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Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Welcome to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. I'm Bailiff Jesse Thorn. We are clearing the docket this week. I'm joined by the leader of the J squad: Judge John Hodgman.

John Hodgman: Look, we're all co-leaders.

Jesse Thorn: Oh! I had no idea!

John Hodgman: Yeah, yeah, yeah. No, we're all the leaders.

Jesse Thorn: This feels like a real promotion for me.

John Hodgman: Jesse, Jennifer, Joel, jaunty Monte Belmonte, Jean.

Jesse Thorn: Juh-Daniel.

John Hodgman: Juh-Daniel Speer, Jattie Lopez, our social media manager. JJ—

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, JJ—it seems like—would be how it would go, right?

John Hodgman: JJ McKeon. JJ Juh-Keon. And of course, me: John Hodgman. Jawn—that comes up—right?—in our docket? We got a lot of things on the docket. Maybe we should go ahead and clear it.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, speaking of Johns, we have a case from Karen in Levittown, Pennsylvania.

“My husband, Julian, uses the word ‘jawn’, even though he is from Queens, New York. We've both lived in the Philly suburbs for about 20 years, but have never lived in the city proper. I believe that saying ‘jawn’ when you're not from Philly is like using a fake Philly accent. Please make him stop.”

John Hodgman: Levittown, Pennsylvania. That famous little town of all those little houses that were designed to house people back when we wanted to house people in this country. Little modest little homes all in a row, but definitely not Philadelphia.

Jesse, have you ever said the word jawn in your life? J-A-W-N?

Jesse Thorn: No. Many years ago, my online life revolved around OKPlayer.com, which is a message board created by Questlove of The Roots. And The Roots are from Philadelphia as well as, you know, many of their sort of affiliated acts—Jill Scott and stuff. And there were a

lot of Philadelphians on the board and a lot of talk about jawns. But that is now 20-some years ago?

John Hodgman: Yeah, folks, if you want to know what jawn means, Questlove is essentially explicator of jawn to the wider world these days. It means a person, place, or thing. It stands in for any noun. It's "spelled"—and I'm using quotation marks, if you're watching on video, doing little bunny foo-foos on either hand to indicate quotation marks. It's "spelled" J-A-W-N.

I put that in quotation marks because it's a piece of verbal slang that is presumably an adaptation of the word joint, as in "this joint is jumpin'"—thanks, Cab Calloway. And now meaning like hand me that joint over there, this joint over here. And you say it in Philadelphia, jawn. I would go ahead and look at Questlove's explanation of it that he gives in some promotional videos that he did for his movie—his great documentary, *Summer of Soul*. Look it up on YouTube, he explains the whole thing.

Jawn. Jawn. Kind of joe-awn, right? A little bit of a diphthong in jawn. I don't know. I never say it, because I am not from Philadelphia.

Jesse Thorn: Nothing like a Philly diphthong, John.

John Hodgman: Nothing like a Philly—(laughs).

Jesse Thorn: They can diphthong anything. Them and people in Baltimore.

John Hodgman: (In a cartoonish Philly accent.) You get a Philly diphthong with cheese or without? Yeh.

Jesse Thorn: You want to add vowels to a vowel? Those are the cities you want to go to in the United States.

John Hodgman: There you go, yeh.

Even though I'm not from Philly—and I obviously can't do the accent, yeh—my mother was, and she had an accent. But it kind of went away over time. My aunts have it, of them say jawn. Because, as far as I can tell, this is a primarily a piece of Black vernacular in Philadelphia. And if I'm wrong on that, I bet I'll get letters.

Jesse Thorn: I think that's true. I think at the very least you would describe it as urban vernacular.

John Hodgman: Yeah, if you were going to be euphemistic about it. I'll tell you what! It's not Levittown vernacular. I'm looking at a map right now. Levittown, you're closer to Trenton than you are to Philadelphia, Levittown. No offense. You might as well be in Trenton. You know what they have up there in Trenton there, Jesse?

Jesse Thorn: What do they have in Philadelphia, John Hodgman?

John Hodgman: They got a big sign. They got a big sign. It says—it's the saddest sign I ever see. Says, "Trenton makes, the world takes." You ever see that sign? Be honest.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, I have seen that sign.

John Hodgman: You see it on the train as you're taking the Amtrak down there, down there to Philadelphia. I can't do it. Of course, I'm doing an imitation of Jon Wurster being Philly Boy Roy on *The Best Show*. And what I'm doing is fairly offensive! I can't imagine. Not offensive so much as cringe. And I don't know what would be more cringe than a person from Queens in Levittown saying jawn all the time. But then on the other hand, a 53-year-old fake internet judge saying cringe is also pretty cringe.

What do you think about this one, Jesse?

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, I'm there with you.

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I would hesitate to characterize it as offensive. I know there are defenders of the appropriation of African American vernacular English and etcetera, etcetera. I'm not inclined to go full offensive, but I am inclined to say: a little embarrassing.

John Hodgman: You know what? Also, because it's old stuff! I didn't realize. Like, you know, you saw it on this bulletin board 20 years ago, 'cause you're cool. Me, I didn't even see *Creed* when it came out in 2015,

Jesse Thorn: *Creed* was a very jawn-heavy film. (*Chuckles.*)

John Hodgman: Yeah, I guess that that—I mean, I didn't see that movie is how out of it I am. And I gather there's a whole scene in which the whole term is described. So, go see that. But that was—2015 was nine years ago, almost ten years ago! So, do I think it's totally chilled and very demure to be using jawn in Levittown, Pennsylvania? I would stay, me, I'd stay away from it. Just say thing. We have that word, thing.

Hey, do you want to know something? You know, who else is a native Philadelphian—a true native Philadelphian besides Ahmir Questlove Thompson?

Jesse Thorn: Paul F. Tompkins?

John Hodgman: Paul F. Tompkins!

Jesse Thorn: Nailed it in one. A lot of people are from Philadelphia. I could have said Benjamin Franklin!

John Hodgman: Could have said Benjamin Franklin. Could have said the Philly's Fanatic.

Jesse Thorn: The Philly Fanatic, yeah. Don't want to get you in trouble.

John Hodgman: I don't care. I don't care anymore. Throw your batteries, Philadelphia, I'll take it all.

(Jesse laughs.)

We had a great show in Philadelphia, and it was fun. We had some good cheesesteaks. We talked about it already, but the point I'm trying to make is: I may be misremembering, but I think I'm not, that Paul F. Tompkins once revealed to me that he and Ahmir Questlove Thompson went to elementary school together. Like, maybe young—like, maybe first or second grade together.

Jesse Thorn: Fantastic.

John Hodgman: That is the *Muppet Babies* prequel that I need in my life.

Jesse Thorn: My only disappointment here is that he didn't go to high school with The Roots, who also went to high school with Boyz II Men.

John Hodgman: Oh, Motown Philly's back again doing a little East Coast swing!

Jesse Thorn: Indeed.

John Hodgman: Boyz II Men going off, not too hard, not too soft.

Jesse Thorn: No, just right.

John Hodgman: And all the Philly steaks you can eat on South Street. Anyway! As far as—we've had enough Philly talk, especially since we're really talking about Levittown, which might as well be Trenton. Yeah, Karen, I would say Julian is little cringe.

Jesse Thorn: As a San Franciscan, I'd say it's hella cringe.

John Hodgman: Hella cringe. It's not hyphy, I'll tell you what. Would you say it's hyphy?

Jesse Thorn: *(Laughing.)* I wouldn't. I wouldn't even say it's stupid doo-doo dumb.

John Hodgman: How would you—how do you feel about me saying it's hyphy?

Jesse Thorn: Well, I don't know. I'd like to see you ghost ride the whip, John.

John Hodgman: Oh! We'd all like to see Judge John Hodgman ghost ride the whip. That's as far as I'm willing to push my fraudulence. I have no idea what I'm saying at this point. So, I think it would be safer if we just moved on.

Jesse Thorn: *Judge John Hodgman's Sideshow*, let's go! (*Laughs.*) Okay, here's something from Gary in Buxton, Maine.

John Hodgman: Buxton, Maine.

Jesse Thorn: “I seek an injunction against my wife, Kara, please make her stop scolding me whenever I try to do the right thing. In the past—”

(They snort into muted laughter.)

If we've learned anything from Spike Lee, it's always do the right thing. Okay.

“In the past, I've been scolded for helping injured or stranded animals; removing tree branches, fallen street signs, and other hazards from the street.”

John Hodgman: Boo, booooo! How dare you?

Jesse Thorn: “Trying to break up a bar fight.”

John Hodgman: Oh, boo!

Jesse Thorn: “She says I should stay out of these situations and mind my own business. I say, if not me, then who?”

John Hodgman: Okay. We got four bullet points to go over here. Jesse, have you ever done the right thing only to have it go horribly wrong?

Jesse Thorn: No, I would never do the right thing. (*Laughs.*)

John Hodgman: You would never do the right thing. Let me go—hey, Jennifer Marmor, you're live down there in California as well, right?

(She confirms.)

You're broadcasting from home today.

Jennifer Marmor: I am, yes.

John Hodgman: So, we might hear a dog, or we might hear a human child.

Jennifer Marmor: A toddler, a garbage truck, right now.

John Hodgman: We got four bullet points on trial. Let me know, both of you—quick quiz. Just yes or no, briefly, if you've ever done any of these things. Helped injured or stranded animal?

Jennifer Marmor: No.

Jesse Thorn: I've followed a dog around. I've followed a dog around. I've never successfully caught one, but I spent like 90 minutes chasing around a stray dog once.

John Hodgman: Did this say “helping stranded animals” or “stalking stranded animals”?

Jesse Thorn: (*Whining.*) I was trying to help him find his home!

John Hodgman: You were trying to help. You were trying to help. Alright.

Remove tree branch, fallen street signs, other hazards from the road? Have you ever removed a hazard from the road?

Jennifer Marmor: I've removed hazards from like the sidewalk, where it's like blocking the path for a stroller or wheelchair or whatever. Definitely removed tree branches or those scooters that you rent from an app.

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John Hodgman: Oh, forget about it. Oh, when we're in Portland, Oregon, in early February in 2025, I know I'm going to be clear in the pathway of so many abandoned scooters. That place is just a scooter jungle gym now. Last time, I was going to climb over them. Alright.

Jesse Thorn: I have a giant eucalyptus tree in front of my house that is like 100 years old and drops terrifying branches. Like real, as they say, widow makers. I saw it destroy a car once. (*Laughs.*)

(*Jennifer and John “whoa”.*)

And I will drag those branches out of the sidewalk. Again, I don't really care about the street part, but I will drag them out of the sidewalk, because I live in a very old-lady heavy neighborhood. A lot of old ladies going for little walks with little visors on in my neighborhood.

John Hodgman: Yeah, yeah. Good. You ever try to break up a bar fight?

Jesse Thorn: (*Laughs.*) Just imagine me and Jennifer Marmor breaking up bar fights.

Jennifer Marmor: A friend of mine tried to break up a bar fight when I was with him. And I was like—I tried to shrink into myself as much as possible, because I did not know what to do.

John Hodgman: Of course!

John Hodgman: That's terrifying! What did your friend—what was the technique your friend used?

Jennifer Marmor: He kind of just got in the middle, put both arms out between them and just like, “Whoa, whoa, hey!” You know, like kind of—

John Hodgman: The classic, “Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa!”

Jennifer Marmor: Yeah, like “You guys, you don't need to do this (*inaudible*).”

John Hodgman: “Everybody chill out!” Everybody be very demure here! Be mindful!

Jennifer Marmor: Mm-hm, mm-hm, Be mindful.

John Hodgman: I'll say this. David Rees intervened in what was a verbal altercation, a wildly escalating verbal altercation between a mom and her young teenage son, and it was getting uncomfortable. And David Rees just popped in and said, “Excuse me, can you tell me what time it is?”

And she's like, “Oh yeah, excuse me. It's 5:35.”

And then it stopped. I was like, “What was that?!”

He goes, you know, someone that he knows who was a social worker taught him that as a de-escalation technique, that it just sort of pops people back into a world where there are other people around, and then they just auto-regulate. Not all the time. But it's something I don't mind spreading, a de-escalation technique. Ask people what time it is.

Jesse Thorn: I love that. That's like—that seems like something that the Guardian Angels would have done on the bus when I was a kid.

(John laughs and says something unclear.)

A lot of Guardian—he was a New Yorker, but in San Francisco in the '80s, there were a lot of Guardian Angels in my neighborhood.

John Hodgman: Guardians Angels were there?

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, for sure. They were like weird superheroes. It was really a trip, with their berets on.

John Hodgman: For those who don't know, the Guardian Angels were—and maybe still are—a team of—(*laughing at himself*) a team—a group of volunteer safety patrol guys, typically.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, that's about right.

John Hodgman: Organized by a New York City oddball and now fairly right-wing figure and former talk show host Curtis Sliwa. But he became famous first for being a Guardian Angel.

Jesse Thorn: He did run for mayor of New York City as a cat enthusiast Republican, I would say was his platform. Right? (*Chuckles.*)

John Hodgman: I don't know; I find that to be a really interesting technique, and I haven't had a chance to put it into practice. May I confess to you both, J Squad, one of my weirder fantasies?

Jesse Thorn: (*Laughing.*) Please!

Jennifer Marmor: I guess?

John Hodgman: Who knew this was going ask Reddit after dark?

John Hodgman: Here's my weird fantasy. I wish—you know, if I were to choose a superpower, everyone knows I would choose invisibility over flight. Because it's more practical. But honestly, if I had a superpower, I wish I could win any fight.

It's so dumb! But I just wish that I like had kung fu programmed into my brain, and it was just known—it was just inevitable due to my own skills and the weird hand of fate—that if ever I were to be in a physical altercation, that I would win that fight. And I'll tell you what, I would be breaking up bar fights all the time! I would be using that great power for great responsibility.

Jesse Thorn: You know where I'd be. You know where I'd be. I'd just be out there in my fortress of solitude.

John Hodgman: Yeah. In your meditative state? Playing with your crystals?

Anyway, don't know what trouble Kara is concerned or Kara is concerned that Gary is going to get into up there in Buxton, Maine by moving a branch off the road. But I will say this!

[00:15:00]

Speaking of my own Maine experience, if it's a fallen power line, do not move it! Stay away and call your local volunteer firefighter or the power company or something.

Trying to break up a bar fight. Okay. Here's where we get into some stuff here. Because it is really—especially these days, it is really, really good to act upon and model neighborliness instead of the increasing trend—it seems to me—post lockdown and other, let's say, political factors of selfish—I don't know how else to put it—asshole-ism. We should make sure that we are neighborly to each other. And helping to deescalate conflict is part of that, but you do not have an obligation to put yourself at physical risk.

And I think that, you know—I don't know whether Gary's got kung fu downloaded in his brain *Matrix*-style or whatever, but I would try to develop some—learn about some de-escalation techniques that are proven to work, rather than just throw yourself in between elbows and fists. Like, ask them what time it is, or try to get someone else to help or whatever. Also, if you see other conflict, especially, between people who are more physically powerful than others—like an adult or a child, or let's say a heterosexual couple where the guy is menacing the woman or whatever—then it is good to step in and just show the person who might be more intimidated or vulnerable in that moment that they're not alone.

But again, you're not obligated to put yourself at physical risk.

Jesse Thorn: Alright, let's take a quick break. We'll be back in just a second on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Welcome back to the Judge John Hodgman podcast, where we are clearing the docket. And we have a case from Abraham in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

“My best friend, Thomas, and I have had an ongoing dispute since childhood over the game *The Legend of Zelda: Four Swords*. Thomas will pick up my character and throw him into lava. He does this to get the rupees that my character releases upon his death.”

John Hodgman: Wow.

Jesse Thorn: “This is a teamwork game. Please ban Thomas from purposely working against the group in all future cooperative games.” All future cooperative games?! Even *Save the Whales*, the board game that I had as a child?! (*Laughs.*)

John Hodgman: Yeah, when you're saving whales, the best way to do it is to destroy your co-player and get their rupees.

Jesse Thorn: Each character was a different type of whale and had very nice heavy metal whale pieces.

John Hodgman: Oh! So, you're not saving the whales. You are the whale. You are being—you are saving—the whales are saving themselves.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, I'm trying to remember. The memories are pretty mixed up with the legendary Canadian public television coproduction *The Voyage of the Mimi*, starring young Ben Affleck. (*Giggles.*)

John Hodgman: Well, I am not an expert on that game, nor am I an expert on this one because I have never once in my life played a *Zelda*. Not a single *Zelda* have I played. Have you ever played a *Zelda*, Jesse?

Jesse Thorn: I beat an entire *Zelda*.

(*John whistles.*)

But what's weird is that's the only *Zelda* I've played. I've never played any of the NES *Zeldas*, any of—the only one I've played was— During the pandemic, or very early in the pandemic, my friend Jordan Morris from *Jordan, Jesse, Go!* gave my family his Wii-U. Which is a sort of marginal, semi-unsuccessful Nintendo console that was—

John Hodgman: It was a transitional console, let's say.

Jesse Thorn: Exactly. And it had the game *Legend of Zelda Breath of the Wild* on it. Jordan had that game. He gave us that. Through 2020, I played and ultimately defeated that game. I beat Ganon. I'm not afraid to say it. It's the only thing that my seven-year-old respects about me.

John Hodgman: (*Laughs.*) But that is not a cooperative game. Only *Legend of Zelda: Four Swords* is a cooperative game, I believe.

Jesse Thorn: That sounds right to me. I know that *Zelda* is the boy, right?

John Hodgman: *Zelda* is the boy. Yeah. Thank you, Ariel Dumas, for letting us know *Zelda* is the boy.

You know, you see his picture right on the box.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, it's right there in the box.

John Hodgman: *Legend of Zelda*. It's a boy. *Zelda's* a boy. *Zelda*.

Jennifer Marmor, you ever play a game where somebody cheated or wasn't a good sport?

Jennifer Marmor: I mean, it probably doesn't count if we're talking about my five-year-old, because he's still learning how to be a good sport.

John Hodgman: Okay! We don't know the ages of these people, by the way. So, it could be that Abraham's friend, Thomas, is five. But...

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Jennifer Marmor: No, but I definitely have played like a boardgame with somebody who, as a grownup, was a shockingly poor sport about it.

John Hodgman: Just—yeah. I mean, this isn't even cheating. It's just kind of being crummy. You know?

(Jennifer agrees.)

What Thomas is doing.

I once played—I was at an event once where Ken Jennings, the host of *Jeopardy*, was running a little *Jeopardy*-style trivia game on the side. I'm not going to say that he was running a side hustle of *Jeopardy*. I don't want to get Ken Jennings in trouble.

Jesse Thorn: On the side?! You sound like he was turning in the back room of a pool hall! For high stakes.

John Hodgman: Yeah, yeah, yeah, it was down in the docks in a warehouse and playing unlicensed *Jeopardy*. There were of rupees at stake, and then we got shut down by Batman at the last minute. But before that happened, I had gotten to the final round.

And we had buzzers. This is a *Jeopardy*-style game. Okay? Don't get Ken Jennings in trouble. We were just having some fun trivia. It was non wagering. It was just a little private enterprise. But there was a buzzer mechanism, and I was working hard to win this fair and square. And guess what? Hodgman did it. What is Suriname? That's the answer. You guess the question. I'm not even playing. It's not *Jeopardy*.

Point is that was the—I won. And afterward, one of the two guys I was playing with—and they were both guys—they said, “Hey, that was really great that you won, especially since I was cheating the whole time.”

(Jennifer gasps and Jesse laughs.)

Yeah! He had figured out that if you just hold down the buzzer the whole time, you always buzz in first. And I was like, “Why are you telling me this?”

Jennifer Marmor: Excuse me?!

John Hodgman: Why?! Like, he thought he was being very clever about it! But I thought it was like, you know, just turn—(*stammering*) you think you're—he thought he was being very clever, and he thought that we were all going to be like, “Hey, that's really fun.” But I was like, that's terrible! That's a terrible thing to do.

And there is—and this is something that I've heard about through my wife, who's a whole human being in her own right, who's been a high school teacher for a long time—there are two—it's not a huge insight, but it's like there are two kinds of students: those who will never cheat, because it's obvious why they shouldn't. That's not the point of what they're doing. And those who will cheat! Because they believe cheating is part of the system.

And we live in a society now where it seems to be more and more acceptable that, yeah, cheating's part of the system, everyone does it. So, everyone should just cheat and be jerks to each other. This is what I was talking about before. You know what I'm talking about, everybody. You know, you can get a lot—you can get away with a lot these days, but I have to have faith that eventually if you get a reputation as a creepy crumb-bum, it will catch up to you one way or the other.

I'll tell you, I've never played a *Zelda*, but it is true that *Legend of Zelda: Four Swords* is my favorite Abraham Lincoln speech.

Jesse Thorn: (*Laughs.*) Okay, here's something from Kyle.

“When I go see a movie in theaters, I like to wait for the movie to start before eating my popcorn. Then I eat it one kernel at a time. My friend says this is distracting, because my munching and bag sounds persist long after everyone else's have ceased. She thinks that my extended munching violates an unspoken popcorn pact. I consider myself a conscientious person, but it's my corn, and I can eat it as I please. Am I wrong?”

First of all, I just want to—I want to request an injunction against the phrase, “It's my corn, and I can eat it as I please.” (*Laughs.*)

Jennifer Marmor: It's so funny! (*Laughs.*)

John Hodgman: Absolutely granted. Injunction granted as well. It could be that Kyle's friend has a little misophonia going on. Or it could be that Kyle is just a very loud and disgusting eater that would repulse anybody, regardless of their level of misophonia or their grossness-tolerance factor. But I don't know that Kyle could be making sounds that are more disgusting than simply the words, “My munching and bag sounds.” That's bad enough. Ugh!

Alright, let's get into it. First of all, popcorn. Yes or no? Jesse.

Jesse Thorn: You mean in general or—?

John Hodgman: Yeah, that's right. That's right. We're gonna ban popcorn.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, popcorn's very good.

John Hodgman: Popcorn, yes. Okay.

Jesse Thorn: I know you're a Whirly Pop man.

John Hodgman: Yeah, I do have a Whirly Pop at my house.

Jennifer Marmor: Same.

Jesse Thorn: I use an America's Test Kitchen system that involves putting three kernels into your fat, and then waiting for them all to pop.

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Then you put the rest of your popcorn in and take it off the heat for 30 seconds.

John Hodgman: Oh yeah, this does sound like America's Test Kitchen already. It's like I'm reading an encyclopedia article.

Jesse Thorn: Then put it back on the heat. And it works. It's a miracle.

John Hodgman: 30 seconds off the heat, then put it back on the heat.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. So, you have to wait until the pan and the oil are hot. That's what those three kernels in the bottom are for.

John Hodgman: The secret of the three kernels.

Jesse Thorn: They can tell when it's ready. Then you dump in the corn, take it off the heat for 30 seconds, put it back on the heat, and wait until it pops. And it's a total dream. Works perfectly.

John Hodgman: What do you top it with? What do you got going on?

Jesse Thorn: I use something called (*adding a flourish to the word*) butter.

John Hodgman: Butter? Melted butter. And salt?

Jesse Thorn: Melted butter.

John Hodgman: The classic.

Jesse Thorn: I have found that there is no better application for fancy butter than homemade popcorn. I will go to a local warehouse store, best known for having a magazine that once featured Jesse Thorn in it, and I will purchase a high-end Irish butter, cultured butter. And I will melt that and put it on the popcorn, and it is the best. It is—

John Hodgman: You can talk about a brand. It's *Costco Magazine*, featuring cover boy, Jesse Thorn.

Jennifer Marmor: *Costco Connection*.

John Hodgman: *Costco Connection* magazine, featuring cover boy, Jesse Thorn. They sell butter. And the butter you're talking about, I betcha, is Kerrygold?

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, it's Kerrygold butter.

John Hodgman: Kerrygold's having a moment, for sure.

Jesse Thorn: Somebody at the flea market yesterday told me that they tore my article out of their *Costco Connection* magazine, but they also had not read it yet. I just want to be clear, there were two paragraphs about me in *Costco Connection*. (*Laughing.*) There was a picture of me, two or three paragraphs, that's it. So, look, if you're waiting on it, just go ahead and do it now. You're going to, you're going to enjoy those three 'graphs.

John Hodgman: I'm definitely gonna go search for the back issue of the *Big Chicken Barn* when I'm in Maine over the holidays. But in the meantime, Jennifer Marmor. Popcorn? Yes or no? And how do you top your popcorn? Or tell me how you cook it. How do you like your corn? It's your corn! You can eat it as you please! We all know.

Jennifer Marmor: We use a Whirly Pop also. And when say we, I really mean my husband Shane. He's the one who does the popcorn. And sometimes—I mean, I do enjoy butter on it, but sometimes I just don't. (*Chuckling.*) Sometimes I say—

John Hodgman: Just plain?

Jennifer Marmor: Just plain salt is good for me. Sometimes at the movie theater—

John Hodgman: Here we go.

Jennifer Marmor: I like to add in a little M&M's into the mix.

(*John "whoa"s loudly.*)

Jesse Thorn: That's really cool and fun.

Jennifer Marmor: And that was something that I thought my friend Becca and I invented. And then I found out that like everybody does it.

Jesse Thorn: I've primarily heard Milkduds. People love to put Milkduds in there.

John Hodgman: I've never heard M&M's.

Jennifer Marmor: Milkduds is tough. 'Cause—

Jesse Thorn: It would soften the duds, which I think is nice. And then it gives you a sort of chocolatey caramel.

John Hodgman: Remember our ghost guest, David Rees?

Jesse Thorn: Sure.

Jennifer Marmor: Who could forget?

John Hodgman: He's got a he's got a popcorn recipe. You ready for this?

Jennifer Marmor: I can't wait.

John Hodgman: First of all, he uses an air popper, which is controversial.

Jesse Thorn: (*Chuckling.*) What is he, wearing leg warmers? Doing jazzercise?

John Hodgman: And then he adds salt, and then he adds pepper, and then he adds canola oil!

Jesse Thorn: Wait, he just pours canola oil on, after air popping it?!

John Hodgman: I just said to him, "What is your current popcorn-topping subroutine? I know it's a big part of your life. I want to mention it on *Judge John Hodgman* today, if you can get back to me before 9:30AM your time."

And he did! And this is what he wrote. "Air popper, canola oil, salt, pepper, nutritional yeast flakes."

Jennifer Marmor: Ooh, that's good.

John Hodgman: Which is good. That's, I think, a pretty prime add on. Very umami-ish.

"Sometimes grated cheddar cheese. Sometimes peanuts."

Jesse Thorn: Cheddar?!

John Hodgman: Yeah, I don't know. I'm just reading the thing! Write him letters. Don't tell me.

Jesse Thorn: I'm impressed that he'd get cheddar in there.

John Hodgman: "Sometimes grated cheddar cheese. Sometimes peanuts. Sometimes chili oil or other hot sauce." But one word that is spelled with all capital letters after canola oil, salt, pepper, nutritional yeast flakes—all caps, no sometimes: mayonnaise.

Jennifer Marmor: What?!

John Hodgman: Yeah. Did everyone drop their podcast players?

Jesse Thorn: How do you even mix it in?

Jennifer Marmor: How does he eat it?! That's so messy.

John Hodgman: I think he eats it with—not literal, but still great—relish.

(Jennifer giggles helplessly.)

Jesse Thorn: I mean, he might as well throw some relish on there as long as he's putting condiments on...

[00:30:00]

Just put some mustard in there. Why not?

Jennifer Marmor: But definitely not ketchup. That is not the Chicago style.

John Hodgman: Yeah. It's your corn, and you can eat it as you please, Kyle. But here's the thing. Jesse Thorn, we've talked about this before, right? If you're at a ballpark, and you're eating peanuts, what do you do with the shells?

Jesse Thorn: Drop them on the ground.

John Hodgman: You drop them on the ground. If you're eating popcorn in the movie theater, when do you eat it?

Jesse Thorn: Well, this is a very intense—I'm aspiring actually this very evening to go to the movies with my wife, which we have not done together since before the pandemic.

(John "ooh"s excitedly.)

So, I'm really hoping that we can make that happen. But other than that, the only person—we did go see—the whole family went to see *Super Mario Brothers* together. *(Chuckles.)* But I haven't gone just with my wife since before the pandemic. And I'm really excited about it, not least because the usual person that I get to go to the movies with is my daughter, Grace. And Grace is absolutely fanatical about her popcorn. She also will not eat one kernel until the movie starts, because she needs the popcorn to last throughout the entire film.

So, it is—and I'm also thinking of my daughter Scarlett, who has some very intense auditory processing issues and needs; and my youngest child, Frankie, who—among all of them—is

the most emphatically opposed to anything being added to the popcorn other than that butter that I mentioned. They all are pretty on board for that.

And I think it's possible that Kyle is an autistic child. That's what I'm inferring from this. (*Chuckles softly.*) Kyle and Kyle's friend, both. And god bless them for it is what I say. Their needs are their needs! They have needs!

John Hodgman: You eat your corn the way you like it. Listen, me personally, I never eat popcorn once the movie has started. But that is only because I eat it as fast as possible, because I love it so much. And I can never save it until the movie's started. But it's there for eating during the movie. That's why they serve it at the movies. And is it potentially loud and disruptive? Yeah. 'Cause it's the movies.

This is why I brought up the thing about the peanut shells in the ballpark. Years ago, someone said, "I don't think you should throw your shells on the ground. Be mindful of the work you leave for others." And I was like, yes, you're absolutely right, person!

And Jesse, you were—as a baseball fan, you were like, "Wrong. Throw the shells on the ground. That's baked into the experience. That's part of the ritual." And I'm like, yeah, absolutely! However, we have a listener named Joanna who had a case for us at Turner's Falls that we couldn't hear, 'cause we'd heard this very thing. And I talked to her about it afterward. Her husband wanted to throw a peanut shells on the floor of the ballpark, up there in Portland, Maine. And I was like, yeah, that's great.

And then she's like, "But the person next to us said, 'Excuse me, but my child is allergic to peanuts. Would you mind not throwing the shells on the ground?'" And I won't tell you what the husband did in this case, but I will say you'd have to be a monster to say no at that point. Because why not make this small accommodation that really costs you nothing in order to respond to a very specific request a fellow human? We're trying to be neighbors here in this place! You know what I mean?

So, while it is totally normal, to eat popcorn during the movie—and for that matter, other snacks—even if it's gross. And it's totally normal to throw peanut shells on the ground at a ballpark, even though it's—I guess, you know—kind of littering, I suppose, and someone has to sweep it up. If the person next to you, whether it's your friend or simply your neighbor in your seat, says, "I really wish wouldn't do that," well, you have to then consider it.

Here's the deal. Your friend, Kyle, has no standing to claim that it is a universal law to not eat popcorn after the movie has started. Everyone eats popcorn whenever they eat it during the movie. That's just the way it is. She can't sue you on behalf of the audience. But if she says to you, "I am personally distracted and grossed out by your munching and your bag noises," I think that out of friendship, you should attempt to accommodate her and maybe eat a little less loudly or something. Try to find a way to accommodate your friend.

There is no universal principle here, and it is disingenuous of her to suggest that there is. But if the person next to you says, "I just need a special—I just need a little bit of consideration."

[00:35:00]

You should consider how much better you'll feel if you offer consideration than if you withhold it and have to sit next to that person for the rest of the ballgame or whatever. It's weird. Otherwise, eat your corn as you please.

Jesse Thorn: Let's take a quick break. We'll be back with more of the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast in just a moment.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Judge John Hodgman, we're taking a quick break from the show, and it is the holiday giving season.

John Hodgman: Yeah, if you haven't checked out our new merch already, make sure to go to [MaxFunStore.com](https://www.maxfunstore.com). Check out our brand-new Weird Mom shirts and stickers complementing our very famous Weird Dad hats and t-shirts. We have also taken the Canadian House of Pizza and Garbage out of the vault for the holidays only. Get your loved ones one of those Canadian House of Pizza and Garbage t-shirts or our brand-new Canadian House of Pizza and Garbage beverage koozies in either a regular 12-ounce size or a slim 12-ounce can size. Boy, oh boy, are we up on the trends! Those slim cans, I see them all the time at the food train. Now we've got koozies for them, Canadian House of Pizza and Garbage style. Go and get them at [MaxFunStore.com](https://www.maxfunstore.com).

Jesse Thorn: And if you're giving away something this holiday, why not make it something special from the Put This On Shop? We not only have brought back our legendary dad caps—preorder on right now—we also have our New York and California caps. They're very gorgeous. And our classic Put This On ballcap. All of them available now at [PutThisOnShop.com](https://www.putthisonshop.com), all of them handmade in the United States with beautiful wool flannel and leather bands and leather adjustable straps. They're really gorgeous.

And I also just added to the Put This On Shop, John, a new line of scarves. I found some beautiful vintage Japanese textiles. And you know, there are, certain Japanese fabrics that are woven very narrow, and so we are calling them our double-selvedge scarves, because both selvages of the weaving are used in the scarf. So, it is essentially a length of the fabric with the ends finished by hand, hand rolled, the short ends. The long sides are selvages, and there are a few different, really gorgeous, vintage Japanese textiles.

Somebody I know went to Japan, bought them at an antique store or something, brought them back to me. Very limited, all there at [PutThisOnShop.com](https://www.putthisonshop.com). And if you buy one of those things, you can use the code “JUSTICE”, and it'll ship to you for free in the classic, continental United States.

John Hodgman: Jesse, when we're done recording today, remind me; I have a question I have to ask you. Where can I get a stunning antique rhino statue?

Jesse Thorn: Oh, well, you're going to want to go to PutThisOnShop.com, but we can talk about it later.

John Hodgman: Hey, one more thing before we go! You know, speaking of going into the holidays, if you're living on the West Coast or you know someone who does who's a fan of the show, we've got tickets on sale for our shows in the West Coast in the New Year.

We're going to Vancouver, Canada—British Columbia, specifically. Seattle, Washington; Portland, Oregon; and San Francisco, California for the just-announced Francisco Sketchfest appearance on Groundhog Day! February the 2nd. And too bad, Los Angeles, we are sold out for that special show with *Jordan, Jesse, Go!* But check the subreddit, Maximum Fun subreddit. Some people sometimes give away tickets there.

But the best way to make sure you get a ticket is to go ahead to MaximumFun.org/events and buy one for yourself or for a loved one or even just for a liked one! Info and tickets for all of our shows are available, as I say, at MaximumFun.org/events.

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

John Hodgman: Let's!

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Welcome back to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. We have a case here from Daniel in Brookline, Massachusetts. Shout out to Brookline, Massachusetts. What a nice time we had in Brookline, Massachusetts—just hanging out in the film library of the Coolidge Corner Movie Theater with our friend Josh Kantor, organist for the Boston Red Sox.

John Hodgman: Yep, Josh Kantor. Shout out to all of the folks at the Coolidge—Anne and Andy and Mark—and all of the incredible people who—Lars and Blair—all the people who worked there and helped us put on such a great show. It was such a wonderful time to come home to see the theater where I worked so many times, and to see it again for the first time. Because they just built this whole new extra couple of theaters on top. It's a beautiful extension, and I'm just so glad that the movie theater is thriving. And I'm so glad to have one more dispute from Brookline. So, what does this person have to say?

[00:40:00]

Jesse Thorn: Can I just say that my highlight of our entire tour was—our friend Josh Kantor can play any song, and we started talking about baseball songs.

John Hodgman: Baseball song.

Jesse Thorn: One of the great baseball songs, a song called “Van Lingle Mungo” by Dave Frishberg, jazz pianist,

John Hodgman: Right. “Van Lingle Mung... elo”. Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: “Van Lingle Mungo”.

John Hodgman: “Van Lingle Mungo”.

Jesse Thorn: It's just a—it's a very beautiful song, but all of the lyrics are just the names of baseball players. It's just—it's a truly perfect—it's the apotheosis of the phenomenon known on the internet as “remember some guys”.

John Hodgman: It's like that—sort of like that *Key & Peele* sketch.

Jesse Thorn: It is, but with real names that are just as good.

John Hodgman: With real names, not—yeah.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. And it's a song that I had on a cassette tape as a child, and I would listen to this. It was like a baseball song cassette tape. And I would listen to this cassette tape a lot. And so, Josh Kantor and I took turns during soundcheck singing (*laughing*) “Van Lingle Mungo” by Dave Frishberg and just remembering all the names. Big Johnny Mize and all of that. Oh, it was great. It was a really great time. Thanks, Josh.

John Hodgman: I'd like to give a shout out to Michael's Deli for being open on Mondays for the first time in years, so that I could—just not on purpose for me, it just so happens that I really wanted a pastrami egg and cheese sandwich, and they made me one, and it was delicious. And then I also want to shout out, not to a Brookline—they have a branch now in Brookline, which is a real delight, but it's a Connecticut small chain of noodle shops called Mecha Noodle Bar, where they make really, really good different ramens and pho and pan-Asian cuisine of all kinds. And not only does their stuff taste really good when you're eating it at their location, right there across Harvard Street and Coolidge Corner, but it even tastes great after it's been heated up at 1AM in a microwave oven, and you're eating it alone in a completely empty, dark lobby of a Courtyard by Marriott. It's really good. Just a Brookline delight all around.

Okay. But we do have a dispute here from Daniel in Brookline. What does Daniel have to say?

Jesse Thorn: “My wife fills the Brita pitcher with whatever temperature water the tap is set to. This often leads to a pitcher full of hot water for drinking. She says this is because I don't refill it. That's not true. I would like her to acknowledge that filling a Brita with hot water is unhinged behavior and that blaming it on me is unfair.”

John Hodgman: Mm. What are you—what's your hydration situation these days, you guys?

Jesse Thorn: Fully hydrated. 100% moist.

John Hodgman: Really? How do you—when you're going for a drink of water, what's your go-to drink of water? A tall glass of water, Jesse? Tall glass of tap water?

Jesse Thorn: You know, I grew up—my father was a recovering alcoholic, and when he and I lived together in a little apartment in the Mission in San Francisco, before he married my stepmother, there were usually two drinks in the fridge. One was—

John Hodgman: Well, that's just science.

Jesse Thorn: The body needs two drinks.

And the two drinks were, number one, a like 2-liter bottle of generic club soda. Just the absolute most classic recovering alcoholic beverage that there is. And the other was—you know that kind of fancy-ish apple juice that comes in a glass jug with like a—

John Hodgman: Martinelli's!

Jesse Thorn: Not a Martinelli's one, not the glass jug that is like an apple, but like a Kuh-nudsen—or a Knudsen—that comes in a glass jug and has a like a pebbly throat of the jug that you hold on to.

John Hodgman: Pebbly throat jug. That's my favorite baseball player, by the way.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. (*Chuckles.*) And he would keep that in the fridge with no lid on it, because he lost the lid at some point, so that there was always cold water. Because he liked to drink just cold tap water in that jug. And that, frankly, is essentially my hydration habit to this day. I don't drink club soda, which I guess has a little salt in it or something that distinguishes it from seltzer. I'm glad to drink club soda. That's also fine with me, but I have a bubble water machine. I drink ice cold bubble water, or I drink cold water from the fridge poured over pebble ice from the pebble ice machine that was purchased for me by my good friend, John Hodgman.

John Hodgman: Oh, I'm so glad that thing hasn't broken. (*Chuckles.*)

[00:45:00]

Seems impossible that it hasn't broken by now. I'm so glad that's working for you. But no filtration, no Brita filter, straight from the tap.

Jesse Thorn: Well, you know, speaking of Costco, I have a Kirkland brand filtering water pitcher.

John Hodgman: Oh, okay. So, you do have a water pitcher. Alright.

But Jennifer Marmor, Jesse goes both ways: still and sparkling. Are you a still baby or a sparkling baby?

Jennifer Marmor: I'm also both. Right now I have sparkling in this glass that I made from the bubble water machine. Yeah, at home if we go still, I'll do tap water. But I usually put ice in it, because I just like iced water better.

John Hodgman: You gotta—yeah, look, here in New York City we have pretty good tap water. I don't ever have to filter it particularly. It tastes great. But you know, in general, I'm a sparkling baby. If I go to a restaurant, and they're like, “Still, sparkling, or tap?” everyone at the table's like, “Tap is fine.”

I'm like, (*smacking the table*) “No, it is not! It is not fine. I know this is a ridiculous upsell, but I want a bottle of sparkling water.”

And I will say that—you know, I've had a bubble machine in the past, but I don't—(*stammering*) I really love trying out different sparkles. I'm really into this brand, Lurisia. Lurisia is from the Italian Alps and has got a haunted lighthouse keeper on the front of it, holding a lantern at the sea, looking forlornly. That's what I like to think about when I'm drinking my water. I also like—Mountain Valley is pretty good too. But I'll tell you what I'm off of. Gerolsteiner?

Jesse Thorn: I don't like a Gerolsteiner.

John Hodgman: I like mineral content, and I like a little sodium in my bubble water. I'm sorry, Gerolsteiner, when I finish drinking a big bottle of sparkling water, you know what I don't want to be? Thirsty. That stuff just makes me more thirsty! You know what I like is that—I think it's the same company that makes Jarritos, the Mineragua. I think (*inaudible*).

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, Jarritos Mineragua is pretty good. How do you feel about Peñafiel?

John Hodgman: I don't know about Peñafiel! Is that a baseball player or a sparkling water?

Jesse Thorn: Peñafiel is a Jarritos competitor. Jarritos has gone pretty hard in the United States the last, maybe, 10 years. They have the English language marketing and stuff, which they didn't used to have. Jarritos's main competitor, though—at least in the imported beverages from Mexico in the United States market—was always Peñafiel. Which is sort of more—it is a soda line, but it is more focused on the idea of it being mineral water. And they make—you know, they make Jarritos-style fruity, sweetened sodas, but they also—their like main product is a sparkling water. And it is nice, but it comes in a plastic container.

Daniel Speer, our Mexican American correspondent, checking in.

Daniel Speer: Yeah, the main difference with all these Mexican drinks is that instead of corn syrup, they use sugar, because sugar is subsidized in Mexico. They have sugarcane, and that's one of the biggest Mexican exports. So, Peñafiel has a lot of appeal because it uses sugar. And it gets you—it's less fake, I guess, tasting.

John Hodgman: Much like—well, it's got a different flavor profile. Much like, you know, the Coke that is exported—the Coca Cola that is exported from Mexico has cane sugar as opposed to corn syrup. And you know, you get it at hipster restaurants and so forth.

Daniel Speer: Yeah, or if you're like my family, we would go to Mexico once a month and then just restock on junk food.

(They laugh.)

John Hodgman: There we go!

Jesse Thorn: How could you ever find Mexican junk food here in Southern California, Daniel?

Daniel Speer: In the '90s, it was harder! In the '90s, it was harder to come by. And when I was a kid, we lived in San Diego. So, a border trip wasn't that big of a deal, you know?

Jesse Thorn: I'll tell you this. I think I've complained about this on *Judge John Hodgman* before, but in that time when I lived with my dad and just my dad—I mean, I split time between my parents' houses, but there was no one else at my dad's house. Well, I would be waiting for the bus to take me to school—this would be when I was about seven or eight years old—once in a great while, he would say I could pick out a drink to bring with me to school. But the only store that was by the bus stop was a Mexican grocery store. And in the Mexican grocery store, the only drink was Kerns Nectar. *(Laughing.)*

John Hodgman: I don't even know what that is.

Jesse Thorn: I hated Kerns Nectar. Drink a bite of Kerns Nectar. I hated this stuff, but it was—I needed to choose something.

[00:50:00]

Because otherwise—I was getting to choose anything! So, I had to choose something.

John Hodgman: Coming up to bat, famous lefty Kerns Nectar. Here comes the pitch outside. Strike one for Kerns—no, foul—well, anyway, ball.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. Good job, John.

John Hodgman: Kerns Nectar baseball player—is the name of a baseball player, is the joke that I was making. Okay.

Jesse Thorn: Kerns Nectar, holding a bat—a baseball bat.

John Hodgman: Holding a baseball bat! We'll see what happens.

Jesse Thorn: There it goes.

John Hodgman: The thrower throws, orb comes in—boom, into the score hole. Holy cow!

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. Got it. Nailed it. Nailed it.

John Hodgman: In any case!

Jesse Thorn: Boom, into the score hole.

John Hodgman: In any case, Jesse, you identified something that was very important to me. Which is that water that comes in plastic does not taste good to me. And that includes Brita filters, everybody. Don't care for them! Now, look, I have a lot of fondness for the Brita filter. And I mean, talk about Brookline. First time I ever saw a Brita filter was at Lisa Dierks grownup apartment in Brookline, Massachusetts. Boy, did Lisa Dierks tell us how to live. Take your shoes off in the apartment, have a Brita filter, pay your rent on time. She was a grownup. We weren't. It was amazing.

And yet, I don't ever want to drink water from a Brita filter, because it tastes like plastic to me. Is it placebo? Perhaps. But it tastes like plastic. That said, Daniel, do not describe your wife as unhinged when what you really mean is lazy. Or impatient. Or resentful. Because I have no doubt that she's correct; you probably don't fill up that pitcher enough. But that is no reason why she should be filling it up with hot water. Especially when, if you were not so lazy or impatient or resentful, you wouldn't be writing me; you'd be checking the Brita website that says, quote, "Hot water shouldn't be used with the Brita standard filter."

She's doing it wrong, but you both are. You both should stop calling each other unhinged and wrong, and instead just fill up the British pitcher with cold water. Break the circle of revenge. Fill the pitcher, Daniel. But yeah, don't fill it up with hot water.

Jesse Thorn: It's also really energy inefficient, because you're using energy to heat up the water, and then you're using energy to cool it back down with your refrigerator. It's warming up your entire refrigerator. What a mess.

John Hodgman: I just hesitate to call unhinged what we can ascribe to simply like, "We're just trying to get along here. We're just trying to fill up the picture." But yeah, no, technically you're correct, Daniel. You got to fill that picture up with cold water. That's what the website says. Do it.

Jesse Thorn: Here's something from Brian in Westfield, Massachusetts.

"I have been the commissioner of a friends and family NFL pick'em pool for the last 25 years. At the beginning of this season, I changed a pool setting in order to eliminate weekly ties and a split pot. We play for bananas."

John Hodgman: Alright. I'm just going to stop you there. Am I having a stroke? Do these words mean something to you? I feel like I'm just hearing Charlie Brown teacher talk here, but okay.

Jesse Thorn: This is an intrafamily form of gambling in which you're basically just choosing who is going to win in games during that week's NFL football games.

John Hodgman: Okay. Alright, what's the dispute then?

Jesse Thorn: And apparently they play for bananas.

“More than one pool member let me know that they don't like this new rule. I emailed the group to open up the discussion. I encouraged everyone to hit ‘reply all’ to weigh in on the topic and vote yay or nay. A few Millennials in the group have harshly criticized me for showing a lack of internet courtesy. Based on the responses the thread has received so far, I stand by my decision. I think my critics are dunderheads. They think I am an obtuse Boomer.”

John Hodgman: (*Chuckling.*) Okay. Okay, Boomer, dunderhead, or whatever. What are the top email sins that you've encountered, Jesse? I'll get it started. You know, what bothers me is long emails. Oh! All those *Judge John Hodgman* fans have now just paused in the middle of their 10th paragraph of that email they're sending to me right now. But it's true.

Jesse Thorn: (*Laughing.*) I've seen the emails.

John Hodgman: It's true. It's true. Look, I love it when you send me emails, and I'm so glad that you listen. But you know, a paragraph is fine. You don't have to send more than one. I won't send out—I send out a newsletter at Hodgman.substack.com that comes in email form. And while that will have multiple paragraphs, I would make sure that no paragraph is longer than three lines. Just because it's more readable to me. You know, those big blocks of text, not for me.

[00:55:00]

And by now—I mean, you know, our attention spans are so challenged. Not merely by our habit of looking at our phones all the time or whatever, but it's just like we have so much coming at us that you need to be clean and punchy and write in direct sentences. Get in, get your message out there, get out. That's my thing. That's my advice for emails. Do you have any emailing advice?

Jesse Thorn: My mom sends emails that I don't understand what they mean. Like, I really don't know what they mean. My wife rarely knows what they mean. She often has to come to me for explanation. But then I often—even with four decades of experience with my mom's writing, I still sometimes struggle to understand what they mean. I do not know what my mom's neurodivergences are, but they are substantial, and they directly affect her ability to write emails that I understand. (*Chuckles.*)

John Hodgman: Clarity. Clarity, again, is key when it comes to emails.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. But I think the obvious one is—and in my email inbox, probably the—almost certainly the biggest problem is publicists. Publicists who are sending me things that are irrelevant to my work, because it is easier for them to just blast it to every email address they have than to actually make pitches to people who might actually appreciate what they're pitching.

John Hodgman: Got to cast that net wide now that it's so easy to reach people. Why not bother everyone?

Jesse Thorn: Exactly. But I think that the question of CCing without BCCing and replying all is, ultimately, the like the most central email sin—is if you don't need to make everyone's email address public for a particular reason, then you can BCC instead of CCing. And if you don't need to talk to everyone, you can reply instead of replying all.

John Hodgman: Yeah, I would agree. Replying all has come up frequently in the—yeah, I would agree. Aside from protecting people's privacy and, frankly, the dignity of their attention, and not looping them in on stuff that they don't necessarily need to know about, replying all is a really, really hard way to have a group conversation. Like, all of a sudden you've got a list of 30 or 40 emails, and depending on how your email program formats it, that last email for some reason might just be like a single column of one character.

You know, it's so confusing and complicated. And I think, Brian, that the biggest email sin of all—and this is what your Millennial family members are trying to teach you—is using email. Like, it's a terrible—compared to a text thread, it's a terrible way to have a group conversation. The formatting just becomes so ungainly, and it is so complicated to follow the conversation. and young people don't do it. Young people don't really use email anymore.

Like, if I email something to either of our adult children, I might as well be putting it into a tin of caramel popcorn and throwing it into Lake Michigan. 'Cause that's how soon I'm going to get a response from that email. It's just not part of it. And frankly, using reply all to try to have this conversation, I dare say it is dunderheaded. That's right. I said it! You are the dunderhead, sir. You have a head of dunder.

This goes back to our dispute about how to punctuate text messages, in particular using periods at the end of sentences in text messages—or specifically, the ends of messages. And a young person in the office advised the older person in the office like don't use a period at the end of the message, because it sounds severe. It sounds harsh. And the old person's like, “You don't understand punctuation anymore! Read *Strunk & White!*” Meanwhile, that person is using “toe the line” incorrectly all the time and “begs the question” incorrectly all the time. People think they're so smart about language, but they're dumb. They're all dumb.

And the fact is, when someone who offers you advice on how to use language—particularly a younger person, is trying to teach you how to use language as it is used now, that's a favor for you. That's information for you to process and perhaps not incorporate into your life. But better take it in and decide. Like, now I understand. that putting a period at the end of a text

message sounds like yelling. Period. Dead stop. That's what it sounds like. It's different than if you're writing a formal letter or an email or whatever. And you need to be flexible.

[01:00:00]

Okay, Boomer? Be flexible. I don't know if Slack is the answer for you, but there's got to be a better way for you to communicate with everybody than these reply alls in the emails. It's terrible.

Jesse Thorn: I read a newspaper article one time—you know, in 1874. (*Laughs.*) I guess.

John Hodgman: Yeah, that's right. I remember.

Jesse Thorn: I was reading newspaper articles.

I read a newspaper article relatively recently about Gen Z business owners not using email, which I understand. I think there's a certain tragedy to people turning away from email, because it's really one of the last parts of the internet that isn't corrupted by corporate advertising algorithms and attempts to build walled gardens. It's an open platform that has existed for a really long time for a reason.

But leaving that aside, there was—

John Hodgman: And I will say, offers a lot of features and convenience when you are conveying information formally or trying to send attachments. In terms of, you know, professional correspondence, email is the way to go. Reply all sucks, but that's what I'm saying. But go on, Jesse.

Jesse Thorn: Unless you're the people that this trend article found—who were people in their 20s who were business owners who communicated about their business exclusively through Instagram messages. (*Laughing.*)

Which aren't—at the time—I think with the introduction of like AI features into Instagram, those messages are now searchable, maybe? But I know that at the time, because I was selling things on Instagram at the Put This On Shop—[@Put.This.On](#)—you couldn't search in Instagram messages for anything that was inside the messages.

It's like, I can't imagine how you could possibly keep track of your correspondence without being able to sort it or search it.

John Hodgman: I'm not going to say it's dunderheaded. I mean, I do think you're losing something by not being able to search your messages or properly archive them or keep them, should Instagram decide to shut down tomorrow or whatever. But hey, it's your planet now. I don't know why I would be yelling at a younger person when they're inheriting the planet as it is. Like, I'm sorry. All I should be doing is apologizing. So, yeah. Okay, Boomer. Don't be a dunderhead.

Jesse Thorn: The docket is now clear! That's it for another episode of *Judge John Hodgman*. *Judge John Hodgman*, created by Jesse Thorn and John Hodgman. Our video editor and Tijuana Grocery correspondent is Daniel Speer. The podcast, edited by AJ McKeon. Our producer is Jennifer Marmor. Nattie Lopez is our social media manager. Photos from the show are posted on our Instagram account, [@JudgeJohnHodgman](https://www.instagram.com/JudgeJohnHodgman), [Instagram.com/JudgeJohnHodgman](https://www.instagram.com/JudgeJohnHodgman).

Do you think we're going to probably—we'll probably end up with some pictures of Guardian Angels there. Don't you think?

John Hodgman: I'd love to see your pictures of Guardian Angels. I'd love to see your recommended bubble waters storage solutions. Love to see your popcorns. Send me the corns the way you like it.

Jesse Thorn: We're on TikTok and YouTube, [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](https://www.youtube.com/@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod), where there is lots of exclusive content in addition to the video of every single episode.

You know, I just read a study, John, from Edison Media Research. YouTube, now the number one podcast platform, the most used podcast platform. So, go ahead and send an email to a 20-something, and tell them to watch it on YouTube.

John Hodgman: Watch the podcast on YouTube.

Jesse Thorn: [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](https://www.youtube.com/@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod).

John Hodgman: [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](https://www.youtube.com/@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod). Smash that like, smash that subscribe, smash that notification bell, smash that share, smash us a comment over there on YouTube. Number one podcast platform world! You can let me know whether or not you think that replying all is a betting pool foul over there in the comments on YouTube or wherever you want to get to me.

But we also still need party fouls in general—and all of your party disputes. Is someone making punch wrong at the party? What about a potluck dispute? I love a potluck dispute. Maybe the luck is not so good. Speaking of parties, you know where we always have a good party is over there in the Members Only Mailbag.

If you're a member of Maximum Fun, you can send us a letter at MaximumFun.org/jjho. Doesn't have to be a dispute, doesn't have to be anything! It just can be a request for comment of any kind. And we'll read it over there in the Members Only feed, the Members Only Mailbag. This year we're going to do our *Judge John Hodgman* Office Holiday Party over there in the BoCo feed, the Members Only feed.

(Jesse whistles.)

Will we be able to top Kenny's 5 Cup Salad—also known as Moon Poop—from last year?

[01:05:00]

I don't know! But if you or your family has a favorite old holiday food or drink recipe—particularly if it's weird or disgusting; we're talking about eggnog and Fanta territory here—send it over there at MaximumFun.org/jjho. If you're not already a member, do consider becoming one at MaximumFun.org/join, so you can get in on that Membos Only Office Party Mailbag coming up soon.

You can always join the fun at MaximumFun.org/join at any time. All members at the \$5 a month level or higher get immediate access to the entire network's bonus feed, including our monthly Membo Mailbags. A lot of fun.

Jesse Thorn: And of course, we want to hear any dispute that you have. You can send them to us at MaximumFun.org/jjho. They are the gasoline that powers the motor vehicle that is the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. So, go to MaximumFun.org/jjho, and submit your case right this very moment. 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!