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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, "Probable Jaws". Natasha brings the case against her friend, Jessica. Jessica says if she had to, she could beat up a great white shark. But Natasha doesn't believe Jessica has what it takes to win a shark fight. She says Jessica can't even swim! Jessica says her swimming abilities are irrelevant. She just knows she can beat a shark in a fight. 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:** Please continue to be risen, but I am ceding the obscure cultural reference to Joel Mann, program and operations director here at WERU in Orland, Maine. Take it away, Joel, with an obscure cultural reference!

**Joel Mann:** "Very first light, chief, sharks come cruising. So, we formed ourselves into tight groups. The idea was the shark comes to the nearest man. That man, he starts pounding, hollering, and screaming. And sometimes that shark, he go away. Sometimes he wouldn't go away."

**John Hodgman:** Joel Mann, as saying the role of... question mark?! We'll find out when you swear the litigants in, Jesse Thorn.

**Jesse Thorn:** Natasha and Jessica, 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 he's more of a whale guy?

*(They swear.)*

Judge Hodgman, you may proceed.

**John Hodgman:** I love a whale. If I didn't love a whale, would I be reading *Moby Dick* into a tin can and presenting a chapter by chapter via my Substack, [Hodgman.substack.com](https://Hodgman.substack.com)? You might even argue that I have an obsession with a whale and vengeance upon that whale. But we're not talking about whales. We're talking about sharking! Jessica, Natasha, sit down!

*(Chairs squeak.)*

For an immediate summary judgment in one of your favors, can either of you name the piece of obscure—not very obscure—culture that Joel Mann performed for you as I entered the courtroom? Natasha, why don't you guess first?

**Natasha:** Okay, so I don't remember the captain's name, but that sounds like he's describing the *Jaws* incident—the Indianapolis, right? Like, the famous World War II incident?

**John Hodgman:** The famous *Jaws* incident of World War II! The Indianapolis.

**Jesse Thorn:** *(Laughing.)* I now realize you mean a ship called the Indianapolis. I thought you were describing a shark incident that had occurred in Indianapolis.

**John Hodgman:** Yeees. The famous Circle City shark attacks of 1975.

*(They laugh.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** The Motor Speedway Massacre.

**Jessica:** Of the shark. It would be a massacre of the shark.

**John Hodgman:** Massacre of the shark? Right. Because you believe all humans, including you, beat all sharks.

*(Jessica confirms.)*

A topic for today's debate. But before we get to it, what is your guess?

**Jessica:** So, I sort of agree with Natasha. It does sound like the Indianapolis case, which is where a boat sank during World War II, and lots of people were unfortunately eaten or mauled by sharks.

**John Hodgman:** The monologue that you're referring to, Natasha—you're talking about the monologue from the movie *Jaws*?

**Natasha:** Yes.

**John Hodgman:** Jessica, are you talking about the monologue from the movie *Jaws*?

**Jessica:** Sure.

**John Hodgman:** Famous shark movie celebrating its 50th anniversary this year?

*(They confirm.)*

Good. All guesses are wrong. Because I was not quoting the movie *Jaws*. It might have sounded like I was. In fact, I wasn't doing anything. It was Joel doing all of the gruff talking.

**Jessica:** Was it *Sharknado 5: Global Swarming*?

**John Hodgman:** It was not *Sharknado 5*. It was none of the *Sharknados*.

Joel, I asked you to read it because the name of the captain from *Jaws* is Quint, assayed by the actor—famously gruff actor—Robert Shaw. I felt like you had more of a seafarer's voice than mine.

**Joel Mann:** Aye-aye.

**John Hodgman:** (*Laughing.*) Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Mann. But in fact— You know, how could I not *Jaws* in this 15th anniversary year when we're talking about punching out a great white shark? But I was not quoting from the movie *Jaws*. I was quoting from the play *The Shark is Broken*, written by Joseph Nixon and Ian Shaw, who is Robert Shaw's second youngest child. Robert Shaw passed away when Ian Shaw was eight or nine years old. Ian Shaw became an actor. He is now the age—or thereabouts—that Robert Shaw was when he passed away. He looks just like Robert Shaw. And noticing that he looked like his father, he started thinking about a play that he cowrote with Joseph Nixon.

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That play is called *The Shark is Broken*. It is a play set on the set of *Jaws* during the periods of time when the mechanical shark was broken—when Robert Shaw and Richard Dreyfus and Roy Scheider would sit around and shoot the feces and yell at each other. And! Robert Shaw would refine that monologue.

So, while the screenplay of *Jaws* was written and credited to Peter Benchley, who was the novelist, and Carl Gottlieb, that particular monologue was the result of a kind of hazy collaboration between the writer, Howard Sackler, famous screenwriter John Milius, and Robert Shaw himself—who is not just an actor, but also a playwright. And their contribution to that monologue is kind of misremembered by a lot of people. But basically, the understanding is that Robert Shaw refined and cut down and shaped the final draft that he performed onscreen.

And this play, *The Shark is Broken*, debuted at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2019. It came to Broadway in 2023, where I saw it with Ian Shaw—the spitting image of his dad—and Alex Brightman as Richard Dreyfus. All incredible performances. But the play ends with Ian Shaw performing the monologue again. All of the rest of it is written and made up and based on conversations, but they actually quote the entire Indianapolis monologue. And let tell you something: three actors, 95 minutes, one set, no intermission. This thing is a license to print money. I do not know why it's not on Vegas right now. On Vegas, they call it. I don't know why it's not the Blue Man Group of *Jaws* theatre.

Because that place was packed with dads who wanted to see stuff about *Jaws*. And when Ian Shaw performed his father's famous monologue at the end of the show? We all drowned in dad tears. Even though we were all standing up in a standing ovation, the house came down. It was incredible. They just did a tour of the UK and Ireland. That's done now.

But if you get a chance to see this show, particularly with Ian Shaw in it, it's a really remarkable piece. And as I say, it's a license to print money. Ian Shaw, if you're listening, let's get it going. Let's get it everywhere. I'm signed on as a producer. Joel, are you signed on as a producer?

**Joel Mann:** I'm definitely there.

**John Hodgman:** Jesse, you signed on as a producer?

**Jesse Thorn:** Executive producer. I'll take executive producer (*unclear*).

**John Hodgman:** Executive producer only. I forgot.

Alright, so there it is. You guessed correctly, but I found a way to make it wrong, as I always do here on *Judge John Hodgman*. So, let's hear the case. Who seeks justice in my courtroom?

**Natasha:** I do, your honor. Natasha.

**John Hodgman:** Natasha, you say that Jessica cannot beat up a shark. Is that correct?

**Natasha:** Yes. I say Jessica suffers from delusions of grandeur and thinks she can beat an apex predator. So. And she's been saying this for years now, so thank you for having us.

**John Hodgman:** How many years would you guess?

**Natasha:** We traced it back in text messages, and it looks about four years.

**John Hodgman:** About four years. And how long have you known Jessica?

**Natasha:** Coming up on 10. It'll be 10 years in November.

**John Hodgman:** And how did you come to be friends? You don't live in the same town. Natasha, you're there in Austin. Jessica, you're there out in Georgia—an unnamed location in Georgia. If you're watching on the YouTube channel, [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](#), you can see that—inadvertently—Jessica and Natasha both dressed for their backgrounds. Natasha is wearing a wonderful, plant printed shirt—like, got fronds of plants, and there are fronds of plants behind her there, in Austin. And Jessica, you look like a beautiful evening sky.

**Jessica:** Yeah, that's what I was going for.

**John Hodgman:** A nighttime sky dotted with stars in a midnight-blue studio. Anyway. How did you come to meet each other, Natasha?

**Natasha:** So, we are both big trivia nerds. We're into trivia. And 10 years ago we were both, you know, living in our own little separate worlds; both fans of the same *Jeopardy* champion, who happened to form an online chat room. And he invited anyone who wanted to come in to, you know, meet him and play trivia with him. He'd host trivia. And so, we both joined along with a number of other people from across the country and a really nice chat room started up. And so, we became chatroom friends 10 years ago, and then it formed into an IRL friendship. We've met several times in person.

**Jessica:** Natasha says, “chat room friends”, which sounds like was like 2002.

**John Hodgman:** It sounds creepy.

**Jessica:** Yeah, it does sound creepy. She means a discord server.

*(John “ohhh”s.)*

Which is like a much more modern parlance of what happened. It was not a chat room on AOL, like it was—it was a Discord server.

*(John affirms.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** It didn't all start with one of you either, “Age—”

**Jessica:** There was no ASL. Yeah. *(Chuckles.)* There was no ASL involved.

**Natasha:** Well, let me actually say: I met my husband in this chat room as well.

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He's what brought me from Miami to Austin. And my first sentence to him was “ASL.”  
*(Laughs.)* And then, thus a great romance formed. So.

**John Hodgman:** Now, obviously I know everything about Discord. But ASL, what is that?

**Natasha:** It's what you used to say in the old, creepy chat rooms. It's “age, sex, location”.

**John Hodgman:** Oh-ho-ho-ho! Got you.

**Natasha:** Yep.

**Jessica:** Yeah. Natasha's the only person who's ever typed that in Discord. No one has ever.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, when you typed that in to your future husband, you were like, “I am of legal age. I will have sex, and I'm willing to change location.”

**Natasha:** Yeah, I mean, basically!

**Jessica:** I was literally that.

**John Hodgman:** And that turned out to be your proposal.

**Natasha:** Yeah, it worked out great for me. *(Laughs.)*

**John Hodgman:** You are both— You don't want to name the *Jeopardy* champion who was running this underground discord?

**Natasha:** We're happy to name him.

**John Hodgman:** Do you think they're gonna get in trouble with *Jeopardy* proper?

**Natasha:** I don't think so, 'cause he was very willing to self-promote. So. And it was all over social media, so. His name was Alex Jacob; I think he won something like eight games in regular *Jeopardy*. And so, he got to come back to the Tournament of Champions, and then he won that in like a really dominant fashion. So, he was a very impressive champion, and he had lots of fans.

**John Hodgman:** And he facilitated not only your love match, Natasha, but your friend match with Jessica.

**Natasha:** Yep!

**John Hodgman:** Now Jessica, the two of you have been on *Jeopardy*, right? The TV show?

**Jessica:** We have. Yes. Yeah.

**John Hodgman:** You're not just messing around on Discords! That's amazing.

**Jessica:** Yeah. So, it was after we met on Discord. We both, you know, really just started dedicating to trying to get on *Jeopardy*, because it's not just a one-off process. Like, you actually do—we did a lot of studying. We took the tests multiple times. But Natasha was on first, and then I guess about a year later I was on. And then our other friend, Lisa—also from the Discord group—has been on as well.

**John Hodgman:** Jessica... I don't care about Lisa.

*(Natasha laughs.)*

Lisa's not even here.

**Jessica:** Well, she's not here.

**Natasha:** But we do love Lisa.

**Jesse Thorn:** Lisa can take a long walk off a short pier, as far as Judge John Hodgman's concerned.

**Jessica:** But we love Lisa, and Lisa loves this podcast! So.

**Jesse Thorn:** I hope Lisa has some lemons, 'cause she's gonna be sucking on one soon!

**John Hodgman:** Well, Lisa isn't here. Jessica, when you were on *Jeopardy* a year after Natasha, did you mention Lisa when you were on television or Natasha?

**Jessica:** I did mention—okay, so I mentioned Natasha, but not by name.

**John Hodgman:** But you mentioned Natasha—not by name, but in the context of what, on the TV?

**Jessica:** Yeah. So, my contestant interview—which those are sort of chosen by the producers. So, you submit five, and they pick the ones that they like the best. So, this was *Jeopardy* approved as a story—was that within hours of meeting Natasha in person for the first time, she tried to feed me to an alligator.

*(John makes a shocked, strangled noise.)*

**Natasha:** Objection.

**Jessica:** No.

**John Hodgman:** Go ahead, Natasha. I'll allow it.

**Jesse Thorn:** *(Dismissively.)* No, this is classic Natasha frivolous lawsuit stuff.

**Jessica:** Exactly.

**Jesse Thorn:** This objection. This is why we need tort reform.

**John Hodgman:** I'll allow it, only in that it speaks to the topic at hand, which is fighting aquatic foes.

**Natasha:** So, the very quick version of this story is that I took her to the Everglades. I was living in Miami at the time. There was a lot of like hibernating alligators around. We passed

by one of these sleepy alligators whom like other tourists were taking photos in front of. And as we passed by it, it did move. I will say it did move. So, that was a little startling. And I jumped back. The way that Jessica tells this story is not that I jumped back, but that I pushed her to this alligator, you know, sacrificing her instead of myself.

*(Natasha agrees.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** It was a classic example of “I don't have to be faster than a bear; I just have to be faster than you.”

**Jessica:** Exactly, and that is the exact thing Alex Trebek said when he referred to that, which is— So, clearly that is the, you know, interpretation of this story, which is what happened. And it was not just moving; it was making a horrible alligator hissing sound. Which if you—

**John Hodgman:** How did it sound?

**Jessica:** Like, *(in a breathy growl)* “Heeehh-eh!”

*(Jesse laughs.)*

Like, a horrible alligator hissing sound. It was horrible. 'Cause people had been taking selfies with the alligator, which is a horrible idea!

**John Hodgman:** No, don't take selfies with an alligator.

**Jessica:** So, it was very—you know—irate. And so, it did this horrible alligator hissing sound of “heeehh”. And then Natasha physically moved me to be closer to the alligator while she skedaddled down the path!

**John Hodgman:** Now, Natasha, you say that you were just getting out of the way and putting distance between you and this mean alligator. But how do you respond to these charges that I'm reading here in my notes—you can see I'm reading them here on YouTube. It says here that, before jumping back and pushing Jessica toward the alligator, that you covered her with beef tallow and gave her a necklace of raw chicken thighs?

**Natasha:** No! No, no, no. No.

**John Hodgman:** That's what it says here.

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**Natasha:** And I have—I—

**Jesse Thorn:** The chicken thighs were cooked, Judge Hodgman.



**John Hodgman:** Oh, okay.

**Natasha:** Not only did I not baste her in anything, I also don't think I pushed her! I think I just took care of myself. She's a grown woman. I was trusting she could take care of herself.

**Jessica:** So, you abandoned me to the alligator.

**Natasha:** To the sleeping, hibernating alligator, yes.

**Jessica:** Was it snoring then? Like, you're alleging that was a snore?!

**Natasha:** That's probably—your noise that you just called a hiss sounded a lot more like a snore.

**Jessica:** It was a hiss! Everyone can Google alligator sounds. And what I just did—

**John Hodgman:** It sounded like a sneer to me.

**Jessica:** It was “heeehh!” It was exactly—

*(John mimics the noise.)*

It was—yeah. It was correct.

**John Hodgman:** Joel, why don't you make the noise?

*(Joel makes a strangled mooing sound.)*

That's... that's not quite it. But cool.

**Jessica:** That wasn't it, but that was good.

*(Joel tries a guttural whine.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** That was more romantic than I expected.

**John Hodgman:** Okay, Joel. That's fine. You did a great job in the obscure cultural reference. Thank you.

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

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**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**John Hodgman:** Let's put a pin in the alligator for a minute and get back to the shark. Natasha, you don't think Jessica could win a fight with a shark, however you define it. How did this even come up in your lives?

**Natasha:** So, based on the text messages, the way that we think that it came up was that we were just chatting in a group one day—group text. And someone said, “Hey, did you see the—you know, there's this online meme going around, basically like, ‘I could win a fight against X wild animal.’”

And Jessica said, “Oh yeah, I can definitely—like, name the animal. I'll be able to win a fight against any of them.”

So, I decided to take it to apex predator. So, I started—I said, “Not a great white shark. Like, certainly you don't think that.”

**John Hodgman:** Surely not a great white shark!

**Natasha:** Surely not! And Jessica, with all the confidence that she always possesses, said, “Of course, I can.” Like, it's not even a doubt in her mind!

**Jessica:** None.

**Natasha:** Yeah! To her it's the most obvious thing in the world. So. And then my immediate retort to her was, “You can't even swim. How do you think this is going down? You can't even swim!”

**John Hodgman:** Yeah! How is it gonna go down if you can't even swim? It sounds to me like you are gonna go down! To the briny depths of death.

**Jessica:** I retort to that: sharks can't even walk.

**John Hodgman:** Shut it down, Jesse. Sharks can't walk.

**Jesse Thorn:** Got it. Sharks can't walk.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. Alright, let's get outta here. Joel, shut down the radio station.

**Joel Mann:** Alright.

**John Hodgman:** Sharks can't walk. Should have seen this coming. Too bad we raised all that money during the pledge drive here. Gotta shut down the radio station now.

**Joel Mann:** A shame.

**John Hodgman:** Sharks can't walk. But in a hypothetical situation— Sharks can't walk. You make a good point there, Jessica. No one disagrees with you. How is that gonna help you win the fight? Because sharks are not usually walking around looking for fights.

**Jessica:** Okay, so they are not looking for fights. And I have a notebook that I've written facts on. You can't see it. It says, “Sharks.”

**John Hodgman:** I can see it. I can see it on the YouTube, and so can everyone else.

*(Jesse erupts into laughter.)*

**Jessica:** I have read extensive journals—scientific journals—about sharks. Don't make that face, Natasha! I've read—did this—

**Natasha:** I thought you meant a shark journal! Like, the shark was like, “Dear diary—”  
*(Laughing.)*

**Jessica:** No! *(Laughs.)* Yeah, I've read sharks' private thoughts. No. No, I've read scientific journals and sharks are not looking for fights. In fact, sharks will flee if they think there's a fight. So, all you have to do is, one, dress like an orca. Because they are terrified of orcas. According to the Monterey Bay Aquarium, if there's an orca, they will leave. Even if they've only seen the orca, they will leave for a year their favorite hunting ground. So, you dress like an orca; they will leave.

**John Hodgman:** Hang on, let me look it up in my book of shark facts here.

*(Jessica chuckles.)*

No, no. Let's see. Ah, you're right! Here it is. “Dress like an orca. You can win a fight.”

**Jesse Thorn:** John, how do you even know that's a book of shark facts if it doesn't say “sharks” on it?! *(Chuckling.)*

**Jessica:** Yeah. It didn't say “sharks” like mine.

**John Hodgman:** What else does it—? Read more of it from your little book there, Jessica. What does it say there?

**Jessica:** Most of the, quote/unquote, “shark attacks” are not actually attacks. They're investigatory bites, because that's how they feel. They're only trying to figure out what you are. So, it's a case of mistaken identity. There's only been like actually 11 fatal shark bites in Florida in the past like 100 years since they've been recording this. So, sharks are not looking for a fight. So, they would just forfeit. They would just be like, “I'm cool. Like, I'm good man.”

**John Hodgman:** But you appreciate, after one (*struggling with the word a little*) investigatory— You know what I'm talking about. Badee-badee-badee; that's all, folks. After one investigation bite, the fight might be over even if it never started. For you.

**Jessica:** I don't think it would be. So, I would be willing to lose an arm to win this fight, this theoretical fight with Natasha. So, if a shark came up and like bit my hand off—and then it would leave, because it wouldn't want to eat me, because they don't—I would still win! So, like it would leave after, you know, it's investigatory bite of, you know, “Oh, what's this?”

**John Hodgman:** Why is it so easy for you to say it, and I can't say it? Invest-ti-guh-tor—? In—? I actually can't say it!

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**Jessica:** Because I read it like five times. Investigatory.

**John Hodgman:** Well, you have it on in your notebook (*unclear*).

**Jessica:** I do. (*Chuckling*.) I have it where it says “sharks.”

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. I threw my shark book away.

**Jesse Thorn:** If a shark ate your arm, and then it left—thus satiated, both in terms of hunger and in terms of investigation—you would consider yourself to have won that fight, as you bled profusely into the ocean from the hole where your arm used to be.

**Jessica:** Yes! (*Laughing*.) What? Like, y'all genuinely wouldn't consider that winning? People get beat up in boxing matches all the time with like horrible injuries, and they're still considered the winner.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, they're being paid.

**Jessica:** Well, I would assume I'm being— Like, I don't know what scenario in which—

**John Hodgman:** Oh! You're proposing a paid bout.

**Jessica:** I just— I don't know what scenario in which a shark fight would occur except for dystopia or money.

**Jesse Thorn:** What are you, Jessica?! Logan Paul?!

**John Hodgman:** (*Chuckles*.) Yeah. You should have a YouTube channel where you fight sharks. Make some money.

**Jessica:** I am not Logan Paul.

**Jesse Thorn:** Okay, fair enough.

**John Hodgman:** Natasha, Jessica went to social media to take a poll on this subject. I think that we have that as Exhibit A in our evidence. Jennifer Marmor, do you want to share that exhibit? Okay, look at this. Okay. Natasha—tell me about this poll, Natasha.

**Natasha:** So, as you can see, she didn't— The fairest way to phrase this was just—could have been “no and yes”. Can I beat it? No or yes.

**John Hodgman:** The question is posed, “Do you believe I could win in a fight against a great white shark?” And the options are, “Yes, you have thumbs.” Meaning any creature with thumbs can be to fish. And then the other option is, “No, I am Natasha.” Meaning you are a weakling when it comes to sharks.

**Jessica:** And a disbeliever. Yeah. A disbeliever.

**John Hodgman:** Oh, I see. A disbeliever. Right, I got you. No, right. I see now. The reference here is to Natasha, to not believing that you could win a fight. Okay.

**Natasha:** I think she was also trying to bias it by saying, “I am Natasha.” I think she was hoping it would only get one vote from Natasha. And everybody else, because they are not Natasha, could not answer that, and so would have to answer the other way. But 47% of people—almost all of whom are not Natasha—agreed with me.

**Jessica:** But 53%—! You can't just say 47% and then don't mention that the winning result, which was 53%, was yes.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. I mean, what are you a democratic politician? I get it. 47% is a lot of people, but it's not anything in our post-election system.

Most people agreed with Jessica that Jessica could beat up a shark. Natasha, what's your problem with Jessica's argument? The people have voted!

**Natasha:** The people didn't know she can't swim. So, we still haven't addressed that.

**John Hodgman:** You know, if you ever watch the movie *Jaws*, you'll remember that old piece of shark lore that most shark attacks happen in three feet of water!

**Natasha:** Jessica, do you ever go into three feet of water?

**Jessica:** No! Which to me proves the point that like it has to be some prearranged scenario for this fight to even happen.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. 'Cause Jessica already pointed out she's only fighting the shark for money. Wasn't—what was it?

**Jessica:** Or like my honor. I would—

**John Hodgman:** The two reasons that you would be fighting a shark were dystopia or money.

**Jessica:** Yeah. I would do it for my honor too.

**Jesse Thorn:** Wait, like if the shark accused you of being an adulterer or something?!

**Jessica:** *(Laughs.)* I meant like to prove—well, I wouldn't actually do it to prove Natasha wrong, 'cause I don't wanna fight a shark. Like, that's the main thing. I don't wanna fight a shark.

**John Hodgman:** Right. You don't want to hurt a little, old great white shark!

**Jessica:** No, I really don't! Especially after taking all these notes. I really like sharks now.

**John Hodgman:** Alright. You're— All around the country, and indeed the world, sharks who are listening to this are taking their gloves off their fins and throwing them down on the ground to challenge you to a duel, Jessica. But I promise you this shall only be a hypothetical duel of fates and honor.

**Jesse Thorn:** Jessica, can you describe what the physical context you imagine is for this fight? Because you've alluded to it being a setup, but you haven't clearly described where you're imagining this taking place.

**John Hodgman:** If it's a dystopia, it's gotta be a Thunderdome of some kind. Right?

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, I pictured like a Thunderdome-ized version of Marine World Africa, USA or something.

**John Hodgman:** This sounds great!

*(They chuckle.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, you should build a Thunderdome over the like orca pit or the dolphin zone at Marine World.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. You mentioned the Monterey Bay Aquarium. Maybe you, as a future dystopian warlord, take over the aquarium and just fight all the animals in it.

**Jessica:** I wouldn't be the warlord. I would be like— So, I don't wanna fight animals, so I would—

**John Hodgman:** Oh, you'd be the outsider who would try to free the orca laborers.

**Jessica:** Yes! I would be some sort of like—

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Yeah, it would be like, “Oh, you have to do this or—you know, they're gonna kill a bunch of orphans.” And like, I have to—

**Jesse Thorn:** Bad news, Jessica. Bad news. The animals want to fight you, 'cause you've been talking a lot of shit. *(Laughs.)*

**John Hodgman:** That's right.

**Jessica:** Yeah, probably. So, yeah, maybe the dystopia is like the animals are, you know, the leaders. And they're mad.

**John Hodgman:** Set the stage hypothetically. I mean, literally think of the stage. This is gonna be an exposition fight between Jessica and a great white shark.

**Jessica:** You would have to make it a fair fighting ground for both parties. That is a—

**John Hodgman:** Well, just by saying “ground,” automatically it's anti-shark!

**Jessica:** Okay! So, it would be like a wading pool!

**John Hodgman:** I wouldn't accept these terms if I were a shark.

**Jessica:** It would be a wading pool. It would be the three feet of water, about, that you mentioned. So, therefore it would be an— You know, the shark could live. But then I would still have the advantage because, one, I can learn to swim. I just haven't. So, if I knew it was gonna happen, I would obviously take the time to learn to swim. A shark cannot learn to walk.

**Jesse Thorn:** I don't know. There's a lot of classes at my community pool.

*(They laugh.)*

**Jessica:** For walking on land?

**Jesse Thorn:** Jessica, is this pool—? Maybe can we imagine it to be the size of the performance pool at like an aquatic park, like a Marine World Africa, USA?

**Jessica:** Sure. It can be like where Free Willie was.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah. There's like enough room for dolphins to swim around and do tricks, but it's relatively shallow compared to a pool like that, because you're standing in it.

**Jessica:** Yes. I think that's a good assumption.

**John Hodgman:** Okay, so—

**Jesse Thorn:** And you're fighting a great white shark. Are you allowed to bring weapons in there? Like knives or guns or shark repellent?

**Jessica:** I think that's a very good question, and I would have the foresight to do that. There's also a thing called shark suits, which are wetsuits that are basically a type of like micro chainmail.

**John Hodgman:** I thought you were gonna dress as an orca!

**Jessica:** It would be like an orca print shark suit! *(Laughs.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** Jennifer, can you share the orca suit that I imagined?

**Jessica:** *(Quietly.)* Oh god. Oh god.

**Jesse Thorn:** I did some research into orca suits, 'cause I know that Jessica planned to use an orca to scare the shark away for one year. *(Laughs.)*

**Jessica:** For one year! A whole year. From its preferred hunting ground.

**Jesse Thorn:** I mean, this could become an annual event in that case? That's one of my concerns. But let's take a look at the suit that I'm imagining Jessica wearing. And then, I can just find out how our litigants feel about that.

*(A collective muffled chuckle.)*

**Jessica:** So, I—

**John Hodgman:** Obviously, all of these images will be available on our show page at [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org), as well as all of our social media. You could be watching it right now on YouTube. Jessica, go ahead.

**Jessica:** Are you saying that would not scare a shark away? Because *(laughing)* I think it would.

**Natasha:** Correct. Because my number one question is: is a shark scared by a standing up orca who only has its ankles in the water? I would imagine it has to simulate real orca-ness in terms of body movements.

**Jessica:** I can do that!



**Natasha:** No, you can't! You can't swim!

**Jessica:** I can lay in the pool in this suit and do some flopping.

**Jesse Thorn:** Jessica, you're on camera right now. Would you mind sharing just an upper torso version of what you're describing?

**Jessica:** I can do that. I can do that. So, *(laughing)* it would be like— *(Beat.)* You know, some orca movements!

**John Hodgman:** Wow. Orca movements.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah. Some of those orca movements.

**John Hodgman:** I'll tell you what. If I saw this guy wearing this orca suit, I would not be afraid of getting mauled by an orca—devastating, fierce creatures that they are. I'd be afraid of getting roofied at a Halloween party.

*(They laugh.)*

Alright, let's break it down. Let me just make sure I understand this. We have a large waiting pool, three feet of water, so that you can stand and the shark can splash about and swim. We're talking about an average size *(struggling with the word)* chardoncadon-cachar-cadarius. A great white shark. That's what Linnaeus called it. Carcharodon Carcharius. It's gonna be taking its invest-tiguh-tuh-tatory bites. It's average size. So, that's about 15- to 16-foot-long for a female. A little bit shorter for a male. So, let's just say 13/14/15 feet. 15-foot shark. 15-foot shark.

You're going in dressed as a chain mail orca. You said you had some weapons that you were gonna deploy?

**Jessica:** Okay, so if I'm allowed to bring tools, which are—

**John Hodgman:** Hey, it's your scenario.

**Jessica:** Well, Natasha argues that it's not my scenario. She has specific rules.

**John Hodgman:** Well, I'm giving you— Hey, Natasha isn't the judge here.

**Jessica:** That's true.

**John Hodgman:** I'm giving you free reign to describe your scenario.

[00:30:00]

Orca suit, chainmail. What melee weapons are you bringing in?

**Jessica:** Some type of shark—so, they have shark repellent. And they also have—

**Jesse Thorn:** Wait, hold on. By they, do you mean Batman?

*(They giggle.)*

**Jessica:** I mean—no, there is literally shark—

**Jesse Thorn:** From the 1966 film, *Batman: The Movie*?

**Jessica:** There is literally shark repellent that you can purchase, not just like in your little bat tool belt thing. But—

**Jesse Thorn:** It was in his helicopter, but continue.

**Jessica:** Same—yeah. But sharks also, in their snout area, are incredibly sensitive to electromagnetic like pulses. So, you could have just some very strong magnets. That would deter the sharks.

**John Hodgman:** You're talking about using a magnet to disrupt their electromagnetic sense, or using the magnet to hit the shark in the nose?

**Jessica:** Either. Both!

**Jesse Thorn:** Por qué no los dos?

**Jessica:** Yeah, exactly. Por qué no los dos?

**Jesse Thorn:** I bet you could get one of those magnet fishing setups. And then you could hit the shark in the nose, disrupt its senses, and pull a rusty bicycle out of a river! *(Laughs.)*

**John Hodgman:** There we go! Would you be deploying any live baby seals as decoys?

**Jessica:** I would not, no. I will not use live baby seals.

**John Hodgman:** Keep it a fair fight.

**Jessica:** Yeah. Well, and I love animals!

**John Hodgman:** It's just a creature in its unnatural habitat being gawked at by hundreds of spectators while—

**Jessica:** Well, apparently it wants to fight me!

**John Hodgman:** While a person in a chainmail orca suit—

**Jessica:** I was just told that this fight's happening because I've been talking too much feces, and so that's why the shark wants to fight me. So, the shark asked for it in this scenario.

**John Hodgman:** In this scenario, the shark has willingly signed up for this match.

**Jessica:** Yes. The shark—yeah, the shark like entered a lottery and won.

**John Hodgman:** And believe that it can win. Okay. Natasha, you've heard the whole scenario. Do you—in this specific scenario, do you feel that Jessica would triumph? Or that your friend would become chum?

**Natasha:** Chum. Also, half of the tools that she just named are repellents. And so, the shark's not approaching her. It's not like hand-to-fin combat, which is what I'm picturing. That's what a fight is! It's not “Jessica enters three feet of water, puts out every electromagnetic pulse possible, and the shark never comes within 100 feet of her.” That's not winning a fight. So.

**John Hodgman:** Well, how would you define victory in this case, Jessica?

**Jessica:** I would define victory as, you know, the shark leaves.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah. So, Jessica very clearly stated earlier on the very bold and unusual assertion that if a shark swum up to her, ate her arm, left her bleeding from the arm hole, and swam away, that she won that fight.

**John Hodgman:** Survival is the definition of winning, is that what you're saying, Jesse?

**Jesse Thorn:** That's what Jessica is asserting. Now, I would question whether the shark even can swim away in a performance tank at Marine World Africa, USA. The reality is it's not gonna get more than 100 or so feet away.

**Jessica:** Well, I would say if it appears like it's wanting to leave, then it's forfeiting at that point.

**Jesse Thorn:** Judge Hodgman, I think I have a relevant example from real life.

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

**Jesse Thorn:** And I'm really glad that you brought up seals. Because a friend of ours, John Reichmuth of the sketch comedy group, Kaspar Hauser, was once attacked by a seal in the San Francisco Bay.

Jessica, would you say that a harbor seal is a more or less fearsome creature than a great white shark?

**Jessica:** I would say slightly less, perhaps.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah. It's like maybe like 200 pounds or something, rather than *(laughing)* like 1,000 pounds or whatever. And it basically just eats little sardines and stuff. *(Laughs.)* And John Reichmuth. Okay, so. This is just a few, quick excerpts from the ABC7 web article, "Berkeley Man Bitten by Harbor Seal".

"‘I thought it was a sea lion or a small shark—not like a great white,’ said Reichmuth. But when he came face to face with it, Reichmuth says it was clearly a harbor seal attacking him during an open water swim. ‘I had my hands on it and punched it, but it was kind of a melee. And then it took off,’ said John Reichmuth. The harbor seal bit Reichmuth's left ankle and left a large, gaping wound. Its fangs also punctured four holes in his right leg, just below his knee. ‘It was really clamped on at that point! I was actually thinking very briefly about whether it was gonna take me under!’”

[00:35:00]

So, I don't have John's number in my phone, but I did text his twin brother, James Reichmuth.

**John Hodgman:** Excuse me. Identical twin brother.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah. His identical twin brother, who I believe we can stipulate is a fair broker in this situation. *(Laughs.)*

**John Hodgman:** Yes. I have seen them both together. It's not just John living a double life.

**Jesse Thorn:** I asked James, “Would you say John won or lost his fight with the harbor seal?”

This is what James said. I think it speaks directly to Jessica's assertions. “Um. If you were in a fight with a guy in a bar, and you walked away, and he had to go to the ER and get stitches and had scars for the rest of his life...” Dot, dot, dot! Then he said, “Although John will tell you that he definitely got a couple of really solid punches in on the seals face.”

*(They laugh.)*

And his final verdict was: “LOST!” And then he sent me a picture of John with a giant bandage on his leg. *(Chuckles.)*

**John Hodgman:** I mean, under the Reichmuth scenario—Jessica, you getting your arm chewed off, the shark goes away, that is not you winning that fight. That is you escaping with your life.

**Jessica:** But! The actual person who seal attack happened to, he would think he did win. I would say the twin is a biased opinion. Because of course a twin—! Like, you know, that's something you can like—you can joke about! You know, I'm an only child, so I don't understand sibling dynamics. But I imagine that do that kind of thing where they wanna roast each other and be like, “Ah, you lost a fight to a seal!” So, of course he's gonna say that!

**Jesse Thorn:** You clearly have the blind arrogance of the only child.

**Jessica:** I do. Yeah.

**John Hodgman:** I knew there was a reason that I liked you, Jessica. Natasha, are you an only child?

**Natasha:** No, I'm the youngest of five. So, I do not have the confidence that Jessica inherently possesses.

**Jesse Thorn:** You know a little something about losing fights. *(Laughs.)*

**Natasha:** Yes!

**John Hodgman:** I was just gonna say, you've actually been in—

**Natasha:** And realism! Yeah, exactly.

**John Hodgman:** Well, let's— I'm bored of realism. Let's get back to fantasy. The dystopian fantasy, in this case. And in the scenario that you have chosen, Jessica: wading pool. Shark has signed on to fight. You're dressed as an orca. You've got repellents and magnets. How do you define victory? Is it like if you're both still standing after five minutes? Do you have to— I mean, do you have to wound or mortally wound the shark? If you get bitten, but you survive, is that victory? What is victory? Just so that I know.

**Jessica:** I would say it's the shark giving up. I would say whoever gives up first.

**John Hodgman:** If the shark surrenders and goes and cowers at the other end of the tank while you raised your giant magnets up in your hand—

**Jessica:** I would.

**John Hodgman:** —to the cheering of the mutants who live in this dystopian wasteland. Alright.

**Jessica:** In the Orca outfit,

**John Hodgman:** Yes, obviously in the orca outfit! Natasha, even in this hypothetical scenario, do you maintain that Jessica could not win the fight of the shark? Remember, the shark has agreed to fight, so the shark's in it to win it.

**Natasha:** I'm willing to say that I would consider—like, it's possible. Not likely, but possible. But I would also say that she comes up with a new hypothetical literally every time we talk about this. And it's been four years.

**Jessica:** The judge came up with this hypothetical!

**Natasha:** Okay. But you led him down a primrose path with that. *(Laughs.)*

**John Hodgman:** Let's talk about how far back this goes. Now there is an Exhibit C here, which is a photo of, Jessica, you with a shark. Can we take a look at that? Right. Now, obviously you're not in the water with a shark. It looks like you're at an aquarium, and a shark is swimming by. And I don't think this is a great white shark, but it's definitely a shark. And it looks like you're shaking your fist at it.

**Jessica:** Yes, I was—

**Jesse Thorn:** “Old man yells at cloud” style.

**Jessica:** Yeah, that's exactly it. This was at the Shedd Aquarium. My friend, Jen, took this photo. Because even when I'm not with Natasha, I'm still thinking about— You know, I'm aware of sharks. I'm thinking about how to beat the sharks. And this shark is cowering and leaving the scene.

**John Hodgman:** Well. *(Laughs.)* I'm not sure the shark can even see you on that side of the glass. But.

**Natasha:** Nope.

**Jessica:** Well, he's certainly not coming at me.

**John Hodgman:** Right. Okay. You're also several feet below it, because it's floating above you.

**Jessica:** That's a skill issue.

**John Hodgman:** Right. So, Natasha, do you get photos of Jessica's shaking her fists at sharks and other goads like this often?

**Natasha:** Yes. Jessica is my funniest friend. This has been a long, ongoing dispute, but also joke between us for many years.

[00:40:00]

And so, if anything even rhymes with shark, *(laughs)* we will be engaging with each other.

**John Hodgman:** About this issue.

**Natasha:** On this issue. Yes.

**John Hodgman:** Jessica, I'll ask you a serious question. How does it feel when Natasha says, over and over again, "No, you cannot beat a shark in a fight." Does it feel worse than when she tried to feed you to that alligator? How does it feel when your friend doesn't believe in you?

**Jessica:** I was also gonna refer back to the alligator incident. And you know, it's not the first time Natasha's betrayed me. And I love and forgive her every time. Even like the—you know, the alligator incident. So. It's okay. Not everyone's perfect.

**Natasha:** For the record, I have not forgiven her for the slander on national television, but. And now on a national podcast. So.

**Jessica:** Or to the—I also slandered you to the National Park Service.

**Natasha:** True. So.

**John Hodgman:** How did you slander Natasha to the National Park Service, Jessica?

**Jessica:** And they had a post about like, you know, watch out for bison. And I replied and said, "Well, what about if a—you know, a guest on your Everglades National Park attempted to feed another guest to an alligator?"

And they replied like, you know, (*chuckling*) "That's not approved either."

**John Hodgman:** Yeah, that would probably be suboptimal from the point of view of the National Parks Service.

**Jessica:** Yeah. And they didn't like it. Yeah.

**John Hodgman:** As long as it's still funded. I mean, honestly—

**Jessica:** That was a few years ago. So, I don't—

**John Hodgman:** Unless we hand it over to whatever billionaire wants it, they're probably going to insist that people get pushed into alligator's way. For fun.

**Jessica:** Yeah, that's the dystopian I'm thinking of. So.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. Natasha, you would like me to rule that we eliminate all elaborate hypothetical scenarios, and instead force Jessica to acknowledge that if Jessica were three to

four feet of water in the ocean, and a shark came and attacked her, that she would lose in the fight. Correct?

**Natasha:** Correct. To me, that's what the question that started this whole thing—that was the basis of the question. “I can beat the wild animal.” That inherently to me means in its natural habitat, in a natural setting that you would encounter that wild animal—not the Jules’ Octagon wading pool with every tool in the book. Like. So, yes, I would like a ruling on wild habitat, natural circumstances.

**John Hodgman:** Wild habitat, natural circumstances. But as I think Jessica has pointed out, under natural— Like, let's just be plain here. Great white shark attacks are very rare in terms of marine, never mind ground, fatalities.

**Natasha:** They can't walk.

**John Hodgman:** So, in the natural habitat, it probably wouldn't ever happen.

**Jessica:** Exactly.

**John Hodgman:** And you would argue that's because all sharks are cowards. Right, Jessica?

**Jessica:** Sure. We could say all sharks are cowards. But now that's just gonna make more of them sign up for the fight lottery. But they don't attack people! And there's a—they just don't do it!

**John Hodgman:** Let me tell you something, Jessica. Don't worry about it. Sharks don't listen to podcasts. They can't even walk.

**Jessica:** That's true.

**Jesse Thorn:** But Jessica, can I say to you: it's not gonna be fight lottery. It's gonna be a fight tournament. Only the finest fighter will fight you.

**Jessica:** Okay. Yeah, that's— You know, I hadn't thought of that scenario, but... I mean, that's okay.

**John Hodgman:** Why does it bother you, Natasha, that Jessica keeps this idea alive?

**Natasha:** I actually don't think it bothers me. I don't think this case has a crux. I'm sorry. You guys are brilliant at coming up with the emotional cruxes. It might have one for Jessica. I never—it never occurred to me that this could be hurting her feelings, 'cause she's always so confident. (*Laughs.*) I love Jessica. I'm happy if this continues. I just want an authority figure such as yourself to be on my side. And I guess that would tip the poll from—I would then have 50—

**Jessica:** The poll's over. I'm not on Twitter anymore.



**John Hodgman:** As the youngest of five siblings—are the youngest of five or are you the youngest of six?

**Natasha:** Five. Of five. I'm the fifth.

**John Hodgman:** As the youngest of five siblings, no one's ever been on your side. Except maybe your mommy and daddy.

**Natasha:** No. *(Laughs.)*

**John Hodgman:** Not even then. Whereas Jessica is an only child. The whole world is on your side all the time.

**Jessica:** And I am usually on Natasha's side a lot.

**Natasha:** She is.

**Jessica:** Yeah. Just not in this.

**Jesse Thorn:** Who's side would Alex the *Jeopardy* champion be on?

**Natasha:** That's a good question.

**Jessica:** That is a good question. I don't know.

**Natasha:** Yeah. He dropped out of the server a long time ago, so he actually wasn't around when this fight—when this dispute came up.

**John Hodgman:** Jessica, you want me to rule not only that you could beat a shark in a fight—both in natural and unnatural environments—but also that Natasha did attempt to push you into the jaws of an alligator, right?

**Jessica:** That would be an ideal ruling. Yes.

**John Hodgman:** Natasha says that there's no crux here, Jessica. But you're still sending her images of you threatening sharks.

[00:45:00]

It still lurks in your mind. Why is this important to you?

**Jessica:** I think that it's important for everyone to know that they can beat a shark. Because I don't think it's just me personally that could. I think Natasha could beat a shark. I think any of you could beat a shark! Because we have opposable thumbs, and sharks don't. So, naturally we are evolved to fight creatures.

**John Hodgman:** Now look, I don't have a notebook full of shark facts, but I'm pretty—

*(Jessica giggles.)*

I'm pretty sure I'm right when I say sharks don't bite with their thumbs.

**Jessica:** They don't; *(laughing.)* they do investigatory bites.

**John Hodgman:** The name of the movie is not *A Marine Thumb to Your Eye*. The name of the movie's *Jaws*.

**Jessica:** But that's what I would do! I would do a thumb to their eye. Because I have in my notebook of shark facts that shark eyes are covered by a nictitating membrane, and that would not protect their eyes against a digit. It doesn't have to be a thumb. It could be an index finger. Any type of jabbing.

**John Hodgman:** I would—you know, I did point out that there are very few fatal and even non-fatal great white shark attacks. I mean, you hear about them when they happen, right? 'Cause they're obviously, you know, a point of cultural imagination. Those people who were bitten by or killed by great white sharks or other sharks, are you saying that they're just weaklings who didn't use their thumbs correctly? Is that what you wanna say to their families?

**Jessica:** No! That is not what I wanna say to their families.

**John Hodgman:** I have it on record that you want to say that to their families.

**Jessica:** *(Laughing.)* No.

**Natasha:** What do you wanna say to their families, Jessica?!

**Jessica:** I wanna say I'm very sorry for their loss and the fact that their loved one was taken off-guard by a shark that was confused and bit them. So, it wasn't the fair fight in like the scenario we're talking about.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. Well, I'll give you both a chance for another immediate summary judgment. I want you, if you can, to remember one of the—I guess not questions but answers that you were presented on *Jeopardy* and see if you can stump the judge. Do you remember which one you won on or which one you wish you had won on?

**Jessica:** Well, we didn't win.

**Natasha:** Yeah, we both came in second place.

**Jessica:** Nooo, *(quietly)* I came in third...

**Natasha:** Oh, okay. Sorry.

**John Hodgman:** Jessica came in third. There's the crux!

*(They laugh.)*

There's the crux, Joel! Jesse, there's the crux. Jessica came in third. She's an only child. Natasha came in second the last of five. That's a win for Natasha, but that's a horrible loss for Jessica.

**Jessica:** It is a horrible loss.

**John Hodgman:** No wonder Jessica wants to win. No wonder Jessica wants to chomp onto this with both set rows of her teeth. But do you have a *Jeopardy* question or prompt that you wanna try to stump me with?

**Jessica:** Do you wanna go first, Natasha?

**Natasha:** Sure. I remember both of my Daily—I hit two Daily Doubles. One of them is baseball related, so I could probably stump the judge, but I'm sure it wouldn't stump Jesse.

**John Hodgman:** Jesse is allowed to buzz in.

**Natasha:** Okay. The category was like “starts with w”, and it was something like, “This is the word for the sweet spot of a batter.” Like, a baseball batter. This is their sweet spot.

**John Hodgman:** Buzz. What is withers?

**Natasha:** No. Jesse, do you have a guess?

**Jesse Thorn:** This is a batter's sweet spot or a bat's sweet—? You usually say the bat has a sweet spot.

**Natasha:** Okay. No, it's definitely not the bat. It's not like the ding on a bat. It's like where a batter would love to have the pitch thrown—like, so that it's—

**Jesse Thorn:** Wheelhouse! What is wheelhouse?

**Natasha:** Yep, that's correct.

**John Hodgman:** Ohhh, okay. Good job, Natasha. You stumped me, but you knew that you would.

**Natasha:** *(Chuckles.)* Yeah.

**John Hodgman:** Alright, Jessica, you have a chance win it all here.

**Jessica:** Huh! That sounds familiar!

So, mine, the only question I can remember is the one that I lost it all on. 'Cause I was in lead.

**John Hodgman:** I can imagine you're haunted forever.

**Jessica:** I was lead—yeah. *(Laughs.)* Oh, yeah! I was leading, going into Final Jeopardy. And if you're in first place, you have to bet enough to cover second place doubling their money. So, I had to bet a lot of money. And so, I bet pretty much all of my money. And the category was Children's Literature.

**John Hodgman:** Here we go.

**Jessica:** So, it was “This winged character from an early 20th century work is named because she mends the pots and kettles.”

**John Hodgman:** *(Beat.)* Who is Tinkerbell?

**Jessica:** *(Laughs bitterly.)* Yeah, that's it!

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. I'll be back in a moment with my verdict. See you later. I'm gonna go to the champion's lounge!

[00:50:00]

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.)*

Jessica, how are you feeling about your chances right now?

**Jessica:** Umm, as I feel in all things, I'm very confident. *(Laughs.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** *(Laughing.)* Yeah, if only you had an older sibling to beat that outta you.

**Jessica:** Yeah, I didn't get that. So.

**Jesse Thorn:** Natasha, how are you feeling?

**Natasha:** I'm feeling okay. I feel like the judge understood maybe the difference between natural scenario versus completely fake wading pool scenario. So, hopefully we get a good ruling.

**Jesse Thorn:** Do you think you could beat a harbor seal, Jessica?

**Jessica:** Yes, absolutely. *(Laughing.)* I could beat any wild animal. And I do believe that! I know! I wish I didn't believe that, but I do!

**Jesse Thorn:** Well, 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:** Funky, upbeat banjo music.

**Dan McCoy:** *The Flop House* is a podcast where we watch a bad movie, and then we talk about it.

**Elliott Kalan:** Robert Shaw in *Jaws*, and they're trying to figure out how to get rid of the ghoulies. And he scratches his nails and goes, "I'll get you, ghoulie."

**Dan:** He's just standing above the toilet with a harpoon. No, I was just looking forward to you going through the other ways in which *Wild Wild West* is historically inaccurate.

**Stuart Wellington:** You know how much movies cost nowadays?! When you add in your popped corn, and your bagel bites, and your cheese curders.

**Elliott:** Sure. You can't go wrong with a Henry Cavill mustache. Here at Henry Cavill Mustaches, the only supplier!

*(They laugh.)*

**Narrator:** *The Flop House*. New episodes every Saturday. Find it at [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org).

*(Music fades out.)*

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**Jesse Thorn:** It's the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. We're taking a quick break. What have you got going on, John?

**John Hodgman:** Well Jesse, summer is coming to a close. Soon I'll return to my regular chambers there in Brooklyn, New York. But before I leave my summertime chambers here at [WERU.org](http://WERU.org) in Orland, Maine, I just wanna say thank you to all of you *Judge John Hodgman* listeners—and I know that there are more than one of you—who called in and pledged your support for WERU, a community radio station that's losing a huge chunk—I believe a third—of its budget due to the government clawing back money from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. They just completed their big pledge drive. I hear it was a real success. Right, Joel?

**Joel Mann:** Huge.

**John Hodgman:** Huge success. But please remember to support your local community radio, local community journalism, local community artists. And of course, please continue to listen to [WERU.org](http://WERU.org). You can always support this station as well as your local station anytime during the year, just as you can become a member of Maximum Fun anytime during the year. These independently owned media operations really, really only thrive on your support. So, we're very grateful to have yours.

Jesse, what's going on in your world?

**Jesse Thorn:** Well, we've had some really cool guests on *Bullseye* that I hope people will check out. Marlee Matlin.

**John Hodgman:** Wow!

**Jesse Thorn:** The Oscar award-winning actor. There's a beautiful documentary about her life that includes like—among other things, she had a relationship with William Hurt when they were making a film together. It was very tumultuous and ultimately abusive. And I found out that after she went to rehab and moved to Los Angeles from Chicago, where she was from, she lived at Henry Winkler's house for two years.

*(John makes a sound of jealous surprise.)*

She just showed up at Henry Winkler's door, knocked on the door, and said, “I don't have anywhere to go.”

And Henry Winkler and his wife said, “Come into our house and live with us.” For two years. Anyway. She's so cool and so funny and awesome.

She actually— She's been working with the same interpreter. She's deaf, and she can speak but prefers to use ASL. And she's had the same interpreter since back then. So, 35/40 years.

And they're like best buds and business partners, and he is such an extraordinary interpreter of her ASL that I think this will play every bit as well on the radio as it would if you're watching the video and use ASL. It is—

**John Hodgman:** And *Bullseye* is on video now!

**Jesse Thorn:** And *Bullseye* is on video. So, if you prefer to watch the ASL, that is also available to you. We also have Al Jardine from the Beach Boys on the show.

**John Hodgman:** Wow.

**Jesse Thorn:** And this is a weird one, but I want to recommend it: this guy called Victor Koskovvsky. He directed this movie called *Architecton*.

**John Hodgman:** Go on.

**Jesse Thorn:** It is a sort of massive-scale documentary about rocks, basically. (*Chuckles.*) And architecture. That is essentially a sort of like slow-moving argument for permanence and beauty in the built world—or at least relative permanence. And he's Russian. He lives in Barcelona. The interview's in English. He is one of the most fascinating people I've ever talked to in my life. You just—and he was really lovely.

**John Hodgman:** Oh, it sounds amazing.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, it was really, really cool. The movie's amazing too. And also! While I'm at it, you know, autumn is just around the corner, John.

**John Hodgman:** It is.

**Jesse Thorn:** And we have so many beautiful things in the Put This On Shop. So, please go to PutThisOnShop.com. Among other things, I just got a—we have a raft of flight jackets, beautiful leather flight jackets for your autumn use.

[00:55:00]

And also, a lot of ladies' things in the shop right now. Not just jewelry! Including jewelry, but also a lot of beautiful clothes as well. So, go to PutThisOnShop.com, and go get yourself some stuff for autumn. That's PutThisOnShop.com.

**John Hodgman:** You deserve something beautiful for autumn. I agree.

**Jesse Thorn:** I agree.

**John Hodgman:** Go get it.

**Jesse Thorn:** Now, 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:** Now look, this program is edited. We have a wonderful video editor named Daniel Speer. We have a wonderful audio editor named AJ McKeon. But I am going to present for you right now a legal document. This is a deposition from both AJ and Daniel that they did not edit time it took for me to present the correct response: "Who is Tinkerbell?" That happened in real time. Daniel says it right here. AJ says it right here. That happened in real time. Joel, you would attest to that, right?

*(Joel confirms.)*

Ohh, you did not know how nervous I was, Jessica, after my horrible loss on the wheelhouse prompt. That one went straight to a part of my brain that I haven't visited for a long time: the brain that gets things right. Tinkerbell. Who is Tinkerbell? I got that one right in real time. You're looking at an only child who is extremely proud of himself right now!

**Jessica:** And I'm happy for you.

**John Hodgman:** Jessica, I'm an only child. It's my turn to talk.

**Jessica:** Okay. *(Laughs.)* I've never experienced this before.

**John Hodgman:** I can tell! I can tell. You think there's a reason—*(chuckling)* you think there's a reason why I love putting on these robes and getting this gavel and pushing people around? It's 'cause I'm an only child. This is the way we were born to live. We were born to live and to win hypothetical fights. Because for us, the fights were always hypothetical. *(Laughs.)* We didn't have to live with what Natasha put up with: the constant pushback and reevaluation of argument that Natasha had to go through in order just to be heard in her family. For you, it was always the case. You could shake your fist at anything that was floating above you when you were protected by a five-foot wall of glass in an aquarium. 'Cause nothing was ever gonna get to us, Jessica. 'Cause we're only children.

**Jessica:** That's true.

**John Hodgman:** Conflict was not how I was raised. Avoidance of conflict, that's a fight I'll win every time.

*(Jessica laughs.)*



I never got into sports, so I couldn't even rehearse conflict! And perhaps that's what gives me an unfair confidence. But not even I necessarily believe I could win a fight with a shark.

I've seen the scars on John Reichmuth's leg from a harbor seal. I saw a harbor seal last night in the water here in Maine! And it freaked me out! I've also, around here in our neighborhood of Maine, heard tell of harbor seals washing up to shore with big chunks bit out of them. Because there are great whites up here in Maine now. They're following the warm waters and the food. And you would not believe how the authorities literally described cause of death for this harbor seal that washed up on our friend's shore with a big chunk bitten out of it, obviously by a shark. They said, "Boating accident." That was their obscure cultural reference to *Jaws*!

It wasn't.

These sharks, you're right that they're not looking for a fight. They're just looking for a food. But there was a person in Harpswell just a couple of years ago who was attacked and killed by a great white shark here in Maine. Because that shark was confused. They were not hunting human flesh. But they get— They're not smart, either. And they do get confused. And I would say that while there are techniques to defend yourself from a shark attack— I mean, historically, I did learn from comic books that if you punch a shark in the nose, it's very sensitive there—as you pointed out, Jessica—and that that will drive them off.

But I would say that, you know, in almost any scenario, a shark is a natural predator with many rows of teeth and lots of biting experience under its belt. And it doesn't wear a belt, because it doesn't wear trousers, 'cause sharks can't walk. They can swim. Formidable foe, I would say.

Now. I will say this, Jessica. In your scenario, we get a big wading pool, three feet deep. We bring it to the Blue Hill Fair.

[01:00:00]

We charge admission. The shark goes into the water. You go into the water. You are wearing a chainmail orca suit. You've got shark repellent. You've got magnets. The shark, I guess, has signed up for this fight? In this scenario, I do think you would beat the shark. Because you see it coming! You've got the advantage of being in a relatively natural environment, which is (*chuckling*) the carnival atmosphere of an end of summer fair.

Shark's gonna—I don't care what the shark signed. Shark is not fighting at its best in three feet of water. Not fighting at its best. Frankly, I think it would be horrified and immediately terrified and confused. And for you to beat that shark would mean that you're a bad person.

(*Jessica laughs.*)

But you could do it. It would be a gruesome display. And we'd all make a lot of money.

**Jessica:** We would.

**John Hodgman:** And the shark signed something! I mean, I have its signature right here.

*(Claps hands.)*

That said, I don't want you to do that ever.

**Jessica:** I don't wanna do that.

**John Hodgman:** Well. It sounds like you want to.

*(Jessica laughs.)*

But the main thing is it would be cruel to a shark. Shark's just trying to live out there. And while they can be fearsome creatures, and horrible tragedies have happened when sharks have mistaken humans for their natural prey, they are just trying to live. You don't want to bring a fight to a shark! And here's the thing, if you are out there in the water? First of all, you can't swim.

*(They laugh.)*

**Jessica:** It's not gonna be out in the water!

**John Hodgman:** Even if you were a championship open water swimmer, you saw what a harbor seal did to John Reichmuth. I'm telling you right now—and it pains me. Because only child to only child, I love your confidence. Natural environment, shark wins every time. Every time. It doesn't need thumbs when it's got jaws. I hope you never face a shark in any kind of fight.

**Jessica:** I won't. *(Laughs.)*

**John Hodgman:** Because I do believe that you would fight hard. Let me say this: based on this conversation, you wouldn't go down without a fight, it's for sure. You've thought about it. You might be able to bring some of your thinking to the moment. But in its natural environment, without being able to swim, I'm afraid you're gonna go down. Sorry. But in the dystopian carnival environment that you envision, you would win. But we would all lose.

This is the sound of a gavel.

**Clip:**

**Sharks (*Finding Nemo*):** *(In unison.)* Fish are friends, not food.

**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.)*

Natasha, how do you feel about this verdict?

**Natasha:** I feel good. I got the ruling I wanted, and I'm happy that Jessica can beat up on sad, little, dying sharks in octagon wading pools.

**Jesse Thorn:** Look, we're all happy that she can beat up on sad, little, dying sharks.

*(They laugh.)*

You don't have to say it! It's self-evident.

Jessica, how are you feeling about the verdict?

**Jessica:** I feel fine about the verdict, because today is Natasha's birthday. And you know, I'll give her this gift!

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

**Jessica:** Thank you for having us.

**Natasha:** Thank you so much for having us.

**Sound Effect:** Three gavel bangs.

**Jesse Thorn:** Another *Judge John Hodgman* case is in the books. We'll have Swift Justice in just a second. First, our thanks to Redditor u/TheRhubarbarian—another classic Reddit name, John.

**John Hodgman:** Great. Great name.

**Jesse Thorn:** For naming this week's episode “Probable Jaws”. We are on Reddit at r/MaximumFun, where you can chat about this episode and suggest names for future cases. You can find the evidence from this show posted on our Instagram account at [Instagram.com/judgejohnhodgman](https://www.instagram.com/judgejohnhodgman).

John, don't worry. I have sent Jennifer both the picture of the orca suit and the picture of John Reichmuth drinking a beer with his leg in bandages.

**John Hodgman:** Ohhh, good. So, we'll have that for our evidence, available as soon as you listen to the show?

**Jesse Thorn:** Both of those—yeah, both of those will be available.

**John Hodgman:** Great.

**Jesse Thorn:** You can find us on TikTok and YouTube at [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](#), and we encourage you to subscribe to us in both locales, to check out both full episodes of the program and video-only content.

**John Hodgman:** Jesse, speaking of video-only content, our YouTube commenter of the week is YouTube user Very Nearly a Person, who writes: “These videos are nicely done.”

[01:05:00]

(*Chuckles.*) Thank you, Very Nearly a Person. They go on to say, “Of all the podcasts that are now on YouTube, you all have the best videos. I would say that even if you weren't already my favorite podcast.”

Thank you very much, Very Nearly a Person. In fact, I'm gonna go ahead and say you're a whole human being in your own right, as is everyone who listens to the show and watches it on YouTube. If you are watching it on YouTube, please take a moment to follow, like, subscribe, and share, and comment! All of it helps people discover the podcast in a new way over there at [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](#). And indeed, any review or any way that you can share the show with anyone that you know really helps us a lot. So, I thank you in advance for sharing in the newfangled ways and the oldfangled ways. Here's an oldfangled way.

Joel!

**Joel Mann:** Yep.

**John Hodgman:** You ever listened to *Judge John Hodgman*?

**Joel Mann:** Yep.

**John Hodgman:** Okay. Pretend you didn't.

**Joel Mann:** Uh, is that a podcast?

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. Listen to it, Joel. Okay?

**Joel Mann:** Okay.

**John Hodgman:** We did it! That's how it's done.

**Jesse Thorn:** But don't only suggest—don't only suggest it to Joel, though. Just to be clear.

**John Hodgman:** Yeah. Everyone go on Instagram and @ Joel Mann.

**Jesse Thorn:** You have a Joel in your life. Suggest it to your Joel.

Okay, *Judge John Hodgman*, created by Jesse Thorn and John Hodgman. This episode, engineered by Cory McKane at Just Push Record Studios in Austin, Texas—aptly named. And by the Creator's Clubhouse in Atlanta, Georgia. And by Joel Mann at WERU in Orland, Maine. 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.

Okay, you ready for Swift Justice, Judge Hodgman?

**John Hodgman:** I'm ready.

**Jesse Thorn:** Whiskey Standard on the MaxFun subreddit says, “My wife always cranks the car air conditioner on full blast, and she sets it to hit her face and legs. She could use less power if she just did face for cold and feet for hot. ‘Cause that's how air moves.”

**John Hodgman:** What?

**Jesse Thorn:** “But she won't listen to me.” Cool moves down—cool air goes down. Warm air goes up.

**John Hodgman:** Okaaay. I think I understand what you're saying, Whiskey Standard. But I mean, you're talking about blow—blowing on feet? Blowing hot air on the feet and cold air on the face?

**Jesse Thorn:** Yes, exactly. So that the cool air that blows on your face would then descend down towards your waist and feet.

**John Hodgman:** What are these kids driving around in, a McDLT?! That's an old-time reference for an old McDonald's sandwich where they kept the hot hot and the cool cool. Right, Jesse?

**Jesse Thorn:** That's before my time, but I've heard tell.

**John Hodgman:** I don't even know how you run the air conditioner that way! Where you make it hot on the feet.

**Jesse Thorn:** You don't have a button on your car that puts the top—? You wouldn't do it at the same time, John!

**John Hodgman:** Well, isn't that what they're talking about?

**Jesse Thorn:** No! They're talking about if they're using the air conditioner, you use the top part, so that your face cools from the top, and then the cool air settles down towards your feet. Or if you're using warm air, you shoot it at your feet. 'Cause then your feet get warm, but the warmth heads up towards your head. That's what they're talking about.

**John Hodgman:** Okay, look. I don't know what to say, Whiskey Standard.

**Jesse Thorn:** It's two different scenarios, John.

**John Hodgman:** We're all trying to be a little bit more ecologically considerate. I am, after all broadcasting today from the solar powered studios here at WERU, which powers the incredible— The power of the intensely hot sun is powering the incredibly cold air conditioning in here! And I'm gonna say, it's a little chilly in here, Joel. Because I'm wearing shorts under these robes.

*(Joel agrees.)*

I should have worn my long pants.

Point is, we're all trying to be ecologically conscious, Whiskey Standard. I get it. But if your wife is blowing cold air on her face and legs, that's probably 'cause her face and legs are hot. You should be more concerned about your wife's comfort than how much power you're consuming, in general, and save your scheme for when you're driving in the car alone. Sorry. I find in favor of the wife who's a whole human being in her own right with her own face— her own hot face and her own hot legs.

**Jesse Thorn:** John, I'm wearing shorts too. And I just looked down when you mentioned that you were wearing shorts, and the tails in front of my bailiff jacket are covering up my shorts completely. So, when I looked down, I thought, “Huh!? Am I not wearing pants?!” *(Laughs.)*

**John Hodgman:** You have to check. You have to check. You have to do a pants check every now and then.

**Jesse Thorn:** It looks like I'm fully nude. Like, it truly looks like the entire bottom half of my body is plein air right now.

**John Hodgman:** I'm gonna go ahead and stand up for the people watching YouTube so they can see my shorts. Save that for the blooper reel!

*(Jesse giggles.)*

Hey, we are talking about shark attacks and alligators and so forth. I wanna hear some more wild animal disputes. Do you have a friend who says koala bear, even though they're not a bear? If you had a non-traditional pet that was ethically okay—hypothetically! Like, if you wanted to keep as a pet something other than a cat or a dog or an axolotl or whatever, like what kind of wacky pet would you like, Joel, if you could get one? Like a giraffe?

**Joel Mann:** Uh, hippopotamus.

[01:10:00]

**John Hodgman:** Alright! Hippopotamus, very cute, very meme worthy these days.

**Jesse Thorn:** Very deadly!

**John Hodgman:** What is your— (*Laughing.*) Yeah, also very deadly. It's true.

Does your partner like to rescue small animals in peril, and you'd rather let nature take its course, if you will? Send us your wild animal disputes to [MaximumFun.org/jjho](https://MaximumFun.org/jjho), or email me directly at [Hodgman@MaximumFun.org](mailto:Hodgman@MaximumFun.org). All of your wild animal disputes are welcome here. As well as all of your other disputes, right Jesse?

**Jesse Thorn:** Indeed, no matter what your dispute is, you can submit it to us at [MaximumFun.org/jjho](https://MaximumFun.org/jjho) or email us at [Hodgman@MaximumFun.org](mailto:Hodgman@MaximumFun.org). That is where we get disputes for docket clearing. That's where we get our disputes for these big case episodes. That's where we get our disputes for live shows. That's where John gets disputes for his columnette in the *New York Times*. This is the source of *Judge John Hodgman* content other than us. So, please do send us something at [MaximumFun.org/jjho](https://MaximumFun.org/jjho). And 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!