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**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**Jesse Thorn:** Welcome to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. I am Bailiff Jesse Thorn. We're in chambers this week to clear the docket. With me is my friend, Judge John Hodgman. Hi, John.

**John Hodgman:** Jesse Thorn, hellooo. Today we have a very special docket. It is all on the topic of shopping. Now you have a shop, [PutThisOnShop.com](http://PutThisOnShop.com), right?

**Jesse Thorn:** I do indeed. And! I go shopping regularly.

**John Hodgman:** And you go regularly shopping for clothes, correct?

**Jesse Thorn:** I go shopping for clothes. I go shopping for small items. I go to estate sales, flea markets, garage sales, thrift stores. John, not to brag, but just recently I went to a drug store to go shopping for... antibiotics. Yes, that's right folks! I have juuuust a liiiiittle bit of pneumonia right now.

*(John "oh no"s.)*

So, uh *(chuckles)* if you hear a rattle, it's just the liquid in my chest!

**John Hodgman:** You have just a little scooch? A little scooch of the pneumones?

**Jesse Thorn:** *(High pitched.)* Just a little bit still. It's still in there, sloshing around a little tiny bit!

*(Returning to his usual voice.)* I'm feeling a lot better. I was very ill for about four or five days. Thought I had the flu. It turns out I had some kind of respiratory infection. But...

**John Hodgman:** Go get your vaccines. Go take care of yourself. There's stuff going around. You don't wanna get that pneumones; that's awful. And I'm glad you're feeling a little bit better. But it did give you a chance to go to the drugstore, where I like to sometimes peruse and browse for toothpastes.

**Jesse Thorn:** I took advantage of the opportunity, John, to buy some leftover Easter candy. So, I'm doing great now.

**John Hodgman:** Oh! What'd you get?

**Jesse Thorn:** Oh, I got some Whoppers eggs. I love a Whoppers egg.

**John Hodgman:** I haven't had a Whoppers malted milk ball or a Malteser in a long time.

**Jesse Thorn:** Oh, they're very good.

**John Hodgman:** Maybe I ought to go shopping. When you go shopping, Jesse Thorn, how does it make you feel?

**Jesse Thorn:** It makes me feel like a king. My favorite place to go shopping, John? It's gonna be Costco all the way. And you know me as a major Costco celebrity, as featured in *Costco Connection Magazine*.

**John Hodgman:** (*Giggles.*) Sure. I've got my framed copy.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah. But when I was about 13 or 14, my father had a series of events in his life. One was he got like a \$25,000 inheritance from an aunt who died. One was, he got his post-traumatic stress disorder disability certified after decades of trying. And it was military related, so he started getting military—you know, disabled vet benefits.

(*John affirms.*)

And the combination of those two things rocketed us into the middle class. (*Chuckles.*) And so, what happened is my dad bought a 2-year-old Honda Accord Wagon that he then drove until it had 300,000 miles on it. He got a color television. (*Chuckling.*) Which, believe it or not, we did not—at this point in the early 1990s—have. He got cable, including that thing where you get CD-quality music broadcast to you over the cable, which was very exciting to him at the time.

(*John whistles and affirms.*)

And we joined Costco and started buying cereal in bulk. So, to me, Costco is an avatar for prosperity. (*Laughs.*)

**John Hodgman:** It is a feeling of abundance that I enjoy when I go. I love going to the grocery store. That's my one of my top shopping experiences. I don't even need to buy anything. I just like going through the aisles, seeing what the labels look like these days, checking out the produce. It gives me a good feeling to go in there.

**Jesse Thorn:** And you love a classic grocery store, the kind of grocery store that you might imagine a character in—to my mind, it would be like a character in *Jaws* would go into this grocery store.

**John Hodgman:** (*Chuckling fiendishly.*) Oh-ho-ho-ho-ho, yes, that's right.

**Jesse Thorn:** Like, the suburban imagination of Steven Spielberg in the mid to late 1970s. Just big, wide aisles.

**John Hodgman:** Wide aisles and squared-off shelves full of boxes of different kinds of macaroni and cans of beans—varieties of beans I really enjoy! You're, of course, talking

about my dream store, which is the Anderson Supermarket in Bluejay, California, where I would make a pilgrimage stop on the way up to and on the way back from MaxFunCon. Every year I would go in there and just—'cause it was truly like 1981-style squared-off aisles and just full of everything. And I just love that stuff.

[00:05:00]

**Jesse Thorn:** John, I can't even begin to tell you the extent to which, one day when you come with me to my cabin in Sequoia Crest, California—

**John Hodgman:** I'd love it.

**Jesse Thorn:** You are going to freak out when you get to Springville, and you go to the Town and Country Market with me. Because that Town and Country Market, that's the last grocery store for an hour.

*(John laughs.)*

As you drive into “Jesse can afford the cabin” territory.

**John Hodgman:** It's called Town and Market? What? What's it called?

**Jesse Thorn:** Town and Country Market. This is a huuuge grocery store, untouched by the last 40ish years, I would say. 40 to 45 years. It basically contains—like, if you just imagine like the grandest Midwestern—not this newfangled grocery store where there's, you know, dramatic lighting and a Starbucks inside and all this kind of stuff like a newly renovated Ralph's has in Los Angeles. I'm just talking about these flat lighting, wide aisles, a full Midwestern grocery store from 1982, plus an entire Latin American products market also in there. If you need to buy some Florida Water for your voodoo or hoodoo rituals? Great news. They got that there. I bought some; now I'm magic!

**John Hodgman:** They got Florida Water at the Town and Country?!

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah. Florida Water is like a cologne. *(Chuckles.)* It's a cologne that comes in an amazing plastic bottle that I encourage everyone to look at, either right now on the YouTube, or at home by searching for Florida Water on their phone. And it comes in this amazing plastic bottle. It costs like \$3 or \$4. And if you're a *(unclear)* or an Orisha, or just a classic Portland witch, this stuff apparently has magic power. I just bought it, 'cause I like the bottle, and it costs \$4.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. It's gorgeous!

**Jesse Thorn:** But I was told recently by a witch of my acquaintance that you can put it in your mop bucket and mop your house with it, *(chuckling)* and it turns your house magical somehow. I was like, “Awesome. I'm in.” *(Laughs.)*

**John Hodgman:** It says here on the manufacturer's website that “Florida Water has been mystifying and delighting generations since 1808. Sold in New York City pharmacies starting then and now. The original formula on label, inspired by the enchanting properties of the famed Fountain of Youth, has remained unchanged for 200 years.” I never knew about it! So, glad to know.

I think you put your finger on it, though, when you pointed out that the supermarket Town and Country has a real hold on me. 'Cause it's not really the abundance that I enjoy. 'Cause it's not—that's sort of like—we're getting into like materialism and capitalism and food waste issues. That's not what I enjoy. It's the feeling of moving between places, between town and country or country and town. And the feeling, particularly, of provisioning for an adventure that makes grocery stores so exciting to me. It's like, “I'm going to go—what if I made—what if I live this way tonight, and I make macaroni and cheese?” I don't know. That's a delight for me.

**Jesse Thorn:** I know. I think that's especially true for you as a Brooklynite, where most of your grocery shopping is happening—necessarily—at very small, narrow-aisled grocery stores that are, you know, standard issue in most of New York City. Certainly there are parts of New York City that have sort of classic American supermarkets, but for the most part, New York has—

**John Hodgman:** It's a mad scramble through an overstuffed maze of off-brand gourmet items and Spams. Yeah.

**Jesse Thorn:** It's an odd scene that could be a little—it's nice, 'cause you can always walk to the corner and buy tonight's food. But there is something great—I know—like, when I go to my cabin, and I know that I'm not going to be able to shop for groceries for the next week—*(chuckles)* like, I won't be able to go get an onion or anything. I imagine a new life for myself. That life almost always involves eating Cool Ranch Doritos, which is something that I do not bring into my regular house, 'cause I would just eat them. And they're very bad for you. But at the cabin, no! Everyone eats Cool Ranch Doritos at the cabin! *(Laughs.)* We bought some, we gotta eat them!

**John Hodgman:** You feel like you're starting a new life. That's exactly what it is. And maybe my new life is going to involve 35 gallons of chili that I'm gonna make. I don't know. I love it.

**Jesse Thorn:** That's great.

**John Hodgman:** Worst place to go shopping, obviously, is a car dealership.

**Jesse Thorn:** Oh yeah, sure.

**John Hodgman:** Runner up is the very fancy clothing store in Boston that my wife and daughter—both whole human beings in their own right—went to. Very expensive women's clothes. And they went in, and they looked at a price tag, and it was like, “Here is a kerchief for \$5,000.”

And they were like, “Oh no, no. Sorry, my mistake.”

And as they left, the young woman who was, you know, manning the store goes, “Thanks for trying!”

*(Jesse cackles.)*

Like, I don't need this! I don't need this. I don't need me to be reminded—

Jennifer Marmor, you're here, aren't you? It's a docket, after all.

*(Jennifer confirms.)*

Where's your favorite place to go shopping? Where's your least favorite place to go shopping mall?

**Jesse Thorn:** Maaall, Jen loves the mall. *(Sing-song.)* Jen loves the mall.

**Jennifer Marmor:** *(Singing.)* The mall, the maaaall!

**John Hodgman:** *(Harmonizing.)* The maaall!

Of course, the mall.

**Jennifer Marmor:** I love nothing more than to walk around, do what—it's called in Yiddish shmying. Just love to shmy.

**John Hodgman:** Shmy?

**Jennifer Marmor:** You just walk around, and you look at stuff. And sometimes you buy things, but you don't have to buy things. You just look at things and just see what's out there. And I love that. I love it. Some of my favorite stores are no longer at the mall. I used to go to the Americana a lot to get some of the things that I would need that I would prefer to buy in person.

**John Hodgman:** Wait, is Americana a mall or a place in the mall?

**Jennifer Marmor:** It's—oh, sorry! It is a mall. It's an outdoor mall in Los Angeles, in Glendale.

**Jesse Thorn:** What is that—Jennifer, what is that at?

**Jennifer Marmor:** Brand. The Americana at Brand.

**Jesse Thorn:** Ahhh, the Americana at Brand. I follow, yeah, sure.

**Jennifer Marmor:** (*Chuckles.*) If you've heard of The Grove, it's like that, but in Glendale. So, I don't wanna—(*playfully*) I don't wanna buzz market. Madewell is a store that I would occasionally buy things at, and they're not there anymore. And I'm like, “Where do I buy things if I wanna buy them in person?” I don't know. But anyway. Yeah.

**Jesse Thorn:** They probably still have those soup dumplings though, right?

**Jennifer Marmor:** Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. I don't like Costco. It stresses me out!

**John Hodgman:** Okay! People like what they like.

(*Jennifer chuckles.*)

**Jesse Thorn:** I don't love the fight of Costco, so I go as infrequently as possible. Like, I'm a Costco executive member. Again, not to brag, but I'm a Costco celebrity. But I probably go quarterly, but then when I go, I'll like get a receipt. It's four feet long, and it says, you know, \$2,800 or something. (*Chuckles.*) Like, I buy every beverage we will consume for the next three months. You know, I buy every trash bag we'll use for the next three months. Every vitamin we'll consume for the next three months. A bunch of meat that I'm portioning and putting into a freezer. Like, everything will come from Costco. And the secret to Costco is you just gotta go right before they close. And you can't go on the weekend. You can't go on the weekend.

(*Jennifer agrees emphatically.*)

**John Hodgman:** Go right before they close. Not first thing?

**Jesse Thorn:** First thing is the second best. But first thing—first thing, you're dealing with a rush of— My Costco is in Alhambra, California. This is a land of old ladies who have a different sense of personal space than mine.

(*Jennifer chuckles.*)

Who will run me over with their carts. Just culturally speaking, just a different perspective on how walking through the world works. And so, I will try and avoid that first thing, 'cause those ladies love first thing. But it is better than like—you know, going at two o'clock in the afternoon on a Saturday is the worst nightmare in the world.

**John Hodgman:** In the theme park community, going first thing is called rope drop. You get there when they drop the rope.

**Jesse Thorn:** Do you wanna get into these docket cases, John?

**John Hodgman:** Yeah! The rope has dropped on our shopping spree. We've got a lot of dockets involving some disputes and dilemmas regarding going to the store. So, let's get into it!

**Jesse Thorn:** Here's a case from Sean in Seattle, Washington. "The discount shelf at the grocery store is irresistible to me. Chocolate tahini for 50% off?! Organic fig and black tea preserves, usually \$11, but a steal at \$5.50?! Count. Me. In. But my wife hates my discount groceries. She says spending six bucks for three ounces of fancy-pants jam is not a deal. I think these are interesting tastes we'd otherwise never experience. We are also combating food waste. Please tell her I'm right, or at least tell her to stop throwing my cans of paleo chickpeas bread away."

**John Hodgman:** (*Chuckling.*) Okay. You know, I received a gift of some off-brand gourmet items, like organic fig and black tea preserves.

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You know, there's this stuff that's—you know, a lot of mail order, gourmet, gift-y stuff that is coming from some brand you've never heard of. And I've got—a person that I care about a lot in my life knows that I love tuna salad. And so, I got some very, very fancy Italian canned tuna that came in a little net, even! Like, the can itself was wrapped tightly in an artisanal net. And that thing has been—well, it's not been on my shelf; it's been in my refrigerator. And I'll tell you why in a moment.

**Jesse Thorn:** John, is it wrapped in an artisanal net because it symbolizes a dolphin?

**John Hodgman:** (*Laughing.*) Yeah, it's entangled. It actually comes entangled in a plastic six pack—a series of plastic six pack rings from a can of—forget it.

(*Jesse laughs.*)

You know where I was going.

**Jesse Thorn:** I know what you're talking about. 99 ways to save the Earth, circa 1992. Primarily the problem with the earth at the time was six pack rings.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. Six pack rings. No, it's just— You know, when I want my tuna, I don't want—first of all, a fancy pack. I don't need my tuna can in a fine mesh net. I just want—me, I'm a Bumblebee White Albacore and Spring Water guy, and that's it. And these—particularly these gourmet things that are a little off-brand, or some of the like fancy jams or jellies you'll get in a set—or in that matter, seen on a dusty discount shelf—I do find them to be a little like—just suspicious to me.

**Jesse Thorn:** I don't like any of them, John.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. But you know what I'm talking about, that sort of like (*unclear*) gourmet?

**Jesse Thorn:** My wonderful other comedy partner, Jordan Morris's, wonderful partner—Melissa—was kind enough to bring me some special salt from her home state of Arizona. It's citrus salt.

*(John “wow”s.)*

I bet it's great. I have used none of it and can't imagine how I would use it. And I'm very grateful for the thought of—my friend doing this very thoughtful thing on my behalf. But also, *(chuckling)* basically anything that comes in a gift basket other than those fancy pears, I have no interest in. I'll eat the cheese if it's not complicated cheese, but I don't want the—I don't want the novelty cheese either! You know how they always—it's like a cheese with four different things mixed into it. Just gimme nice cheese!

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, like a layer cake, like a huntsman layer cake of Monterey Jack and Wasabi Pea and—like, just these weird flavors.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah. I also don't want a panettone. Like, there's a long list of things that you buy at places, like these gift foods? I basically don't want any of them!

**John Hodgman:** Alright. No gift foods for Jesse, except for those pears.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah. Or high-quality cheese. Just regular high-quality cheese. You're a former cheese monger; you know.

**John Hodgman:** I do. I monged, and I continue to mong in my heart. Jennifer Marmor, I'm gonna ask you two questions; you answer whichever one is meaningful to you.

*(Jennifer affirms.)*

One, what's the best thing you ever got on the discount shelf at a grocery store? Or two, what's the best way to make tuna salad?

**Jennifer Marmor:** Oh boy. Okay. Tuna salad. So—

*(John “wow”s.)*

I'm a fan of Bumblebee. I also like Wild Planet. I like that tuna a lot.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, that's good.

**Jennifer Marmor:** I use some mayo. Sometimes—yeah, just mayo. Sorry. I was like, sometimes—I've been trying to make an olive oil tuna, 'cause there's a place near me that has a great olive oil tuna sandwich, but I haven't figured out that. So, just the basics. Mayo, celery, spring onion, and some lemon juice. I'll stick some lemon juice in there.



**John Hodgman:** Look, I don't—the only quarrel I have with that is celery, 'cause I don't like celery in there.

**Jennifer Marmor:** Mmm, I love celery in there.

**John Hodgman:** Eh. It adds a fresh crunch.

**Jennifer Marmor:** I don't always have the onion, but if I don't have the celery, I'm not even gonna bother.

**John Hodgman:** I used to be a just straight-up solid White Albacore, Bumblebee tuna, and Spring Water guy with mayonnaise, salt, and pepper, the end. And the one thing that was important to me is that I like my tuna salad to be really cold. So, I keep my cans of tuna in the fridge, so that if I ever go and make it, it's already cold. But I have been adding—a little bit of lemon juice is nice. And I like a little minced onion. Or spring onion. That really adds something for me. But celery? Go to jail as far, as I'm concerned. Not you, Jennifer Marmor. Celery.

**Jennifer Marmor:** Thank you, 'cause I won't!

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. Don't go to jail.

**Jesse Thorn:** What about Sean's case?

*(John “oh yeah”s.)*

**Jennifer Marmor:** Oof. *(Laughs.)*

[00:20:00]

We're not here to just talk about tuna?!

**John Hodgman:** Sean is buying some, what I presume to be, shelf stable items. I think that chocolate tahini probably is shelf stable. Certainly, that black tea preserves with organic fig are literally preserved. And Sean's wife is not there for it.

**Jesse Thorn:** It sounds like he likes a flavor adventure, and she doesn't like a flavor adventure. And he is lying to her and telling her that these are a deal, when in fact these types of products are not even really a deal at half price. *(Chuckles.)*

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. Well, I mean, I think she has a point. Six bucks for three ounces of organic fig and black tea preserves? That's not nothing; that's not a steal. That's a pay. If you were stealing it, that would be a deal. That would be a steal deal.

**Jennifer Marmor:** And a crime.

**John Hodgman:** It would be a crime. I'm not saying—I'm not encouraging crime; I'm just saying.

*(Jennifer giggles.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** My feeling about this, John—and tell me how you feel, since you're the judge here. My feeling is that it is reasonable for Sean to be making these purchases and going on his flavor adventures. I don't think it is outrageous for him to enjoy flavor adventures. It's a nice way to spend your life, if that's your thing.

**John Hodgman:** If you're curious about something.

**Jesse Thorn:** It does sound like he actually eats this stuff. So, that's great. I want him to stop telling his wife that they're saving money by doing it.

*(John giggles.)*

And I also want his wife, if she doesn't like flavor adventures, to acknowledge that her husband has this hobby, and he's doing it in a relatively low impact way. I mean, he could be going to one of those super fancy grocery stores and paying full freight for novelty foods.

*(John agrees.)*

He could be ordering them on the internet and paying shipping fees. I don't think he's—you know, or he could just be into like golf or whatever. *(Chuckles.)* You know what I mean?

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. What if he's ordering pounds and pounds and pounds of Uncle Bud's Deep-Fried Peanuts, because his friend, Jesse Thorn, was eating them one time before a recording? And now I'm paying a huge premium to get them sent to me.

**Jesse Thorn:** Did you like them?

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. They're really good!

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, they're great, right? *(Laughs.)* They're so good!

**John Hodgman:** We ate them, and then we ordered more.

**Jesse Thorn:** *(Cackles.)* They're so good!

**John Hodgman:** Speaking of novelty foods, if anyone is interested in shipping me some—unopened, please—Gentleman's Relish from the UK, a fancy anchovy and butter relish that is very good on toast. I can't pay the premium to have that shipped to me. Otherwise, I'm gonna look for it on the discount shelf.

I agree with you, Jesse. I think that, you know, there's no harm in this. Unless! Unless Sean is going to that discount shelf and taking a bag and just waving his hand across the shelf, just cleaning it out! Getting everything on the shelf. That would be very, very wasteful indeed. No matter what he thinks. He's not combating food waste at that point. He's just creating a hoard of off-brand items that are gross.

**Jesse Thorn:** What kind of fancy grocery store are you going to, Sean, where that's what's on the discount shelf? 'Cause the discount shelf at my grocery store is just discontinued O'Boises.

*(John chuckles.)*

Okay. We're gonna take a quick break and hear from this week's partners. We'll be back with more cases to clear from the docket on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**John Hodgman:** Hello, I'm your judge, John Hodgman. The *Judge John Hodgman* podcast is brought to you every week by you—our members, of course. Thank you so much for your support of this podcast and all of your favorite podcasts at [MaximumFun.org](https://MaximumFun.org), and they are all your favorites. If you want to join the many member supporters of this podcast and this network, boy oh boy, that would be fantastic.

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**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**Jesse Thorn:** Welcome back to *Judge John Hodgman*. We are clearing the docket.

Okay, here's something from Anthony. “My partner, V, loves to touch merchandise in stores and makes me uncomfortable, especially when they touch small, fragile items like glass or ceramic figurines. I used to touch things in stores as a child, but my father made me stop. To V's credit, they don't touch unpackaged food, and they haven't broken anything. V points out that touch is one of the most important ways humans explore their surroundings. We're both neurodivergent, so I appreciate the need for sensory experiences when shopping. But when V touches things in a store, I feel like I'm gonna get in trouble! How much merchandise touching is acceptable?”

I have an interesting point of evidence here.

**John Hodgman:** I would love to hear it.

**Jesse Thorn:** My father-in-law, Steve, who is—

**John Hodgman:** Great guy.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah. One of the best guys ever. A mere 60 feet from where I sit right now, actually. Steve, for a long time, was one of the managers of a hardware store in Marin County, California, called Jackson's Hardware. Worker-owned hardware store. Go buy something there.

**John Hodgman:** I thought you were gonna say that he loves to fondle all the bagels before he picks one, but okay. Go on.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah. Steve is neurodivergent. And one of Steve's, uh, distinctive behaviors—let's say—one of the reflections of his neurodiversity is one day he just mentioned to me that when he would walk down an aisle in Jackson's, he would touch all the products. And that was in a store that he managed. He said, “Look, I'd probably do something to like make it not seem weird if a customer was walking by, like maybe straighten things out a little bit.” He's like, “I touch 'em all.” And I don't think that is a super uncommon or super unreasonable behavior, unless V is touching all this stuff in a way that is conspicuously irresponsible.

**John Hodgman:** You know, that resonates with a story that my first-year college suitemate, Mike, told me about someone he knew growing up, who clearly had not been diagnosed with something but was dealing with something. Because he had to smell all of the audio-visual equipment in the house all the time. The TV.

**Jesse Thorn:** (*Chuckling.*) That's great.

**John Hodgman:** He had to smell the—he would be smelling the TV, or he'd be smelling the, you know, Hi-Fi system. And he had to do this, and he had to—and he would say to himself, “Pure,” when he would smell it. Which sounds, perhaps, like an OCD diagnosis before he had one.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah. OCD was part of my father-in-law's diagnosis. My father-in-law's also autistic. And he's managed them—you know, those often go together. Not always, or maybe not even the majority of the time, but they're often comorbid. And he manages them and his experiences in the world with them in different ways. But that was part of why he liked to touch stuff. But also, sensory seeking is very common among neurodivergent people.

(*John agrees.*)

I mean, I know my three kids, who are all autistic, they each have their own versions of wanting intense sensory input. They're, all three of them, very different versions of it. But like, I am not surprised to hear about somebody who really likes to smell stuff. Like, our friend, John Darnielle of The Mountain Goats—who may or may not, himself, be neurodivergent, but is certainly a distinctive mind, let's say—

**John Hodgman:** Right. True. None like it.

**Jesse Thorn:** I don't know anyone more passionate about scents than John. That guy loves scents.

**John Hodgman:** You're talking about like colognes or pennies?

[00:30:00]

**Jesse Thorn:** Well, colognes is the like expression of it.

*(John affirms.)*

But he's so, so passionate about it, and like that's not— Like, he's not passionate about it because it's like in his cultural milieu, you know what I mean? Like, it's not like, “Oh yeah, those DIY rock guys, they're all into cologne!” *(Chuckles.)* You know what I mean?

**John Hodgman:** *(Laughs.)* Yeah. He's a real Drakkar Noir kind of guy.

**Jesse Thorn:** Exactly.

**John Hodgman:** That actually would be a great title for a Mountain Goats album, *Drakkar Noir Kind of Guy*.

*(Jesse agrees.)*

But it's true. And you know, the thing is that— Now, I'm grateful that lots of people who are growing up with both diagnosed or undiagnosed neural differences, there's a lot more understanding; and there's a lot more care and grace being offered to folks. But it sounds as though Anthony grew up the way my friend, Mike's, high school pal grew up, who one day— you know, Mike was gonna go to the movies with him, and he said, “I can't. I'm grounded. My parents caught me smelling the VCR.”

You shouldn't punish people for these experiences. You know? And you look at the outcome, which is that Anthony is now dealing with anxiety when V is just moving through the world, trying to feel those figurines, and gain pleasure, and causing no harm, and maybe even deciding which figurine is for me. So, that's really hard. How do you think that this should be negotiated between Anthony and their partner, V?

**Jesse Thorn:** I think there is a question here that is difficult to ascertain from one side of the story. And it sounds like these two have a wonderful relationship. Like, this doesn't sound like a real pain point, a real intense pain point in their relationship. But like the question is— so, I don't think anybody's being disingenuous here.

**John Hodgman:** No. And obviously, they express a lot of understanding for one another, which is great.

**Jesse Thorn:** Exactly. But I think one of the questions is: are they going to get in trouble?

(John “hm”s.)

There are certainly ways that one could touch things in a store that would get someone in trouble. But I think for the most part, that is not the case. And from the context that Anthony has given, their partner is not doing that kind of stuff. And so, while I don't think that V should be making choices specifically to antagonize their partner, and that to the extent that they can accommodate their partner's discomfort, they probably ought to; but I also think that like if I were to focus on one piece of this, I would focus on, Anthony, how can you get help and support dealing with your anxiety? Rather than, V, how can you get help and support dealing with your interest in examining stuff with your hands?

Now it could be that, you know, Anthony is just being generous in their description, and V is actually throwing things back and forth between their—you know, juggling crystal dragons or whatever.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, I was gonna say— (*Laughs.*) Yeah, if you're touching—

**Jennifer Marmor:** (*Unclear.*)

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. The touching of crystal figurines means playing bocce ball with them in the middle of the store. Yeah. No, I agree. And here's the—like, I think ultimately, Anthony, that—I hope and trust that you are seeing a therapist or have seen a therapist or are open to talking with someone about anxiety management. It could be that V is, perhaps, overdoing it, which is a certain conversation to have. But if they're operating within reason, and they are not getting in trouble, I think it's a rare store where you would really get in trouble. But that fear, that feeling of getting in trouble is very, very powerful.

**Jesse Thorn:** And very real, too.

**John Hodgman:** And very real! You know? And here's the thing. Like, you know, I've been swimming at the YMCA for the past—I would say—18 months. And it really tests my comfort level to take my shirt off in any situation, even a private shower—never mind getting into a pool full of other people whom you then have to share a lane with.

[00:35:00]

**Jesse Thorn:** John, we've been friends for almost 20 years, and I ain't never seen them nips.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah! I've never flashed my nips to Jesse Thorn, and maybe I need to do that as part of my immersion therapy. But meanwhile, I've been immersing myself in this pool water. And it's very therapeutic, both physically and emotionally, because it's like, “Oh yeah, you can just—you can go through this uncomfortable transition, and then you get into the flow, and it's fine.” And even though you have to navigate some weird etiquette sometime, 'cause when the pool is a little bit crowded, you'll have to split lanes, or you have to go in circles in the lane, and you have to kind of gesture to the folks and talk to them about it. Like, even then, where you feel like they're gonna go like, “You're wrong!”, they're never that way. And you just do it, and then you get through it, and that's the kind of therapy.

And then the other day I got into the pool, and I tried to indicate to the guy that I wanted to split lanes with him, and he ignored me. So, I just started swimming. And when I got to the end of the lane, I saw that our lane was now getting crowded—not only with the guy who was originally in there, but these two teenagers who I did not wanna swim with.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, they were there looking for t-shirts.

**John Hodgman:** They were there looking—they were t-shirt bros! They were like some real camel t-shirt kids. It's like, I don't wanna swim with those bad kids!

**Jesse Thorn:** John, they were looking for Dale Earnhardt Jr. t-shirts.

**John Hodgman:** So, I bopped over a couple of lanes to the free swim lane where I like to swim. And it looked like there was only one guy in that lane. And so, I start my swimming from the wrong direction, to be clear. I was not at the part where you enter from, but I was already in the pool. And I'm swimming along, and all of a sudden there's a guy swimming right up at me like he's a Jaws from the movie *Jaws*. Like, he's right up in my face. And he jumps outta the water, and he yells at me! He says, “You're supposed to let us know!”

And I'm like, “I know. I didn't see you. I'm sorry.” And then the lifeguard blows the whistle at me!

*(Jennifer gasps.)*

It's like the thing that I thought, “This will never happen. I'm never gonna get in trouble.” And yet I did get in trouble! In the worst possible way. Floating around in the water, basically being yelled at while I'm in the nude. It was like a nightmare. And I walked—I just got outta the pool and walked outta there! Like, this is not gonna be a good swim for me. I went up, and I changed, and I got on the elliptical, and I watched an episode of *Letterkenny*. And the point is, I survived. I survived getting in trouble.

There's very little low-level trouble that you can't survive. You just have to breathe through it, and it'll be okay. I don't know that you're ever gonna get in trouble, Anthony, because V's touching these figurines. But I think that it is reasonable for you to say to V, “This is making me anxious. Do you mind scaling back a little bit?” But it is also reasonable for you to, as you probably are doing already, seek some help in managing the anxiety. You know, it's better to manage anxiety than to distort your whole life to try to evade it. 'Cause that just becomes a different kind of anxiety.

And the fact of the matter is, like sometimes you gotta touch the glass figurines. 'Cause how else are you gonna know that they're ripe? You know?

**Jesse Thorn:** *(Chuckles.)* Exactly. Here is a case from Tatjana in Santa Barbara.

**John Hodgman:** Lovely city to live in.

**Jesse Thorn:** That's a Tat-ee-ana, not Tat-ana. Right? I'm gonna say it's—it's a T-A-T-J-A-N-A. So, I'm gonna go with Tat-ee-ana.

**John Hodgman:** That says Tat-ee-ana to me.

**Jesse Thorn:** It says Tat-ee-ana to you? Okay, great.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, Tat-yee-ana. Tat-tee-yana, it seems to me.

**Jesse Thorn:** We're just gonna go with that.

“When we're checking out at the grocery store, it's important to my husband, Daniel, that all the frozen items be bagged together. If the bagger doesn't do this, Daniel asks them to do it again, or he re-bags himself. Bagging frozen items together makes sense. Things stay cold. But we live less than five minutes from the store. I don't think it's worth it for Daniel to make a big deal out of it.”

*(John agrees.)*

Mm, there's steps being skipped here.

**John Hodgman:** Oh, well, tell me what the steps are!

**Jesse Thorn:** There's stuff being skipped here.

**John Hodgman:** What's being skipped? What's the missing info?

**Jesse Thorn:** As you may have heard, John, the closest grocery store to my cabin is an hour away. *(Chuckles.)*

**John Hodgman:** It's more—yeah, it's halfway between the town and the country.

**Jesse Thorn:** So, there are situations in my life where it's particularly important for me to pay attention to keeping cold stuff cold. My hopes of having ice cream at the cabin depend upon it.

*(John affirms.)*

Here's the thing. Number one, why is Daniel asking about this after the groceries have been bagged?! *(Laughs.)*

**John Hodgman:** Right?!

**Jese Thorn:** And B) Why isn't Daniel using the technique that I use, which is: putting the cold items on the conveyor belt together?



[00:40:00]

There's two steps you can take. I take both of those steps. I will put the cold stuff on the conveyor belt together, and I will mention—if there's a bagger; I often shop at grocery stores where they do not have a bagger. Shoutout to grocery stores that do. Those are usually the good kind of grocery stores with union workers that get paid a good wage. So, shoutout to those grocery stores. But I will put the cold stuff together on the conveyor belt, so it comes through the conveyor belt at the same time. And I will mention to the bagger, “Hey, I'm just trying to keep the cold stuff together. Help me out if you can.”

There's two reasons. One is it might be because it's a long drive. There are situations where—you know, it's probably a 20-minute drive from my Costco, for example. But the other reason is that often I am coming home, hoping against hope that someone besides me will put the groceries away. Because I hate putting groceries away. (*Laughs.*) And my wife—and if my mother or father-in-law is at the house, they don't mind; they're glad to do it on my behalf. They might not be available at that moment. And so, there are definitely times when I put the cold stuff away, and my wife says, “Just leave the rest of the stuff. I'll take care of it.” But she doesn't have the time to take care of it right then.

So, having the cold stuff together is important, because then I can just get the cold stuff put away right away, so there's no issues with foodborne illness or whatever. And then I can F off to my office, and my wife can handle the rest of it when there's a lull in her day-to-day responsibilities.

**John Hodgman:** Let me see if I—lemme clarify something here, Jesse, with regard to your system. So, you like to keep the cold stuff together. That makes sense. It keeps it cold. And your system is to group the cold stuff together first, so it is more likely to be bagged together and then you reinforce that ahead of time by saying, “I'm doing this 'cause I want the cold stuff to be all bagged together. Do you mind keeping an eye out for that? Thank you very much.” That's your system.

*(Jesse confirms.)*

So, how is that better than saying nothing, laying a trap by putting the cold stuff down willy nilly amongst the warm stuff like it's a big *Tetris* game that someone else has to solve, and then when the person does it incorrectly, you either yell at them and tell them, “Do it again!”, or you go, “Ugh!” Thanos-style, “Fine, I'll do it myself!”?

**Jesse Thorn:** (*Sarcastically.*) Now that you mention it—I hadn't thought it through, but now that you mentioned it, I guess those are probably about the same.

**John Hodgman:** I mean, you gotta take responsibility. People like what they like. And believe me, you think I go to the grocery store—? I mean, you've seen the way I load a dishwasher; you think I'm not thinking very seriously about how to load up that—never mind how to load up the conveyor belt—how I'm gonna organize stuff in the cart to keep the cold stuff together and the pantry stuff together and the produce that doesn't need to be refrigerated together. Do you think I'm not thinking about how I'm gonna be unloading those groceries and in what order I'm gonna be unloading them when I get home?

Because guess what? There's no one in my house who's gonna do it for me. No one. Not a one whole human being in their own right is gonna unload those groceries for me.

**Jesse Thorn:** Not even your cat?

**John Hodgman:** No, my cat won't even bat around a toy mouse! You think that they're gonna be putting away bags of dried beans?!

*(Jesse laughs.)*

The interest isn't there. No, my wife—who is a whole human being in her own right—will put the groceries away, but no one else in my house will. So, I am thinking ahead and in ways that, perhaps, are not necessarily healthy for my brain. But it is my preference. It is my preference, and I have to take responsibility for it. So, if I want a system to be followed, I've got to take advantage—you know, advocate for that system ahead of time in a nice way. And say, “Hey, I've got this cooler bag. Can we put the cold stuff in here?” Or just like, “I'm gonna bag it myself, if you don't mind.”

'Cause that's also—I mean, I love putting stuff into bags, so that's nice. But yeah, there's no reason that Tatjana should be there cringing while Daniel, the husband, is—you know—after the fact scolding anybody—a bagger of all people!—for not doing it right. I'm sure that Daniel isn't actively scolding, but it's like, yeah, no one wants to be in trouble. Set the person up for success!

**Jesse Thorn:** Okay. Here's something from Emil in Copenhagen.

“Sometimes when we are grocery shopping, I leave the shopping cart behind while I hunt down something I'm looking for.”

[00:45:00]

“The shopping basket or cart in question is the kind that rolls on wheels and is pulled by a handle. My partner, Misha, says this is an unacceptable nuisance to other shoppers. Who's right.”

John, you know, the kind of cart that they're talking about? It's like a grocery basket, the kind that you would hold in your hands in an American grocery store. I see them occasionally in American grocery stores, but it's about that size, maybe a little taller. And then it has an extensible handle that comes out of it, so you can roll it around on the ground instead of holding it by two handles up in the air.

**John Hodgman:** You know how I feel about that? Hate it.

**Jesse Thorn:** Really? Because it's too low?

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. I see them in the CVS all the time. It's too low! And I do associate it with CVS shopping, and that means pulling a wheel thing over carpeting a lot of the time, which I hate. And I don't like bending down to pick things up or put things away. I don't like this kind of shopping cart at all.

**Jesse Thorn:** You heard Judge John Hodgman! Duane Reade, sponsor *Judge John Hodgman!* (Laughs.)

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, it's like an extra deep handheld basket, but it's got little, tiny squeaky wheels on the bottom, and then you kind of drag it behind you like a sled.

**Jesse Thorn:** I bet they're nice though. In Denmark they take good care of 'em.

**John Hodgman:** Everything's nice in Denmark. And you know who else is nice in Denmark? Emil and Misha. I bet they're very nice, but they are in amidst of a dispute. Jennifer, when you go grocery shopping, do you hang onto the cart, or do you ever leave it behind? I don't care what kind of cart.

**Jennifer Marmor:** Yeah, sometimes I'll leave it behind. I'll put it in a—I'll try to tuck it away out of the way as much as I can and go down the aisle. 'Cause, you know, shoutout to Trader Joe's. I shop there a lot, and it's busy, and the aisles are not very wide sometimes, depending on how they've laid out the store. And trying to get through with that cart is annoying. And I just wanna walk down the aisle, grab the pasta, come back and throw it in the cart, and be on my way.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah! You don't wanna clog up the aisle with your cart all the time. People are trying to get at stuff, and you're the in the way!

**Jesse Thorn:** The tuck is so essential though. Like, I can't emphasize the tuck enough.

(Jennifer agrees.)

This is something that I think comes naturally to people who are born and raised in cities and understand the flow of pedestrian traffic.

**Jennifer Marmor:** Mm-hm. Preach.

**Jesse Thorn:** I think that there are people who are not from that environment who believe that anyone or anything can stop in any place. (Laughs.)

(John agrees.)

So, if you leave your cart behind, and you didn't tuck it to the side, you're blocking traffic going both directions, and you're not there to move it out of the way if someone gets stuck. That is the worst thing anyone could ever do. However, often by tucking and walking, you

are actually improving the flow of traffic, because you spotted a place to tuck that isn't gonna slow things down in a wider aisle or similar. So, the tuck is absolutely essential to this.

**John Hodgman:** Now, I can't really speak to this technique at Trader Joe's, which doesn't have traditional aisles. I mean, some of them certainly do. I'm thinking in New York City, they're often built into the former infrastructure of old banks or whatever. And so, you're just guided through a sort of a sort of hedge maze of groceries. It's sort of like if you're doing your grocery shopping in the 45-minute long or 90-minute long queue to board Indiana Jones Adventure at Disneyland.

*(Jennifer agrees.)*

Like, you just—you're locked into a path.

**Jesse Thorn:** Most of the Trader Joe's that I've been to in New York City I think were built into like mausoleum tunnels of some kind?!

*(They laugh.)*

**John Hodgman:** You know, there's that Trader Joe's that's in the old—in the Greenwood Cemetery now.

**Jesse Thorn:** Wait, Trader Joe's Queen's Catacombs is the location?!

*(They titter.)*

**John Hodgman:** But if you go into a grocery store that's got real aisles, then the tuck is always a good technique. I would even suggest end capping it! Leave your cart at the end of the aisle. Now end caps, meaning the ends of the aisle. Sometimes they have stuff that's on sale there. You don't wanna leave it there forever. People need to access that stuff too. But in general, if the aisle's pretty crowded, end cap your cart. Go in there, surgical strike. Get your jar of olives or whatever. Come on back, and move it along. You ever—?

**Jesse Thorn:** You know what my number one story is for tucking?

**John Hodgman:** No.

**Jesse Thorn:** It's gonna be Costco, guys.

**John Hodgman:** Costco!

**Jennifer Marmor:** Yeah, okay.

**Jesse Thorn:** Gotta tuck at Costco. 'Cause otherwise, *(laughing)* these old ladies with different cultural expectations about space are just gonna take you out!

[00:50:00]

**John Hodgman:** Have you ever—? This has never happened to me. It is something that I worry about. You ever leave your cart behind, and then go and retrieve it and realize you got the wrong cart?

*(They both confirm.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** I did that relatively recently, and I shared a great laugh with a nice lady at the Trader Joe's.

**John Hodgman:** There you go! There you go.

**Jesse Thorn:** She was very nice about it. Okay, we're gonna take a quick break. We've got a case about what counts as shopping, and then a case about the biggest shopping day of them all, Black Friday.

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**Promo:**

**Brenda Snell:** Hi, is this Sam?

**Sam:** Yes, it is.

**Brenda:** I'm Brenda, host of *Secret Histories Of Nerd Mysteries* on Maximum Fun. And I'm calling because you've been named Maximum Fun's Member of the Month for May.

**Sam:** Wow. I'm really excited to hear that. I love being a member. I like all the BOCO, and I just—I enjoy all the shows that I listen to. I just—I love Maximum Fun.

**Brenda:** As our member of the month, you'll be getting a \$25 gift card to the Maximum Fun Store, a special Member of the Month bumper sticker, a special priority parking spot at Maximum Fun HQ in Los Angeles, California, just for you.

**Sam:** I can't wait to see what the bumper sticker looks like.

**Brenda:** Oh yeah. I am obsessed with bumper stickers. What's your message to people thinking about joining Maximum Fun?

**Sam:** I mean, if you really like the shows, I think it's like a really good way to help support them. I'm really happy I'm able to.

**Brenda:** Thank you so much for listening.

**Sam:** Thank you for making your show.

**Speaker:** Become a Maximum Fun member now at [MaximumFun.org/join](https://MaximumFun.org/join).

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**Jesse Thorn:** Judge Hodgman, we are taking a quick break from clearing the docket. I wanna mention—you know our friend, Jean Grae?

**John Hodgman:** I do! I just heard Jean Grae on a wonderful radio show and podcast, called *Bullseye*!

**Jesse Thorn:** Indeed. Now, I will say interviewing Jean Grae is like herding cats. Jean has a lot of thoughts in a lot of different directions. The good news is: they're all great and insightful and hilarious! (*Chuckles.*) So, it is a wild journey, my interview with Jean Grae, and it is a great time. So, I hope everybody will go check it out on *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn*.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, no, that was a wonderful conversation. Obviously, Jean has a new book out, which we've talked about before and which I encourage you to check out if you've not done so already. Either check it out at the library or check it out at your local bookstore. Browse it, and perhaps buy it. It's called *In My Remaining Years*, and it's a smart, funny, wise memoir and advice book for what to do with your remaining years.

Me, I got a little super-secret project going with our friend David Rees. Can't tell you anymore about it right now, but it sure is fun to work on. While you're waiting for details, maybe go over there to Hulu and, once again, check out *Dicktown* maybe for the very first time. It's two seasons of a very funny PG-13 cartoon starring the voices of me, David Rees, your friend Jean Grae, as well as Amy Sedaris, as well as Mike Mitchell from the *Doughboys*. I tried to get Wiger on there, but I was told by our producers, "This is not a *Doughboys* fanfiction." (*Laughs.*) "This is an actual animated show." And indeed it is. It's on Hulu; it's called Dick Town. And it's fun! And each episode is about 11 minutes long, and there are only 20 of them, so you can knock it out on an evening if you've run out of *White Lotuses* to watch. I hope you would enjoy this a lot.

And I'll definitely give you news about what's coming up as soon as I have it to share. And in the meantime, you might want to go over to [Hodgman.substack.com](https://Hodgman.substack.com). That's my newsletter, called "Secret Society". Don't worry, there's a public spot in every secret society. Just subscribe for free. I give you all the news of what's going on with me. Little, weird off-appearances or surprise popups on things that I don't even know about until maybe a week before. I recently announced that I was appearing with the *Doughboys* at the Wilbur Theater. And that happened the other week, and it was great to see some Secret Societians there.

And then there's a secret part of Secret Society! If you feel like subscribing at the paid level, you get to listen to me read *Moby Dick* to you in a Maine accent and share other more personal things with you. So, if that's something that's interesting to you, [Hodgman.substack.com](http://Hodgman.substack.com) is where you can find it. You'll always get the very latest news about what I'm up to whenever I have it to share with you.

**Jesse Thorn:** Let's get back to that docket!

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**Jesse Thorn:** Here's a case from I Write Good on BlueSky—by the way, follow *Judge John Hodgman* on BlueSky; [@JudgeJohnHodgman](https://www.bluethumb.com/@JudgeJohnHodgman).

“I say shopping requires a purchase, otherwise it's not shopping. My partner disagrees. They say browsing without buying anything is still shopping. Who's right?”

**John Hodgman:** Hm. Hm! Browsing without buying, is it still shopping? Somewhat of an existential question.

[00:55:00]

Before we dig into it— Jesse and Jennifer, have I ever told you about the time Bill Nye tried to bully me into buying a cast iron waffle iron?

**Jesse Thorn:** I mean, it's happened to all of us, but you did tell us.

**Jennifer Marmor:** (*Playfully.*) Who amongst us—?

**John Hodgman:** I was at Martin and Melissa's wedding in California, and I went to a—I guess an antique store, but an antique store that sells a bunch of cast iron pans. Not just like Wedgewood furniture, but like a fair amount of junk. And I love to— You know, that to me is one of my great—aside from grocery shopping; that is also one of my great pleasures—to browse around a junky antique store. I'll go live at the Big Chicken Barn in Ellsworth, Maine, if they would let me set up a little cot. I've asked many times; they say no because of liability issues.

And in this store— I like cast iron, and I saw this very ingenious and clever cast iron waffle iron that flipped over! So that, you know, you cook half of the waffle on one side, you cook half the waffle on the other. And it came in a frame, and it had— Look it up online. You'll see what I'm talking about. It was a Griswold, of course. It caught my eye, but I knew that I was only browsing. I knew that I was only browsing. I wasn't there to make a purchase. I didn't need this waffle iron. And the next day after the wedding, we were having brunch, and Bill Nye was a guest at the wedding! And I told him and my other table companions about this. And Bill Nye said, “You should go back and buy it.”

And I'm like, “Well, n-no. I—I don't think it was a very good deal, and I don't really need it.”

He's like, “No, it spoke to you. You should own it.”

And I'm like, “Bill Nye, as they say at the YMCA pool, stay in your lane. You wanna tell me about science and climate change? I'm all ears!”

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, Bill Nye! We know what your lane is. Your lane is the Pasadena Swing Dancing Club!

**John Hodgman:** There we go! Yeah. You want to show me some Lindy Hop steps? For sure. I'm open to Bill Nye's advice, but when it comes to not only cast iron—a thing that I like and occasionally collect, and a thing that is very heavy that I do not wanna put in my suitcase to travel across the—I don't need it!

Bill Nye would not let it go. He kept trying to get me to buy it, and I said, “I'm not gonna be bullied, Bill Nye.” He also told me to leave \$20 for the housekeeper at the hotel. And I'm like, “There, I agree with you.” If you have the means, leave as much as you can for the housekeeper. Because boy oh boy, are their job's thankless, and we've talked about it before.

But was I shopping, even though I knew that I would not buy any cast iron pan, never mind a cast iron waffle iron?

**Jesse Thorn:** Yes, you were.

**Jennifer Marmor:** Mm-hm.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. That counts as shopping, right? Browsing counts as shopping?

**Jennifer Marmor:** I think so. Because even if you don't have the intention to buy something, like there could have been something that you were browsing, and then thought, “Huh, you know, I think I am gonna buy this.”

*(John agrees.)*

Like, there is that—there's the possibility of buying that's always there when you're browsing.

**Jesse Thorn:** You know what I'm thinking about right now? You know our former—the wonderful standup comic and our former MaxFun colleague, Jasper Redd?

*(They confirm.)*

Jasper used to have this line—it wasn't even a punchline—that I think about all the time in his act. Which is—and you know, he had that real slow Tennessee drawl. And Jasper would just say, *(drawling)* “I was in the drugstore the other day, browsing products.”

*(John snorts and agrees.)*



*(Laughs.)* I think about “browsing products”. Oh, anytime I'm in a store, I'm browsing products.

**John Hodgman:** Do I need this big bottle of magnesium? It's two for one. I mean, I think about that all the time when I'm dragging a basket across the carpeted halls of the CVS.

**Jesse Thorn:** Here's something from Steve in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

“My cousin, Carla, is Canadian. But she often attends Thanksgiving dinner with us here in the United States. She says it's to visit us. She's lying. She comes for one reason: Black Friday. I say that Thanksgiving is a time to celebrate togetherness, not to fight crowds in a mall. Please order her to skip Black Friday going forward. She should celebrate American Thanksgiving with us, not our big box stores.”

**John Hodgman:** Matt, do you think—and be honest. Do you think that Steve in Ann Arbor really has a cousin in Canada named Carla? Or he's just trying to seem cool?

**Jesse Thorn:** Oh, yeah! No, I know Carla. I mean, I've never met Carla person, but I know of Carla. She's my summer camp friend's girlfriend.

**John Hodgman:** *(Laughs.)* Canada has its own Thanksgiving celebration, and it is held on the second Monday in October.

[01:00:00]

Because Canada, as we learn over and over again, doesn't get it 100% right, but has a better batting average than a lot of places. They got this one right. No reason in the God-or-Whatever darn world should Thanksgiving just be weeks—weeks!—before the major winter holidays of Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, New Year's, all of that stuff. Like, spread it out! Dumb. It's dumb! Also, everyone knows that I don't agree with Steve in Ann Arbor. I do not find that Thanksgiving is a time to celebrate togetherness. I feel like it's a time—what it really should be is a nice, long weekend where no one does anything, just takes a break.

I don't like it. But I'll tell you what, if it were the second week in October, I might get into it. I might have the energy and the pace to have a big family meal. Canadian Thanksgiving, maybe I'm gonna celebrate that from now on. You have a problem with that, Steve in Ann Arbor?!

I'll tell you something though. Canada also has a Black Friday. And you know when that is? Black Friday, the Friday after American Thanksgiving. Until relatively recently, I would imagine, Canadians loooved to swarm across the border for big discount days like Black Friday. And the Canadian retailers were so annoyed to be losing this business, they said, “Okay, well we're gonna do it too.” So, they have it there. So, your whole argument falls apart, Steve from Ann Arbor, because Carla could be doing Black Friday in Canada. But indeed, she is—if she really exists—coming to spend that time in Michigan with you and your family and doing something that she wants to do. And who are you to judge? Cousins shouldn't judge.

(Beat.) Mmmm, I judge my older cousin, Jason. He was kind of a jerk. But generally speaking, if you like your Canadian cousin, just let 'em do what they're gonna do! Anyway, you'll be lucky if you see her in the future. 'Cause I think a lot of Canadians are saying they're not gonna travel to the United States or shop there for a while. And that's— I know it'll be interesting to watch what happens up in Maine this summer, because it has a lot of Canadian tourism. I mean, Old Orchard Beach is the Daytona Beach for Canada. (Chuckles.) It's like where all of the—it's where all of the Québécois bikers come and party all summer long. That is their spot. And will they show up? I don't know.

Anyway, I think that's it, right? Is the docket clear?

**Jesse Thorn:** (Singing.) Docket is clear.

That's it for another episode of *Judge John Hodgman*, which was created by Jesse Thorn and John Hodgman. Our social media manager, Dan Telfer. The podcast, edited by AJ McKeon. Daniel Speer, our video producer. Our show, produced by Jennifer Marmor. Photos from the show are on our Instagram account at [Instagram.com/JudgeJohnHodgman](https://www.instagram.com/JudgeJohnHodgman). We're also on TikTok and YouTube, where you can watch full episodes of the show and highlights [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](https://www.youtube.com/@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod). Follow us and subscribe there. And please do do that. In fact, go there and share one of your favorite episodes with a friend.

**John Hodgman:** Speaking of video content, our YouTube comment of the week belongs to RobinNordstrom7799. Thank you, Robin. You may recall that this episode, entitled “Shelf Incrimination”, was between Hailey and her fiancé. Hailey wanted her fiancé to limit her library of books that they would share when they moved in together to zero books. And apparently RobinNordstrom7799, when she heard the words “zero books” just typed in a comment, “Audible gasp.” I love it. Yeah, for sure. I wonder if Robin Nordstrom is related to the very popular department store retailer, Nordstrom.

If you have a system for grocery shopping that is worthy of an audible gasp, please tell us in the YouTube comments in this episode! Or let me know if you've ever done Black Friday shopping. And if so, what did you buy? Or let me know if there's something you touched at a store when you were just browsing, and then you didn't buy it, and then you wished you did, and you've never stopped thinking about it, and it's gone now. I can tell you that is exactly how I feel about that print of an outsider art painting of a UFO over the Deer Isle Bridge that I found in the basement of the Hancock Creamery Antique Mall. And they were charging too much for it. And I was like, “No one will ever buy it.” But then someone did, and I lost it. I wish I had it.

You can share this episode with anyone you want! Friend, foe, family, any future listener who you think might enjoy it. Going to YouTube is one of the best ways to do it.

[01:05:00]

A lot of people listen to podcasts now, or watch podcasts now, on [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](https://www.youtube.com/@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod), our channel on YouTube. And it's very easy to share from there. Just click on that little arrow, copy a link, or just follow their prompts to share it to wherever or whoever you want. It's so easy to do, and it is so helpful to us. Thank you for your comments on YouTube, on all

the places you can leave them. It really does help people discover the show, and it's a lot of fun for us to read and engage with you. So, please keep it up. Keep those comments, likes, shares, subscribes, and so forth coming. They really do help.

Hey, we talked a lot about shopping today. People love to find comfort in it, but if retail therapy isn't your thing, maybe it's comfort food. Are you a Kraft mac and cheese purist, and your partner insists on putting peas in it?! Whoa. Whoa! Jennifer Marmor, you write this copy?

*(Jennifer confirms.)*

Who's putting peas in their Kraft mac and cheese?!

**Jennifer Marmor:** People do it. I've tried it before. Eh.

**John Hodgman:** Okay. I don't know about that.

**Jesse Thorn:** Peas cheese?! Gimme a break.

*(They chuckle.)*

**John Hodgman:** If not mac and cheese, what would you say is the definitive comfort food? The main one? Did you discover that your boyfriend was lying about something big, and none of your friends brought you a casserole? You may be a real housewife of Orange County, but I want to hear about it. Send your comfort food cases to us at [MaximumFun.org/jjho](https://MaximumFun.org/jjho).

**Jesse Thorn:** And of course, we wanna hear about all your disputes on any subject. No case too big or too small. So, remember to submit those cases at [MaximumFun.org/jjho](https://MaximumFun.org/jjho). 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!