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Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

John Hodgman: Claxon, claxon, claxon! Please pardon the claxon, but I have a very happy surprise announcement. Thank you, thank you, thank you to everyone who supported *Judge John Hodgman* and all of Maximum Fun during the MaxFunDrive. I'm very, very happy to announce that we did meet our stretch goal of 2,500 new upgrading and boosting members, and that means we did it! We unlocked *Get Your Pets*. Now, if you don't know, *Get Your Pets* is the afternoon talk show in which I, a person who used to be on actual television, now goes online at the *Judge John Hodgman* YouTube channel and interviews not people, but their cats and dogs and other pets. It's called *Get Your Pets*, and we're gonna do it on April the 3rd at 3PM Eastern, noon Pacific.

It's going to be a very special episode of *Get Your Pets* where all pets are invited to wear their spring finest. Whether it's an Easter hat on a dog, or a cat wearing a Seersucker suit. And seriously, I wanna see a cat in a Seersucker suit. Or perhaps a special celebrity guest—such as Jesse Thorn and his two dogs, Mabel and Junior—wearing their spring finest. You'll see it all on *Get Your Pets*. Please join us over there at [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](#). That's the YouTube channel for *Judge John Hodgman*. Check out the live video section at noon or 3PM, depending on which coast you're in.

By the time you hear this, we will have already set up something so that you can go hit a bell and notify you in advance of when we are going to start streaming. *Get Your Pets* is gonna happen on Thursday, April the 3rd at noon Pacific, 3PM Eastern. Go to [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](#) live video section to set a notification right now. It's gonna be a lot of fun.

And most of all, may I say again, thank you to all of the wonderful supporters of Maximum Fun and *Judge John Hodgman* during the MaxFunDrive. What a delight it was to spend time with you online and off, and we really do appreciate your support. So, let's celebrate it with some pets and funny hats.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jean Grae: Welcome to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast! I'm Guest Bailiff Jean Grae, sitting in for Jesse Thorn. This week—oh, come on you guys—“Time and Rubbishment”. Mm.

Nick brings the case against his wife, Michele—with just one L because she's efficient. The trash pickup schedule in Nick and Michele's neighborhood is confusing. No one knows when to bring their bins out. Nick wants to put an automated digital sign in their front window that displays the schedule, but Michele is opposed. She says The sign is tacky. Who's right? Who's wrong? Only one can decide. Please rise as Judge John Hodgman enters the courtroom and presents an obscure cultural reference.

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

John Hodgman: “Trash! Won't pick it up. Take those lights away. Trash! Won't pick it up. Don't throw your life away. Trash! Won't pick it up. Please don't take my podcast away.”

Guest Bailiff Jean Grae, please swear the litigants in.

Jean Grae: Nick and Michele, please rise and raise your right hands.

(Chairs squeak.)

Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth—so help you God or a manatee that you cannot hug, because that is illegal?

(They swear.)

Great. And do you swear to abide by Judge John Hodgman's ruling, despite the fact that he keeps saying he's ambidextrous, but I have never seen this put to use?

(They swear.)

Hm. Judge Hodgman, you may proceed.

That doesn't count. I see what you're doing. That's not how ambidextrous works. You can't just clap your hands like a crab. That's not it.

John Hodgman: If you're—*(chuckles)* well, if you're watching on the YouTube channel, [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](#), you'll see that I am using both of my hands. But I am not ambidextrous. I am unidextrous at best. And I'm doing my imitation of a Maine lobster. One of these is my crusher claw. The other one of these is my... bity claw. I don't remember what the claws are for, but this is what they do. *(Claw pinching noises.)*

Jean Grae: Which one is more delicious?

John Hodgman: Oh, that's a really good question, Jean. Crusher claw is bigger than the sharpy claw. Sharpy claw is mostly used for holding Sharpies, 'cause lobsters sign a lot of autographs.

Jean Grae: Because they are ambidextrous, as everyone knows.

John Hodgman: Well, no, but they have— You know what? I don't know! Hey, send us a letter if you know.

[00:05:00]

Are lobsters ambidextrous? Or are they—

Jean Grae: How do you not know that song?

John Hodgman: Are lobsters ambidextrous? Is that a song?

Jean Grae: No, it's "Lobster, lobster writes with both hands. Lobster, lobster plays with those cans." 'Cause the lobsters also like to kick cans along the sea floor. I don't know how you don't know these songs. Okay.

John Hodgman: I don't know. Well, I guess it's an old Maine folk song that I should know, I suppose.

(Jean confirms.)

I wonder—I do not know the answer to this. Hey, Nick or Michele for an immediate summary judgment in one of yours favors, can either of you say authoritatively whether or not lobsters always have the crusher claw on one side, or do they alternate? In other words: are lobsters handed?

Nick: I do not know.

Michelle: I have no idea.

John Hodgman: We're reaching you in Columbus, Ohio, right?

(They confirm.)

Well, and that's—is that on a river? It's gotta be.

Nick: That's on two rivers, the Olentangy and the Scioto.

John Hodgman: Say those names again, please.

Nick: Olentangy and Scioto.

John Hodgman: Okay, I'll commit that to memory.

(Nick laughs.)

I don't think you have any river lobsters there in Ohio though, right?

Nick: No.

Michele: I don't think so.

John Hodgman: You don't have any great lake lobsters either?

Nick: No. Crawfish.

John Hodgman: Oh, do you? Ohhhh, little lobsters. Call them lobsterettes. Alright, well, we're not talking about lobsters anymore. Because for actual summary judgment in one of yours favors, can either of you—Nick or Michele—? By the way, you may be seated.

(Chairs squeak.)

Can either of you name the piece of culture that I referenced as I entered this courtroom? We'll start with you, Nick.

Nick: I cannot—I'm gonna guess The Cramps song, “Garbage Man”.

John Hodgman: The Cramps song, “Garbage Man”. That got a big guffaw from social media manager Dan Telfer out there, across the window from me.

(Nick laughs.)

Michele, I hate to say it. It's a great guess. Nick has offered a great guess.

Michele: No pressure. *(Laughs.)*

John Hodgman: No pressure. But you better get it right.

Michele: Oh goodness. I'm gonna guess Oscar the Grouch from *Sesame Street*.

John Hodgman: That is also a great guess! Right, Jean?

Jean Grae: I love that! I love that so much. And I love you both equally in different ways right now. I get the relationship; I get the whole thing. Like, that explained a lot about who they are as people, and I think we can go.

John Hodgman: Did Oscar the Grouch ever sit in with The Cramps? Did he ever sit in and play an old fish skeleton as a harp or something?

(They laugh.)

That'd be good. Woow! Both guesses are great. All guesses... are wrong, I'm sorry to say. It was the lyrics to a song, and you're absolutely right, Michele, that I was thinking about “I Love Trash” by Oscar the Grouch. And I'll announce right now on an already rollicking episode of *Judge John Hodgman*—rollicking because I am here in the studios of Maximum Fun Podcasting Network, an employee-owned cooperative, where I am in Los Angeles. Jesse Thorn is not here! What's going on!?! But we have wonderful Guest Bailiff Jean Grae.

Jean Grae: Hellooo!

John Hodgman: Over there across the country in Baltimore. And the reason that Jean is here, and Jesse is on a cruise with our friend Jonathan Coulton. And Jean and I were left behind.

Jean Grae: We really were.

John Hodgman: But of course, Jean, you couldn't go on the cruise right now, because you've got this incredible book about to come out.

Jean Grae: Yes. I had to say no to sailing the seas, because I gotta put out some pages to the world.

John Hodgman: Yeah. You're pushing pages on the world! *In My Remaining Years* is the name of the book that Jean Grae has written so wonderfully. It is a wise and wonderful, a very funny memoir of a—dare I say, a singular life that has not yet ended. But here you will hear what Jean has to say about her remaining years and all of the years that have led to this very moment. (*Chuckles.*) Go. It is out now.

Jean Grae: (*Chuckling.*) Right now.

John Hodgman: *In My Remaining Years*. Yeah, it is out now. Go and get it wherever books are sold or loaned. And we'll talk more about that later. But here we are with Nick and Michele.

The point I was going to make was I'm in Los Angeles. Oh yeah—it's very rollicking, 'cause I'm very disoriented. I've never been in this room alone in my life, and I'm a little scared. I'm only ever here when Jesse is here. I never sit on this side of the studio. Unfortunately, I can see myself in the video, which is very distracting. We tried to put a Post-It note over my face on the iPad, but it didn't work. It fell off. So, things are just a little off the rails, Nick and Michele.

(*Jean chuckles.*)

In the meantime, that is a great guess. I decided not to do that one. Instead, I did a different song. I. You would not be surprised to learn that this song, which might have had an influence on—what was it? “Garbage Man” by The Cramps? I don't know which came first, but this is the definitive trash song of New York City, 1970s, by David Johansen in the New York Dolls. Rest in peace and power. David Johansen just passed away.

[00:10:00]

Incredible, groundbreaking glam rock band. And then David Johansen put on a bow tie and sang as Buster Poindexter.

Jean Grae: Yeah, that happened.

John Hodgman: That happened.

Jean Grae: And also, fitting that I'm here, because I am from trash 1970s New York City.

John Hodgman: That's what I'm talking about! You grew up—

Jean Grae: It was me! I was the garbage!

(They laugh.)

John Hodgman: “Hey, it's me. I'm the garbage. It's me.”

Jean Grae: It's me.

John Hodgman: That's the other Oscar the Grouch song. Yeah. Jean Grae grew up in the Chelsea Hotel in Chelsea, Manhattan, during a time when—indeed—they would not collect the trash!

(Jean confirms.)

Which is part of what that song is about, but mostly it's about strange, queer life on the streets of New York City in the '70s.

Jean Grae: Which is also what I was doing as a baby!

John Hodgman: You were in the New York Dolls as a baby?!

Jean Grae: Yes! They needed a baby! Every group needs a baby. Every New York group needs a queer baby.

John Hodgman: I'm just trying to remember what it is that CBGBs stands for. Cool Babies...

(Jean wheezes a laugh.)

... Go Bananas.

Jean Grae: Yeah! That was me!

John Hodgman: *(Inaudible.)* Whatever that is. Yeah, that's good.

Jean Grae: That was me. That was me who gave them the name.

John Hodgman: Ohhh Jean, it's so nice to see you. I wish you were here in this room with me, because I feel completely untethered and unanchored.

(Jean apologizes.)

I'm working off paper, Jean! *(Rattles a page.)* Paper!

(Jean apologizes again with a laugh.)

I dunno what this stuff is!

Jean Grae: It's too much.

John Hodgman: Nick and Michele, you're here too. Sorry that I can't rule in one of your favors in a summary judgment, Nick and Michele. But that's great, because we get to talk to each other across the internet wires to you there in Columbus, Ohio: the capital of Ohio. Where—who brings the case against whom? Who is the person seeking justice in my court?

Nick: I am.

John Hodgman: Nick. And then what is the nature of the justice you seek? You've got some trash.

Nick: Yes. Too often, we have trash that isn't picked up. Our collection schedule in our neighborhood is confusing and difficult to keep track of, for me and all of my neighbors. I often see bins out at the wrong time. So, I would like to put a sign in our front window. We have large front windows in our house. I would like to put a digital sign in there that helps people keep track of trash day and recycling day and yard waste day.

John Hodgman: You want to create a—essentially you want to create a PowerPoint deck for the neighborhood explaining when to take the trash out.

Nick: Yes. Correct.

John Hodgman: And the different kinds of trash.

Nick: Correct, yes.

John Hodgman: Which we'll get into in minute detail in a moment. That's a promise.

(Nick chuckles.)

But Michele, tell me about your neighborhood, there in Columbus, Ohio. Are you both Ohioans by birth and nature?

Michele: We are.

John Hodgman: Or were you lured there, as I have been so many times?

Michele: (*Laughs.*) Oh no. We are both born and raised. I'm from more Southern Ohio. He's from Northern. Yeah, we live in a great neighborhood. He's been there almost 15 years.

Nick: More than. More than, yeah.

Michele: And yeah, the trash is very confusing. I'll be honest. I never take out the trash or recycling. That is his job.

John Hodgman: (*Stammering.*) Before we get into the trash, the minutia of the trash—which, I really want to go through your trash. Trust me. But what does the neighborhood look like? It is a suburban neighborhood? It is single story, you know, two story family homes? Small lots, big lots? What are we talking about?

Michele: So, it's—what? Like, a quarter of an acre?

Nick: Eighth of an acre. Yeah.

Michele: Eighth of an acre. Yeah. We're pretty much in the city.

John Hodgman: The whole neighborhood?!

(*Nick laughs.*)

Michele: Oh yeah! (*Laughs.*)

John Hodgman: It's called some—yeah, they have a lot of density there in Columbus. No, so you're on eighth of an acre lots. Modest lots, modest homes.

Michele: Cape Cods, mostly.

John Hodgman: Cape Cods!? In Ohio!?

(*Nick confirms.*)

Get your own houses, Ohio! Michele, how long have you lived in your home?

Michele: So, I've been there about seven years.

John Hodgman: And now you cohabitate. Are you married?

(Michele confirms.)

How long have you been married?

Michele: It'll be six years this year.

John Hodgman: Congratulations.

Michele: Thank you.

John Hodgman: And how did you first meet? Were you fishing for Ohio River Lobsters one day? And you saw this handsome person in a boat across the river from you, or what?

Michele: Close! Uh, OkCupid. *(Laughs.)*

John Hodgman: Oh, okay! Fair enough! They've been bringing lobster lovers together for a long time, over there. Nick, what makes the trash collection so confusing? When you put the trash in the curb, they come and get it, right?

(Nick confirms with a chuckle.)

Or has Columbus already fallen to a warlord? *(Laughs.)*

Nick: No, not yet.

John Hodgman: Has civilization already collapsed in Columbus? And...?

Nick: No, it's getting close, but not yet.

So, the garbage day, recycling day, and yard waste day are not necessarily the same day. And they shift based on holidays in different ways.

[00:15:00]

They don't all shift the same way, and they don't all observe the same holidays. Which means it's sort of an ever-shifting collection schedule that is difficult to keep track of. You know, once everyone sort of figures it out after a holiday, and—you know—there's a couple weeks of confusion. And then—especially like in the fall, in the winter, there's a lot of holidays, so there's a lot of missed collection.

John Hodgman: You hear about that one, Jean Grae? Yard waste day. Ever hear of that one before?

Jean Grae: Yes! But only—

John Hodgman: Did you have yard waste day at the Chelsea Hotel?

Jean Grae: No, I—listen, it's been a crazy time adjusting even over the past few years. 'Cause I've never dealt with like, you know, yard waste or this kind of trash pickup where I'm like, “Oh look, they're like almost in my house. That's crazy! I'm in a house, also! That's crazy.”

John Hodgman: Yeah. You're in a freestanding home in Baltimore, which is different from the way you grew up living in New York City, the way we lived in New York City—not together, but in the same city at the same time for a while. It would've been fun to share a brownstone with you.

Jean Grae: Yeah, it—oh, that'd be great! And also we'd have so much money.

John Hodgman: Yeah, it would've been great to share an old firehouse together, like the Ghostbusters firehouse. But the way we throw garbage out in New York City is—

Jean Grae: Very different.

John Hodgman: Almost literally out the window.

Jean Grae: It's practically out the window. (*Chuckles.*) I have thrown it out the window before.

John Hodgman: So, to understand this exotic, trash disposal system, Nick, you sent in a spreadsheet?

(Nick confirms with a chuckle.)

I think we may need—I think I may need a visual aid. Let's take a look at the evidence. Exhibit A is what I'm gonna look at first.

Jean Grae: I'm gonna say already, Nick, it's very difficult between the two of you. Because I see myself in both of you. I have also made a spreadsheet about the confusing trash days here in Baltimore. I do understand.

John Hodgman: I am looking at Exhibit A, which is the spreadsheet in which Nick tries to explain the trash collection schedule. Do you have access to this spreadsheet, Jean Grae?

Jean Grae: I believe I do.

John Hodgman: Let's take a look while you're calling it up, I can read here. There's a note to the spreadsheet. “Refuse collection is confusing. Tracking refuse collection in our neighborhood is a challenge. Trash, recycling, and yard waste shift around holidays, but not in the same way or the same holidays. Each cell,” Nick writes, “represents a single day in 2025 with holidays and collection days color coded.”

(Jean gasps.)

“Light blue means holiday may affect collection days. Dark blue means trash. Dark red means recycling. And of course, everyone knows light red means yard waste.”

And now I'm gonna look at this multicolored spreadsheet.

Jean Grae: I'm looking at this spreadsheet right now. Let me tell you, I shouldn't get that excited when I open something and it's color coded, but I got real excited just now!

(They laugh.)

John Hodgman: You love data presentation, right Jean Grae?

Jean Grae: I really—I truly, truly do. In an unhealthy way.

John Hodgman: I'm looking here at a—it's a calendar for the entire year!

Jean Grae: Okay, well... some—okay.

John Hodgman: Starting with January 1st. “Holiday, no trash collection.” January 2nd, January 3rd, nothing's going on. Right, Nick? Am I reading this correctly?

(Nick confirms.)

Saturday, January the 4th, red and light red. So, that's recycling and yard waste, naturally. Then nothing until January 8th when it's trash. That's a Wednesday. Then recycling picks up again on Friday the 10th!

(Nick confirms.)

B-but it—but we just did recycling the previous Saturday! And now this Saturday, nothing. Next Wednesday, trash. The following Friday, recycling and yard waste. Okay, but—so now we're on Fridays for that. But then trash doesn't happen until the next Thursday! Because there was a holiday on the 20th, of course—Martin Luther King Day. And then on the Friday, no yard waste, but definitely recycling. I see what you mean. It just goes on and on like this! It's all over the place!

(Nick agrees.)

What—wh-wha—? Who's setting this schedule? The city of Columbus?

Nick: *(Laughs.)* Yes. Yeah, the city of Columbus. I think it is a result of different collective bargaining agreements between—trash collection is city employees; recycling is outsourced to a private company. Yeah. And I'm not sure who does the recycle—I'm not sure who does

the yard waste, but yeah. So, the different—they have different contracts, different—that they have negotiated.

John Hodgman: And you hate this because you hate unions?

Nick: No, not at all. (*Chuckles.*) Not at all.

(*Michele cackles.*)

I work for a labor union. No.

John Hodgman: They're ruining this country, right?

Nick: No, no. The exact opposite.

[00:20:00]

John Hodgman: Right, that's—okay. Alright. You want to respect the unions, but you just want the neighborhood to know when know this schedule as well as you do. I gather that the rest of the neighbors have not bothered to make a spreadsheet.

Nick: I don't think they have, no. No.

John Hodgman: So, what is the result, on the streets of Columbus in your neighborhood, of this confusion? You got yard waste all over the place?

Nick: (*Chuckles.*) Yeah. Yard waste is the least of the problems. It's—you know, the trash and recycling are out at all times. Another part of the problem is that if you leave your bins on the easement—you know, the utility easement between the street and the sidewalk and someone parks in front of them, they will not pick up the trash.

John Hodgman: These are all terms I know very well.

(*They chuckle.*)

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

John Hodgman: Michele, would you agree that your neighborhood is incredibly trashy?

Michele: (*Laughs.*) I would agree—

John Hodgman: It's got trash all over the place, it sounds like. The way Nick is describing it.

Michele: I don't think there's trash all over the place, but I do see it is very confusing. And oftentimes, there will be trash bins and recycling bins put out at different times. So, if we're not really sure what's going on, we may have our trash bin out on Wednesday when the neighbors have it out on Thursday.

John Hodgman: Wait, wait, wait, wait. Wait, wait, wait, wait. Michele. Why would you not know what's going on? Don't you have the spreadsheet?

Michele: I do have the spreadsheet.

John Hodgman: Nick, didn't you give your wife the spreadsheet?

Nick: (*Laughing.*) I did, yeah.

John Hodgman: You know what's my recommendation is? Just in case Michele's not up to date. Print the spreadsheet on a pillowcase.

(*They laugh.*)

Put it on her pillow. And yours too! But you don't want to put the spreadsheet on a pillowcase, Nick. You want to put it in your window. And not just the spreadsheet itself, but an animated version of same.

(*Nick confirms.*)

Tell me about your plan.

Nick: So, I have—it already exists. I have created a three-slide presentation that— You know, one slide is “next trash day is this day, next recycling day is this day, next yard waste day is this day.” It goes out; it reads the city's website where they keep—you know, where you can look up your collection schedule. It retrieves that information every night at midnight and updates itself automatically.

John Hodgman: You've programmed—so, it's not—you're not just making a PowerPoint deck. Which, of course, is the solution to all problems (*inaudible*) invented in the past century. But also it's going out and getting the latest information on its own.

(*Nick confirms.*)

Are you a computer programmer?

Nick: (*Chuckles.*) I am. I am. Well, I do a lot of things in IT, but yes. I do some programming.

John Hodgman: This is very industrious of you and very clever of you! Michele, what's the problem with this plan?

Michele: (*Laughs.*) First of all, I love that he sees a problem, and he's trying to fix it and like make our lives easier and everyone else's lives easier.

John Hodgman: I mean, check out the hook while my DJ revolves it!

Michele: (*Laughs.*) Yes. Like, that's just so indicative of who he is as a person, like trying to solve problems and make life easier for everyone. So, I love that. The concern that I have is putting a TV in our window would look tacky, and I don't wanna become those people.

Jean Grae: Michele, I just wanna tell you that the whole sentence was just, "The concern I have is putting a TV in the window."

(*They laugh.*)

That was it. That was really it.

John Hodgman: That's the whole sentence. That's all you need. Yeah. Well, it's not a TV, is it Nick? It's a monitor, right?

Nick: Uh, yeah. It would be—I mean, I could use either a TV or monitor. It would be easy enough to wire up whatever it needed to be. I figure—

John Hodgman: But it's a single purpose. You're not gonna be showing episodes of *South Side* and *Bluey* on this thing.

(*Nick confirms with a laugh.*)

This is just going to be your PowerPoint trash presentation. Your—excuse me, your dynamically updated trash deck, facing the neighborhood through your front picture window. And I believe that we have a photo of the exterior of your house as well that we can take a look at. I'm gonna see if I can find that now.

Okay. So, you have kind of a yellow-ish house. It's a classic Columbus river trout style house. Is that what you called it, Jean? Ohio trout?

(*Jean confirms.*)

Ohio trout style house with—it looks like three sliding windows facing the street. Is that right?

Nick: That's correct, yeah.

John Hodgman: Three separate sliders?

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So, which one would you put your trash announcement board in?

Nick: I don't have strong feelings about which one. I would think—

John Hodgman: Then what are we even doing here?

(Nick laughs.)

Surely there's one that is appropriate.

Jean Grae: May I ask if Michele has very strong feelings about not which one? Or is it just none?

Michele: That's a great question. I guess I just kind of assumed that he would put it in the middle one.

John Hodgman: What were you thinking, Nick?

Nick: I envisioned it to one of the ones off the side.

John Hodgman: Whyyy?!

Nick: I—I don't know. *(Laughs.)* I have—I do not have a good answer to that.

John Hodgman: Look, you know, I'm gonna say this. I am currently neutral in this case. Obviously, putting a huge TV facing out to your neighbors to tell them when to take their trash out is a big move.

(Nick agrees.)

And I could understand why Michele might have some trepidation surrounding it. That said, I'm open to it just 'cause it's so wild, and I don't have to live there.

(They laugh.)

But when you start telling me that you don't want to put it—when you've got three basically picture windows, and you don't want to put it in the middle one but off to the side, that just makes me—that makes me itchy. That off-center stuff is really making me upset right now, Nick!

Nick: That's fair.

John Hodgman: It just feels unbalanced to me!

Nick: Maybe we could put another one on the other side.

(Michele laughs.)

John Hodgman: Yeah. Well, you do have three windows. Why not three—?

Jean Grae: Well, yeah. If you're gonna like Wes Anderson it out, then we gotta like change the colors. And then you get, you know, one over there and one over there. And now we're really starting to do something.

John Hodgman: Yeah, Nick and Michele— So, Jean is not only our guest bailiff, she's also a musician, a composer, a comedian, a storyteller, obviously a writer. But also a visual artist and someone with a very deep sense of visual aesthetics. And I think I join Jean in imagining that what you're proposing right now—simply on aesthetic grounds, Nick?—makes me want to throw up.

(Jean cackles.)

Jean: I was gonna—

Nick: I don't have a good response to that.

John Hodgman: It makes me wanna throw up a little in... And especially when you start talking about like putting it off-center in one of the other sliders.

Jean Grae: Can I ask—maybe it's a dumb question, I don't know. But I feel like we gotta explore all the options here. Do people like not get email?

John Hodgman: Great question!

Jean Grae: Like, is there a way where—'cause when I first moved to this neighborhood, they were like, “Oh, there is a community email.”

I was like, “That sounds great!” And then a week later I was like, “I hate this so much. Count me out, take me off the list.”

But would there be—like, is there a way to just have a scheduled email that's sent out to everyone every day, and then that's just the notice?

John Hodgman: Yeah, Nick—I mean, we've established that there's still civilization in Ohio. It's not like Lord Humongous-Columbus has outlawed email. Why not send up an auto-send to all of your neighbors?

Nick: One, that would require collecting email addresses. I think the other problem is, you know, we have—

Jean Grae: Niiick! Niiick!

(Nick laughs.)

You did those—have you seen the spreadsheet!?

Nick: *(Chuckles.)* Yes.

Jean Grae: Okay. I feel like— Also, I think it might make it—so, people would have to come by your house to be able to get this information. And if there are people who are not able to do that for whatever reason, that—I mean, the trash might already be difficult for them.

John Hodgman: Yeah. You're literally not meeting people where they live. You're counting on them driving by your house to get the information that you want them to have.

Nick: Yeah. Our house is already a bit of a hub, in that we have a little free pantry box in our front yard.

Jean Grae: Oh, okay! Mm-hm. That's nice!

Nick: So, there's already a fair amount—yeah, there's already a fair amount of traffic coming to our house.

John Hodgman: Michele, explain the concept of the little free pantry for those listening at home who may not understand it.

Michele: Yeah, I think people are more familiar with the little free library. It's the same premise.

Jean Grae: Yeah, we have that here.

Michele: Yeah, it's the same exact thing. It's just a pantry for non-perishable goods. So, it's a take what you need/leave what you can type of deal.

John Hodgman: Right, right. The little free libraries are a way—they're very popular in Parks Slope, Brooklyn. That's where we take our trash books and throw them away.

Jean Grae: I'm about to take all the books out of this little free library that's right—like, 60 feet away, and just only put my book in there.

[00:30:00]

(John laughs.)

Just no other books but my book.

John Hodgman: Just fill it up. Only copies of *In My Remaining Years* by Jean Grae.

Jean Grae: What if there were a little newsletter they could pick up with that information that lived inside of the little pantry.

Nick: That's—that's... not the worst idea. I think the advantage of—

Jean Grae: (*Sardonically.*) Thanks, Nick! Thanks so much!

(*They laugh.*)

John Hodgman: Yeah. Nick is like, “That's not the worst idea, but why would I do it when I've already had the worst idea?”

(*They laugh.*)

“Sorry, that's not the worst idea. I can't go through with that.”

I'm not saying that that's the worst idea. I'm just—I'm still neutral. I'm still unbiased on this.

Nick: I think the advantage of the digital sign is that it is very passive for people to absorb the information. Anyone passing by quickly can get the information. You know, in tech they call it reducing friction, right? Like, it is an easy way for people to get the information without having to take any action, without having to do any steps.

Jean Grae: May I offer this? May I offer this? Sometimes—and I've learned this a lot over the past year. Sometimes the things that we think that we're making easier for other people are just kind of things that are easy for us to deal with, and it might not serve everyone the same way.

John Hodgman: Yeah. You know, that's—I think that Jean has raised an interesting point, Nick, that I would like to investigate with you. When Jean suggested the very civilized and, honestly, simple solution of creating an email to update your neighbors—and even an automated email to update your neighbors—to remind them, your first thought was, “Well, that would involve collecting email addresses.” Which I think I understand your apprehension with this idea. Because I think that would involve talking to your neighbors, right? Like, going to your neighbors and being like, “I would like your email address so I could send you literal junk mail. Semi literal.”

(*Nick laughs.*)

Jean Grae: But! But if those neighbors are already coming by the pantry, what say you leave a pen and a paper for them to write their emails down, no contact?

John Hodgman: I think that Nick is hoping that people are gonna come for the extra cans of cream corn, and they're gonna stay to watch the—

(They laugh.)

Jean Grae: To watch the show.

John Hodgman: To watch the screen. Yeah. The show.

Nick: I think that's a good idea. I think another part of the problem is not everyone in our neighborhood is... you know, we have people of all different ages, all different education levels. Not every—you know, I wouldn't—I'm sure there are people in our neighborhood who don't even have an email or never check their email. You know, the city already has—you can subscribe to emails from the city. People obviously don't do it. You can check the app on your phone. You know, people don't do it.

I think it is a matter of access, in that there are—for people who are willing to take that proactive step, there are already ways to do it. So, this is just sort of another level of providing access to the information to people who may not have access to it in another way.

John Hodgman: Michele, Nick really got me there. I was about to blame Nick for being shy or too scared to talk to your neighbors. And he comes back to me and was like, “Not everyone has an email address.”

And I'm like, “Oh, right. Some people live in a tech desert!” There's an access issue.

Tell me about your neighbors, Michele. How do you think they would respond to your putting a screen in one of your sliding glass door windows, telling them when to take their trash out?

Michele: Honestly, I'm not sure how they would react. When we first started talking about this, I had suggested that as well, like maybe going door-to-door or sending like a letter to each house. Because my thought is, yeah, are we trying to fix a problem that doesn't exist? So, I do wonder if we could maybe go to every house, because we are very—like, both of us are social people. We love talking to people, meeting new people. So, yeah. Could we go to people and see if this is a problem? 'Cause maybe we're the only ones with the problem. I don't think that's the case, but it could be.

John Hodgman: But Nick, you tried to convey that your neighborhood is full of misplaced trash cans all the time. Right? There is a problem, yes or no?

Nick: *(Laughs.)* I think full “all the time” is a bit of an overstatement. But I mean, I see bins out at all times. You know, I often see—you know, I see people put the bin out for the day that collection day was last week.

[00:35:00]

And you know, I happen to know it's the wrong day. So, I mean, I know it's a problem. You know, the—

John Hodgman: And what do you do? You just silently seethe?

(Nick laughs.)

You don't say to those people, "Hey, neighbors."

Nick: No.

John Hodgman: How do you feel when you see those wrong bins?

Nick: I... I-I mean, I understand. I do it all the time too. I mean, I have a difficult time keeping track of it.

John Hodgman: And you've got the spreadsheet!

Nick: I've got the spreadsheet, right.

John Hodgman: Michele, you don't seem convinced that there really is a problem though. *(Beat.)* Do you think that he's invented this problem in order to have a problem to solve?

Michele: No. I mean, I do think that there is a problem. I don't know that other people think it's as big of a problem as maybe he does.

John Hodgman: Right. And what do you think the neighbors would say about you guys if you had a big screen on—I guess—24 hours a day, rotating information about when to throw out your yard waste, when to throw out your recycling, when to throw out your regular trash, or a do-nothing day?

Michele: You know, it could go one of two ways. I think that either we're weirdos, or—you know, there have been problems in the past that we— That's why the little free pantry is there. We saw a need, and so we did what we could to fulfill that need.

John Hodgman: So, it's a fairly neighborly community, right?

Nick: Yeah, I think so.

John Hodgman: Do you get the sense that it's like—people don't— If you were to go door to door, and I know that's a miserable feeling to do, whether you're— You know, sometimes one has to do it. To say hello to your neighbors, to get to know them, or to help them make a plan to vote, for example. It's a very, very noble thing to do, to go meet your neighbors. But it's scary. I get that.

Do you think if you went door-to-door—let's say not collecting email addresses, 'cause you really eviscerated me with your "people don't have internet" comeback. That was good. You did a good job there. But if you went door-to-door with a handout or a piece of—a flyer or a

piece of paper—and talked to your neighbors about, “I know this is very confusing, maybe this will help,” do you think they'd be receptive?

Nick: Uh, potentially. Yeah.

John Hodgman: Do you have any evidence that your neighbors share your concern and confusion? Have you talked to them about this? Or is this just something you're observing 'cause cans are out when they shouldn't be?

Nick: I mean, the guy across the street is constantly asking me if I know when the next collection day is.

John Hodgman: Right. He's like, “Hey Nick, I'm your across the street neighbor. I'm constantly confused. Could you put a screen up in your house that will shine into my bedroom 24 hours a day to remind me?”

(They cackle.)

Michele, you said that you have a concern that you would be, uh, pegged as the weird house in the neighborhood if you had a TV announcing trash collection details shining out into the street 24 hours a day. And I'm going to tell you that is what would happen. You would be the weird house. Why is that a concern for you?

Michele: You know, I don't know that like it's a concern, because I feel like we shouldn't be those weirdos. But I guess when I really think about it, like we are weird people. Sooo, I guess I don't know why that is such a concern for me. *(Laughs.)*

John Hodgman: Do you think that the neighbors would resent this sign? What do you think their reaction would be, if I were to order in Nick's favor?

Michele: Yeah. Resenting not so much. I mean, I think that they would probably just kind of giggle. *(Chuckles.)*

John Hodgman: They would kind of giggle?

Michele: Yeah!

John Hodgman: Do you think it would actually change behavior?

Michele: I mean, my gut says no. But I mean, maybe? It could be a powerful tool to help people get on the same track.

John Hodgman: I'll tell you—I'll make the argument for you that you won't make for yourself: it's not gonna help. You sent in a draft of your deck, I believe.

(Nick confirms.)

And I'm gonna try to take a look at that now so we can see what you have in mind. So, there are three slides that are part of this deck. And the slides will be chosen based on your bot going to this town hall, getting the information, bringing it back. So, it says, "Next recycling collection Friday, March 14th." And this is just plain white-on-black lettering. "Next yard waste collection Friday, March 28th," et cetera, et cetera. So, it's very, very—for someone who likes data visualization, this is a pretty rudimentary design, I may say, Nick.

Nick: Yes. It is. My primary concern was legibility from the street. You know, I was trying to make it very simple and easy to read the information.

John Hodgman: And then it goes on to say—so, it says, "Next yard waste collection, March 28th. Next recycling—" And then the sign, the next slide is "no independent thought."

[00:40:00]

(They giggle.)

The next slide is "obey." The next slide is—

Jean Grae: Consume.

John Hodgman: The next slide is "they live, we sleep."

And Nick, may I also point out that I felt like you were saying that the sign would say, "Today is trash day," or "Today is yard waste day." But now you're saying, "Next week is this—" or like "the next yard waste day is this day." Now you're asking people to plan ahead! You think they're gonna be walking by getting their cream spinach and then with their Filofaxes to write this down in?!

Nick: It would say—for example, if the collection day were tomorrow, the slide would update to say the next trash collection is tomorrow, or trash collection is today. So, it would update in real time to when the next—you know, to say today or tomorrow.

John Hodgman: You also have a nice picture here, Exhibit D, of your little free pantry. "Leave what you can, take what you need." You got a can of pinto beans in there, a can of Knorr seasoned rice, chicken rice. Looks like you have some towels in there. That's very nice! That's very handy. Alright, I think I—

If I were to rule in your favor, Michele, what would you have me rule? Nothing, right? Nothing in the window.

(Michele confirms.)

Nick, what would you have me rule, if I were to rule in your favor? Put a TV in the window?

Nick: Yeah. I mean, I think the ideal ruling is something that makes us both happy.

John Hodgman: I disagree with you.

Nick: Yeah, I don't—I mean, I don't wanna just put the sign in the window against Michele's wishes. Right? I mean, I don't—you know, I don't want—I mean, obviously I would like to be able to put the sign up. But yeah, I mean, I think the ideal ruling is something that makes us both happy, and I don't know what that is.

John Hodgman: Well, my job is to make one of you happy and the other sad.

(They laugh.)

Sometimes I fail at that job, and I do end up making both people happy. But I want to assure you and the audience that is not ever my intention.

Jean Grae: It's very true.

John Hodgman: Michele, it says here that you're concerned about being “those people” in the neighborhood.

Michele: Yeah.

John Hodgman: Why is that upsetting to you? Do you feel like you're already on the cusp of being those people? And what does it mean to you, being those people?

Michele: That's a great question.

John Hodgman: Thank you. It was written down for me.

(They laugh.)

Michele: Yeah. I mean, at the end of the day, I guess I don't really care that much. Because we—

John Hodgman: Oh, alright! Then why are we even here?

(They laugh.)

Michele: I don't wanna look tacky. I think it would be unbecoming. I don't like the aesthetic of it. Yeah, I just think it would look pretty silly to have a TV monitor in the front room.

John Hodgman: Are you more concerned about what your neighbors will think if they're walking by your monitor window, or how you're going to feel when you come home and there's a big sign, a big, illuminated sign in your window saying, “trash day today”?

Michele: It's definitely a matter of what other people would think. For sure.

John Hodgman: Really? You feel that would look good?

Michele: No.

John Hodgman: You would look at that and going like, “That looks terrible, but at least Nick is happy. So, I'm happy.”

Michele: I mean, if it were just us two, absolutely. But I worry more about what the neighbors would think, what that would say about us.

John Hodgman: What do you think it would say about—? What sign would—what would the sign saying, “Take your yard waste out today,” really be saying to the neighbors?

Michele: Yeah. That's where we come back to like it is kind of just right up our alley in terms of like seeing a problem and giving a solution. So, I'm not sure.

John Hodgman: Okay. I think I heard everything I need to in order to make my decision. I am going to take my goat on a rope and go for a stroll as I think about this. I'll be back in a moment with my verdict.

Jean Grae: Please rise as Judge John Hodgman exits the courtroom.

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

Alright, Michele and Nick, I'm gonna ask you: Michele, how are you feeling right now? How do you think this is going?

Michele: I'm feeling really good. I feel like you guys are both kind of on my side and at least understand where I'm coming from. *(Laughs.)*

Jean Grae: Okay. Nick, how are you feeling?

Nick: I think not as confident as Michele. But I, you know, also think the judge has an affinity for weirdness. So, I think that's going in my favor.

Jean Grae: Well, I know the judge, John Hodgman, is going to come in and say something that I would be like, “Oh, that's why we're friends. Absolutely. And I 100% agree. And we wouldn't have worded it the same way, but absolutely.” But before he does, I wanna tell you both that it takes a lot to be really self-aware and environmentally aware, and especially of your neighbors and caring and willing to see solutions and do something about them to contribute to your community betterment.

[00:45:00]

And one of the ways we can best do that for all of us is by continuing to not care how things look as long as they make life better for all of us. We'll see what the judge has to say about all this when we come back in just a moment.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Promo:

Music: Relaxed, funky synth.

Speaker: A special thank you to the MaxFun members who joined, boosted, or upgraded their membership during this year's MaxFunDrive. And as a thank you to everyone who supports MaxFun, we're excited to announce that this year's pin sale is now open. This year's proceeds will go to Transgender Law Center to support their continuing work and advocating self-determination for all people.

Everyone at \$10 per month or more can purchase MaxFunDrive pins featuring shows from across the network. And all levels are able to buy our 2025 exclusive pin featuring our rad pal, Nutsy the Squirrel. For more info, head to MaximumFun.org/pinsale.

And as always, thank you so much for your ongoing support.

Promo:

Music: Exciting, upbeat music.

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

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

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

Ify: Listen, we love straight White guys.

Drea: Well, some of them.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(Music ends.)

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

John Hodgman: While we're taking a break from this case, I just want to say once again that we are so happy to be joined by Jean Grae. Jean has been a friend of the show and mine for many years, and she is a friend of yours. And that is why my plug for the week is go and get Jean Grae's book, *In My Remaining Years*. And make sure to follow Jean wherever you can. On Instagram. You have a Substack too, right, Jean?

Jean Grae: I do. My Substack is called "Stacked Passions", and you can find me over on my Instagram, [@JeannieGrigio](#). That's two Ns. And then you'll work it out. Just type in Jean Grae on Instagram and your Googles, and you'll find me instantly. And I'll be over there, and you can ask me questions. You can ask me about the book. You can see what I'm doing about the book. You can get the book and then tell me you got the book.

John Hodgman: And Jean, you read your own audiobook. Isn't that true?

Jean Grae: I did read my own audiobook. I narrated that mother-mmm! And I made the music.

John Hodgman: That mother-mother?

Jean Grae: That mother-mother. I made the music, and it's got amazing sound design. It was a real big passion project. And I'm not gonna say that I loved it more than writing the book, but I may. I may. I may.

John Hodgman: *(Laughs.)* I need to tell everybody that the moment that I met Jean Grae, my life got better, and it has only gotten better more and more, the more time I spend with her. I've only gotten smarter, wiser, and I know myself better, and I'm very grateful to know Jean better from reading this incredible story about her growing up at the Chelsea Hotel in New

York; her life of artistry throughout her many, many careers in many different ways. And the wisdom that she brings to the page is astonishing.

Please do what you need to do right now. Do not hesitate. Pause the podcast. I mean it!

(Jean agrees.)

Go to where you get your books and get *In My Remaining Years* in hardcover, electronic format, audiobook, or aaall three. And by the way, Jean, I'm gonna just be a little bit of a selfish jerk and say I also have a Substack, which is at Hodgman.substack.com. And a couple of times a month, I read chapters from Moby Dick to you. And that's about what I do over there.

Jean Grae: That's fantastic.

John Hodgman: Among another things that I might share. I've never read Moby Dick before, and I read it out loud in a terrible Maine accent. So, if that's something you're interested in, Hodgman.substack.com.

Jean Grae: Hell yeah!

John Hodgman: Jean, your Substack is called—?

Jean Grae: “Stacked Passions”.

John Hodgman: Stacked Passions. And you can get it by going to Substack and searching for Jean Grae, as well as on Instagram, [@JeannieGrigio](https://www.instagram.com/JeannieGrigio). Just get to know Jean. That's my one request. Get to know Jean.

Jean Grae: You really should. It's gonna be so worth it. It's gonna be so much more than you thought it was gonna be. I am invaluable to the community of the world!

John Hodgman: And hey, I've got one more thing to plug. If you are in Chicago or can get there on April 11th—

[00:50:00]

You know our friend Jesse Thorn and his best friend, Jordan Morris, have been recording this incredible comedy podcast for so long? *Jordan, Jesse, Go!*. If you don't know, now is the time to go and discover it for the first time. If you do know, well get yourself there! It's April 11th at Sleeping Village in Chicago with Peter Sagal and Sam Riegel!

Sam Riegel, of course, is from the huge D&D podcast, *Critical Role*, also known for their Amazon TV series. And Peter Sagal, of course, is your friend from the radio: *Wait, Wait, Don't Tell Me!*. Don't wait. Just go there. April 11th, *Jordan, Jesse, Go!* at Sleeping Village in Chicago. Get your tickets now at MaximumFun.org/events.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jean Grae: Please rise as Judge John Hodgman reenters the courtroom and presents his verdict.

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

John Hodgman: You may be seated. So, I'm gonna say some words, and they might not be the same words that Jean might have said. But I think that the words that she did say exemplify why I am very lucky to call her my friend. And the words that I will say that I hope please her just as much, is go out and buy Jean's book. It's called *In My Remaining Years*. It's available in bookstores now.

Jean Grae: Case closed!

John Hodgman: But I will also say this and echo what I think Jean both said beautifully and has helped reinforce me to understand over the years. Which is: weird is wonderful. Weird is great. And you guys know this. I mean, you both know. I don't think you're particularly weird. And I'll also say this, which is something that I've learned over the years—in many ways with help from Jean and her wonderful example—which is that being weird is wonderful. Being weird and being different—or I should at least say expressing yourself without fear of how you seem, even to your neighbors, so long as your goat on your rope is not eating their property, for example, but is only enhancing and expressing your own inner self, being weird is really wonderful.

And I remember when I was a little kid, as an only child, I was default-weird. And I was coming to understand that. And I said to my mom, “I'm weird.”

And my mom, understandably, got a little concerned about my self-esteem. She's like, “Don't say that you're weird.”

And in a lifetime of perfect parenting, that was maybe my mom's one misstep. 'Cause I got in my head about it for a minute, and it took me a little while to realize, no, being weird is great! Because we all have a profound inner life. And it hurts us to hide it in order to, quote/unquote, fit in. And we all are, in our own ways, weird. And expressing that weirdness and showing it to the world helps other people embrace their own difference and strangeness and creativity and make them feel like, “Yeah, I deserve to have a goat on a rope too!” Weird culture in particular saves lives.

You know, we started with the New York Dolls, which were a genderfluid rock band in the '70s that wasn't glam rock like on that international stage where everyone was an alien from another planet. Which isn't to put down David Bowie in any way—like, also an incredible role model for weirdness. But they were like weird from the streets of New York City. You know, punk rock in the '70s, pretty masc, pretty much. You know, pretty masculine. So, for the New York Dolls to come out there and wear makeup and wear queer-coded clothing and sing songs about—I mean, think of the lives that they saved, people who heard those songs and saw themselves reflected there.

And I think about our friend, Ken Reid, with the incredible podcast *TV Guidance Counselor*, talking about the radio station that he was able to pick up back before there was internet when he was growing up in Massachusetts, picking up a radio station from across the border—I think in Rhode Island—that was playing the weirdest punk rock songs. And it was a lifeline for him to know that he wasn't alone in this world. Being weird is really wonderful.

And I think for the most part, neighbors—good neighbors—really appreciate the idiosyncrasies of their other neighbors. You're not weird to put out a little free pantry. That's just gracious good-neighborliness, you know. But expressing yourself in the way that makes you feel good and helpful to your neighbors, even if it marks you as a little bit weird?

[00:55:00]

That's a good impulse, not a bad impulse, and not one that you should hide. And I don't really get the sense, Michele, that you want to. Like, I don't think you want to live your life in perfect conformity there in Ohio. That's not what you're after. What the problem, Michele, is—and I think you've identified it, and let me help you put a real pin in it. This idea is ugly.

(They all dissolve into laughter.)

It's not weird; it's janky. It's not tacky. So, tacky is a word that is used to enforce social conformity a lot of the time. And I think that I understand that you couldn't quite put your finger on what you didn't like about this. So, I'm offering this to you. This may be your experience, or it may not be. Or your inner judgment. But I'm telling you what my inner and now outer judgment is: it's janky. The idea of putting a TV screen—that's, by the way, 32 inches too small—into a sliding glass door facing out all the time? And I love that you love data visualization, but this particular PowerPoint deck is rudimentary to the point of feeling like a cry for help.

(Nick laughs.)

Jean Grae: You can't use Impact font in 2025. What are we doing? What are we doing?

(They laugh.)

John Hodgman: And putting it off-center in your home only triples the jank. Like, it's just—no one would be able to take in the message, because they would be averting their eyes. The problem in the neighborhood is trash. Don't add more trash to the neighborhood.

(Nick laughs.)

Now there are many other ways that you could get this information out, and it might be very helpful to your neighbors to do it. You could design, as we say, a nice flyer. But maybe that would also be putting trash into the neighborhood. 'Cause who knows. Like, people just throw that away or whatever. And it seems to me that, you know, you already have a community meeting place in your world, which is this little free lending pantry where people

can borrow a can of green beans and eat free and then return the can? I don't know exactly how it works, but yeah.

Don't return the can.

But you know, if your brother can make a little free lending pantry out of scraps from his goat yard, surely between the three of you—Michele, your brother, Michele, and Nick—can create a sign inside the pantry. Or on top of the pantry! Something that looks good. Now, for the life of me, I do not understand why you would not get an old-fashioned train station clicky sign that updates the information by going click-click-click-click-click-click-click-click-click-click-click. That's something that people wanna look at!

Now, would it possibly be vandalized or destroyed by weather or human mischief? Maybe. But I do think that it would be visually more appealing to either design a really nice—like, I'm thinking a purpose-specific electronic sign. Kind of like what you already rejected, Michele, which is the that scrolling letter sign that you see in bodegas. That's not quite what you want. There are lots and lots of versions, right? And I know, 'cause I've been gulled into buying them off of Instagram already. But there are all kinds of like single-purpose digital signs that you can buy that are actually pretty attractive looking in and of themselves and can display information in an interesting way. Look it up. You can find lots of different versions of this. Some of them actually go clickity-clickity-clickity-clickity. Jonathan Coulton has one in his living room. I don't know if it would stand up to rain very well. But it's like—it is an analog—literal tiled letters roll over to form words. That I would love to see when I'm picking up some free pantry items.

But there are also digital ones too that could, for example, use your program and update the information about when trash is to be collected dynamically. And it could also display other information that you feel the neighborhood needs to know. That's a kind of aesthetically pleasing weirdness that I could get behind. But having a monitor outside your window that's on 24/7 showing, frankly, this trash deck that you put together, Nick.

(Nick laughs.)

I apologize. You're an idea man. But the execution leaves something to be desired.

Nick: Fair.

John Hodgman: You know, maybe you and Michele can work together to find someone—

[01:00:00]

—and to find a technology that can put that information where it belongs in the community meeting place that you've already established, where people are coming to already get stuff and commune with you. And maybe that'll make a difference in your neighborhood. I also think you can just design an—I mean, I know that not everyone in your neighborhood has the same level of technology you do, and I get it, but this also seems perfect for like an—if not a

email chain, an app that you can just give to your neighbors for free that'll just tell them on their phones or whatever what day of the week they gotta get their trash out there.

But if you're gonna be weird, I guess the message is: be as good looking as a man with a goat on a rope in Baltimore. Because you can just—you don't even need to—just the picture it conjures alone is like, “Yeah, that's the weird we want. Not a janky screen and a sliding door.”

So, I find in Nick's favor, but with the obvious caveats that I've laid down. It's gotta look good, and it's gotta look especially good to Michele. This is the sound of a gavel.

Clip:

Oscar The Grouch: *(Singing.) Oh, I love trash!*

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

Jean Grae: Please rise as Judge John Hodgman exits the courtroom.

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

How do you guys feel about the decision? Nick, I'm gonna ask you first.

Nick: Yeah, I feel good about that. Yeah, I mean, I think that the charge that it was ugly is totally fair. Yeah, I sort of viewed it as a prototype, but I think the judge's solution is much better, to somehow put it with the pantry box. Makes sense. Yeah, I feel good about it.

Jean Grae: Fantastic. Michele, how are you feeling?

Michele: Yeah, I feel good about it too. I think that like neither one of us ever thought about putting something on the free pantry box. So, I think that was a really good idea and something that we can figure out together.

Nick: Yeah, we can figure it out. Yeah.

Jean Grae: Michele and Nick, it was an absolute pleasure to meet you both, and congratulations for everything you're doing for your community. Thanks for being on *Judge John Hodgman* and for both winning and your community winning.

Alright, that's another case in the books!

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jean Grae: (*Sing-song.*) Another case in the books!

Before we dispense some Swift Justice, we wanna thank Redditor u/_magpie_ for naming this week's episode "Time and Rubbishment". You did that. Join the—(*laughs*).

Join the Conversation over at the Maximum Fun subreddit over at [Reddit.com/r/MaximumFun](https://www.reddit.com/r/MaximumFun). We'll be asking for title suggestions there too, so keep an eye out for those. Evidence and photos from the show are posted on our Instagram account at [Instagram.com/judgejohnhodgman](https://www.instagram.com/judgejohnhodgman). We are also on TikTok and YouTube, [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](https://www.youtube.com/@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod). Follow and subscribe to see our episodes and video-only content, pod.

John Hodgman: Oh, and thank you Emily in Vermont. That's a listener, I presume, in Vermont—or Emily's a liar. Emily in Vermont listens over on Apple Podcasts and left some very kind words and—not one, not two, not three, not four—but five stars as a rating for us at Apple Podcasts.

Emily wrote just a few weeks ago, "Always a joy. Five stars. By listening to this podcast, I always learn new things and laugh out loud. What more could one want? Also, a hotdog is not a sandwich." If you're listening to—thank you very much, by the way, Emily in Vermont. And if you're listening to us on Apple Podcasts and you're someone other than Emily in Vermont, why don't you go and leave a few words of how you feel? Maybe a rating, maybe five stars, if that's how you feel about it. If we've earned it. We'd be so grateful. You can do the same, over on Pocket Casts. And you can also help the show by leaving a comment on Spotify as well as right down below on this episode over on YouTube. [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](https://www.youtube.com/@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod) is our YouTube channel. All of these things, as well as simply talking to a friend in person about the podcast that you love and say, "Hey, go listen to *Judge John Hodgman*," really, really helps people discover the show, so thank you for that.

The *Judge John Hodgman* podcast was created by Jesse Thorn and me, John Hodgman. This episode was engineered by Steve Muza and Dan Lovelace at The Sycamore in Plain City, Ohio. And by the way, Plain City, I think you're pretty great. You're not just plain. Our social media manager is Dan Telfer. The podcast is edited by AJ McKeon. Our video producer is Daniel Speer. Our producer, as always, is Jennifer Marmor, and I'm so happy to have been joined by our guest bailiff, Jean Grae, this week.

(*Jean cheers.*)

Make sure you please, please go and order her book right now *In My Remaining Years* by Jean Grae. Jean, do we have some Swift Justice in the meantime?

Jean Grae: Let's get to the Swift Justice! Where we answer your small disputes...

[01:05:00]

With a quick judgment! Cinemkr—okay, Cinna-may—cinnamaker?

John Hodgman: Sin-a-muh-kur?

Jean Grae: This is spelled—

John Hodgman: C-I-N-E-M-K-R.

Jean Grae: Yes. I just saw this guy on TikTok who pronounced fettuccine Alfredo “fuh-tux-ine”. So, I'm thinking that right now.

John Hodgman: Wwwwow. Let's just—I just want to say that the response on the other side of the window from Jennifer Marmor, Daniel Speer and Dan Telfer was quite audible. That was quite audible. People—that—huh.

(Jean laughs.)

Fuh-tux-in-ee?

Jean Grae: Fuh-tux-ine. And he kept saying it so many times. *(Laughing.)* And he was like, “What?! What's the problem? What are you talking about?!”

John Hodgman: Fuh-tux-ine. No. Fuh-tux-in-ee sounds like a city in Ohio. Fuh-tux-ine does not sound like a pasta. Okay, but this is from Cinemkr.

Jean Grae: This is from Cinemkr on the Maximum Fun subreddit. Cinemkr says, “When I'm driving, I like to change lanes to keep my speed constant. This also saves fuel and wear on the brakes. My wife prefers I stay in one lane. Note: driving is a big part of my job, so I consider myself a pro-fess-ion-al.”

John Hodgman: *(Sighs heavily.)* This is one of those things where there's so much missing information.

Jean Grae: I don't think so! I think all the information is there.

John Hodgman: Well, yeah. I mean, the subtext is pretty supertext-y, which is that Cinemkr probably changes his lanes too much. What do you think, Jean? I gotta take a sip of water.

Jean Grae: I think he needs to stay in his lane.

John Hodgman: I mean, yes. I was already suspicious, I must say Cinemkr, of your driving habits when you're like, “My wife doesn't like the way I drive. I love to shift lanes all the time.” And then you started using excuses like “it prevents wear and tear on the brakes,” which I guess it does? But when you're like, “Also, I'm kind of a professional driver,” it's like—

Jean Grae: That did it for me.

John Hodgman: Yeah, yeah, yeah. That's how we know you're moving around too much out there. Look, here's the rule. Here's the rule for driving. These are the rules. Stay away from everybody. The best lane to be in is the one where you are furthest away from all the other cars.

Jean Grae: Do you know how I achieve that?

John Hodgman: Never driving?

Jean Grae: That's right.

John Hodgman: You should not be changing lanes just to change lanes or to—you know. You should be staying away from everybody. You should be constantly making sure that no one is coming up—that no one is behind you wanting to pass you. You should not be parking in the left lane. You should be concerned about everyone who's on the road, not just your desire to maintain your brake pad integrity. And you should also be concerned about everyone who is in your car.

And if the person that you claim to love the most is made uncomfortable by your driving, even if she's not a professional, you should make sure that she feels—or any passenger in your car—feels safe and cared for in your car. They are more important than your gas mileage or your brakes.

As of this episode's release, we are one day past April Fool's Day. I'm sure we had a great time yesterday, right Jean? Reading all those pranks online?

Jean Grae: I fooled everybody.

John Hodgman: We're looking for disputes surrounding April Fool's Day. Any disputes about pranks gone wrong? Jokes or fools in your life? We want to hear them. Are you a practical joker, and no one appreciates your efforts? Because everyone hates practical jokes. They're practically good for nothing. Does your weird parent like to joke during—Although, I do like the *Impractical Jokers*. They're pretty funny. But no, making people uncomfortable in public is never good. So, I take it back. But still, I'll go on your cruise, *Impractical Jokers*. Bring me along.

Are you trying to get your partner to watch your favorite comedy, and they just don't get it? Fools and jokes and jokers and disputes about the *Joker* movies, perhaps.

Jean Grae: Justice and clowns!

John Hodgman: There we go! Justice and clowns. Send all your disputes about jokes and fools and pranks and so forth to MaximumFun.org/jjho. And what if you have a dispute that's not about those things? Well, we wanna hear that one too. We need to hear all of your

disputes, no matter how big, no matter how small—even no matter how medium! Send them to Maximum.Fun.org/jjho. Submit your cases. We need your beefs. The whole podcast runs on beef.

[01:10:00]

Guest Bailiff Jean Grae, thank you so much for being here.

Jean Grae: It was a great time.

John Hodgman: Have a wonderful time—by the time that this is released, you'll be out in the world touring your book, *In My Remaining Years* by Jean Grae. That's spelled G-R-A-E. Jean is spelled J-E-A-N. *In My Remaining Years*. If you wanna see how that's spelled, why don't you go just check out the book right away?

Jean Grae: You could just do that.

John Hodgman: And as we mentioned before, people can go find out where you're touring by going where, Jean?

Jean Grae: You can usually go to my Instagram; you can follow me right there. I'm very active. Sometimes, if you join my little channel, I also give you little sneak peeks and little secrets of where I might be ahead of everyone else. My Substack is gonna be nice and up and running, because I have been tearing through being a first new author, and haven't had any time! It's rough. It's rough.

John Hodgman: It's a lot of work bringing a book out.

Jean Grae: And! And besides the book, I want you guys to know that there is also an audiobook, which I narrated myself and did the original music for. And it's incredibly immersive. It's a whole other experience. So, if you're not really a reading book person or you want to listen along while you're reading the book, it's fantastic. I had a great time recording it. One of my favorite things I've ever done.

John Hodgman: Jean, one of my favorite things that I've ever done was meeting you for the first time and every time I've met you thereafter. It is such a delight to spend time with you virtually, and I hope in person soon. Please, everybody go and get *In My Remaining Years* and follow Jean wherever she might lead you. You'll be glad to go on this journey with her. Other than that, *Judge John Hodgman* returns next time, and we will see you next time on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Transition: Cheerful ukulele chord.

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Speaker 5: —directly—

Speaker 6: —by you!