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Transition: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: It's the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast, and I am Bailiff Jesse Thorn. With me is Judge John Hodgman. This week's episode, recorded live in Vancouver, British Columbia.

John Hodgman: We talked about a family book club. We talked about cutting fingernails. We talked about cutting sandwiches. And we talked about what to name your curling broom. Very Canadian! And when we talk about the very best way to cut a sandwich, we reference some testimony from some expert witnesses. Make sure to listen all the way to the end of the episode to hear these voice memos from Deb Perelman and Kenji López-Alt, our friends from *The Recipe* podcast.

Jesse Thorn: Let's go to the stage at the Hollywood Theater in Vancouver.

Transition: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: People of Vancouver, you asked us for live justice; and we are here to deliver it! The court of Judge John Hodgman is now in session.

(Raucous cheers and applause.)

Please welcome to the stage Adam and Catherine!

(Cheers and applause.)

Adam brings the case against his wife, Catherine. Catherine bought her family *Moby Dick* for Christmas with the intention of starting a family book club. No one in the family read the book except for Adam. Catherine never even started it!

(Laughter.)

Adam is here for literary justice. Please rise as Judge John Hodgman enters the courtroom.

John Hodgman: Welcome to the courtroom.

(Applause.)

Thank you Adam and Catherine; you may be seated. Adam, you seek justice in my fake courtroom?

Adam: I do indeed.

John Hodgman: So, tell me about the Christmas when you got *Moby Dick* as a present.

Adam: Christmas of 2011 was the first Christmas that I spent with Catherine's family back when we were dating.

(John “wow”s.)

And when Catherine presented everyone except me with a brand-new shiny copy of *Moby Dick*—I used this copy that my dad bought used before I was born.

John Hodgman: She didn't give you a copy of this book!?

Adam: No, no, no.

John Hodgman: Okay, go on.

(Adam starts but John interrupts him.) Catherine, *(unclear)* you see this? I'm ready to judge.

(Laughter.)

Catherine: Oh, can I interject?

John Hodgman: No.

Jesse Thorn: No! You'll shut your pie hole, ma'am!

John Hodgman: In a moment. Thank you very much.

Adam: It was obviously important for me to, you know, show well for Catherine's family. And I think I did so.

John Hodgman: So, Catherine, you gave a copy of *Moby Dick* to everyone in your family except the person you were dating to form a family book club. Is this correct?

Catherine: Sort of. So, it was one copy per household. So, we were living together at the time; so we only needed one. So, actually the copy that I got for me was for us, although Adam already had a copy.

John Hodgman: I was going to ask, Adam, did you suspect that the entire family was playing a joke on you? Tricking you into reading *Moby Dick*?

Adam: *(Chuckles.)* It was difficult to calibrate to Catherine's family. Catherine, where's your copy?

Catherine: I don't know.

(Laughter.)

I looked for it.

John Hodgman: To be fair, this was a long time ago. I mean—what?—14 years now, right? 14 years?

Catherine: Yeah. 13/14, something like that. Yeah.

John Hodgman: You haven't had time to read *Moby Dick* in decade and a half?!

Jesse Thorn: The copy's probably not even shiny anymore.

John Hodgman: Go back in time, if you were, to the old whaling days of Nantucket—or 2011—when you were coming up with this idea to have a family book club. What was your motivation, and what was your plan?

Catherine: Okay. So, Adam made it sound like he was trying to impress my family, but actually we were trying to impress him with how literate we were. And I think we failed on that.

John Hodgman: So, it was a family-wide prank!

(Laughter.)

Catherine: No, we were dead serious. So, we are terrible cooks in our family. Adam showed up; he makes the most amazing Christmas meals, and we were like, “We have to keep this guy around! Everyone has to work together for this.”

John Hodgman: What's your specialty, Adam?

Adam: Oh, Italian food.

John Hodgman: *(Interrupting.)* Whale steaks? What? Whale—?

Adam: Whale steaks. Italian food.

John Hodgman: Italian food. Italian food. Whale carbonara.

Adam: *(Laughs.)* Perfect.

John Hodgman: So, you were trying to impress him—

(Catherine confirms.)

—by pretending you were all gonna read *Moby Dick*.

Catherine: We were gonna read *Moby Dick*.

John Hodgman: So, why didn't it happen?

Catherine: So, Adam was reading it for work purposes, and he gave me a running commentary of it. And to be perfectly honest, he didn't do a good job of selling it. He said that there was a lot of antiquated cytology in it. And you know, there are only so many hours in a day!

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: Remember how I was gonna bring this gavel down so hard against you, Catherine?

Catherine: I'm gonna read it this, though!

John Hodgman: Wait, wait! Remember how you just said cytology, meaning the study of whales? Gavel lifted.

(Laughter.)

We're back to neutral. Unbiased, once more! You have a chance. Why would someone who knows the word cytology not wanna read *Moby Dick*?! There's no more whaley book around!

(Laughter.)

Catherine: I really wanna read it.

Jesse Thorn: Adam—

John Hodgman: Maybe someday.

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Catherine: This year.

Jesse Thorn: Adam, Catherine said that you were reading it for work. Are you a harpoonist, or—?

Adam: *(Laughs.)* No, I'm a musician.

(Laughter.)

Jesse Thorn: You're in The Decemberists, I presume?

(John cackles.)

(Scattered applause.)

Adam: No, I'm a trumpet player. I play in the Calgary Philharmonic. We were playing an opera of *Moby Dick* that year.

John Hodgman: Oh, okay! And tell us about *Moby Dick*. Good book?

Adam: The first and last fifth of the book are amazing!

John Hodgman: That leaves three—? I'm not great at subtraction. There's a middle 3/5ths?

Adam: Those middle 3/5ths are rough.

John Hodgman: It's just antiquated cytology?

Adam: Antiquated cytology and nine gams. And you know, you gotta get what you can.

John Hodgman: *(Excited.)* I know what a gam is!

Adam: Sorry?

John Hodgman: I know what a gam is! Yeah!

Adam: I know you know what a gam is!

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. They're are ladies who are married to gamps!

(Scattered laughter.)

John Hodgman: It's when two boats tie up to each other, so they can meet each other and hang out and exchange news.

(Adam confirms.)

Because do you know what, Catherine? I'm reading *Moby Dick* right now.

(Laughter.)

Catherine: Oh, I am aware of that.

John Hodgman: Oh, are you? I'm reading it out loud on my Substack.

(Catherine confirms.)

Did you know that, Jesse?

Jesse Thorn: I don't subscribe to the Substack.

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: Yeah. Good. You'd love it, 'cause I read it in my main accent.

Jesse Thorn: *(Unenthusiastically.)* Oh. Do you really?

John Hodgman: Uh-yep!

(Jesse "oh no"s.)

(In a warped Maine accent.) "Call me Ishmael." Those are the first three words. That's as far as I've gotten.

Catherine: I did read that part!

Jesse Thorn: *(Mimicking the accent.)* Sounds like a real nightmare, John!

John Hodgman: Oh, that's good! *(In the accent.)* "Can't get to Nantucket from here." It's a lot of fun. It's a lot—

Jesse Thorn: *(Ramping up the accent.)* Really punishing off hands, are you?

John Hodgman: I would say that I am not past the first fifth, for sure. So, I'm not getting into the boring gams part yet.

Adam: Yeah, though the gams are okay. But when you read a long chapter about the philosophical affect of a whale's head, and you finish it, and you turn the page, and you see that the next chapter is called "Right Whale's Head, Alternate View", it's a dark moment.

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: Do you know—do you know why the—?

Jesse Thorn: Is this book gonna have a point/counterpoint format?!

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: So, your whole family gave up on it. Or do you think they ever even tried?

Catherine: I don't think they tried.

John Hodgman: Did you even try?

Catherine: I read the first couple of chapters, and I've never given up!

John Hodgman: The first—sometimes the chapters are only like two pages! First couple of chapters is maybe 15 pages of prose.

Catherine: (*Determined.*) I'm gonna read it.

(*Laughter.*)

John Hodgman: Adam, do you believe her?

Adam: Yes, I do believe her.

John Hodgman: Would you like her to read it?

Adam: I think there are probably better things to read.

(*Laughter.*)

John Hodgman: Go on.

Adam: What I would like— Catherine only reads books that I recommend to her when someone in a more authoritative position also recommends them. And a book that I love and that I think Catherine would love and that I've heard you speak about before that I would love if you could recommend to her is *The Broken Earth Trilogy* by NK Jemisin.

John Hodgman: I do recommend those!

(*A cheer from the audience and scattered applause.*)

That's an incredible trilogy, for sure.

Catherine: Oh! I'll read them for sure! Huh!

John Hodgman: There you go! But why don't you—? I'm curious about this. Why don't you—

Catherine: Don't patronize the nerds, ma'am.

(*Laughter.*)

John Hodgman: Why don't you read the books that your beloved—husband, correct?

(Catherine confirms.)

Now? Husband. Your beloved husband recommends to you?

Catherine: Well, sometimes I do. I would like to point out, in—

John Hodgman: Does he recommend a lot of stinkers?

Catherine: Um, well. There are just—

John Hodgman: What's the worst one he ever recommended?

(Laughter.)

I think Adam knows.

Catherine: I'm gonna evade that question by saying that for Christmas, a few years after this Christmas, I read *Dune* as a Christmas gift to Adam.

(John “wow”s.)

And I liked it!

(Scattered applause.)

John Hodgman: That's doing a lot for a husband; I must agree. Wouldn't you want me to compel her to read *Moby Dick*?

Adam: *(Squeaking.)* Uh...

(Laughter.)

I mean, you could. You are, of course, the judge. And I trust your judgment. I think, for me—especially, these days—I'm leaning more into escapism in my art consumption. So, something of grim reality like *Moby Dick*...

John Hodgman: It's a lot of fun, this book *Moby Dick*. When you listen to me read it out loud on my Substack, you will hear how funny it is. And indeed, I am not ordering you to read *Moby Dick*, Catherine. But you and your entire family shall listen to me read it.

(Laughter and scattered cheers.)

How many are in your family?

Catherine: I have two parents and two brothers.

John Hodgman: Is that four households, including yours?

(Catherine confirms.)

I will give you three free subscriptions. The others must pay.

(Laughter and scattered cheers.)

Until then, you have to read at least the first book in *The Broken Earth Trilogy* by NK Jemisin. To make up for your failure to fully prank, Adam.

Catherine: I deserve this punishment.

John Hodgman: This is the sound of a gavel. *(Bangs his gavel three times.)*

Jesse Thorn: Thank you, Adam and Catherine!

(Cheers and applause.)

Swift Justice continues! Please welcome to stage—

John Hodgman: *(Chanting.)* Swift, swift, swift, swift, swift!

Jesse Thorn: Melanie and Steve!

John Hodgman: Melanie and Steve, welcome to the courtroom. Thank you for being here.

(Cheers.)

Jesse Thorn: Melanie brings the case against her husband, Steve. Melanie says Steve cuts his nails wrong.

(Laughter.)

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Steve says the way he clips his nails is fine, but it gives Melanie the ick. Judge Hodgman, you may proceed.

John Hodgman: Melanie, you have the ick with your husband, Steve, over this issue. How does he disgust you with his fingernails?

Jesse Thorn: First of all, can I just thank Melanie for recognizing this is a black-tie occasion?

(Scattered cheers.)

John Hodgman: You both look wonderful.

Melanie: Thank you. We're on date night.

John Hodgman: Oh, wonderful! So, how does your husband disgust you with his fingernails?

Melanie: So, what he does is he will take the fingernail clipper, and he'll clip like one third of the way. And then after that clip is done, he just rips it off!

(Horror from the audience.)

John Hodgman: Steve, you've heard the reaction from the audience.

(Laughter.)

Jesse Thorn: You're very lucky there is not an old fruit concession in the back of this room.

John Hodgman: Why—why do you—why do you do—? You have the nail clipper in one of your hands. Why don't you just complete the job with the clippers?

Steve: So, earlier in my life, I had really bad ingrown toenails. They had to do surgery on it. I remember the nurse kept going around and around and around—

Jesse Thorn: This is definitely helping me with my ick!

(Laughter.)

Steve: So, I got really sensitive to the length of toenails. After that, sometimes—the part I also want to just interject. We sat down. I thought we were specifically talking about toenails; and she said they're all included.

John Hodgman: I'm sorry; I had fingernails here.

Steve: I feel like—

Melanie: It's all ten nails. It's all ten nails.

John Hodgman: It's all ten nails. Let me just take a quick look at your fingernails please, Steve. Mm-hm. Mm-hm. Thank you. And now toes?

(Laughter.)

(Firmly.) Toes, please.

(Scattered shouts from the crowd that build to applause.)

Jesse Thorn: Let the record reflect that Steve is placing toes on me.

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: I won't ask for the other toes, just because those other—I think they're probably the same. Right?

Steve: Very close.

John Hodgman: Yeah. In the interest of time, I'll not make you disrobe your other foot. Steve, um, isn't this painful? And doesn't it go horribly wrong? Frequently?

Steve: Not frequently.

John Hodgman: And also, I don't understand— Alright, we'll follow up on that. But you had to go to the hospital to have your ingrown toenails dealt with.

Steve: I feel like that was earlier when I was a minor, and I can't speak to like whatever they do to you.

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: But I have yet to make the connection as to why you do your—why you rip your fingernails off your fingers and your toenails off your toes now?

Steve: Well, it's basically the fingernails and the toenails. I wouldn't want any of that to grow in and cause me discomfort.

John Hodgman: Yeah, but you could clip them frequently.

Steve: I feel like clipping them leaves you with raggedy edges that are just waiting to—

John Hodgman: Raggedy?! More raggedy than tearing them off, Steve?!

Steve: Are you familiar with asparagus?

(Beat.)

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: I'll see where you're going with this, counselor. But watch yourself! What does this have to do with asparagus?!

Steve: Melanie—

John Hodgman: Am I gonna have to smell your pee?!

Steve: You will not! If you could, you might smell it from where you are. It's not that kind of story.

John Hodgman: (Beat.) None has helped me understand anything! What is the— Can you help me understand the asparagus thing here?

Steve: If you farm asparagus and you're more like a gardener about it and less like a farmer about it, you grab a piece of asparagus, and you break it off. Depending on how the asparagus is—

John Hodgman: Oh, I didn't realize you were talking about the famous parable of the asparagus farmer.

(Laughter.)

What's something that's relatable that will help me explain myself? What famous story do I know? Oh yeah! The old asparagus farmer yarn! When you farm asparagus, you're not precious about it! You tear it out of the earth!

Jesse Thorn: (High pitched baby voice.) “Mommy, mommy, I cannot sweep (*sleep*). Tell me the stowry of the aspawagus fawmer!”

John Hodgman: No! You must read *Dune*!

A picture of my children's growing up.

(Laughter.)

Steve: The asparagus breaks off where it's best to break off. It's underground. It's not really done yet. If it breaks off at top, then that's where you have to leave that asparagus. And some of it I think is just—99 out of 100 times, no problem.

Jesse Thorn: You're letting the nail speak to you.

John Hodgman: And what's happens the 1 out of 100 times when it goes wrong? Horrible infection.

Steve: I mean, not horrible infection—

John Hodgman: Why are you waving to the audience!? Like they all know?! You know. You all know!

Jesse Thorn: He's like—

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He's like, "No, no not horrible infection. I rather enjoy it!"

John Hodgman: *(Laughing.)* What happens when it goes wrong, Melanie?

Melanie: He gets a little wound!

John Hodgman: He gets a little wound. And how does this hurt you, exactly? What are the damages against you?

Melanie: So, it's not exactly damages against me. But like I'm a nurse, and I'm specifically a skincare nurse.

(Horror and realization from the audience.)

So, in that case, there like is guidance on how you're supposed to cut nails.

John Hodgman: And because why? I mean, I would imagine that there's a chance of infection if you wound yourself that way—you know, if you pull a nail off.

Melanie: Yes. Or as people get older—

(John "wow"s repeatedly.)

—they don't heal as well. And then you're opening yourself up to infection—

John Hodgman: You're saying that he that he could bleed to death from his pinky? Because he's an old man.

Melanie: No, more sepsis. I'm more concerned about sepsis.

John Hodgman: You're a— Good point. You ever hear the story about the asparagus farmer and the sepsis?

(Laughter.)

Melanie: Too many times!

(Jesse cackles.)

John Hodgman: Obviously, Steve, you have some unresolved trauma during your childhood experience with ingrown toenails. You had to go to the hospital. You don't even remember what happened, exactly. You have a mental block. You had some— You went into a fugue state where you imagined everyone follows asparagus husbandry. There's something that you need to work through.

Good news for you, Steve! You're married to a nurse who knows how to cut nails clinically. I order you to cut his toenails and fingernails properly from now on—

(Scattered disgust from the audience.)

—so that he can work through his trauma, and maybe you two can have some romantic time together. This is the sound of a gavel. *(Bangs his gavel.)*

Jesse Thorn: Thank you, Melanie and Steve.

Transition: Three gavel bangs.

(ADVERTISEMENT)

Transition: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Let's bring out our next litigants. Please welcome to the stage Colin and Sam!

Colin and Sam are good friends who agree on everything, with one exception: the correct way to cut a sandwich in half. Judge Hodgman.

John Hodgman: Colin and Sam, you may be seated. Welcome to the courtroom. You are friends?

(They confirm.)

Which one is Colin?

Colin: I'm Colin.

John Hodgman: I really wanted you to both raise your hands at the same time.

(Laughter.)

Sam: Sorry, dropped the ball on you. I'm Colin too.

John Hodgman: Because I would've said, "Oh, they must be brothers and members of the same Viking tribe."

(Sam laughs and Colin agrees.)

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, I was gonna ask if you met at the That Guy club.

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: You both seem to have—you both are gingers. You both have great, big, ginger beards.

[00:20:00]

One of you has ginger hair on top. You both look like you met at a Ren Fair or a Caber Tossing Festival. How long have you been friends?

Colin: *(Beat.)* Subtraction is hard. Uh. Eight, maybe ten years.

(John affirms.)

Sam: Ten years, closer.

John Hodgman: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Almost as long as there's been a *Moby Dick* book club that hasn't been there.

Colin: Yeah, precisely.

John Hodgman: And sorry, you are Sam?

Colin: I'm Colin.

Sam: I'm Colin.

John Hodgman: You are Colin. You're the accused.

Sam: I'm Colin too. This is the accused over here.

John Hodgman: You're Colin.

Colin: No, Colin is right. Sam is wrong. I'm on—even though I am on the left. Colin, Sam, Colin.

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: Jesse, you know that story about the asparagus farmer who lost his mind? Lost his mind, and didn't know where he was anymore, and language didn't seem to work anymore?

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, my gam told me that story.

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: Jesse, if I turn around, are these two guys gonna still be there, or am I hallucinating?

Jesse Thorn: I'm 60% confident they switched places at some point.

John Hodgman: Alright. One of you actually— You have notes in your hand?

(Sam confirms.)

And which one are you?

Sam: I'm Sam.

John Hodgman: Really?!

Sam: It depends on the day.

John Hodgman: Colin?

(Colin confirms.)

Sam. Got it.

Sam. What's in your notes?

Sam: Well, it's evidence to help me explain how I cut a sandwich. Because every time we seem to explain it, people don't quite understand the monstrosity.

John Hodgman: Let me see the notes.

Colin: Monstrosity. Yes.

John Hodgman: *(Beat.)* I see. May I show this to my Bailiff?

Sam: You may.

John Hodgman: I enter into evidence Colin's drawing.

(Laughter.)

Don't reveal that to the audience just yet.

Sam's drawing?!

Sam: No, that was actually drawn—

Jesse Thorn: Hold on. Can I reveal that he signed and dated it?

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: I'm going through my notes here, and I still don't know which one of you is Sam or Colin. You are—?

Sam: Sam.

John Hodgman: Sam. Colin?

(Colin confirms.)

Let me see if I can understand this. This is a very controversial topic regarding how to cut a sandwich in half, correct? And people feel very strongly about this one way or the other. So, before we begin, before you explain how your friend—whose name I've already forgotten—cuts his sandwich, I just want to appeal to the audience. What you're gonna hear is shocking. If you are repulsed or disturbed, I only ask that you express this very loudly.

(Laughter.)

Colin, how does Sam cut his sandwich?

Colin: Horizontally.

John Hodgman: Jesse, show the picture.

(Beat.)

(Wildly mixed and enthusiastic reactions from the audience.)

Rankled Audience Member: Come on!

John Hodgman: That is to say anti-diagonally.

Colin: Anti-diagonally, anti-vertically. Like, I'd be okay with straight up-and-down too, but like...

Jesse Thorn: If you imagine that a loaf of sandwich bread has two bulbs atop it, where it has spilled forth over the pan, he has cloven the sandwich down through those bulbs—(*correcting himself*) nope!

Colin: No! Across!

Jesse Thorn: He has— If you imagine a sandwich has two bulbs at the top and what I'll call a shaft below.

(*Laughter.*)

He has horizontally sliced across the shaft, generating two half-sandwiches which are not identical. One has bulb; one only shaft.

(*Laughter.*)

Colin: Correct.

John Hodgman: Colin, why is this wrong.

Colin: Oh, (*searching for words*) Sam's family runs a cafe.

(*Scattered laughter.*)

So.

John Hodgman: It's not just that Sam is wrong. He's learned it the wrong way, and they are handing out wrong sandwiches?

Colin: No, I'm just concerned for the people of Greenwood, BC that they would encounter such monstrosity.

John Hodgman: SHOUTOUT TO GREENWOOOOD!

(*A few cheers.*)

Colin: Whoo! All 12 of us. (*Laughs.*)

John Hodgman: Sam, your family runs a cafe in Greenwood, BC.

(Sam confirms.)

Do they cut sandwiches this way when they are selling them to people for their hard-earned loonies and toonies?

Sam: They actually do not cut the sandwich at all. It is cut just—

John Hodgman: Oh, well that explains it! You never saw!

(Laughter.)

Sam: No, I—yeah. *(Laughs.)*

John Hodgman: *(Empathetically.)* You had to make this up for yourself! You're like a feral child!

Sam: Yeah. I've been out on these mean streets. It's been hard. *(Laughs.)*

John Hodgman: Why is—how would you prefer to cut the sandwich?

Colin: I would prefer diagonally. I would be okay with vertically.

[00:25:00]

But diagonal gets the best bite.

(Scattered applause.)

It just seems that there was a lack of thought put into this.

John Hodgman: You know, we have friends of the podcast—Kenji Lopéz-Alt, great food writer; Deb Perelman, *The Smitten Kitchen*, also an incredible food writer. They do an incredible podcast together called *The Recipe*, and I heard them have this exact fight. And Kenji made the point that if you cut a sandwich diagonally, it actually maximizes the interior bite-ability. That is, it reveals more interior sandwich than any other cut according to him.

(Colin agrees.)

And that it's easier to eat, 'cause you can get the corners in your mouth more easily. Deb, cut the sandwich horizontally, put that on the internet, and was destroyed!

(Laughter.)

I think she said that she got 640 direct messages within five hours, calling her a monster. And the story was picked up by NPR and the *Washington Post*. And her life's never been the same.

(Laughter.)

You are also gonna be on blast now.

(Colin agrees with laughter.)

But why does this hurt you if he's eating the sandwich that he likes?

Colin: It's just we found that 1% difference.

John Hodgman: Noncompatibility!

Colin: Noncompatibility!

Sam: Yeah. This is it.

Colin: And it's just— How—how can someone so—? How can that 1% be so monstrous?! Like, you know?!

(Laughter.)

Like, that's my like—I don't know; couldn't you just like different music or something? Like—?

John Hodgman: What's your favorite kind of sandwich?

Sam: Ooh, that's a tough—*(interrupting himself immediately)* uh, club sandwich. *(Laughs.)* Got it! Got it!

Colin: Traditionally cut into thirds.

John Hodgman: What a short road you went down!

Sam: *(Laughing.)* Yeah, I know! I was shocked! I've never been that quick.

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: Colin, best sandwich?

Colin: I'm into Italian subs these days.

(A single audience member cheers.)

John Hodgman: Italian subs!? You can't cut those diagonally!

Colin: No, you can't cut them diagonally. But you don't cut 'em horizontally either!

John Hodgman: You don't cut them lengthwise.

(Laughter.)

Colin: Like, I hate to bring this up, Jesse, but I'm sure you've seen the burrito cuts—the horizontal burrito cuts.

Jesse Thorn: *(Flatly.)* No, I haven't seen the most upsetting *(unclear)* *(censor beep)* ever.

John Hodgman: I just saw something die inside of Jesse Thorn.

Colin: I'm very sorry. It's just wrong.

Jesse Thorn: I gotta do a whole rest of the show, man!

Colin: I'm sorry.

John Hodgman: They take the burrito, and they cut it down—?!

(Colin confirms.)

Not across. Like that?

(Colin confirms despondently.)

Jesse Thorn: What do they eat it with?! A *(censor beep)* spoon?!

Colin: Basically. Yeah.

John Hodgman: You have an— Look. Colin, I know where you're coming from. I agree. I grew up being a horizontal-cut person. That's just how my mom and dad packed my lunches for me. And when I first cut my sandwich diagonally, I thought, “I am murdering my mother and father.”

(Laughter.)

“I am murdering the Hodgman family tradition.” *(Quietly.)* And yet? I like it better that way.

I am team diagonal as well. But you have not shown any damages. This does not affect your sandwich. Everyone in life has to eat their own sandwich.

Colin: This is very true.

John Hodgman: And indeed, a sandwich is a very personal thing: how you have your sandwich, how you cut it, how you eat it, how you enjoy it. I think we have to leave it to Sam to enjoy his sandwich. But I do order this. You ever heard the story about the asparagus farmer?

(Laughter.)

Sam: Often.

John Hodgman: The asparagus farmer knows you don't just cut the asparagus willy-nilly where you want. The asparagus shows you where it wants to be cut!

(Laughter.)

Next time you have a sandwich, don't cut it! Just sort of like break off a little bit.

(Cackling.)

Let it speak to you. Find the natural fault in the sandwich, and then tear it apart like an animal.

And for you... other one.

Jesse Thorn: Colin.

Sam: May I defend myself?

Jesse Thorn: NO!

Sam: No?

John Hodgman: I just found in your favor! But go on.

Jesse Thorn: The timer screen is already red, sir!

(Laughter.)

Sam: Sounds great!

John Hodgman: This is the sound of a gavel. *(Bangs his gavel extra hard.)*

Jesse Thorn: Thank you, Colin and Sam.

(Cheers and applause.)

Vancouver, are you ready for... mega justice?!

(Raucous cheers and applause.)

Let's bring out our litigants. Please welcome to the stage Taryn and Lauren!

(Applause.)

Tonight's case, "Nom de Broom"! Taryn brings the case against her sister, Lauren. Taryn and Lauren are both practitioners of that king of Canadian sports: curling.

(Loud cheering.)

Yeah, that's right. You heard me, hockey! Take off, you hosers! And *(censor beep)* you too, fivepin bowling!

John Hodgman: YEAAAAH! Someone had to say it! Someone had to say it!

Jesse Thorn: But not you. You didn't wanna say it.

John Hodgman: But not me. Jesse said it!

Jesse Thorn: You made me say it. *(Beat.)* Anyway.

[00:30:00]

Taryn owns a controversial curling broom, and she named it an honor of Beyonce. But Lauren hates the broom! She won't even say its name, say its name.

(Laughter.)

Who's right? Who's wrong? Only one can decide. Please rise as Judge John Hodgman enters the courtroom and delivers an obscure cultural reference.

(Loud cheers and applause.)

John Hodgman: "Hey, man. All I did was cut his bulk mescaline for street sale and neglect to pay him. Chris, on the other hand, crushed his head with a curling rock."

Bailiff Jesse Thorn, please swear the litigants in

Jesse Thorn: Taryn and Lauren, please rise and raise your right hands. 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 only likes that weird kind of bowling they do at that one bowling alley he likes in Maine?

(Laughter.)

Possibly candle pin bowling, but I don't remember.

John Hodgman: Well, let's see. It's not duck pin. It's not duck pin with the rubber bands around it, and it's certainly not FIVEPIN BOWLING!

(Laughter.)

There are 10 candle pins. The king of bowling!

Taryn and Lauren, you may be seated. For an immediate summary judgment in one of yours favors, can either of you name the piece of culture that I referenced as I entered the courtroom? Taryn, you go first.

Taryn: Sure. I will go with an interview with Brad Gushue from the podcast *Broomgate*.

(Laughter and delayed applause.)

John Hodgman: Why—why is your cultural reference more obscure than mine?

(Laughter.)

Taryn: I'm a Canadian curler.

John Hodgman: Alright! Lauren, are you a Canadian curler?

Lauren: Oh, very much so.

John Hodgman: So, did you get my obscure cultural reference?

Lauren: I don't think I did, but I prepared a guess, which is *Bedknobs and Broomsticks*, starring Angela Lansbury.

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: I love that guess. I love both of those guesses, but all guesses are wrong. Of the two—probably, Lauren, you are closer, because it is from a movie. And it involves brooms.

Jesse Thorn: (Shouting.) It's from *Bedknobs and Broomsticks* starring Jason Statham.

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: No, it was from a movie called *Men With Brooms*, a 2002 Canadian comedy that I have never seen, but was referenced on our one and only other curling episode on *Judge John Hodgman*. I think it was episode 652. But in any case, don't write me letters.

In any case, you are both wrong. So, we have to hear this case. Taryn, you bring the case against Lauren, is that correct?

Taryn: I do.

John Hodgman: And you are sisters? Siblings.

(They confirm.)

And who's the older one?

Lauren: That would be me, Lauren.

John Hodgman: Lauren. Okay, so would you like to start dominating the conversation now, or...?

(Laughter.)

Lauren: I'll let her go first.

John Hodgman: Okay. Well, tell me— One of you should tell me about curling. And tell me all about curling and why it's better than hockey and fivepin bowling, please.

Taryn: That would be for Lauren.

(They laugh.)

John Hodgman: Alright, Lauren.

Lauren: Well, curling is a game played with 40-pound stones on a sheet of ice where you throw the stone down the sheet. Your teammates sweep with a broom to control the speed of the stone. And you try to get it to the end. It'd be closest to kind of a bullseye at the other end.

John Hodgman: Have you ever done the version of curling that's a combination with the Canadian table Game of *crokinole*?

(Scattered recognition from the audience.)

Lauren: Uhh, I don't think I have.

John Hodgman: Well, I got one on you there.

(Laughs.)

I think it's called curlicroke? Curlanole? I don't know what it's called, but it sounds fun to me. Alright. And what you have, Taryn, in your hand is a broom. We're gonna talk about this broom in detail in a second. But first of all, you both curl; you're part of a curling league. Looks like you're wearing some merch from your curling league. What is the name of your team?

Taryn: Our team is called the Grippers. And a gripper is the sticky shoe. 'Cause you have a slide-y shoe and a sticky shoe.

John Hodgman: Got it.

Jesse Thorn: Each person wears one of each type of shoe?

Taryn: Yes, correct.

John Hodgman: Oh, okay! So, your two—

Jesse Thorn: Do they—do the two shoes start the same, and you do something to one of the shoes?

(Laughter.)

Lauren: Yes. You remove the gripper. And then you have the slider and the sticky one.

Jesse Thorn: Got it. I would've presumed you'd add something sticky to one of them.

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: And what positions do you each play on your—?

Jesse Thorn: (*Playfully aggressive.*) Like chewing gum, you nasty freaks!

(*Laughter.*)

Taryn: I am the third. A very important position.

John Hodgman: Okay. Well, okay. Don't presume I know what you're talking about. Thank you. Explain.

Lauren: I'm the skip, which—

John Hodgman: The boss. The older—also known as the older sister.

Lauren: That's correct.

John Hodgman: You tell the other—the sweepers where and how to sweep.

Lauren: That's absolutely correct.

John Hodgman: By yelling at them.

Lauren: Absolutely.

John Hodgman: Okay. Very good. And the third is an important position. I don't— I mean, I presume there's a first and a second, or—?

(*Taryn confirms.*)

Okay.

[00:35:00]

Taryn: The third in old-timey curling was called the vice skip. So, I like to call myself that sometimes.

John Hodgman: Okay! Guess what? It's 2025.

(*Laughter.*)

Okay?

(*Taryn concedes.*)

We now play the modern sport of curling. In old-timey curling, people died.

(Laughter.)

Taryn: They also used corn brooms. Which...

John Hodgman: Corn brooms?!

(Taryn confirms regretfully.)

What are you talking about!? *(Stammering.)* Like the corn—like the—the—the corn cobs!? You put a corn cob—?!

Taryn: Like what you would you put a corn sweep your porch with like a... corn broom.

John Hodgman: CORN? Does corn mean something else in British Columbia?

(Laughter.)

Lauren: I think it was made from the husks or something. It's a corn broom!

John Hodgman: Oh, like a straw broom.

Lauren: Yeah. Correct.

John Hodgman: Okay.

Lauren: We call them corn brooms. *(Laughs.)*

John Hodgman: No, no, no, no. They may—I mean, look, I'm not an expert on broomology. I'm sure there is such a thing as a—

Jesse Thorn: In the United States, we prefer our corn unswept.

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: It used to be played with basically house brooms, whatever they might—whatever— Do you know about the asparagus farmer?

(Laughter.)

The people listening won't know that one, so forget that. But so, in old-timey times, it would be played with regular, old house brooms. But now there are special brooms that are special made. And you have a very special broom, indeed, with you, Taryn. Why don't you raise it up in a pose of victory, and show people your broom?

(Some quiet “ooh”s from the audience.)

Oh, I thought people were booing your broom already.

(Laughter.)

Because this is—

Jesse Thorn: Judge Hodgman, they’re horny. They’re horny for the special broom.

John Hodgman: That's how it goes in No Fun City. You get horny for a curling broom.

(Cheers from the audience.)

People might boo this broom though, because it's a controversial broom.

Taryn: It sure is.

John Hodgman: What makes it a controversial broom?

Taryn: Well, basically if you're very good at curling, you cannot use this broom, because it makes you too good at curling. And you can put the rock wherever you want if you sweep with it.

John Hodgman: What about it? May I hold your broom?

Taryn: Absolutely. I’d be honored.

John Hodgman: Thank you. It's very lightweight. What makes it, um, so handy at making things—whatever it is you were saying?

(Laughter.)

Taryn: The fabric on it is like a special type of fabric that essentially like carves into the ice, and you can direct the rock wherever you want—if you're very good and very strong and like very talented, which we are not.

John Hodgman: Mmm. The broom is enhanced.

Taryn: Yes.

John Hodgman: Lauren, would you say that— Would the Grippers ever use such a broom in regular competition?

Lauren: Oh, heck yeah. We need every advantage we can get.

John Hodgman: Oh, so you're not against—?!

Lauren: No, I love the broom!

John Hodgman: But it seems to me like— I mean, when you submitted this case, you called it a cheating broom.

Lauren: It is. If you're good.

Taryn: Which we are not.

John Hodgman: So—okay.

Taryn: But like, you aren't allowed to use it if you're good.

John Hodgman: And because it's a cheating broom, you gave it a name. You named it in honor of Beyonce, but not for Beyonce.

(Taryn confirms.)

What is the name of the broom?

Taryn: J-Sweep.

John Hodgman: J-Sweep. As in Jay-Z, for example.

Taryn: Yes.

John Hodgman: And Lauren, Jay-Z did admit on the record—to the *New York Times Magazine* where the *Judge John Hodgman* column appears—

(Scattered applause that builds to loud cheering.)

No, no, no, no. I see you, Vancouver. I see what excites you. Curling broom!

(Cheers and applause.)

I traveled across a continent to be here. Mention my column, you're like, “Eeeh.”

(Laughter.)

Lauren, Jay-Z did admit on the record to the *New York Times Magazine* that he did indeed cheat on Beyonce during their marriage. So, it seems like the name is sort of appropriate. Why are you against the name J-Sweep for this cheating broom?

Lauren: Yes. So, I would love it to be on the record that I love my sister. Very much. I'm so glad that she's doing this weird Canadian sport that people our age do not usually do. Love it.

John Hodgman: You're doing it too!

Lauren: Yes. But I'm weird. That's okay.

Taryn: She's cool, right?

John Hodgman: Who recruited whom into the curling lifestyle?

Lauren: I recruited Taryn. I've been watching for many years like an old lady.

John Hodgman: Oh, nice!

Lauren: Yeah. So, the reason I am anti the name is simply that I can never remember what it is, because—

John Hodgman: J-Sweep.

Lauren: Yes, sure.

John Hodgman: Did you forget already? What's the name? Say its name. Say its name.

(Laughter.)

Lauren: J-Sweep.

John Hodgman: Oh! You remembered!

Lauren: I got it this time.

John Hodgman: Okay. Under pressure.

Lauren: We are on a stage talking about it, so it's easier. But when Taryn is like—

Jesse Thorn: I feel like you're *(laughing)* acting kind of shady and just calling it baby.

(Laughter and cheers.)

Lauren: Fair enough. But when Taryn brings it out, I'm like—

[00:40:00]

“Oh, it's your broom. It's named after Beyonce. It's beautiful. It's Broomyonce!” No, it's not. It is some other name that I can't remember! Because who cares about Jay-Z?! Beyonce!

John Hodgman: I mean—

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. *(Laughing.)* Who cares about Jay-Z?

(Scattered applause.)

John Hodgman: So, your objections are you can't remember it; you think it's a bad name; you think that it dishonors Beyonce, because it honors her cheating husband; and it should be called Broomyonce?

Lauren: Yes. Or one of a few names that I've come up with.

(Loud laughter and scattered cheers.)

John Hodgman: Ah! Let the record show that Lauren has produced a piece of paper. May I just take a look at the evidence?

Lauren: Please.

Jesse Thorn: Judge Hodgman, can you confirm whether that's signed and dated?

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: I do confirm it, Jesse Thorn. May I hand that to you for you to read in a moment?

(Jesse confirms.)

Alright. Very good. Thank you. Have you heard some of the other names that Lauren has suggested?

Taryn: I have not. They have been kept from me.

John Hodgman: In general, how do you feel—do you feel precious about the name J-Sweep, or would you be open to a suggestion?

Taryn: I am open to it. If it's better.

Lauren: Which it—yeah, it would be.

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: Now I've only reviewed the names very quickly. We're going to hear them in a moment. But does your older sister, Taryn, always try to push you around and rename things?

Taryn: *(Hesitantly.)* Nnno...

Lauren: Wh—?!

John Hodgman: Hang on a second. Lauren, just to me this favor while Taryn tries to answer. Stop staring at her with your arms crossed in a threatening way.

(Laughter.)

Lauren: Yes, your honor.

Taryn: No, she—

John Hodgman: Lauren, look at me right here.

(Laughter.)

Look right over here. Look over here. Taryn, are you okay?

Taryn: I will be, yes.

John Hodgman: Alright. Very good. Can you explain—? You're free to answer now. You don't have to do that anymore. That was weird, and I apologize.

Lauren: No, that's okay.

Taryn: She does not bully me or pressure me to name things I don't want. She's very supportive of me. We name a lot of things together, which is really nice.

Jesse Thorn: *(Cackles.)* That's nice. What other things have you named together?

John Hodgman: Yeah. What do you do on a sisterly naming date? Like, it's like, “Hey, I haven't seen you in a couple—” I presume you don't cohabitate. You have your own separate lives.

Lauren: Not anymore.

John Hodgman: Right. Okay. So, do you ever call your sister saying, “You wanna go out today and name some stuff? Get some brunch and things?”

Taryn: That sounds like a lovely outing!

Lauren: Yeah, sounds great.

John Hodgman: Okay. Like, what kind of things have you named in the past? Together or separately or what?

Taryn: When we lived together, we named all of our kitchen appliances different things.

John Hodgman: (*Excitedly.*) Here we go!

Taryn: One, our toaster was named Brother Cavil for *Battlestar Galactica*.

(*Scattered cheers and applause.*)

John Hodgman: *Battle*—? Wow. No! No, no, no! Do you know what?

(*Laughter.*)

It's okay if you don't want to applaud my column in the *New York Times Magazine*. But when Vancouver doesn't applaud *Battlestar Galactica*, it's time for the robots to take over and destroy us. This is *BSG* town. Do you forget? How soon they forget!

You named your toaster Brother Cavil, like the character in *Battlestar Galactica*?!

(*Cheers.*)

Oh yeah, that's right, Jesse! I forgot. *Battlestar Galactica* was filmed right here in Vancouver!

(*Cheers and applause.*)

What other names did you give to your other appliances?

Taryn: Our coffee grinder was Johnny Castle from *Dirty Dancing*, because he's... a grinder.

(*Laughter and cheers.*)

John Hodgman: Lauren, do you remember any that you're particularly fond of?

Lauren: Yeah. Our tea kettle, we named Sandy Ryerson from *Glee*. Stephen Tobolowsky's character from *Glee*.

John Hodgman: Oh, I love Stephen Tobolowsky.

Lauren: Who doesn't? Yeah. He was on that show, *Dicktown*.

(Cheers.)

Alright. Alright! And where are all of these kitchen appliances now?

Taryn: Probably the dump.

John Hodgman: This sounds like the saddest Pixar movie ever.

Lauren: They're at the recycling electronics place.

John Hodgman: They all live together happily on a farm.

Lauren: Near the asparagus fields,

John Hodgman: Near the asparagus fields of British Columbia.

Jesse Thorn: John, when you got in from like the immigration controls, coming into the Vancouver airport, were you greeted with any enormous, wall-sized photo that said in huge letters across the top, "Welcome to Vancouver, British Columbia," and then underneath, it just had a bunch of home appliances?

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: Yeah, I was! That was really weird!

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. That was a trip.

John Hodgman: Huh? How about that!

[00:45:00]

Alright, so—

Jesse Thorn: I just— I don't know what ceremonial purpose they serve for your people, but it's clearly something.

John Hodgman: So— And you agreed on these names together, and no one was ever forcing a name or whatever. You never had an issue with anything that Taryn named until this broom was named— Do you remember its name?

Lauren: Yes. (*Hesitating just a little.*) J-Sweep.

John Hodgman: See, you can remember?

Lauren: I was about to say Jay-Z! Or Jay-Zweep!

John Hodgman: J-Zweep? Interesting.

Lauren: Yeah. Not on the list.

John Hodgman: Well, let's go ahead down the list, Taryn. Just— This is not my official ruling. Keep an open mind. Let's hear these ideas that Lauren has.

Jesse Thorn: Alternate broom names. One, Broomyonce.

John Hodgman: Alright, we've heard it.

Jesse Thorn: She doesn't cheat, but...

Two, Brusha Fierce.

John Hodgman: Not sure I catch that reference, 'cause I'm weird.

Jesse Thorn: Three, Stonelange.

(*Laughter.*)

Lauren: That is a (*unclear*).

John Hodgman: That I get. Solange.

Lauren: Correct.

John Hodgman: Stonelange.

Lauren: Correct.

John Hodgman: It's a broom.

Lauren: And we use it to brush stones.

John Hodgman: Well, you don't brush stones. You brush ice, so the stone can slide over it.
(*Beat.*) Do you really curl, dude?

Lauren: Yes, but not well.

John Hodgman: Do you really? Do you even curl?

Lauren: Oh, I curl. Yes.

Jesse Thorn: Do you even curl, bro?

(*Laughter.*)

Number four, Sir Sweeps-a-Lot.

John Hodgman: I feel like that's been done to death a little.

(*Taryn concedes.*)

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. Five, Brumi. Which—is that—? It's spelled B-R-U-M-I. Is that after the poet, Rumi?

(*Laughter.*)

Lauren: Taryn can tell you who that's after.

Taryn: It's one of Beyonce's children.

Jesse Thorn: Ah.

(*John “oh”s.*)

Okay. Honorable mention, Broom Ivy.

(*Laughter.*)

John Hodgman: Broom Ivy.

The biggest response was Sir Sweeps-a-Lot, because that— From the audience. It was kind of a classic. And it's also outside of the whole Beyonce genre.

Lauren: No, it is not. Her son is named Sir.

(*John is struck silent. Laughter builds in the room.*)

John Hodgman: Named after Seattle's own Sir Mix-a-Lot?

Lauren: That I do not know.

John Hodgman: Oh, okay. Just an extrapolation.

Lauren: Exactly.

John Hodgman: Is there something about the name Jay-Sweep that offends you deeply or makes it hard for you to understand or remember the name?

Lauren: I think it's not quite a joke. It's not quite there.

John Hodgman: It's not quite there.

Lauren: And it's— It doesn't offend me. I did not sue Taryn. She brought me to court. I wouldn't—I would let her call it whatever she liked, but she brought me to the stage, and I had need to defend my position, which is that I just don't remember it. 'Cause it's not— It doesn't stick. It's not a sticky name.

Jesse Thorn: It's not carefully crafted like Stonelange.

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: It's a slide-y name, not a sticky name.

Lauren: Thank you. Thank you. Yes, absolutely.

John Hodgman: Alright, I understand.

Taryn, would you agree with me that none of Lauren's suggested names are as good as J-Sweep?

Taryn: *(Regretfully.)* Yeah.

John Hodgman: Sorry, Lauren.

Lauren: No, that's okay!

John Hodgman: I like 'em! I like 'em. Don't get me wrong.

Lauren: I don't think they're better necessarily either, but I will remember them. *(Laughing.)* Because I wrote them.

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: Taryn, Lauren keeps claiming that she can't remember the name of your broom. Do you think this is genuine forgetfulness?

Taryn: Truly, yes.

John Hodgman: Is she forgetful in other ways? Should she be evaluated?

(Laughter.)

Taryn: Not evaluated, but there are words she just can't remember sometimes.

John Hodgman: Like what? Can you remember any of the words she can't remember?

Taryn: I sure can. There is a particular kitchen utensil that is sort of specific and weird, and she can never remember how to actually pronounce the word. And it's like a mixture of a spoon and a spatula.

Lauren: *(Confidently.)* I would call it a spoon-oo-la.

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: I've never even heard of it!

Taryn: It's a spoonula.

Lauren: That doesn't make sense.

John Hodgman: And what did you say, Lauren?

Taryn: *(Laughing.)* Spoon-oo-la.

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: Is this a Canadian thing that everyone has?

(A resounding group "NO" from the audience.)

Jesse Thorn: What other implements have you combined?

John Hodgman: That was the most incredible unanimous "no".

(Laughter.)

I love that.

Jesse Thorn: What other implements have been combined here in this nation?

(Laughter.)

Lauren: *(Softly.)* That's a great question.

John Hodgman: A fork and a lint brush?

Jesse Thorn: Toaster and a blender. It's a TOE-BLEND-AR!

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: No, it's Brother Cavil. *(Laughs.)*

Lauren, do you ever have to use a broom, as the skip?

[00:50:00]

Lauren: Yes. So, I use a broom to indicate. *(Laughs.)* I don't sweep with it. That's for the lesser numbers on the team.

(John "whoa"s.)

(The crowd erupts in hoots and laughter.)

But I hold—

John Hodgman: There we go.

Lauren: I hold the broom to show where they should throw it.

John Hodgman: It's an indicating broom.

(Lauren confirms.)

It's a purely ornamental pointin' broom.

Lauren: Very ornamental. Yes.

Jesse Thorn: Wait, so like the boss of the team's job is to hold a broom and point at the place the thing's supposed to go?!

Lauren: Absolutely.

Jesse Thorn: I mean, it's drawn on the ice, right?

(Laughter.)

Lauren: It is drawn on the ice. There's quite a lot of strategy. They call it chess on ice.

John Hodgman: *(Patronizingly.)* Sure they do.

Lauren: They do! They do.

(Laughter.)

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. When you say they, you are referring to—?

Lauren: Oh, curling legend Russ Howard, of course.

(Scattered cheers.)

John Hodgman: Curling legend Russ Howard, without any self-interest at all, calls curling chess on ice.

(Laughter.)

But you do have to—when you point to it— This is what I call my pointin' gavel. Like, it's not just that you want to get it right in the house necessarily. You wanna get as close to it, but it might be that you want to knock another person's stone out of the circle.

Lauren: Right. Or place a guard above the house.

John Hodgman: Or place a guard above the house, Jesse! Like everyone knows!

(Jesse agrees sagely.)

So, you would point like—? Here, why don't you show me how you do it.

Lauren: I'd be happy to *(unclear)* you could use a broom. If we were going for a guard, I would point above the circle like so. And then I would indicate the turn of the rock, in-turn or out-turn.

John Hodgman: Very nice. Thank you. May I have my gavel back?

(Applause.)

Jesse Thorn: See, that's the kind of respectful reaction I've come to expect from you, Canada.

John Hodgman: Do you know my gavel's name? A Whole Gavel in Its Own Right.

(Laughter.)

(Murmuring to his gavel.) Was she nice to you? Uh-huh. He says you're fine.

Lauren: Oh, good.

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: And what is the name of your pointin' broom?

Lauren: So, my broom does not have a name.

John Hodgman: What?!

Lauren: My broom was inherited from my mom. Or no, she bought it for me. *(Laughs.)* Sorry, I forgot!

(Laughter.)

Our teammate—

John Hodgman: Taryn, did you know that your mom was still alive?

(Laughter.)

Taryn: News to me.

Lauren: Our teammate has our mom's inherited broom. My mom bought me my broom, and I just never named it. But it's not a working broom. It's ornamental. It doesn't need a name.

John Hodgman: Do any of the other brooms have names on your squad, Taryn?

Taryn: Yes. Our mother's heritage broom.

(Laughter.)

I gave it to one of our teammates. And she—

John Hodgman: The first or the second? If you're the third—?

Taryn: The second.

John Hodgman: The second. Okay.

Taryn: Yeah. and she named it Purple Ivy.

Lauren: *(Correcting.)* Pink Ivy.

Taryn: Pink Ivy?!

Lauren: It's pink!

Taryn: But it has a purple.

Lauren: No.

(Laughter.)

John Hodgman: Seems like no one can remember. Alright, Taryn. What would you have me rule if I were to rule in your favor?

Taryn: I would love for her to remember the broom's name and use it every once in a while.

John Hodgman: And Lauren, what would you have me rule if I rule in your favor?

Lauren: I mean, I would love for Taryn to acknowledge—as all older siblings would like—that I was right.

(Scattered cheers from the audience.)

That my idea was better. Which who knows if it was, but that's what I want. And to just be okay with me not remembering the broom. I'll try. I'll do my best, but I don't know. I'm 41. The mind is going!

John Hodgman: How dare you.

(Laughter.)

How dare you, child?

Alright, I think I've heard everything I need to in order to make my decision. I'm going to go into my secret chambers. I'll be back in a moment with my verdict.

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

(Applause and cheers.)

Transition: Three gavel bangs.

Promo:

(Pleasant chimes.)

Manolo Moreno: Hey, it's Sue the Subway train.

(Pleasant chimes.)

Hey, guess what, Sue? I just inherited a game show. And I have to continue it, because there are people out there who like to curl up into a ball and listen to it.

(Thoughtful chimes.)

Yeah. It's a podcast where listeners submit game show ideas for others to play on air.

(Cheery chimes.)

Well, it is! In fact the dumber the better.

(Querying chimes.)

Right, right. It's called *Dr. Gameshow*. Some curled up balls consider it a tradition while others call it a train wreck.

(Unhappy chimes.)

No, not you, Sue. It's *Dr. Gameshow*. If you're the sort that likes to listen to people competing for refrigerator magnets, then curl up into a ball and listen to *Dr. Gameshow* every other Wednesday on MaximumFun.org.

(Bright chimes.)

Promo:

Music: Paramore inspired pop punk music.

Sequoia Holmes: Are you a five-star baddy? If you answered yes, then *Black People Love Paramore* is the podcast for you. Contrary to the title, we are not a podcast about the band. *Paramore Black People Love Paramore* is a pop culture show about the common and uncommon interests of Black people in order to help us feel a little bit more seen.

Jewel Wicker: We are your co-hosts.

Sequoia: Sequoia Holmes.

Jewel Wicker: Jewel Wicker.

Ryan Gilyard: And Ryan Gilyard.

Sequoia: And in each episode, we dissect one pop culture topic that mainstream media doesn't associate with Black people, but we know that we like.

Jewel: We get into topics like ginger ale, *The Golden Girls*, Black romance, UNO, and so much more.

Ryan: Tune in every other Thursday to the podcast that's dedicated to helping Black people feel more seen. Find *Black People Love Paramore* On MaximumFun.org or wherever you get your podcasts.

(Music fades out.)

[00:55:00]

Transition: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Judge Hodgman, we're taking a quick break from the stage at the Hollywood Theater, and I am headed to the stages of theaters across this great nation! By across this great nation, I mean in three places across this great nation. Those places being:

Number one, New York City. Number two, Los Angeles—specifically, Pasadena. Number three, Santa Cruz. Why?

John Hodgman: Yeah, and why? Are you just going to different airports to check the payphones, see if they have any quarters in them?

Jesse Thorn: Those are the three homes of *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn*, which is celebrating its 25th anniversary this autumn.

(John whistles and claps.)

I, of course, live here in LA. We produce the show here in LA. And LAist in Pasadena is our home station. We will be performing at the Crawford there. Santa Cruz is where the show started 25 years ago when I was a student at UC Santa Cruz with my friends, Jordan and Gene. And New York City is the first place we ever did a live show. And in fact, we are performing at the first place we ever did a live show: The People's Improv Theater in New York City.

We have incredible lineups for all three shows. UNBELIEVABLE lineups for all three shows. Plus! We have a livestreaming spectacular on October 9th that features 25 of my favorite people who I have email addresses for.

(John chuckles.)

It is 25 interviews in a row—not old interviews, new interviews. 25 interviews in a row, conducted by me over the course of three hours on October 9th from 5 to 8PM All of the information for all of that stuff is at MaximumFun.org/events. It is gonna be an extravaganza, and if you subscribe to *Bullseye*, you will get some of the classics from our 25-year history over the course of this autumn. I'm so, so excited about it.

John, in addition to all those things, we also have a job opening.

John Hodgman: That's right, Jesse! We're looking for a new social media strategist! Someone to post stuff across all of our social media and interact and help our audience connect with us! And we're really excited to be accepting applications now.

Jesse Thorn: It's a half-time paid job. We'd love somebody with some expertise in social media management. You can go to MaximumFun.org/jobs to find the job listing. MaximumFun.org/jobs. It might be nice if you're in Los Angeles, but absolutely not necessary. We're taking applications from around the country. So, MaximumFun.org/jobs is the place to go if you wanna see that job listing. And yeah, I think it's really cool, fun gig. So, yeah, we're looking for somebody really awesome to do it. MaximumFun.org/jobs.

John Hodgman: And while you're over there at MaximumFun.org/jobs, make sure—I'll remind you—to go over to MaximumFun.org/events. Those big *Bullseye* 25th anniversary shows are not to be missed. They're gonna be a lot of fun. You know, from *The Sound of Young America* to *Bullseye*, Jesse Thorn interviewing people has been a part of my weekly life, and I hope it's been a part of yours! I wouldn't be here talking to you if Jesse hadn't interviewed me so long ago on *Bullseye*'s predecessor, *The Sound of Young America*. And I'm so glad to be introduced to all of the people that Jesse has interviewed over the years. It's an incredible show, and it is worth celebrating, and even more so in person. MaximumFun.org/events for all of the ticket links there.

Jesse Thorn: Let's get back to the stage in Vancouver.

Transition: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Taryn, how are you feeling about your chances right now?

Taryn: I feel alright.

Jesse Thorn: Why is that?

Taryn: (*Giggling.*) She didn't come up with very good names.

(*Laughter.*)

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, I'm gonna be frank. These names really suck ass.

(*Laughter and scattered cheers.*)

(*John “wow”s twice.*)

Lauren: Thank you.

Jesse Thorn: Lauren, how are you feeling?

Lauren: Umm, not as good. Certainly. I did think I—

Jesse Thorn: Why is that? 'Cause your names sucked (*sensor beep*)?

(*Laughter.*)

Lauren: I did think—with the court's history of, you know, older siblings telling younger siblings what to do—not hugely favorable. But also, I can't remember! I don't know what to do about that! (*Laughs.*)

Jesse Thorn: Well, we'll see what Judge Hodgman has to say about all this in just a moment.

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

(*Raucous cheers and applause.*)

John Hodgman: Lauren, I do feel for you. There are certain terms that I just cannot remember. And it's not— There's no rhyme nor reason to why I can't remember the name for one thing or another. (*Snorts.*) I certainly can't remember the name of the thing you were talking about before. The spoon-ach? The spoon-okula?

(*Laughter.*)

Lauren: That's close. Yeah.

John Hodgman: I hope never to see one.

Jesse Thorn: That's a combination of a spoon and a speculum.

(Laughter and hooting.)

John Hodgman: Frankly, I consider it a gift of my aging mind that I will never remember what that thing is, so that when I see it, it'll just be like an episode of *Westworld*. That means nothing to me.

(Laughter.)

[01:00:00]

It is not merely because I am old—indeed, older than you—that I cannot place my mind into recalling certain basic concepts or anything. It's just like since I was a child, I've been unable to remember—to this day—what you call the— *(Chuckles at himself.)* I keep wanting to say machine. But it's the vehicle that the letter carrier drives to drop off the mail. Is it a—*(ducks a laugh)* postal bus?

(Laughter.)

It might be different in Canada. It's something that I grew up with, and it was like a blue and white jeep with “US Postal Service” on it. And it had the—the steering wheel is on the opposite side of what is typical in Canada and the United States, so that they could just reach over and throw letters into the mailboxes or whatever. And I would sit around and go, “There goes the—” *(Beat.)* Mm! I can only ever say the words... *(embarrassed)* mail machine.

(Laughter.)

And I, to this moment I don't know what it's called. And I don't want to know ever.

Jesse Thorn: That was my nickname in college.

(Laughter and scattered cheers.)

My wife calls me that to this day.

John Hodgman: Excuse me, Male Machine. Can you come in here for a moment? *(Saucily.)* And bring the broom.

(Laughter.)

So, I actually believe you when you say for some reason your brain cannot get purchase on the name of Taryn's broom. Now, Taryn has the right to name her broom whatever she wants

to name it. It's her broom. It is like none other. And you're not the one who uses it. You have a different broom that's your own. You really don't have any right to say. And I must say that your list of alternate broom names... I'm not rude like my bailiff. I'm just gonna say none of them stood out as such a marked improvement on that list of names that you suggested that I would overrule Taryn's personal decision.

Except for one. Because you're right, J-Sweep doesn't really track. It doesn't really track J-Zweep? That's the name of the broom now.

(Laughter and cheers.)

Sorry. Sorry, Taryn. Do you accept that? *(Without waiting for an answer.)* I don't care. That's how I'm ruling.

But I will also say that you have to give your broom a name, your ornamental pointing— And you're gonna love this, Lauren. It's gonna be called Stonelange.

(Laughter and applause.)

Lauren: I do love that. And I'll remember.

John Hodgman: Because that makes sense! Because you're showing people where they should be launching the stone.

Lauren: Perfect.

John Hodgman: I know. It's terrible! It's terrible. But it's curling. What are you gonna do? And your other team members can pick the names of their own brooms. And Taryn, if you wanna call it J-Sweep, that's fine. But I think J-Zweep is a little bit—

Taryn: It has little more zip.

John Hodgman: It's slightly more punchy. It gets the Z in there.

(Taryn agrees.)

Okay. Well, anyway, that's how I rule. I guess I technically rule in Lauren's favor. This is the sound of a gavel. Sorry, Taryn. *(Bangs his gavel three times.)* Judge John Hodgman rules. That is all.

(Cheers and applause.)

Jesse Thorn: Taryn, Lauren, thank you for joining us on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

Transition: Three gavel bangs.

Clip:

(An answering machine beep.)

Deb Perelman: A year or so ago, I uploaded a video demo for my recipe for tomato soup that you serve with grilled cheese sandwiches. At the end, I cut the sandwiches in half for serving. *(Chuckling.)* And it caused a minor commotion in the comments, such as: “This was the most amazing video until that shocking twist at the end.” “How does one even cut a sandwich that way?” “You’re supposed to cut grilled cheese on the diagonal.” “My soul gasped when I saw the horizontal cut.”

I polled readers on the correct way to cut a sandwich: my way, vertical, quadrants, or diagonal. And the overwhelming majority voted for diagonal. I have never been so confused. By the way, one of my favorite comments was, “Can I vote for any way but the way you cut it, Deb?” *(Chuckles.)*

The next morning, I had 620 DMs about the correct way to cut a sandwich in my inbox. Somebody said, “You hit a collective nerve we did not know we had.” And “Do you eat your hamburger upside down?” It made it to NPR, *The Washington Post*, *The Today Show*. I don’t know, maybe we needed a distraction from the news. For the next year, I was sent at least one sandwich-cutting meme a day. People would highlight a passage in a novel that described cutting a sandwich in half and send it to me. Apparently, Obama also feels that sandwiches should be cut on the diagonal, but who asked him anyway?

Anyway, the thing is the Smitten Kitchen is a very agreeable place. All opinions matter. I actually like it when you mess with my recipes and report back about how it goes. I like it when you share your point of view. And yet, on Sandwichgate, you are all completely, utterly wrong. Wrong, wrong, wrong. The correct way to cut a sandwich is the shortest way across the bread, period.

[01:05:00]

A longer cut, your sandwich guts spill out! Much ado has been made in my comments and emails about the fun of biting off the corner of a triangulated sandwich cut. But the fun is short-lived. The corners are gone, and now you’re holding this like awkwardly sandwich-shaped trapezoid sandwich half, and I just don’t see the charm. So, I believe the jury will find me correct. Even though no jury so far has. Thank you!

(Answering machine beep.)

Kenji Lopéz-Alt: Why are triangles better than rectangles for sandwich cuts? Well, the first one is a visual thing. So, a triangle is the shape that’s going to give you the most view of the inside of a sandwich. So, when you have a square sandwich—a square piece of bread—cutting it from corner-to-corner is the longest line you can cut.

Which means that when you open it up and look inside, you're gonna get the best view of the bite that is to come, the best view of the filling. Which is, you know, (*chuckling.*) the point of a sandwich.

Moreover, when you're actually eating a triangle, there's a point of entry, a natural point of entry on a triangle. When you have a square cut, you end up with four 90-degree angles at the corners. These are awkward to place into your mouth. You gotta open up your mouth wide. You gotta push your cheeks out to the sides to get the sandwich into your mouth. Whereas a triangle, with its 45-degree corners, they go into your mouth much more easily. You can get a much bigger bite. You don't have to open your mouth up as wide. You don't have to choose where you're going to bite into that sandwich. You don't end up with peanut butter and jelly all over your cheeks. It's just a better shape in every way, shape, and form.

Transition: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: That's it for this episode of the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. Thank you to Reddit user Banjo Solo for naming the case in this episode. Make sure to follow us on Instagram at [@JudgeJohnHodgman](#). We're on YouTube and TikTok at [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](#). The *Judge John Hodgman* podcast was created by John Hodgman and Jesse Thorn. This episode, recorded by our friend Matthew Barnhart. AJ McKeon is our podcast editor. Daniel Speer is our video editor. Our producer is Jennifer Marmor. We'll talk to you next time on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

Transition: Cheerful ukulele chord.

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