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Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Welcome to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. I'm Bailiff Jesse Thorn. This week, "Dragonian Law". Erin brings the case against her husband, Bill. Erin and Bill threw a dragon-themed birthday party for their 1-year-old. On the day of the event, Erin was horrified to see the menu Bill had put together. Bill named the food and drink after various things dragons shed, excrete, and throw up. Bill says it was fun, but Erin doesn't wanna see another pitcher of dragon pee ever. 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: "A sage tells of encountering Bahamut in the guise of an old hermit with seven canaries singing sweetly as they flitted nearby. The sage relates that he would never have known that he was anything other than what he appeared to be, except that a group of ogres and trolls happened by, much to their sorrow."

Bailiff Jesse Thorn, please swear the litigants in!

Jesse Thorn: Erin and Bill, please rise and raise your right hands.

(Chairs squeak.)

Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God-or-Whatever?

(They swear.)

Do you swear to abide by Judge John Hodgman's ruling, despite the fact that dragons love tacos? I don't know! I don't know what is the premise of that joke anymore.

(John chuckles.)

We've discussed that before. Do you swear that?

(They swear.)

Judge Hodgman, you may proceed.

John Hodgman: First of all, I will rule that dragons do love tacos, and tacos are not sandwiches.

Second, Erin and Bill, you may be seated.

(Chairs squeak.)

For an immediate summary judgement in one of yours favors, can either of you name the piece of culture that I referenced as I entered this court room? Let's see. Who's going first here? Why don't we say Bill?

Bill: Uhh, okay. That is not anywhere in the realm of what I prepared, so I'm really not sure. But I will—

John Hodgman: Do you wanna hear it again?

(Bill agrees.)

Or how about this? Would you like to hear an example of subduing a dragon?

(Bill agrees.)

Alright. Good. “Two eighth-level fighters, a seventh-level dwarven fighter, an Elvin fourth-level fighter, and a sixth-level magic user, and a halfling thief of ninth-level stumble across a huge, red dragon, peacefully asleep on a veritable mountain of treasure. After a hurried, whispered debate, the party opts to strike to subdue, as that will A) give them a dragon to use or sell, and B) save treasure from destruction by avoiding the fireworks of a general melee.”

I won't go on. Do you have any guess where I'm quoting from?

Bill: I'm gonna guess it's the *Dungeons & Dragons* movie.

John Hodgman: The *Dungeons & Dragons* movie. You mean *Dungeons & Dragons*? Or *Dungeons & Dragons: Honor Among Thieves*?

Bill: Ooh. I'm gonna go with the second.

John Hodgman: *Honor Among Thieves*!

(Bill confirms.)

That's a great movie.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, that was a lot of fun. That was a good movie.

John Hodgman: It was a good movie and a good guess. And I'm writing it down into the guest book right now.

Erin, it's your turn. What is your guess?

Erin: I'm way outta my depth here with the dragon theme, but I'm gonna go—

John Hodgman: Oh here, let me give you some more.

“As the dragon had just awakened, the party strikes first. Four of them hit, and another 23 hit points of doing damages scored. The dragon chooses to breathe, dice score 99%. So, he turns his head and fires right where the elf, dwarf, and halfling are attacking. Saving throws indicate that each take 44, 88, and 44 hit points damage respectively. All three char and die.”

Jesse Thorn: John, do you think Chris Pine might be the best of the Chrises of showbusiness? You know, those Chrises?

John Hodgman: Yes. All the Chrises of showbiz.

Jesse Thorn: They're all very good.

John Hodgman: They're all very good.

Jesse Thorn: But I think Chris Pine might be the best one! He's great in that *Dungeons & Dragons*. I was watching that *Dungeons*—I don't care about *Dungeons & Dragons* particularly, but I watched that movie. And I'm like look at Chris Pine! This guy's great!

John Hodgman: He is great. But I love all the Chrises, and I will never say anything against my friend, Chris Evans, who once responded to me on Twitter before it was terrible. So, alright. All three char and die. Erin, does that give you the hint you need to take this one and put it in your treasure bag?

Erin: Yeah. So, I think now that I've heard that three times, definitely gonna go with “The Ballad of the 20th of Maine” by the Ghost of Paul Revere. That really jogged my memory. So. Thank you.

John Hodgman: “The Ballad of the 20th of Maine” by The Ghost of Paul Revere?! Is that some kind of hippie band that they play up here at WERU.org in Orland Main, Joel?

Joel Mann: Yes. They've been here before.

John Hodgman: Who? Who is it?

Joel Mann: Paul Revere.

John Hodgman: It's hard for me to know which is the band and which is the song and which is the whatever.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. Are we talking about Paul Revere the patriot? Paul Revere of Paul Revere and the Raiders? (*Laughs.*)

John Hodgman: Yeah. I don't know. Erin, what are you talking about?

Erin: It's the ballad—the state ballad of Maine. It's the official...

John Hodgman: The state ballad of Maine?!

[00:05:00]

Erin, do you have a Maine connection?

Erin: I did live in Maine for about six years after college. And—

John Hodgman: Oh, whereabouts?

Erin: Portland, Maine. But I had friends kind of all over and got to explore the state pretty extensively, because a lot of my friends from Maine had, you know, camps up north and various locations.

John Hodgman: Right. Hey, if you have anyone in Maine still, you can let them know the news: the hotdog steamer at the gas station is still broken, I'm very disappointed to report.

(Unhappy sounds from the others.)

Yeah, still broken. It's been weeks! Bill, do you have any connections to Maine?

Bill: Erin. That's my connection to Maine.

John Hodgman: Ohhh, alright. I was gonna throw you outta court, but that's pretty cute. Anyway, all guesses are wrong. Of course, I was quoting from *The Advanced Dungeons & Dragons Monster Manual*. I believe it was the fourth edition from 1979, written by Gary Gygax in his description initially of Bahamut, the one and only platinum dragon—the most powerful of the metallic dragons—and the king of the good dragons. Not to be confused with Tiamat, the goddess. The five—I hope—headed goddess of evil dragons with a different color dragon head for each neck.

But you got it wrong, I'm afraid! Both of you. And so, we will go on to hear the case. Erin, who seeks justice in this case?

Erin: I do, Your Honor.

John Hodgman: What is the nature of the justice that you seek?

Erin: I would like no reparation for past harm done. However, moving forward, would really love to not have any excrement themed food at my son's birthday parties—unless specifically

requested without any goading, prompting, or inside jokes moving forward. Unless he really requests it.

John Hodgman: Your son requests it? Not Bill.

Erin: Oh, yes. Yeah, I don't—yeah.

John Hodgman: Right. Okay. Well, let's go to past harm just so that we understand. So, your husband Bill put together a menu for your shared son's birthday party. When was that birthday party?

Erin: Around January 30th.

John Hodgman: Okay. And how old was your son turning at that time?

Erin: He turned one.

John Hodgman: (*Snorts.*) Okay. So, this was a big birthday party, and the party was dragon-themed. Bill, why dragons?

Bill: Because Erin wanted to do a dragon-themed birthday party.

John Hodgman: Whoa! He just threw it back on you, Erin. Erin, why dragons?

Erin: Well, originally we didn't have a theme, 'cause I think birthday is a good theme. Just party.

John Hodgman: I agree with you!

Erin: Yeah. So, but then our son received a really cute dragon stuffed animal for Christmas, which is only about a month before his birthday, and a really sweet book that went along with it from his Aunt Kristen. And he really liked that dragon, and I thought, “You know what? We could put up a few dragon pictures on the walls and balloons or something just to give it a little bit more pizzazz.” Because it was a small birthday party with just immediate family. We were trying to keep it really lowkey, low stress, so we could enjoy the day together. But I also love, you know, fantasy, medieval fantasy, kind of. So, it was something that I really enjoy. For sure.

John Hodgman: Do you ever play *Dungeons & Dragons* or *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*?

Erin: I have not.

John Hodgman: What's your favorite dragon book to read?

Erin: I'm a big *Lord of the Rings* fan, even though, you know, smog is kind of an evil dragon. But just really into different fantasies. I was actually thinking, when I was in like middle school, I read a book series about talking to dragons. I think it's actually called *Talking to Dragons*, and that may have been like the first series I really got into. I think it was like a YA series that probably came out in the late '80s. I don't know if it should still be read or not, because I was maybe eight or nine or ten when I read it. But that's probably the first like book series I got into with dragons.

John Hodgman: Yeah, yeah. One must be careful when blindly recommending culture from 10 to 30 years ago, for sure. (*Chuckles.*) But okay, so you love dragons. And so, why didn't you take the lead in theming your party? 'Cause it seems like you asked Bill to take care of the food, and that's what the problem is here.

Erin: That's a great question. So, we have a really good distribution of labor in our house, and Bill is admittedly a really good cook. And I'm a really terrible cook. And it also stresses me out. I don't like shopping for meals and having to remember all the ingredients. I can follow a recipe, but Bill is just like a genuinely phenomenal cook. And so, when we were talking about the party, he—I think he volunteered to take on the food, or maybe I was stressed out about it, and I was just gonna go with sandwich trays from Costco or something.

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And he said, “Why don't I take care of it? And you cannot stress out about it. And I'll just, you know, soup to nuts figure out the menu, shop for it, and put it all together.”

John Hodgman: Jesse Thorn, how are the sandwich trays at Costco?

Jesse Thorn: (*Enthusiastically.*) Acceptable!

John Hodgman: Thank you. (*Chuckles.*) Jesse Costco weighs in one more time! Thank you very much, Jesse Costco!

Jesse Thorn: A great value for a party you don't care about that much!

(*Erin giggles.*)

John Hodgman: But your first child is this son?

(*Erin confirms.*)

And I presume he has some sort of dragon name, like Silarius?

Erin: Oh, I wish. No.

John Hodgman: We'll call him Silarius for reasons of anonymity,

Jesse Thorn: I just wanna say that the protagonist of the *Enchanted Forest Chronicles*, the series of which *Talking to Dragons* is the fourth and final book, is Day Star, Son of Simmerine.

John Hodgman: Oh, that's even better! We'll call your son Day Star: Son of Simmerine. It's Day Star's first birthday party. You have sort of stumbled into a dragon theme. You have reasonably delegated the food to your husband, and that's why we're here. 'Cause you think your husband did a bad job. Now, in terms of the badness of the job that he did, how would you rank Bill's work providing a menu for this dragon-themed party?

And I would like you to rank it in order of *Dungeons & Dragons*' metallic dragons. So, did he get a gold, silver, bronze, copper, brass, platinum, cobalt, steel, or mithril dragon level?

Erin: You said mith-re-al?

John Hodgman: Yeah. Mith-rull.

Erin: Oh, okay. Not—okay. Somewhere in the middle. Halfway. Well, here's the thing.

John Hodgman: Brass?

Erin: Sure. (*Reconsidering.*) Well. I thought it was a really creative menu. I like that he was really excited about the theme. He came up with some really interesting ways to bring the theme to life. And the quality of the food was fine. It was nothing like his amazing menus that he's done before. But I was okay with that, because typically he gets stuck in the kitchen for hours doing these really intricate meals. And so, I was kind of glad he did some pre-made food and assembled food, so he could be out there and enjoying the party more. It was more just the naming of the food after things that come out of a dragon that I probably wouldn't say are appetizing for adults.

John Hodgman: Well, let's get into that. You did send in some evidence. All these photos will be available, of course, on our show page at MaximumFun.org, as well as all of our social media. And if you're watching on our YouTube channel, [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](https://www.youtube.com/@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod), you're looking at it right now: Exhibit A, a buffet of party foods labeled with names. I'm going to read the names. Bill, you tell me what the food is. Do you follow me?

(*Bill confirms.*)

Okay, so you have something here labeled dragon claws. Dragon claws.

Bill: Yeah. Those are the classic Bugles snack food.

John Hodgman: Bugles! Well, they do kind of look like claws. And here, you have plated them nicely by putting a bag into a bowl.

Bill: So, this was before the party started. We had not—

John Hodgman: Oh, okay. Got it.

Bill: As you can see, the punch was not mixed yet either.

John Hodgman: Oh, okay. Alright. We'll get to the punch in a moment. Also, we have something labeled here "dragon fireballs". Dragon fireballs. What are we looking at there?

Bill: So, those are cake pops. And I attempted to dip them in like an orange chocolate and then sprinkle them with red dust. I'm not a c chocolatier, so the chocolate was a mess. But I did get some red sprinkles on them. I do think they look like fireballs.

John Hodgman: But these are cake pops that you made yourself?

Bill: Well, I bought the cake pops themselves at the store.

(John affirms.)

And then I was trying to do the chocolate over top of the chocolate that was already on there. And I'm not a chocolatier.

John Hogdman: You were zhuzhing them up.

Bill: Yeah. Not a chocolatier, but.

John Hodgman: And these are dragon fireballs?

(Bill confirms.)

Like something a dragon might breathe.

Bill: Shoot out of its mouth. Right, exactly.

John Hodgman: Okay, just being very, very clear here.

Jesse Thorn: Bill, if I can be clear in understanding this: you're not a chocolatier. Is that correct?

(Bill confirms.)

Are you a pop-atier?

Bill: No, I'm not that either.

John Hodgman: A cake pop-atier?

Bill: No, I'm not that.

Jesse Thorn: What kind of tier are you?

Bill: Uhhh, that's a great question. I'm still trying to figure that one out.

Jesse Thorn: But you wrote “dragon fireballs” on that post-it note. That was your role here?

(Bill confirms.)

That's the kind of tier. You're a post-it note writing-atier.

(Erin laughs.)

Bill: Yeah. I did dip them in another chocolate that I did use a double boiler to melt and then sprinkles—

Jesse Thorn: Right, but you're not a chocolatier. That's clear.

John Hodgman: No, but a double boil-atier. That takes something.

Jesse Thorn: Alright. I mean, as long as he eventually opened that back Bugles and poured them into bowl.

(They laugh.)

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.

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Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

John Hodgman: Dragon pee, you mentioned, had not yet been poured when this photo was taken. There is an empty pitcher that is labeled with a post-it “dragon pee”. P-E-E, if you're

not hearing me correctly. IE, urine. IE, piss. IE, I'm trying to make the 11-year-olds laugh. This is not an invisible liquid. You had not yet concocted the pee, correct?

Bill: Correct. You can see the ingredients sitting next to it. It was Sprite and cranberry juice.

Jesse Thorn: If this were a cooking competition show, this would kind of be a picture of—*(tittering)* of Bill's mise en place.

(Bill and John agrees.)

(Laughing.) This jug of cran-apple juice, this thing of Sprite, and this bag of Bugles.

Bill: I'll also state, I think Erin has older oversold my abilities in the kitchen. I think I'm a fine cook. Certainly no chef.

John Hodgman: There is one post-it that has no accompan-a-ming food. That's right. I said accompan-a-ming! That is a post-it that says, "dragon puke". What's going on? Where's the dragon puke, Bill?

Bill: I think it was still being made, and I don't know that we actually ever came out with the puke. It was supposed to be some mini marshmallows melted in chocolate. But again, we're probably the—

John Hodgman: You're not a chocolatier. We know!

Bill: That's right. That's right. So, that got abandoned last minute.

Jesse Thorn: Are you a marshmellero?

Bill: Not that either.

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John Hodgman: And then we move on to the rest of the buffet. We have dragon scales. This is Exhibit B, which seem to be a bag each of Doritos and Tostitos. So, corn chips become dragon scales. That's pretty creative. And then a very disturbing slow cooker labeled "dragon turds".

(Jesse "uh-oh"s.)

That got Joel Mann. First time I've heard Joel Mann laugh this summer. Of course, I had told him to mute himself. So, no one will ever know what the laughter of Joel Mann sounds like.

(Jesse laughs.)

The deal is, if you hear Joel man laugh, you turn into a wicker man, and you're burned here in Maine at the end of the year. So, that's good for you.

(Erin titters.)

John Hodgman: What are dragon turds, Bill?

Bill: They're meatballs in barbecue sauce.

John Hodgman: Meatballs?! Not grape jelly?

Bill: Not grape jelly.

John Hodgman: You're in Ohio, is that correct?

(Bill confirms.)

Delightful. The delightful Midwest. So, Erin, obviously your dispute is you find dragon turds to be gross for some reason?

Erin: Yes. It wasn't necessarily the food itself; it was the naming of it. It's very Midwestern or Ohio to have a bag of frozen meatballs that you put in a slow cooker and cover and sauce, and that's like an appetizer we serve.

John Hodgman: Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. Bill didn't even make these meatballs?

Jesse Thorn: He's not a meatballer, John!

Erin: He actually makes great meatballs. But I will tell you, I did ask him to try to simplify the menu so that he, again, would not be in the kitchen during the party—which has happened before. I was hoping he would do some like easy things, so he did accommodate me there. Yeah. Mm-hm.

John Hodgman: Okay. So, you're not—your dispute is not with Bill just tossing some Bugles into a bowl and frozen meatballs into a slow cooker rather than making some stuff from scratch. Your dispute is solely with calling those meatballs turds.

Erin: I would've loved to see a little harder fare, considering most of the folks attending the party were adults. There were only three children there, and the rest—probably like 10 adults. So, I would've loved more of like a main course, but I was really trying not to be overly critical. Because parties are stressful, and I thought his menu was really creative. And I wanna say too that it was your mom who wrote out the post-it notes. It was not you.

(John “oh”s curiously.)

Bill: I did some of 'em.

Erin: You did some. Okay.

Bill: It was shared work. I'll also state there was another food item not presented here yet. I called them Viking skewers, and they were basically like Turkey ham sandwiches on a stick. With no bread.

John Hodgman: So, your contention is that there was some hardy fair there?

Bill: Uh, more hardy than has been put on so far. Yes.

Jesse Thorn: John, I'm no menu designer, but you could have thought about just going with dragon Costco sandwiches.

(They laugh.)

John Hodgman: They're acceptable!

Jesse Thorn: Maybe some of the dragon shrimp tray? You know that shrimp tray they got there at Costco? That's good.

John Hodgman: Yeah. Erin, how were the turds?

Erin: I didn't eat them, because it really grossed me out. I have a thing where if something is called, you know, something that gives me like the ick, it kind of makes me not want to eat it. So, I don't think I had any of them.

John Hodgman: Got it. Erin, your mom also contributed to the party. She made a cake in the shape of a dragon. I have a photo of that I'm looking at here as well. Now, I presume you hate this as well?

Erin: No, I love it. And my mom is very creative. And growing up—she is a big DIYer, and no creative task is—she doesn't feel any creative task is like above her skillset. So, she's willing to like, you know, really put herself out there and made this cake that was based on the stuffed animal that Casey got for his birthday. And it's not perfect.

John Hodgman: I'm sorry, are you talking about Silarius, the Day Streamer? The dragon child?

Erin: Correct. Casey Silarius Day Dreamer, the dragon child.

John Hodgman: Daydreamer? What did we decide? Daytime?

Bill: Day Streamer?

John Hodgman: Day Walker? Okay. Silarius the Day Streamer, scion of the dragon kind. First of his name.

Erin: Yeah. Right, right. So, I thought—I presented this as evidence, because I thought this was a really cool way to create food that was dragon-themed that didn't gross people out. Specifically, the adults in the room who were eating the food.

John Hodgman: Were any of the adults grossed out? Did they express—? I mean, did people walk out in a rage?

Erin: No. Your Honor, we're in Ohio. So, people are very polite to your face and would rarely criticize your food and your cooking in front of you. I don't know what people said behind our back! I did ask my grandmother—who's in her late 80s—who attended the party, what did she think of the food.

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And in a very Midwestern, nice way, she said, “Interesting. It was interesting.” Which is kind of her way of saying, “I don't—”

John Hodgman: That's her casting you into the pit of hell.

Erin: Sure. “I can't politely comment on this, and I don't wanna hurt anybody's feelings to their face.” Mm-hm.

John Hodgman: Right, right. How do you feel about, for lack of a better term, potty humor in general, Erin?

Erin: Don't love it. However, since marrying Bill, I have softened up a little, loosened up a little on that.

John Hodgman: Because Bill's a big potty mouth?

(Jesse chortles.)

Erin: Sure. Yeah.

Bill: I do have a potty theme track record to stand on, yes. That predates Erin.

John Hodgman: *(Laughing.)* Gross! I wanna hear about your potty tracks!

Bill: Well, I am part of a very prestigious group in Toledo Old West End called the Party Poopers. And every year, when the Toledo Old West End has their annual parade, we follow the horses in the parade and get rid of any excrement that they leave behind, so other parade goers don't have to walk through it.

John Hodgman: This is an annual parade in Toledo?

Bill: Yes.

John Hodgman: You pick up the poop afterwards, and you and your band of merry men are called the party poopers?

Bill: Correct.

John Hodgman: That's delightful. How many years have you been doing that?

Bill: Over ten.

John Hodgman: Wow. Good job.

Bill: Yes. Thank you. I was gonna say, yeah, we just celebrated our annual ten years. We actually started in 2013 or 2014, but with pandemic related no-parades, we had to black out a year or two.

John Hodgman: No, you had to find other horses to pick up after.

Bill: Wow. We should have.

John Hodgman: Erin, at what point were you aware that Bill was coming up with the dragon puke, dragon pee, dragon turds? Those are the three that bother you, right? Dragon scales, dragon claws. Are those okay?

Erin: Those are okay. I thought that was really creative with the Bugles and—

John Hodgman: Yeah, they look like claws! You put 'em on your fingers, and you act like a werewolf.

Erin: Yeah. I thought that was sweet. Bill shared the menu with me maybe three days before the party and was really excited about it. And I'm working on not, um, kind of immediately like shutting him down if there's something that kind of gives me the ick. So, I was like, "Let me let this sit for a couple days." And I thought I could negotiate my way away from the dragon...

John Hodgman: Excrement.

Erin: Yeah. Uh-huh, those two things. Because I thought the claws and the skills were really cool, and I was really excited to see how excited he was about that. But the negotiations did not go well. And then when his mom got into town—which she's amazing, and I really won the mother-in-law lottery—she and Bill are very similar and have very similar senses of humor. So, it kind of escalated, and then they kind of doubled down on it. Because she shared

Bill's enthusiasm for the menu and thought it was hilarious and was just tickled that this was gonna be part of the party. So, I let it go at that point.

Jesse Thorn: Your kids got a poop grandma?!

Erin: Yeah, she's really cool. She's a really cool grandma.

John Hodgman: Jesse, I forgot that in Ohio they have a mother-in-law lottery. Mothers-in-law are randomly assigned.

(Jesse agrees through laughter.)

If you pull a good one, it's a poop grandma!

Jesse Thorn: I read *The Lottery* in middle school.

John Hodgman: That's right. That's what that famous short story by Shirley Jackson's all about. But even though you won the lottery, I mean, isn't it fair to say that it was two against one at this point? You felt like you couldn't speak up any further?

Erin: That's correct. And it didn't feel like I would be— You know, when you ask somebody to contribute to a party and you kind of split the labor, it felt unfair to then be kind of poking holes in this really big excitement balloon that was growing and growing around this menu. So, yeah. I let it go and then— Or I wouldn't say let it go. I kind of like pushed it down and then after the party kind of thought this would be a great case for the judge, so that we don't bump up against this every year.

John Hodgman: You swallowed your own dragon puke and refused to externalize your feelings.

Jesse Thorn: Erin, you said that this is something you've been working on. Is this something that has come up in other contexts where you have too quickly criticized Bill's tendency to give you the ick?

Erin: That's a great question. I think it's more about compromising in marriage, and you know, reconciling both of our personalities and the things that bring us joy and excitement.

[00:30:00]

And I would say it's just me trying to be a good partner and not— And we've listened to a lot of *Judge John Homan* podcasts, and I've learned a lot about not yucking someone's yums. And that's something we bring up a lot and try to support each other. So, I don't know. Maybe Bill, you can—if you have an example. Maybe I'm being too generous.

Bill: *(Plainly.)* No.

(Jesse laughs.)

John Hodgman: Well, I mean, look. The court does state as settled law that people like what they like. But you have a right to not be nauseated, Erin. Bill, when Erin was expressing her initial displeasure with this menu, why did you keep going?

Bill: That's also a good question. I don't know. And I think kind of to what Erin was saying, I don't know that I, at the time, realized how severely she was taking it. I think it was just kind of a— It felt like an in-passing comment like, “Does it have to be this?”

And I said, “Well, no, but I can't think of anything else.”

John Hodgman: It could be dragon doo-doo; it could be dragon number twos; it could be dragon deuces.

Bill: Probably could have called the punch dragon blood, but I don't know that that would've made her feel a lot better.

Erin: Actually, I'm okay with that. I mean, I remember dragon pee wasn't on the initial menu. It was when you and your mom got together. And I was kind of making a joke, this last pitch like, “Do we really—? Do you think people really want to eat dragon turds? Or something like dragon urine?” And I specifically remember this.

Your mom goes, “That's a great idea. We can call the punch dragon pee.”

And I said, “I think that's disgusting.”

And she said, “I think it's hilarious.”

And that's probably when I started like stuffing down, you know, the feelings and just said, “I'll address this afterwards.”

Bill: I also think, in my defense, I have several nieces—three of which were at the party. And the previous Christmas in which our son received the dragon—

John Hodgman: Silarius the Day Streamer, scion of dragon kind, first of his name. He received the dragon.

Bill: He received the dragon. One of my nieces received a pooppy puppy toy that you feed little treats and then they poop out. And all three of them thought that was hilarious. And so, I don't know, maybe in the moment boy talk did come up. But in my mind it wasn't boy versus girl. It was just little kids, and some big kids find poop jokes funny.

John Hodgman: Bill, these nieces that you talked about that loved that pooppy puppy so much, how'd they feel about your dragon turds?

Bill: Well, I did have two of them write statements. And they both agreed that it was funny. One of them also felt that it was disgusting and should be banned from the USA.

(Jesse cackles.)

And is definitely on Aunt Erin's side in this ordeal. And the other one is totally on my side. Thought it was hilarious, and the food was yummy. And they both thought the food was yummy. But...

John Hodgman: So, you have a 50% niece acceptance rate. Approval rate, I should say.

Bill: I like to think that the third one also found it funny. But I have a feeling she did not. She's the youngest.

John Hodgman: She didn't write a statement?

Bill: She can't write yet. No.

John Hodgman: Okay. Alright. Erin, did you drink the dragon pee? Yes or no? How did it taste?

Erin: No.

John Hodgman: You didn't drink it?

Erin: No, I did not.

John Hodgman: Would you have had some if it were called something else, like dragon blood or dragon elixir?

Erin: Oh, yeah. I think that's fun.

Jesse Thorn: I have a question. Was the ultimate presentation of this menu in the form of post-it notes?

Erin: Yes. That was a stylistic choice by Bill and his mother.

Bill: Well, not entirely, so—

John Hodgman: Yeah, I wouldn't call it a choice either, Bill.

Bill: No, it was a last resort. My intention was to actually make little—

John Hodgman: That's more like it.

Bill: —little printed placards. But I had been fiddling with chocolate that morning and I'm not a chocolate tier.

John Hodgman: We all know! You're not a fiddle-atier. Yeah.

Bill: That did not go as well as planned.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, he's not a placardisto either!

Bill: So, we ran out of time to actually do the initial plan, and so post-it notes became the alternative.

John Hodgman: You ran out of time. Okay. Bill, what do you got planned for birthday party number two?

Bill: I don't know what the theme is yet, so I don't know.

John Hodgman: Well, Erin, how are you gonna protect yourself from your husband for birthday party number two?

Erin: Well, that's why I'm here today, Your Honor. I think, depending on the outcome of this case, we'll have to think really closely about the theme for the second birthday party.

[00:35:00]

Or maybe just no theme.

John Hodgman: And oh, I've got a great theme actually. Number two.

Erin: *(Softly.)* Oh, god.

Jesse Thorn: *(Cackles but suddenly drops to deadpan.)* John, what's that mean?

John Hodgman: What's that? I just mean anything having to do with... number two. Now you're thinking no theme at all! Other than birthday.

Erin: Sure. I'm a little scared to pick a theme. And then if— So, I think my fear is that this becomes a bit. And every year, that this will become kind of a tradition to gross Mom out, and— Mom being me.

John Hodgman: You, being Mom.

Erin: I can't believe I referred to myself in the third person in that way.

John Hodgman: Ohhh, yeah. It happens quick.

Erin: Oh, gosh.

Jesse Thorn: Pretty soon, you'll be calling children kiddos. "Oh, the kiddos are doing this." Oh, boy.

Erin: It's a slippery slope. But yeah, that's my fear. I don't want it to become a bit of trying to gross me out every year and have that be something that brings Bill and Casey Day Star together. And then I'm on the outside of it. I don't wanna be on the outside of a joke like that. Even if it's, you know, somewhat harmless to have this kind of food at a birthday party, like I could get over it. I think my deeper fear is that I get pushed out of the group around his birthday party and around the menu.

John Hodgman: Bill, why was this cool and fun?

Bill: Well, because potty jokes are cool and fun.

John Hodgman: And who—

(Jesse laughs.)

Your child—

Jesse Thorn: Thank you for using a deposition-style delivery, there.

John Hodgman: Let the record show that before answering, Bill put his hand over the microphone to talk to his attorney for a brief period of time before coming back, throwing the question directly back into my face, like so much dragon turds. I guess, I mean to say— Let's go over the guest list one more time. It's obviously you and Erin. Both of your moms. There are three nieces of mystical age changing properties. And thennn all the rest were adults.

Bill: Well, yeah. So, her father, her sister, my brother, his wife, her grandmother, yeah.

John Hodgman: And do you have positive evidence that any of these people loved eating the dragon turds and thought that was the funniest thing of all time?

Bill: Yes. I think both my mother would attest to that as well as my brother and sister-in-law's middle child, Josephine, who provided a statement.

John Hodgman: Got it. And the rest were just eating your turds to be polite.

Bill: Probably. Yes.

John Hodgman: Your son, Silerius Day Streamer, scion of dragon kind, first of his name, but known around the castle yard as Casey is one year old as of January, some months ago.

(Bill confirms.)

So, now we're in the 18 month or so range. What evidence could you possibly have that this child—? Look, I love your child. All children are wonderful. But at the age of one, they're pretty dumb. What evidence do you have—positive evidence—that they loved the dragon turds?

Bill: Um, I don't think I could provide that.

John Hodgman: Erin, Bill says that if I rule in his favor and you put him in charge of food, that you need to just let him be in charge of food. Just let him do his thing. You got through this one party where he served the dragon turds; do you have it in you to go through it again?

Erin: I don't believe so.

John Hodgman: Bill, what does that mean when you asked to be just let alone? Do you feel that Erin is trying to control you or subdue you, as those poor *Dungeons & Dragons* players tried to subdue that red dragon? And three of them were charred to death immediately?

Bill: I think, for lack of a better way to put it, yes. You know, I think as far as the birthday party coming together, it really was Erin's idea on the theme and the decorations. And she did so much. This was kind of my piece of it. And so, I did want to take ownership of it. You know, I love my son, loved celebrating him, and wanted to put my own little personality stamp on it. And I think this was my way to do it.

John Hodgman: Erin, you heard what your husband said. I'm gonna ask you point blank as well. Do you love your son?

Erin: I do, Your Honor.

John Hodgman: Alright.

Jesse Thorn: Let the record reflect that she put her hand over the microphone and checked in with her attorney before answering the question.

(They laugh.)

John Hodgman: Bill, if I were to rule in Erin's favor, she'd ask that I forbid you from serving any turds again. Produced by any animal—real or mythical.

[00:40:00]

How would that make you feel?

Bill: Just a little bit sad.

John Hodgman: Just a little bit?

Bill: Just a little bit.

John Hodgman: Mm-hm. Okay. So, Erin, if the theme isn't number two, what theme are you thinking of for this second birthday?

Erin: I haven't thought about it that much. You know, we're just kind of like living nap-to-nap in our house. And it kind of depends what he's into at the time. Right now he's really into an animated movie about toys and one specific spaceman character in that movie. So, perhaps something along that line. I think it depends. He is developing a personality, and there are things I could imagine at his second birthday that would make him really excited. Like a—you know, a huge balloon of that spaceman from the movie, the story about toys.

John Hodgman: (*Snorts laughing.*) I really appreciate your effort to not mention *Toy Story*. I should say—

Jesse Thorn: Oh, I thought she was—! I thought she was talking about the movie *Toys*!

John Hodgman: *Toys*, the Robin Williams and LL Cool J movie, *Toys*?

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. That's a live action. But the fact that it is a sort of nightmare-scape gives it an animated feel.

John Hodgman: Yeah, that's true. Bill, have you considered the possibility that there be no theme at all? I mean, you thought about that for the first birthday.

Bill: Whatever Erin decides as far as theme. And if she wants me to do food, great. If not, then so be it. But if that is my lane and that is what I'm in charge of, I would like creative control.

John Hodgman: Erin, do you think that you would've avoided this subject if you had spoken up for your nausea earlier?

Erin: No, I think Bill knows me well enough to know that I would be apprehensive about that type of food labeling. I think he knew. Like, “This is not gonna be something Erin's really excited about.” But he was really excited about it. And yeah, I don't know if that's a good answer or not.

John Hodgman: I mean, I'll be honest with you, I don't love that answer. Because saying that “Bill should know how I feel”— You know, spouses should be sensitive to the other person. But at the end of the day, we're individual human beings in our own right, and we have to speak up for ourselves. You know? And I think waiting for him to do the right thing without telling him what you need and want— I don't think you need to wait three days if you're feeling gross about something.

That's even before I go in and consider my verdict. But Bill, at the same time, you felt the dynamic. You felt resistance. And you used your own mom to shore you up, to get to the turds where you wanted to be. Do you think that was a great idea?

Bill: In hindsight, probably not.

John Hodgman: Mm-hm. Okay. I think I've heard everything I need to in order to make my decision. I'm gonna go into the slow cooker of my chambers, and I'll be back in a moment with my verdict.

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

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

Erin, Bill, did you know that the movie *Toys* was directed by Barry Levinson, the director of *Diner* and *The Natural*?!

Bill: Did not.

Jesse Thorn: *(Laughs.)* Was that movie—? Like, I saw that movie in the movie theater. Was it as totally nuts as I remember it being? Jennifer is nodding yes. Erin, how are you feeling about your chances in the case?

Erin: Not great, to be honest. Not great.

Jesse Thorn: Why is that?

Erin: I... you know, there's some court rulings in the past about kind of like letting your spouse enjoy their little weirdsy things. And I'm worried that this is gonna be quantified as kind of a little weirdsy. It did no harm to anyone. And it's just a birthday party; let Bill kind of do his goofy little thing.

Jesse Thorn: Bill, you're clearly irrepressibly goofy. *(Chuckling.)* You've shown that throughout this case.

Bill: Thank you.

Jesse Thorn: How are you feeling about your chances right now?

Bill: I feel okay, but not great.

Jesse Thorn: It's genuinely possible, based on your testimony in this case, that you are actually not a goofball, but rather just a very serious poop enthusiast.

(They laugh.)

Bill: I think both can be true.

Jesse Thorn: Okay, fair enough. Do you think you're gonna win this one?

Bill: I'm hopeful. Cautiously optimistic.

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

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Promo:

Music: Bright, exciting synth.

John-Luke Roberts: Hello, I'm John-Luke Roberts. And I would love for you to give my podcast, *Sound Heap with John-Luke Roberts*, a try. It's basically a parody of every type of podcast imaginable made up with loads of brilliant comedians. It was named the Best Scripted Sketch Show by the BBC Audio Drama Awards. It was a finalist for Best Comedy Podcast at the New York Radio Festival, and it has just been nominated for Best Comedy at the British Podcast Awards.

[00:45:00]

Surely, if there are three things you can trust, they're the BBC, New York, and Britain. So, give *Sound Heap with John-Luke Roberts* a go today. Available from Maximum Fun and all the best podcast apps.

(Music ends.)

Promo:

Music: Cheerful, chiming music.

Alexis B. Preston: Hi, I'm Alexis.

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Alexis: And we're the hosts of *Comfort Creatures*.

Ella: We could spend the next 28 seconds telling you why you should listen. But instead, here's what our listeners have said about our show. Because really, they do know best.

“The show is filled with stories and poems and science and friendship and laughter and tears, sometimes. But tears that are from your heart being so filled up with love.”

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Alexis: Or coffee, Ella. We're not all Brits.

Ella: (*Chuckles.*) Then join us.

Alexis: Every Thursday, at MaximumFun.org.

(*Music ends.*)

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Judge Hodgman, we're taking a quick break from the case. Let's hear about this book.

John Hodgman: Yes. So, I have a friend who is an actual full-time Mainer named Margaret GraceMeyers. She used to work at Books Are Magic down in Brooklyn, but then she moved home to Maine where she has been working on this book for a long time. And it is finally being published. And it could not come at a more appropriate time.

It is a history of sex education in the USA, and it is called, appropriately, *The Fight for Sex Ed: The Century-Long Battle Between Truth and Doctrine*. And it is out today from the Beacon Press. Now Margaret GraceMeyers—that's the name of the author—so smart, so brilliant. Jesse, you met her. She came by after our show in Maine.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, she was super cool!

John Hodgman: Yeah, super cool. Super cool, super funny. But this is serious. And also, she's seriously passionate about sex ed and the history of sex aid—(*correcting himself*) sex ed and the history of sex ed and the fight for sex ed. I've had the pleasure of reading an early copy, and it's amazing. And it's not just a cultural history of the controversies and wild battles between public educators and religious zealots in this country, but it's a timely reminder of

how simple and fact-based sex education saves lives on so many different levels of our society. So, please go to your bookstore and say, loudly, “I want sex ed! By Margaret GraceMeyers.” I’m sure they’ll find it there for you.

And hey, we’ve got two new episodes of *E Pluribus Motto*—one that just came out, and one that’s about to come out. This is the show that Janet Varney and I host, where we cover all the state symbols of America’s states and commonwealths and districts and territories. The one that just came out is from America’s Dairyland, Wisconsin. Coming up next, we have Kentucky, where the state dance is clogging. The state horse is fast horse. I think they call them thoroughbred.

Jesse Thorn: (*Laughing.*) I thought you meant— You know that Bob Odenkirk sketch from *Mr. Show*, “Teaching by Billiards with Van Hammersley”? Dan’s giving me the thumbs up. “And here comes—here comes Mr. Fast horse! Not like his name at all. Real slowly!”

John Hodgman: (*Laughs.*) Well, the state motto of Kentucky is something dumb in Latin probably. And the state beverage, actually infuriatingly, is not bourbon, but milk.

(*Jesse “wow”s flatly.*)

Yeah. That one may be mad. Imagine going on a road trip with two people who will not shut up about all the fascinating state trivia of the state you’re passing through. Well, those people are me and Janet Varney, and that gives you an idea of what you get when you download and subscribe and follow and listen to *E Pluribus Motto* on MaximumFun.org or wherever you get your podcasts.

Jesse, what have you got going on these days?

Jesse Thorn: Well, you may have noticed that some weeks ago in the *Judge John Hodgman* feed, we dropped an episode of my comedy podcast, *Jordan Jesse, Go!*.

John Hodgman: I did notice! And I enjoyed it a lot.

Jesse Thorn: Thank you. I hope that folks out there who enjoyed it will remember to go subscribe to *Jordan, Jesse, Go!*, so they can get—and get this, John—a new episode of the program every week. Not just one episode in the *Judge John Hodgman* feed every decade or so.

(*They laugh.*)

John Hodgman: You mean there’s another way?!

Jesse Thorn: There’s another way. You can just search for *Jordan, Jesse, Go!* in your podcast feed. We also have on *Bullseye* right now a wonderful interview with your friend in mine, Elizabeth Gilbert. Liz has a new book out that is wonderful, moving, and beautiful. And funny, despite being about really serious stuff—just as Liz is in her own life. And I

would remind you that, in a completely unrelated move that happened months after we—or a month after she came in to be on *Bullseye*—

[00:50:00]

—she heard us talking about Al Otro Lado on *Judge John Hodgman*, to which she listens. Hi, Liz.

John Hodgman: Hi, Liz.

Jesse Thorn: Said she would like to offer a \$25,000 matching grant to Al Otro Lado for donations from our listeners. So, please go to AlOtroLado.org/letsdosomething and make a donation for direct services to migrants on both sides of the US Mexico border. They do amazing work. And I'm saying— Right now, John? I'm saying sign up for a monthly. Sign up for a monthly with Al Otro Lado. Give 'em ten bucks a month. You know? You got it.

John Hodgman: You got it.

Jesse Thorn: Your local public radio and television stations and now Al Otro Lado are worth your ten bucks a month right now. Like, come on.

John Hodgman: Yeah. Like, maybe it's a good time to think about like, “Oh, do I really need to pay 12 bucks a month to, say, Paramount+?” Why not take that money back and give it to someone who really needs it? PBS, NPR, wherever you like.

Jesse Thorn: You already watched all the jackass movies.

John Hodgman: That's right. You've seen them!

Jesse Thorn: (*Laughs.*) You've already seen every instance of our friend, LanceBang's, vomiting.

John Hodgman: That's right. He won't vomit any further. It's out of his contract now.

Jesse Thorn: He's done.

Anyway, it's AlOtroLado.org/letsdosomething. And go check out that interview with Liz, both on the *Bullseye* podcast feed and on the *Bullseye* YouTube channel.

And let's get back to the case.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

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

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

John Hodgman: So, as you know, I alluded earlier—and you heard Joel Mann's gruff responses, though not his laughter. You still there, Joel?

Joel Mann: I'm here.

John Hodgman: Okay, great. As you can hear, I am in my summer chambers here at WERU FM 89.9 in Orland, Maine—also available on the internet at WERU.org—because I am in Maine right now. And you know, I have a son who's a whole human being in his own right, who's an adult now. But when we first started coming to Maine— He's got a summer birthday, right? Which is hard, right? Because you know, summer birthday kids, their friends aren't necessarily around. Maybe you've gone away. Maybe they've all gone away. It's a little easier when they're in school, and you can—you know—bring cupcakes to school or whatever it is you do.

So, you wanna make your summer birthday really special for your kid. And as soon as we got here, that is when our son started coming up with themes for his birthday party. Now, understand, he was not one years old. By the time we were up here and we're talking about birthday parties, 9/10/11 years old, 12 years old. And suddenly themes became very important. And the first theme, I believe, was Robinhood, which felt quite random. The second theme was less random, and I believe it was *Minecraft*. I mean, I remember it was *Minecraft*. How I remember it, I don't know, because I spent days and days and days assembling cardboard boxes into large cubes—like, waist-high cubes—and then painting them with stencils that I had made to make them look like Minecraft cubes. Spray painting them with different cans of spray paint in the garage, until I would faint and then recover maybe two hours later.

It was hard work. I was out there late at night spray painting those boxes. And was I giving thought to what are we gonna do with these boxes afterward? Yeah, those *Minecraft* boxes stayed around for years after that. I think it was the next year that he said he wanted to have a *Game of Thrones* themed birthday party. I'm like, “I think you’re 11.”

(Jesse “HA!”s.)

I know you haven't read nor watched *Game of Thrones*. And if you've watched it, that's a problem. But I don't think any of the other people your age around here who might be coming to this party are gonna understand all of the psychosexual implications of the *Game of the Thrones* universe. As I have often said, that's one of my favorite fantasy novels, because it's a fantasy novel about a fantasy world that you would never fantasize about living in. 'Cause it's cruel and mean and harsh. That was my birthday present to him that year, that monologue. I think we came up with something. I think we came up with the '80s, and I made chicken nuggets.

You can read about one of the more ill-fated themes of his birthday parties in my book *Vacationland*, available in paperback now. And then a year arrived when I said, “What is the theme?” And I took a deep and loving breath, because I knew something was gonna come along that was gonna require a lot of time and imagination and expense.

And he said, “I don't know. How about just birthday? How about we just have a birthday party?”

[00:55:00]

And the minute that there was no theme anymore, I have to confess to you, I was profoundly relieved! In no way was I disappointed! In no way did I feel like my son's life and like childhood was slipping through my fingers as he became an adult. I was just like, “Thank you. Let's just have a cake and ice cream.” But I was profoundly relieved when the theme wasn't there.

All of which I tell this heartwarming story to say: why were you people even doing what you were doing? Oh, my sweet summer children, my new young parents! You don't need to have a theme for a one-year-old birthday party! The party is: they're one! It's the first one. That's the theme. Number one. And I'm not talking about dragon pee either. I'm talking about this is it! A chance really to celebrate with your family, your— Presuming you have good relationships with them, and you seem to, you know, with your parents and the uncles and the extended family, the people who have supported you. Maybe these are people who've had experience raising kids of their own.

And this little one-year-old doesn't care. Does not care about dragon pee yet. Will they? Oh, yes. There will be a time when a crockpot full of dragon turds is gonna be exactly what Dream Weaver, son of Mog, wants. But it didn't have to happen this way. And I urge you to think carefully before committing to a theme again in the future—not least because you want to get on board together in terms of how far the theme goes and what the theme's gonna entail and how much work you wanna put into it, and also how you're not gonna gross each other out. But also, Bill, you gotta do a better job than post-it notes. There will be a dragon-themed birthday in the future, presuming that your son continues to be interested in dragons—which they may not!

But I think that if you are invited to create food for a party that has a theme, and you want to get creative with it, you need to plan ahead so that you are actually doing that. Like, you should— This is a chance for you to be practicing your hobbitish calligraphy. You know what I mean? The weird writing on the sign on Bilbo's door, “birthday party business only”. Like, get some parchment, do it up. You know? Empty those Bugles into the bowl. *(Chuckles.)* I know that it wasn't party time yet. I think a lot of your ideas were clever. I think dragon claws for Bugles is really fun. Do you know what I mean? And if you had a party full of like five-year-olds, six-year-olds, who are running around pretending to be dragons with Bugles on their fingers?! That's a wonderful party!

But in this case, it was all just kind of a mismatch, right? It was like—no offense, Bill—but like B+/B execution of some ideas that were pretty good. But like a C- reading of the room, which is that the child who supposedly is interested in dragons isn't interested in dragons per se, and they're just too little. And the people that you are feeding and entertaining don't want to eat your dragon turds. They just don't. They're grownups.

(Erin laughs.)

So, it was just the wrong year for a dragon turd party. Which is the title of the first book in my fantasy series that I'm gonna be writing soon as I get outta here.

So, I'm not here just to scold you both. I mean, you know, these are the kind of the mistakes and adjustments you make when you are learning how to be a parent. I just think that you need to offer yourself some grace. Don't make things harder for yourself than you have to yet. And again, I will reiterate, parenting is a thing where both people have to be 100% on board. It's like the same—like, when you were choosing Silarius's name. You had to both be 100% on board. you can't negotiate that one. You have to both agree. And if you don't want to eat dragon turds, that's fair, and you can say it.

And Bill, obviously it's reasonable—even if you have been charged with making the meal, it's reasonable to hear your spouse, your beloved one, say, “I don't like this one element of it,” and be like, alright, I'll make an adjustment. Rather than turning to backup from your own mom. That's not a great dynamic. You know? It happens. But it's like, eeeh, Erin should come first here.

[01:00:00]

So. What does this mean going forward? Well, first of all, there will be no more turds without Erin's approval on any menu. In this regard, I am ruling in her favor. I have to say that they were— It's an interesting idea, and—and!—and a funny idea. And you know, could have been a little bit better executed if with some delicious meatballs of your own making. But yeah, I'd eat those frozen meatballs in barbecue sauce. I'd give 'em a try. But I'm a weirdo. I love eating turds. If this were Halloween, that's a perfect thing to do. A dragon-themed Halloween party? There you go. Gross 'em out. But for a first birthday party, that was a miss, I'm afraid, Bill. And I think that you need to make sure that Erin is on board with future—I think you have fun ideas, and I think you just need to make sure that Erin's on board with future innovations.

Still, I am haunted. If not dragon turds, what would those meatballs be? Let us know in the comments if you've got better ideas for what he should have called that crockpot of meatballs in a dragon theme. I'd be curious to know what you think. Those are for the listeners. But for you, Bill and Erin, I'm ruling in Erin's favor here. And I would say that theme number two will not be number two; it will be birthday party. And then once you start getting into theme number three, then I feel like Silarius Dream Weaver, scion of dragon kind, first of his name, will be starting to express some theme preferences that he will be able to really enjoy, as it being his party.

But I think you owe yourselves a birthday party that is for you and your family—and obviously, for your son! But you know, it is not necessarily themed. And when you pick this up again at birthday party three or four or whenever it is, then I think you need to be in closer consultation and start earlier with fun, wacky-themed foods, for example, so that you have time to make those adjustments that you need to make in order to make sure everyone is served well, Bill. And also, you have time to make nice signs instead of post-its. Okay. That's my verdict. This is the sound of a gavel.

Sound Effect: A dragon roar.

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

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

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

Bill, how do you feel right now?

Bill: Uh, a little bit disappointed, but I think the judge is wise and fair as usual.

Jesse Thorn: Do you think this is gonna, uh, *(starts laughing)* help preserve your marriage? So your relationship with your wife is not forever associated with doo-doo?

(Bill confirms.)

Erin, how do you feel?

Erin: I feel relieved that we have a path forward for birthday parties two through hopefully many after that.

Jesse Thorn: Well, Erin and Bill, thanks so much for joining us on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

(They thank him.)

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Another *Judge John Hodgman* case is in the books. We're gonna have Swift Justice in just a second. First, our thanks to u/Oldhouse42 on Reddit for naming this week's episode, "Dragonian Law". You can join the conversation at r/MaximumFun there on Reddit. That's also where we ask for those title suggestions. You can always go and suggest titles. It's always one of the most popular threads on our Reddit every single week. You can go suggest titles or just enjoy the ones that others suggest.

You can find evidence and photos from the show on our Instagram, which is [@JudgeJohnHodgman](#). We're also on TikTok and YouTube where you can watch video of this program at [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](#). Go and, you know, pull your phone out and pull out those YouTube and TikTok apps and hit subscribe. Even if you are usually an audio listener, it's fun to go check in, and you hitting subscribe helps us with the program.

John Hodgman: Speaking of YouTube, Jesse, it's time for Y-cut-wuh! That's YCOTW, YouTube Comment of the Week!

This week's YouTube comment of the week comes from *(mimics a drumroll)* TheJeffJeff9424, who left *(struggling not to laugh)* the following comment underneath our recent episode.

Jesse Thorn: Wait, THE JeffJeff9424?!

John Hodgman: TheJeffJeff9424, the one and only—or the one and 1 of 9,424 of them. @TheJeffJeff9424 left the following comment on our recent episode about a maybe imaginary friend. That episode was called “Texas Hold‘em in Contempt”, and they wrote:

[01:05:00]

“I can’t believe the pop culture reference you chose wasn’t any of the bits from *Sports Night* when Dan insists he didn’t sleep with Bobby at a hotel in Spain, and in fact has never been to Spain.”

Me, personally, I completely believe that I didn’t make a *Sports Night* reference, ‘cause I don’t even know what episode that was. But I do love Josh Malina, and I commit to making a *Sports Night* reference in the future.

And hey, if you’re watching our full—

Jesse Thorn: YES! YES!

John Hodgman: Yeah, it’s a great show. It’s a great show. It’s a great show. Right, Jesse?

Jesse Thorn: That was the sound of me and Linda Holmes going, “Yes!” Yeah, that’s right. I’m a Josh Charles stan, by the way. I’ve interacted with him, let’s say, twice on Twitter during the years when Twitter wasn’t awful. And both times I was like, “YES! That’s Josh Charles from *Sports Night*!” We’re talking about the Baltimore Orioles or something.

John Hodgman: Yeah, he’s a big Baltimore Orioles fan. I ran into him on an Amtrak train from Philadelphia, and he was traveling from Balt—well, I got on at Philadelphia. He was already on the train traveling from Baltimore. He had gone to see a game.

Jesse Thorn: There you go.

John Hodgman: And he was so nice. And Robert Guillaume was on that show.

Jesse Thorn: Oh, he’s wonderful.

John Hodgman: Yeah, everybody was so good on that show.

But hey, if you are watching our full episodes on YouTube right now, and you don’t like my obscure cultural reference or think you can think of a better one, why don’t you drop it right there in the comments? Maybe I’ll respond to you. Maybe I’ll be schooled for once! Anyway, if you leave a comment, it does help people find the show and helps us learn what you’re interested in. And if you’re not watching our full episodes on YouTube right now, I don’t know why you’re not doing this! Why don’t you go to YouTube this very moment?

@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod is the name of the channel. And make sure to subscribe and click

that little bell, so you'll get notifications of upcoming new episodes and upcoming other little video-only gifts that we give you over there. It's also where I do my live streaming of *Sim City* from time to time. It's [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](#) over there on YouTube. Like, share, subscribe. Please go and visit over there. It really does help people discover the show,

Jesse Thorn: The *Judge John Hodgman* podcast, created by Jesse Thorn and John Hodgman. This episode, engineered by Jim Prues at Ambient Studios in Cincinnati, Ohio. Our social media manager is Dan Telfer. The podcast is edited by AJ McKeon. Our video editor is Daniel Speer. Our producer is Jennifer Marmor. You ready for some Swift Justice, John?

John Hodgman: Yes, I am.

Jesse Thorn: Lich McConnell—

John Hodgman: Cool name.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. That's like a *Dungeons & Dragons* Senator.

John Hodgman: Yeah. Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: Says, “If my partner is giving guests a tour of the house, they think it's rude to not show the bedroom. I think our bedroom is private. Guests do not need to peer into it, especially if it's on a different floor from the main part of the house. What do you say Judge? Hodgman?”

John Hodgman: Well... okay, so if the pronoun they/their refers to the guests—the guests that are being shown around think that it's rude to not see your most personal room in your life—then they should not be your guests anymore. 'Cause they're rude. If the they/their refers to your partner, however, who feels an obligation to show off your bedroom that you share and sleep in and hug and kiss and fart in, and you don't like that, then I think they need to listen to you and not their inner anxiety. It's fine to keep certain areas of the house private when giving a tour.

All they need to do is say, “That's our main bedroom right there, but it's a mess right now. So, let's just move on to the solarium.” Whatever you do, always move on to the solarium.
(Bangs his gavel.)

(Jesse chuckles.)

Hey, you know, last month it was National Hotdog Day, and we asked for cases about hotdogs—I dare say, beefs about franks. But YouTube user Goblin Girl Studio said, “Ah, dang! I missed Hotdog Day. It's 365 days before I can enjoy another hotdog.”

No, Goblin Girl Studio! Today's a good day too, 'cause it's never too late to enjoy a hotdog, and it's never too late to send us your cases about hotdogs. Do you think that Joey Chestnut should still be banned from Nathan's hotdog eating competition? Do you have a dispute

against the idea of a hotdog eating contest altogether? Do you have a controversial condiment? Do you have a way of eating hotdogs? Do you eat your hotdogs like they did at the World's Fair with little white gloves? I don't even need to have a dispute. I just need to hear your thoughts, your concerns, your questions, your theories about hotdogs. Nothing about sandwiches. It's hotdogs I'm talking about. Your preferences. Joel, you like a red hot or a regular natural casing?

Joel Mann: Natural.

John Hodgman: Natural casing for Joel. I like a red hot. In any case, we wanna hear all about your hotdog beefs, your all-beef hotdog beefs should go to MaximumFun.org/jjho. Or you can even write me an email at Hodgman@MaximumFun.org.

[01:10:00]

And I think that's all we want to hear about, right Jesse? Only hotdogs from here on out.

Jesse Thorn: Look, if you've got a case about something else, just send it to us at MaximumFun.org/jjho! We don't care if it's big or small. You've heard us say it on the program. We mean it! You've heard the cases on this show, just send yours in! You know?

John Hodgman: Yeah. Like, we don't care if it's big or small. It could be hotdog size or cocktail frank size. You decide.

Jesse Thorn: *(Laughs.)* Indeed. As long as it's in a slow cooker full of grape jelly.

John Hodgman: Oh, grape jelly. Oh boy. That's some dragon turds right there.

Jesse Thorn: I kinda like that alright. 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.

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Speaker 5: —directly—

Speaker 6: —by you!