeah, no, because remember my grandfather one time—I poured the milk first, and then I poured the cereal. And he looked at me, and he said, “Now I've seen everything.”

(Laughter.)

It's been going on for a long time. I figured—I cracked this nut a long time ago.

Jesse Thorn: I feel like your best way out of this would have just been to be like, “Eh, it was a Kaspar Hauser situation. Like, I grew up in a cage in a basement eating cereal this way, and—”

John Hodgman: Didn't know how to do it! Do you remember the first time you had the idea?

Will: I don't.

John Hodgman: Because I guarantee you the first time you did that—so, how old do you think you were when your grandfather like burned his disapproval of you into your brain for the rest of your life?

Will: This was—I mean, that couldn't have been—that was several years ago. That was five years ago, max, I think. So, I was an adult. I was an adult, yeah.

John Hodgman: (*Stammering.*) Oh, so—oh, okay. I thought there was something you had done since you were a kid.

Will: I think it might have been, yeah. I think it probably it was. I don't remember converting over.

Jamelle Bouie: But your grandfather didn't witness it when you were a kid.

Will: I think so! But I'm not sure he was super attentive; I'm not sure he would have noticed before.

Jesse Thorn: Your grandfather wasn't one of these people who watches a lot of people eat cereal, like this guy.

(*Laughter.*)

Will: Correct.

Jesse Thorn: This guy's weird brag, earlier.

John Hodgman: I'm just trying to determine—and please be honest here, Will, to the best of your ability. Like, on the one hand, you might be a typical dad in a heterosexual relationship who has three kids and then realizes you're not the center of attention anymore, and you start coming up with systems to do things differently.

(*Will laughs.*)

Like, “Oh, I just discovered a great new way to wash the dishes or to watch television. Everyone get upside down!” Whatever. Like, “Oh, I'm going to do it different! Because it's—we're going to save milk.”

Jesse Thorn: “I play ukulele and sing now!”

Will: There's almost certainly an element of that. There's gotta be.

John Hodgman: "I'm starting a podcast. I'm a sexy podcast host!" Or whatever.

(Laughter.)

[01:00:00]

But like, I want to know. Like, is this something that you did, and you retconned the milk wastage argument to cover for it? Or is the milk wastage argument the real reason? And is wastage a word?

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, that's a word.

John Hodgman: Is that a word? Alright.

Will: I think it's probably retconned completely, would be my guess.

John Hodgman: You think it's retconned? It's just something that you like to do. Does it taste better?

Will: Nnno, but it feels better.

John Hodgman: It feels better.

Jesse Thorn: If you put them into the bowl in the correct order, would it be as though you were eating them holding the spoon in your left hand?

Will: You mean—"the correct order", you mean milk and then cereal?

John Hodgman: *(With faux irritation.)* Alright, Will!

(Laughter.)

Will: I'm just clarifying, Judge.

John Hodgman: I hold you in contempt of court. Anyone who's held in contempt of court gets a jellybean thrown at them. Don't test me. Jennifer, if I were to rule in your favor, what would you have me order?

Jennifer: It's sort of like the peanut butter situation. If he wants to have weird milk—

John Hodgman: First, he gets his own bedroom.

Jennifer: Milk before cereal—in a glass, I will add.

John Hodgman: Wait, what?!

Jennifer: In a glass!

John Hodgman: Do you eat cereal out of a glass, sir?

Jamelle Bouie: Is it like a highball glass? Are you like—?

Jennifer: *(Laughing.)* Yes. It's pretty tall.

Will: That's a different situation!

John Hodgman: Or martini glass! You'd be very elegant.

Will: That's only cereal at night.

Jennifer: *(Overlapping.)* That's only nighttime cereal.

Jesse Thorn: *(Overlapping.)* Give me a double of Cocoa Puffs!

John Hodgman: Nighttime cereal you put in a glass.

Jesse Thorn: After five, it's a cocktail.

(Laughter and scattered applause.)

Will: Then it does taste better. That does make it taste better.

John Hodgman: Why does it taste better in a glass?

Will: I think for the same reason that for a wine glass, it kind of directs the fumes towards your nose. That's the only theory I can come up with.

John Hodgman: What kind of glass are we talking about? Highball?

Will: A tea glass or something?

Jennifer: It's like a Duralex—the tall one. Yeah, you might have—

Jesse Thorn: Like a tumbler?

Jennifer: Well, if you're from Virginia, you might drink tea in it. Yeah.

John Hodgman: But a glass-glass. Okay, I understand. And if I were to rule in your favor, Will, you would have me at least run the experiment to see if your method works?

Will: Yes, I think—

John Hodgman: I don't think there's anything we can do but run the experiment. What do you think, Jamelle? You're the professional cereal tester.

Jamelle Bouie: (*Inaudible.*) I'm actually stuck. Here, I'm stuck on the cereal out of a glass thing. This is really...

John Hodgman: Yeah! Say, producer Laura Volk, would you bring out the cereals, please?

(*Applause.*) This is our live producer, Laura Volk. You'll see her a little later on. She's been helping us.

Jesse Thorn: Just hand those to Jamelle.

John Hodgman: Yeah, just give that stuff to Jamelle, please. Since it's Halloween, we've got all of the monster cereals that are available. Not to buzz market anything, but these are your classic monster cereals. Your Chocula, your Boo Berry, your Frankenberry. There's a new one, which is Creepy Carmella, who is a zombie who apparently is Frankenberry's lost cousin or something like that.

I'm gonna open this while Laura is looking for—oh, here comes Laura with a glass, couple of glasses, so we can try Will's... thing. Jesse, would you mind helping set Jamel up there?

So, we're gonna do—

Jamelle Bouie: Wait, am I the only one who's gonna be eating this?

(*Jesse confirms.*)

Alright, well, I guess I should've expected that.

John Hodgman: So, Will, I want you to observe what's happening here. We have one bowl with the cereal in it, and we're gonna add milk to it. So, what I would like you to do, Jamelle, if you will, is: when you're ready, pour milk into the empty bowl, and then milk over the cereal. Now, we're gonna have you review both of them, and determine whether there is a difference in your experience, and then review the cereal on its own.

Jamelle Bouie: Right, okay. I'm gonna do—so, I will pour the milk here first. This is so weird.

(*Laughter.*)

And how much do I pour?! How do I gauge?!

John Hodgman: Is that the right amount? Or do you—? You probably have a milk jigger at home.

Jamelle Bouie: Is it like—what?—like, two fingers of milk? Is that what I'm looking for?

Will: You know when it's right.

John Hodgman: Is that about right?

Will: Yeah, you just gotta feel it.

Jesse Thorn: Honestly, the second Jamelle did that, I felt like maybe I was a cat in a cartoon.

(Laughter.)

Jamelle Bouie: And I'm going to, I'm going to pour some—

John Hodgman: Let's say—say when, Will.

Will: For that one, just keep pouring.

John Hodgman: We're trying not to waste the milk!

Will: That's not my side of the experiment.

Jamelle Bouie: Okay. To keep pouring—and you don't even get full milk coverage. This is an insane way of eating cereal. Alright.

John Hodgman: Will, go back to your microphone, please. Now that you've observed.

Jennifer: You see why I don't want my children taught this method. It just floats on the top. It's confusing.

Jamelle Bouie: I'm going to—I'm going to try this traditional method first.

John Hodgman: Oh, you can put that down. We really need to get the chewing and slurping on mic.

Jamelle Bouie: *(Dryly.)* Of course. Alright.

Jesse Thorn: So, Jamelle is trying it here.

(Cereal munching sounds.)

You can hear the crunch.

Jamelle Bouie: It's cereal.

John Hodgman: Tastes like regular cereal.

Jamelle Bouie: Tastes like regular cereal. Okay, yeah.

Jesse Thorn: Now he's trying this nasty one.

(Laughter.)

Jamelle Bouie: Now this—there's actually a meaningful difference here.

[01:05:00]

And that this is like still half-dry. It's like it's still unpleasant and dry, because it's not really covered in all the milk. Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: And that was even after I saw you anticipate that potential problem and try and do a few classic swirlies with your spoon to try and get a little dunk-a-roo action and you failed.

Jamelle Bouie: Doesn't work. Okay, so as for the cereal itself? Um, it's not good. *(Laughter.)*

John Hodgman: There goes our sponsorship! Where is it on the Green Onion Chex scale?

Jamelle Bouie: I mean, it's—no, it's sort of like on the—it's closer to the Peeps cereal, in terms of bad cereals I've eaten.

John Hodgman: Oh, that sounds very sweet.

Jamelle Bouie: Yeah, so it's very sweet. It has like it—I mean, it tastes like it's nothing but corn. And it's like—it's extremely cloying. It's like very unpleasant. It's very unpleasant right now in my mouth.

John Hodgman: *(Laughing.)* I'm sorry!

Jamelle Bouie: So, I guess—should I try it in the cup here?

John Hodgman: Yeah, but you have to do it Will's way, which is milk first. So.

Will: Milk first.

John Hodgman: I'll pour the milk. Will, you tell me when to stop. Okay? Can you see it from all the way over there? Good. Thumbs up from Will. Just yell out. Just go, uh—cringe when we reach too much.

Jamelle Bouie: That's gotta be about—

Will: That's probably good. Yeah.

Jamelle Bouie: Like six ounces of milk.

John Hodgman: Well, we don't want to waste it.

Will: While I'm here... who's taking the milk home after? Can we keep that? Or—?

(John confirms and the crowd howls with laughter.)

Jamelle Bouie: This is even crazier, because how—? Like, you can't even judge anything.

John Hodgman: Would you just fill it up to the top, equal parts, would you say? Like, should he come to the—fill it to the rim with his monster cereal?

Will: Yeah, you'll see.

Jesse Thorn: It's like an iceberg. You can see the part above the milk level.

Will: Oh, you got to drink it. You can't use the spoon.

(Shouts from the audience.)

John Hodgman: Excuse me, what?!

Will: You don't want to have to wash a spoon.

John Hodgman: That's what the dog is for!

(Laughter and scattered applause.)

Jamelle Bouie: So, I gotta—I gotta—

John Hodgman: Careful. Careful! *(Laughs.)* He's one of the most brilliant men on earth; he's gonna choke to death on my stage, because Will likes to eat cereal out of a glass at night.

Jesse Thorn: Jamelle brings the same sense of thoroughness to this operation that he does to writing about the Constitution in the *New York Times*.

Jamelle Bouie: I don't—(*stammering*) can we curse?

John Hodgman: Yes.

Jesse Thorn: If you have to, yeah!

Jamelle Bouie: I don't know what the (*sensor beep*) this is.

(*Laughter, applause, and cheers.*)

John Hodgman: I find in favor of Jamelle Bouie all day long. Jennifer and Will, get out of here! Go trick or treating, you crazy kids!

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: That's it for this episode of the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. Our thanks to Reddit user u/TurduckenEverest for naming the case in this episode. Make sure to follow us on Instagram [@JudgeJohnHodgman](#). We're on YouTube and TikTok, [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](#).

John Hodgman: Hey, I also want to shout out a rave review and five stars from listener Sam on Apple Podcasts. Thank you, Sam. Sam calls the show funny and heartwarming, going on to say, “I found this podcast looking for intelligent humor, which it never fails to deliver.” Wow! Thank you. “But it is the wisdom and empathy with which JJHo interviews the claimants and delivers his verdicts. They give it a different dimension than any other humor podcast I have found. It is my go-to show.”

Thank you so much for making us your go-to, Sam! And if you're listening right now on Apple Podcasts, why not leave a review and, dare I ask, five-star rating right now?! It really does help listeners discover the show. And the same goes for Pocket Casts too now. You can rate and review your favorite podcast, AKA *Judge John Hodgman*, on Pocket Casts. You can also leave a comment on this episode in Spotify. You can leave a comment on our YouTube channel as well, [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](#). Or! If you want to introduce someone to the show, bring a friend to one of our live shows.

Truly all those likes and comments, reviews, and especially shares really do matter to us, so thank you very much.

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

Speaker 1: Maximum Fun.

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