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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, "Shut Your Payhole". Genevieve brings the case against her dad, Mike. Mike won't let her pay for him when they go out. If Genevieve does manage to pay, Mike keeps track so he can restore the balance later. As the father, he believes he should always pay his own way. Genevieve wants to be able to pick up the tab without Mike adding the transaction to his mental ledger. 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: "In extreme cases, when different people start shoving credit cards in my face saying everything but 'Pick me, pick me!', I am polite but firm. I tell the contenders something akin to 'Oh, you're all so wonderful to wanna pay for dinner. I wish I could pick all of you!' And then I take a step back from the table saying, 'I cannot wait to see who wins,' and then I walk away."

Bailiff Jesse Thorn, please swear the litigants in.

Jesse Thorn: 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 always makes Jennifer Marmor pick up the tab?

(They swear.)

John, that's not true. Judge Hodgman, you may proceed.

John Hodgman: Yes. Thank you very much, Jesse Thorn. And Genevieve and Mr. Genevieve's Dad, AKA Mike, 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 this internet courtroom? Let's start with Dad. Mr. Mike, what is your guess?

Mike: I would guess it was from *Pawn Sacrifice*, movie made in about 2000.

John Hodgman: *Pawn Sacrifice*. That a chess movie?

Mike: Yes, it is.

John Hodgman: *Pawn Sacrifice* is on the board.

Genevieve: Well, that sounded to me like a quote from the lyrics of the song “Everything is Exactly What It Seems” by the band Slow Runner off of their album *No Disassemble*.
(*Chuckles.*)

John Hodgman: Sounds exactly like lyrics from that song?

Genevieve: Yes. (*Giggling.*)

John Hodgman: Wow. Check and mate, Dad!

Mike: Yeah.

John Hodgman: But advantage Hodgman! Because all guesses are wrong. I'm sorry. There's no way that you might have guessed it. This came from an essay printed by KQED in San Francisco on their website back in 2008, I believe it was! Excuse me, 2009. Written by professional Bay Area waiter at the time and now food writer, a guy named Michael Procopio, about the etiquette multiple people trying to pay for the check and how annoying it is to servers when that happens. And the two people, or more than two people, fight and won't let it go. And then the server has to adjudicate, and no one hired them to be a judge. Let me come in, and I'll figure it out. That's what we're gonna do today.

(*Mike chuckles.*)

I had not heard of Michael Procopio before discovering his writing—why, just today. He currently has a Substack, which is called “Spatchcock”, where he continues to write about food. And in fact, just a few days ago, he wrote a very moving essay about his own parent—or I should say, sadly, the loss of his mom who died at the age of 82, not really being able to eat or drink anything in the later parts of her lives. And meal that he and his family had to honor her afterward. And it was a very indulgent meal that began with one of her favorite foods when she was able to eat anything she wanted, which was an iceberg wedge salad—which I know you enjoy very much, Jesse. Right? An iceberg wedge salad?

Jesse Thorn: I love an iceberg wedge salad.

John Hodgman: Yeah! It's just a chunk of iceberg lettuce, smothered usually in bleu cheese dressing and, often, bacon bits. And the bacon bits reminded him of a phrase—a German phrase that he knew, and I just learned today! And that German phrase is kummerspecks. Kummerspecks. And kummerspecks is a German word. Either of you know what—or any of you know what that means?

Genevieve: I don't.

John Hodgman: It refers to the tendency to overeat during times of emotional crisis. Or let's just say to indulge. But it literally translates—speaking of bacon bits, kummerspecks literally translates to “grief bacon”—which is a concept that I'm very familiar with.

(They chuckle.)

So, anyway, Michael Procopio. Good essay and some insight into how servers feel when people fight for the check, which is what brings you here. You have a father/daughter fight for the check, and one of you is going to pay the bill—forever.

[00:05:00]

That sounded very ominous.

Who brings this case to my court?

Genevieve: I do, your honor.

John Hodgman: Genevieve.

Genevieve: That's correct.

John Hodgman: What is the nature of— This is a class action case, it sounds like to me. Because you are one of some number of siblings who have the same dispute with your dad, Mike. Is that correct?

Genevieve: That's right. There are many interested parties in how this case turns out. I am bringing my dad to your court, because he will not accept me paying for anything. It seems like whether it is— Even on the car ride here, he said that for this trip, he would pay for the gas. He wanted to buy some Hodgman merch. He—

John Hodgman: Thank you!

Genevieve: He said that—

John Hodgman: Stay tuned for some updates on some holiday merch!

(Laughter.)

A little later in this program we're announcing some brand-new *Judge John Hodgman* holiday merch. So, you'll be very excited about that, Mike.

Mike: Yes, I will.

Genevieve: *(Chuckles.)* Ready for Christmas. He also wanted to pay for lunch on the way back. And this is recurring through—I mean, pretty much anything that we do together that costs it any money whatsoever. He will not allow me to pay him without money then also coming out of his wallet. So.

John Hodgman: So, it's not just meals. It's anything that you might—I mean, Mike, when Christmas comes around—I take it you celebrate Christmas?

(Mike confirms.)

And your children give you gifts. Do you then give them the retail value of those gifts in cash back?

(Genevieve laughs.)

Mike: No, not Christmas. But I have to reciprocate with a gift of equal value.

John Hodgman: Oh, so you have to see the receipts?

Mike: Well. I celebrate Christmas after I've gotten my gifts. Then I know how much I have to give to each child.

John Hodgman: You're saying that there's a special holiday after Christmas called Mikesmas, when restitution is made.

Mike: Yes. I think it's the fair way to go about things.

John Hodgman: And we're joining you both in North Carolina, where you were from. The Tarheel State!

Genevieve: That's right.

John Hodgman: Specifically— Well, I know you're recording in Mount Airy, but where all are you from in North Carolina, Mike?

Mike: I'm from Wilkesboro. Genevieve is from Boone.

Genevieve: I live in Boone, North Carolina.

Mike: Close— It's 30 miles apart.

John Hodgman: That's pretty close. That's Northwestern-ish, right? Western North Carolina?

(They both confirm.)

Beautiful country. Beautiful country.

(Mike agrees.)

I hope that we'll be able to return there. Maybe play the Appalachian Theater in Boone one of these days.

Genevieve: Ooh. Yes, please! Please do.

(Mike agrees.)

We would love to have you. *(Chuckles.)*

John Hodgman: You guys listen to a little podcast about the states called *E Pluribus Motto*? That's just a plug.

Genevieve: I have not heard that podcast.

Mike: Uh, no. No. But I will.

John Hodgman: Alright. Well, it's another podcast in the Maximum Fun family of podcasts.

Jesse Thorn: Really good friend of mine hosts that. Janet Varney.

John Hodgman: Well, Janet Varney, but I also do it.

(Jesse concedes.)

It says here, Genevieve, that you're a baker. And Mike, you are a retired driver. Is that correct?

Mike: That's correct. Yes.

Genevieve: Mm-hm. That's right.

John Hodgman: And full-time granddad now.

Mike: Yeah. Yeah. And with part-time stints as a convenience store clerk. *(Chuckles.)*

John Hodgman: Oh, wonderful. And do you bring your grandchildren to work?

Mike: It's been known to happen. Yes.

John Hodgman: How many grandchildren do you have? One? More?

Mike: Uh, seven.

John Hodgman: Whoa! That is more! And what is your grandfatherly name? What do they refer to you as?

Mike: Pop-pop.

John Hodgman: Pop-pop. That's what I called my grandad!

Mike: Mm-hm. Pop-pop.

John Hodgman: Well, I called my maternal grandfather Pop-pop. My paternal grandfather, I called Grandfather. *(Chuckles.)* Dunno how that happened. But Pop-pop was married to Nann—or Nan. And my great-grandmother, who lived to 102, was known as Big Nan.

Jesse Thorn: John, you laugh and joke about having a grandfather that works part-time at a convenience store. That's basically a dream for a kid to go to their grandpa's work at the convenience store, right? Like, just absolutely unlimited Slim Jims and (unclear).

John Hodgman: Yeah. Yeah, that's true. That's true. Your grandchildren come in, and you and you slip 'em some free zagnut bars?

Mike: Well, no. I teach them to work the register.

(They chuckle.)

John Hodgman: I was gonna say, we're not gonna get you fired here. But maybe we are!

Mike: Yeah, well, no. They already knew it, and they just scratched their head about it.

John Hodgman: And Genevieve, you're a baker?

Genevieve: That's right.

John Hodgman: A professional baker or a home baker or a mix?

Genevieve: A mix. I'm a home baker, but I have my home kitchen certified to bake out of. And I sell at farmer's markets.

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John Hodgman: What is your favorite thing to bake? Breads or pastries?

Genevieve: Pastries. Yeah. Yeah. Yep.

John Hodgman: Okay! Genevieve, you represent your siblings. How many siblings do you have?

Genevieve: So, I am one of six children. I am five of six.

John Hodgman: Where are you in the order?

Genevieve: Number five. Yep. I'm five outta six. Yep. I'm the penultimate child.

John Hodgman: The penultimate child! Great title for your memoir.

Genevieve: Oh, thank you! (*Chuckles.*)

John Hodgman: And obviously, you couldn't get the baby to represent the family, 'cause they're too busy being the baby.

Genevieve: That's right.

John Hodgman: And getting everything. So, how did you get nominated to bring your dad to court?

Genevieve: Well, we've all had this issue with my dad for— Well, how old are you, Dad?

(*They chuckle.*)

How old? For the—?

Mike: How old are you?

Genevieve: Yeah, for the entirety of my life. But I'm the one who brought the case because of an inciting incident at a concert that we went to that I bought us tickets for. And at that show, I mentioned to my dad that if he had guests that he wanted to bring with us, he could have done so. And he completely rejected the idea of me paying for guests that he invited, thinking that would be just— I mean, if he won't even let me pay for him, then obviously he won't let me pay for an extra guest that is his friend.

John Hodgman: Well, a minute. How many people does your dad normally roll in with when he is going to a concert?

Genevieve: Well, normally—

Mike: My grandsons.

Genevieve: Normally just him, but it might be like his grandsons—my nephews—could be possible attendees. So, I just mentioned that as a possibility.

John Hodgman: So, you said to your dad— What was the concert?

Genevieve: It was a Michael Flynn concert, the same band that I referenced in my guess earlier in the show. *(Laughs.)*

John Hodgman: Got it. Say the name of that band again?

Genevieve: The band's name is Slow Runner. And I have turned my dad into a fan of his music and have— He agrees with me that artists work hard at their craft, and they deserve to be paid. And yet, he won't allow me to bring more fans into the fold by bringing his other family members that might be with him along to the show on my dime. So.

John Hodgman: So, let me understand. You're like, "If you want to bring some of your 23 nephews or whatever—"

(They chuckle.)

You're like, "If you wanna bring any of the nephews, I'll pay for them!"

And your dad was like, "No, they don't deserve music."

Genevieve: *(Decisively.)* Correct.

John Hodgman: And he was like, "I will bring them, but I will pay for them."

Genevieve: Um. I'm not sure how the conversation ended. It just seemed that he— He felt like he couldn't invite them at all. So, I guess just not even bringing them to the concert.

Mike: Reality.

Genevieve: So, let's see. I have in my notes here— I believe this concert was January 24th of this year.

John Hodgman: Oh, do you know what? That's the birthday of my human daughter!

Genevieve: Oh!

John Hodgman: I'm surprised you didn't invite her!

(They laugh.)

Genevieve: She could have come! I would've been happy to pay. Hi tickets—

John Hodgman: You would have been happy to pay for her? Oh, I wouldn't allow it. I wouldn't allow it. I wouldn't allow that.

Genevieve: His tickets are very reasonable. So, I'm happy to bring along more friends. And his reluctance to have any money flow in his direction has been a problem across the board—as we've talked about. Restaurants, theatre productions, anything like that. And it has always been annoying, but what pushed me over the edge to bring this to court was him not allowing those tickets to the concert. Because in my mind, now that is an artist losing out on potential money for that first concert ticket. And then if that person becomes a fan, the merch that they might buy, the future concert tickets that they might buy, friends that they might then bring. Who knows what the end result is.

And I think that the artist needs as much fan excitement as they can get. And—

John Hodgman: So, you're really not bringing this case against your dad on behalf of you and your siblings, but on the behalf of Slow Runner, the band.

Genevieve: That is my original intention. That's correct. Yes,

John Hodgman: They lost out on some major nephew income, and you are seeking damages.

Genevieve: (*Chuckling.*) That's right. That's right. Yes

Jesse Thorn: It would be The E Street Band at this point if it weren't for this butterfly flapping in China.

Genevieve: That is correct. And when I then told the family about bringing this case, a lot of them piled on saying, “Oh yes, finally someone's gonna get Dad for this.”

[00:15:00]

Because he's been doing, you know, the same thing in other arenas. So, my main concern is artist pay and how his behavior is impacting the artist performances that we might go to. But that behavior does spill over into other areas. And my siblings are concerned or would like to see change more broadly speaking.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

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John Hodgman: Mike, your daughter, has accused you of not wanting to have any money flow in your direction. We've discussed this concert. Tell the story of Slow Runner and the invitation to the concert from your point of view.

Mike: I will not invite anyone if I'm not prepared to pay—my grandsons or not. I was able to go to the concert, and I bought a merch. And by the way, there is an upcoming concert in early December, and both of my grandsons are invited—were invited by me, without your input.

John Hodgman: (*Playfully spiteful.*) Yeah, Genevieve!

Mike: And I am prepared to pay.

John Hodgman: Who paid for your ticket to the concert in January?

Mike: I don't see anything on my ledger, so I suppose that I paid. Did I pay for gas down there?

Genevieve: Yes, you did.

Mike: Oh, I did? Oh.

Genevieve: And you left a 20 in my car on your—yeah.

Mike: And I left a 20 in your car.

(*They laugh.*)

John Hodgman: Left a 20 in your car. What a nice dad, Genevieve! Why are you taking your dad to task for being such a nice and respectful—? That's what dads like to do if they're lucky enough to be able to be generous! Just let him pay his way! And also freeze out your nephews and his grandsons as he wishes, apparently.

(*They chuckle.*)

Jesse Thorn: And also get your car windows broken.

John Hodgman: Right.

Genevieve: In my 20s and even—

John Hodgman: I mean, you're making this argument about Slow Runner losing out on income. And I'm just gonna—I'm just throwing that out of court right now. Because I feel like you wouldn't be here if this were not something that you and your siblings also have a personal feeling about, not just a fan feeling about in terms of Slow Runner's income.

Genevieve: Well, that is correct. That concert was what I call the inciting incident. And that is what led me to make the claim against him. And that's what just tipped me over the edge. But this has been problem behavior—as I said—my whole life.

John Hodgman: I don't know why is it a problem? Is it a problem for you, Mike?

Mike: No.

John Hodgman: I mean, when you say you work at the convenience store, it's not a situation where you're secretly living in the convenience store because you afford to live anywhere else or anything.

Mike: No, no. I have a nice home, and I live alone. And my grandson, one of my grandsons, is a frequent guest there.

John Hodgman: As long as he pays his own way, I suppose.

Mike: Uh, cleans up after himself would be better. 19 years old.

John Hodgman: Okay. No, you would pay for him. You would pay for him, 'cause he is your grandson. That's part of the job of being a Pop-pop.

Mike: I have an obligation as the father and as the grandfather. And my daughter's insisting on paying for me is a way— It's a secret power struggle that she's into. She wants me to owe her something. And I'm not going to owe. I'm going to pay the way.

Genevieve: *(Laughing.)* Absolutely not. That is not correct.

Mike: Well, she may not know that consciously!

John Hodgman: Mike, I apologize. I interrupted you. You were— You said your daughter “wants me to owe her something,” and then you started to say, “I'm not going to owe.” Please finish that sentence.

Mike: I'm not going to have an obligation—legal, social, moral—to anyone. I am going to pay my own way. And if I invite guests, I will offer to pay their way. And if we go out for a meal, I don't always win, but I usually can pick up the check. And it's my status as the head of the family!

John Hodgman: Paterfamilias.

(Mike agrees.)

Jesse Thorn: *(Giggling.)* This is like a scene George RR Martin cut from the *Game of Thrones* books. The stakes are so high here!

Mike: Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: Protect Mike's honor!

[00:20:00]

Genevieve: Jesse, you just used one of my dad's favorite words. I just want you to know that. *(Chuckles.)* Honor is very big with him.

John Hodgman: Oh, sure. I can imagine! I mean, I would— With that in mind: when you pay for dinner, or when you pay for gas, or when you leave a 20 behind in the car, how does that make you feel, father Mike Pop-pop?

Mike: Like I have performed my duty.

John Hodgman: And when you lose at a game of Who Pays the Dinner Check, how does that make you feel?

Mike: Like I have to enter it on my ledger.

John Hodgman: Is this a literal ledger or just a black mark in your soul?

Mike: I can generally— It's a black mark in my soul, but when I need to write it out, it's there.

John Hodgman: I guess it would be a red mark on your soul, because it's a debt.

(Mike confirms.)

Yeah. Yeah. Ough! And does it weigh on you afterwards? You think about it?

Mike: Generally, the ledger has two columns. There's what is right for me to pay. I have limited means. So, then there is reality of what I can pay. And the balance is generosity that they have—my children have for me. And I graciously accept, because I've done all that I can. Which is all that duty requires.

John Hodgman: You're retired, and you mentioned that you live in a nice home. But I presume that you have a fixed income—or you have to be careful about your budgeting, as we all do these days. Right?

Mike: Even more careful right now. Yes.

John Hodgman: Right. And how many of the siblings live in North Carolina, Genevieve?

Genevieve: That would be... four of us.

John Hodgman: Where's the other one?

Genevieve: One is in Germany. One is in California.

John Hodgman: They're eating that grief bacon in Germany.

Genevieve: Yeah, I was embarrassed not to know that word for that reason. *(Chuckles.)*

John Hodgman: *(Quietly.)* I don't know that you should know. Don't worry about it.

Mike: Me too. *(Laughs.)*

John Hodgman: It's wonderful, Mike, that the majority—it would seem of your—children and I presume grandchildren— You know, a lot of parents pay for their children for various things in order to bribe them to spend time with them. Do you worry that if you're not carrying your weight and/or treating them financially to a little—you know, dropping a 20 in the car, that your penultimate child, Genevieve, will stop showing up?

Mike: Well, I'm a hoarder. That's understandable. I hoard things. I don't like to throw things away, even if it's old. I'm old. And I do know that the time is coming when I will be pushed aside, and I don't wish to be pushed aside.

John Hodgman: Pushed aside by your children or by the grim hand of death? Sorry to be blunt, I'm just trying to understand.

Mike: By my children. Death has nothing to do with it. I want them coming to visit my grave.

John Hodgman: Well, just—you know—make sure that there's a stack of 20s on top. I bet you they'll come.

(They laugh.)

Genevieve, when your dad says he's a hoarder, I'm sure he doesn't mean that in a clinical sense. Like, there's not a problem in his house, is there?

Genevieve: Mm. I mean, I think that—

John Hodgman: Alright!

Genevieve: I think some of my siblings would like to see certain things cleared up. But—

John Hodgman: But it's not like the master bedroom is full, floor to ceiling, with rotting pumpkins or anything?

(Genevieve confirms.)

Okay. And Genevieve, do you provide a grandchild to Pop-pop? Or are you a child free person?

Genevieve: I do not have children, so I get to be a fun aunt.

John Hodgman: I mean, that's a heck of a lot of fun.

Genevieve: It's a good position to be in.

John Hodgman: When your dad says that he feels like if you pay for him, he'll be in debt, how does that make you feel?

Genevieve: Sad, because I would like him to just be able to receive something without having that burden of debt foisted upon his psyche. *(Laughs.)*

John Hodgman: Well, debt is an anxious state. That's not something that you want for your dad.

Genevieve: Correct. Yeah.

John Hodgman: But you know, when I talk about parents bribing their adult children to spend time with them by paying for or whatever it might be— I mean, that's something I know very well. One thing I know less well is the feeling that adult children have for their mom and dad, feeling that they're in debt to them! And maybe they should pay! For me! For once! Maybe that will come in time.

But Mike, I mean— Look, I love both of my adult children, and they're very generous people. I don't mean to throw them under the bus the way you iced out your grandchildren from that concert.

(They laugh.)

[00:25:00]

But you know, is there another way of looking at it, Mike? Perhaps that Genevieve—that she loves you and owes you a lot for her upbringing and—I presume—kindness and love? And that it might bring her pleasure to treat you for once?

Mike: I feel that bringing Genevieve and her siblings face to face with the fact that there is a business side to every relationship is the most wonderful gift I can give her, despite whatever sadness it might bring.

John Hodgman: There's a business side to every relationship. Do you want to tell me a little bit more about that philosophy?

Mike: Would you mind telling me where I can buy some *Judge John Hodgman* merch, please?

John Hodgman: I don't mind at all!

(They laugh.)

Jesse, what's the URL for the store?

Jesse Thorn: That's <http://www.maxfunstore.com>!

John Hodgman: I might also say there's another URL that I enjoy. [Bit.ly/dicktown](http://bit.ly/dicktown)! An animated cartoon for adults and young adults that's PG-13, set in North Carolina itself!

Jesse Thorn: Wanna become a member of Maximum Fun? Go to MaximumFun.org/join. We'll like you better!

(They laugh.)

John Hodgman: I think we've settled a lot of debts right there, Mike. Thank you very much for letting us get the plugs out.

Mike: You certainly will.

John Hodgman: Genevieve, have you ever paid for—I mean, you paid for these concert tickets for your dad, right? Yes?

Genevieve: That's corr—well. I am the one who purchased the tickets, but I don't know that I would say that I paid for them. Because I believe my father reimbursed me in the end. So, I think I would still consider that he bought his own ticket and then some. But I was the one who initially purchased and put down the funds for getting those tickets initially.

John Hodgman: Has there ever been a time when you've paid for something and actually gotten away with it?

Genevieve: Yes, we went—also earlier this year—to a... I guess it wasn't a performance, I'm not sure what to call— It was an event that the Wilkes Playmakers were having. My dad lives very close to the theater that the county theatre group performs at. And we went to— They had like a renaissance evening that we went to earlier this year. And I did pay for those tickets. However, the only way that I did successfully for those was by fibbing just a little bit.

When my dad tried to reimburse me, I told him that a mysterious benefactor had already taken care of it, *(chuckles)* which he took to mean my older sister. And I let him believe that. But in fact, the mysterious was... me! *(Laughs.)*

John Hodgman: Is this the first time you're hearing of this deception, Mike?

Mike: *(Sighs.)* Yes, it is. Hm.

John Hodgman: Wow. Let the record show that if you're watching on our YouTube channel, @JudgeJohnHodgmanPod—there's a plug. Mike is very clearly and visibly shook at this moment to understand that the sisters got together to deceive— Like, mysterious—? Why

don't you just tell him, "Oh no, the tickets were free. Don't worry about it. I won them in a raffle."

Genevieve: Oh, there's just— He wouldn't have believed the tickets were free. And he would have been able to very easily check on that. I think he— I wouldn't have put it past him to, when we'd walked through the door and showed our tickets, for him to have asked the ticket taker tickets cost, so that he could have gotten that information.

(Mike confirms he would have done that.)

I didn't want to lie in a way that would be found out so easily. *(Chuckles.)*

Mike: I'm already deeply in debt to your older sister, by the way.

Genevieve: Yeah. *(Laughs.)*

John Hodgman: In financial debt or sort of moral/ethical debt?

Mike: Moral/ethical debt.

John Hodgman: What do you owe—? Genevieve, can you say the name of your older sister?

Genevieve: Yes. Theresa.

John Hodgman: This is the— Theresa is the mysterious benefactor?

Genevieve: Yes, our mysterious benefactor. And I told her to accept this little twisting of the truth. She accepted it. And I knew that my dad would accept that, because he had already run up a debt with my sister. So, I knew that he could just kind of let that go, and that would be a way I could kind of slip in an event that I paid for. *(Chuckles.)*

[00:30:00]

John Hodgman: Mike, how much do you owe mysterious Theresa in moral money?

Mike: Two or three years rent.

John Hodgman: Oh? Because you lived with her for a time?

Mike: No, because she and her husband have bought a house in North Wilkesboro, where I reside.

John Hodgman: I see. You reside in the house?

Mike: That is correct. And I'm paying no rent.

John Hodgman: Oh, yeah. I understand.

Mike: And she complains when I try to pay some upkeep.

John Hodgman: Okay. I get it then. That is a fair amount of moral money. But going back to you, Genevieve. I mean, I'm sure mysterious Theresa and her partner are very happy to have you living in a comfortable home nearby. But I could understand why you might feel a little bit of—well, debt. Indebtedness.

Mike: Oh yeah, I know.

John Hodgman: Genevieve, have you bought a house for your dad yet, or what?

Genevieve: *(Laughs.)* I've not got quite that far in my financial journey.

John Hodgman: Why don't you build him a garden shed out of banana bread? Just a thought.

(They laugh.)

Genevieve: I'll look into that. Thank you for the suggestion.

John Hodgman: Just a thought.

Mike: I did pay for the tool shed on the property.

John Hodgman: Well, that's— Mike, if you don't mind my saying: drop in the bucket. Okay?

Mike: True, true.

John Hodgman: Yeah, you're never—yeah. You're gonna be clawing your way out of this one, this hole, for a long time. Sorry. I'm winding you up a little bit. I apologize.

Mike: Well, thank you.

John Hodgman: I mean, obviously neither of you want to be a hardship to the other. Do you feel, Mike—and maybe you won't want to comment on this as a dad—but do you feel—are you worried that you are causing your own kids to overextend themselves financially?

Mike: Yes, with an explanation. The explanation is: I don't take anything for granted. Her older sister—all of my children are doing quite well.

John Hodgman: Great.

Mike: But I don't that's the picture for tomorrow necessarily. I mean, I hope! I try to be optimistic.

John Hodgman: Yeah. Well, we're all trying!

Mike: Yes, but I don't take anything for granted.

John Hodgman: But on the other hand, when you got away with foisting the debt off to mysterious Theresa, how did you feel?

Genevieve: Glad to have that settled and it have moved forward in a way that does not result with him trying to leave at 20 end my car at the end of the night and put him out any. But also, a bit sad that I had to bend the truth in order to do so. And also, wondering how long my older sister might let me use her as the scapegoat for future outings.

John Hodgman: Well, you have several other siblings. You can burn through all of them slowly over several years.

Genevieve: But my dad will only really accept that from the oldest sister, because of being maybe so far in the red. So, he wouldn't necessarily accept, I don't think, if I told him—

Mike: I do kickbacks for the older sister. What I can afford.

Genevieve: Okay. Okay. Well, I—yes, I do know that.

John Hodgman: So, why do you feel like it's difficult to accept generosity from Genevieve specifically? Since she's sitting right there, and this is probably the most uncomfortable question I could ask.

Mike: Because needs to understand that the sadness that she feels for not being able to give to me is the sadness of life. That's what life is.

(They laugh.)

John Hodgman: Wow! *(Beat.)* Wow! I mean, don't take my wow as disbelief. Like, that's—There's something there that I really need to take in and process! I might be thinking!

Mike: I can loan you my copy of *Philosophy for Dummies*.

John Hodgman: No, no, no! I don't want to be in debt to you, Mike!

(They laugh.)

Don't loan me anything!

Genevieve, it says here that if I were to rule in your favor, you would like me to rule that your father, Mike, quote, “get over it”, unquote. And *(scoffs)* I don’t think that’s ever gonna happen, and “let you invite whoever you want to invite to the upcoming Slow Runner concert and pay for it.” Is that right? Is that what you’d like me to rule? Tell your dad, “Get over it”?

Genevieve: So, I would like for him to not be allowed to pay through any means—

[00:35:00]

—for tickets to experiences that I invite him to, that he accepts.

John Hodgman: But don’t you think your dad enjoys being sneaky in the payback department?

Genevieve: W-well—um. *(Laughs.)*

John Hodgman: I mean, let me ask you, Mike: when you hid that \$20 bill in her car, where’d you hide it?

Mike: Just on the passenger seat, I think, where it would be easily seen.

John Hodgman: Passenger’s seat. Yeah. So, it wasn’t hidden, exactly. It was hidden in plain sight so she would know.

Mike: No. It’s like I dropped it. That’s one of my favorites. “Hey, did you drop a 20?” Yeah.

(They laugh.)

John Hodgman: I like that. I like that game a lot, Mike. I was just at the Bellhouse last night, performing with the *Thrilling Adventure Hour*—another plug. And the bartender gave me a drink for free! And I said, “Oh, well thank you very much. By the way, I found this money on the ground. Maybe you know who it belongs to.”

(Mike laughs.)

Jesse Thorn: At least you didn’t leave it in his car! The leaving it in the car part is— As a lifetime urban resident, the idea of leaving a 20 in a car is so upsetting to me! *(Laughs.)*

John Hodgman: Yeah. I’m sorry, Jesse. This is not the Bay Area or Los Angeles. This is North Carolina.

Jesse Thorn: “Yeah? Well, I gave her a laptop! I left it on the driver’s seat!”

(They laugh.)

“Yeah, I was down a catalytic converter, so I put it on the dashboard.”

John Hodgman: “I bought her a diamond broach, and I left it on the rear left tire next to the car keys.”

(Mike “ooh”s.)

Good trick. Don’t drive away! Don't drive away.

Mike: You're a man after my own heart.

John Hodgman: Well, I know you love buying diamond broaches.

(They laugh.)

Mike: In a week or two.

John Hodgman: Yeah. I love that. I love this. I mean, look, your dad just wants to be generous. You know, I know you're both being coy about your age. He's a vibrant, retired gentleman who keeps a ledger. How do you expect me to force this gentleman to change, Genevieve? Through sheer willpower?

Genevieve: Well, that— My hope is that a ruling from your court—because my dad does believe in honor, and he did agree to abide by your ruling—I think that if you were to rule that he must accept me paying for some of these outings, that he would abide by that.

John Hodgman: So, this is like a trick! You've tricked your— He's sneaking money into your car, and you're tricking him with a fake oath on a dumb podcast that you know, out of a sheer sense of honor, he will take seriously even though it's all a joke.

Genevieve: I learned from the best! *(Laughs.)*

John Hodgman: Ohhh! Do you feel proud of your sneaky daughter? Your sneaky penultimate?

Mike: I have a certain admiration for that response. Yes.

John Hodgman: But that all depends on if I rule in her favor, Mike. I could still rule in your favor.

Mike: Yes. And I would suppose—of course, I would think that was the correct ruling.

John Hodgman: And if I were to rule in your favor, it would be to tell Genevieve to get over it and just let you do whatever you're gonna do.

Mike: Yes. And reality! My continuing age and frailty and the—(*chuckling*) will make this sentence correct soon enough. Sooner than I would like!

John Hodgman: You want Genevieve and your other kids to just leave you alone and let you pay and balance your books.

Mike: That is correct. And they're missing one part of this whole thing. Business is a part of every relationship. And so, is the con. I'm running a con here.

John Hodgman: Wow!

Mike: I'm running a con. Because when the inevitable begins to take away my abilities to go to the gym and to take care of myself, and I need to be shuffled off to an assisted living facility, they will feel obligated. And so, I am running a con here! So, there's— But there's also honor. There's con, and there's business.

John Hodgman: Yeah! It's honor, con, and business. I understand very specifically, Genevieve. We have this upcoming show, the Slow Runners show. If I were to rule in your favor, what would you propose? You pay for the tickets?

[00:40:00]

Genevieve: Well, so I actually was really surprised to hear my dad bring up this show as an example. Because I think it's the worst example he could have brought up. Because the Slow Runner show that's happening, I specifically am paying for already. I'm bringing this artist in for a birthday party that I have privately paid for as a private—

John Hodgman: Oh, it's like a house party?!

Mike: Yeah. So, there's no tickets involved for people to possibly buy in that case. And it's a party that I am paying for. (*Chuckling.*) I guess it's a sneaky way to get my dad to a show that he really can't even possibly pay for.

John Hodgman: So, you've got Slow Runner coming to your house for your birthday?

Genevieve: Well, my, my house is not big enough for the party that I wanted to do. So, we rented a private space. But yes. I do have Michael Flynn of Slow Runner coming to Boone for a private show for my birthday.

John Hodgman: For your birthday!

Genevieve: Because I'm turning 40 this year, so I'm kind of doing a bigger party than I normally would.

John Hodgman: Happy birthday! And welcome to the race to the grave!

(They laugh.)

That Pop-pop and Jesse and I are already enjoying.

Genevieve: Thank you.

John Hodgman: Do you think that a financial donation to Michael Flynn/Slow Runner, Mike, would be a sufficient clearing of the books for you at this birthday party?

Mike: I will contribute anything that's left over after buying my *Judge John Hodgman* merch.

John Hodgman: Well, I think I've heard everything I need to in order to make my decision!

(They laugh.)

Looks like those plugs paid off! I'm gonna go into my chambers. And I'll be back in a moment with my decision.

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

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

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

Genevieve: Oof! Pretty nervous! I thought I had a slam dunk case. And I think that my dad actually maybe prepared more strongly than I anticipated. And I didn't maybe get to make some of the points that I had against him. So, I'm a bit nervous that he is going to be allowed to continue in his ways.

Jesse Thorn: Mike, how are you feeling about your chances?

Mike: I was surprised at how strong my daughter's accusations were. And I think that last one— When I invited your nephews, I thought that I was going to be paying. I didn't know. And there is one concert that Slow Runner is giving where, if the invitations are accepted, I will be paying for Asher.

Genevieve: But there's no tickets to buy!

Mike: But—no, there are two performances.

Genevieve: *(Laughing.)* And I'm paying for them both!

Mike: And you're paying for them both?!

Genevieve: Correct! *(Laughs.)*

Jesse Thorn: Oh no! It's happening in real time!

Mike: Okay. Uh, this is all news to me. Uh, I ask for a continuance to be able to prepare.

Jesse Thorn: Well, we'll see what Judge Hodgman has to say about all this when he comes back with his verdict.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Judge Hodgman, we have brand-new holiday merch!

John Hodgman: That's right! We promised it to Mike and Genevieve, and we're promising it to you now. Available for you in the MaxFun Store. We have brand new holiday merch. Starting with a scented candle, right Jesse?

Jesse Thorn: Oh, I love this scented candle. The scent of this candle? Pure justice smell.

John Hodgman: That's what it says on the Aaron-Draplin-designed beautiful label.

Jesse Thorn: It's like a fresh cotton scent.

John Hodgman: It's like a fresh scented candle, and it comes in a glass, and it's 100% soy wax that has been fairly dispensed in this year, 2025—or the season. And you can get it right now, as well as our brand-new corduroy caps. Now corduroy, that's the cord of the king! Tell us about these caps, Jesse.

Jesse Thorn: John for years and years and years—over 75 years—I have been opening this program by asserting that only one can say who is right and who is wrong.

John Hodgman: That's right!

Jesse Thorn: But with our new caps, you can decide! Yes, that's right. One of our new caps says “right,” and one of our new caps says “wrong.” So, whether you're buying one for yourself or as a gift for someone else, you can really make a point about where you or they stand.

John Hodgman: Who's wearing the right hat? Who's wearing the wrong hat? Only you can decide by going to the MaxFun Store.

[00:45:00]

And as well, we have cozy goth merch. People have been asking about this for a long time. We have a matching sweatpants/sweatshirt athleisure loungewear, featuring a brand-new and

very adorable cozy goth illustration of a cozy goth couple getting cozy for the season, created for us expressly by the wonderful Tom Deja of Bossman Graphics. It's an oversized crew neck and sweatpants set only available at the Maximum Fun Store. What's the URL to get there, Jesse?

Jesse Thorn: That's [MaxFunStore.com](https://www.MaxFunStore.com). [MaxFunStore.com](https://www.MaxFunStore.com) for our new cozy goth sweat sets, those really cool right and wrong corduroy caps, and our brand-new holiday candle featuring pure justice smell.

Also, I got a big show coming up in New York City. John's gonna be there. He won't be on stage, but he's gonna be there. November 15th at the People's Improv Theater. I will be joined by Jad Abumrad, H Jon Benjamin, Tony Shalhoub, Kristin Anderson-Lopez, and Bobby Lopez, and Josh Gondelman. It is a 25th anniversary show for *Bullseye*. So excited to be doing that. Hopefully there are still a few tickets left for you, but they are going fast. So, go to [MaximumFun.org/events](https://www.MaximumFun.org/events) to get those tickets. And make sure that you're subscribed to *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn* for all the great interviews that I will conduct on that stage.

John Hodgman: Happy anniversary, *Bullseye*. We love you!

Jesse Thorn: Thank you, buddy. 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: You may be seated. Before I render my judgment, there was one question that I realized that I forgot to ask Genevieve. You heard your father explain that part of the reason that he wants to continue to be financially generous to all of his kids and grandkids is that he anticipates a time when, later, he's gonna need some more—and fairly expensive, presumably expensive, or more expensive—you know, assistance as he gets older and is less, independent. And I think he's concerned that when that time comes, maybe he'll be out of money, 'cause he spent it all on Slow Runner concerts or something? And I guess my question to you is: can you assure your dad, do you think, that if and when he needs more help—more generosity, more— Well, not generosity, but more help financially and otherwise as he gets older, are you going to freeze him out? Or are you gonna be there for him?

Genevieve: Um, well, it's hard to—

John Hodgman: I don't think you should really be going, “Um, well,” at this point. I mean, it doesn't matter.

(Genevieve laughs.)

You should say, “Yes, it's gonna be fine.” And even if you're lying, that's okay.

Genevieve: Yes, it's going to be fine.

Mike: It doesn't matter. I'm not going to believe you anyway!

John Hodgman: Well, I don't blame you, Mike, because she went, “Ummm...”

Genevieve: (*Chuckling.*) No, my hesitation is not in trying to decide my answer. It is merely, I guess, being hit with the realities of parents getting older and thinking that through. And it is something that I've discussed in my household with my husband. I know that some of my other siblings have already been somewhat involved in care for older parents. And I'll just say that while I don't have this to offer currently, and the real estate market in Boone is quite tough, when I am looking for the next house to buy that could a bit more room in it, it is the plan to have a second living space for any of our parents that might need that—should that be a situation—that would work out for my dad or, you know, other older people in our lives.

John Hodgman: Or whatever. Other older people in your lives. Yeah. You're not gonna cut 'em loose just because you bought them concert tickets at one point.

Genevieve: Absolutely not. Yeah.

John Hodgman: You know where I hear they have free, universal healthcare is in Germany. I don't know! It's interesting. It's a developed country, and it's a wealthy country. And for some reason, they provide universal healthcare. I don't know what they're thinking.

Mike: My son loves it there.

John Hodgman: Yeah. I mean, maybe they don't understand that there's a business side to every—that all human relationships are financial and transactional. That was maybe the most controversial thing, perhaps, that— It sounded more controversial though, Mike, than I think that it is. Because I do think you're onto something there.

[00:50:00]

And it's something that I've observed in this court as well. And now I'm segueing into the verdict, I suppose. But you know, like I've said on the podcast before that, you know, you get a lot of advice often from parents that it doesn't hurt to ask. You know? Like, “You know, it doesn't hurt to ask. Go ahead and ask that friend for a favor or go ahead and ask that former teacher for a recommendation, or go ahead and ask if you can go to that party for free,” or whatever it is. Like, parents normally are often saying to their kids, “It doesn't hurt to ask,” whereas, Mike, I think you know what I have come to understand, which is that it always hurts to ask. That when you are asking of a relationship, you are in a sense spending down a little bit of goodwill—a little bit of investment of goodwill.

And some asks are necessary. Sometimes you have to ask for financial help or support in certain ways. And sometimes you gotta do it. And oftentimes people will be very happy to provide it. But it's true that you wanna be cognizant—right?—of keeping the books balanced. You don't want to be a person who accepts favors and accepts favors and accepts favors and never offers them back. Favors in terms of money, of course, but also in terms of time and consideration. You want to— I mean, everyone should—to some degree—perhaps keep a ledger. And perhaps not one that is as mulled over internally as Mike's is. But you know, keep things more or less in balance, so that you can accept help and generosity from people in your life and know that you're also in a position to return it.

Being generous is... You know, I wrote in my penultimate book so far, *Vacationland*—that's a plug—that because I essentially won the lottery of going on television and making money that I never intended to make as a freelance writer, what I realized was that this freed me from a lot of anxiety. And so much of what is so insidious about the system in which we live is the perpetual anxiety that we feel because of financial pressure, not least because we have to think of and pay for healthcare. But having money that allows you to support yourself and having a little bit more than you perhaps need is such a great—is such an amazing feeling, because it allows you to be generous. And that's such a good feeling that everyone, honestly, should be able to have. People should have a little bit more than just getting by, so that they can be generous to other folks and people. It's a wonderful feeling.

And to some degree, I—you know, I appreciate the feeling that you have, Mike, and the pride and honor that you take and being able to provide for your kids. That's a very good feeling. But you're denying them the reciprocal feeling of being generous with you—with money perhaps, or in other ways. You know. Oftentimes the greatest generosity being generous in your acceptance of other people's generosity. You see what I mean? There's a real paradox there. You may need to go up to your attic and find *Paradoxes for Dummies*. You know, because that's part of graciousness, right? To be able to accept as well as to provide. That is—I think that while you are busy—very busy, indeed—keeping your ledger balanced, you're nooot appreciating that everyone's got their own ledgers. And some of your children would like to give back to you. And will continue to give back to you when it's even more necessary. But even now, they want to give back to you.

And it's not that they're spending down whatever savings they might have for your later needs. They wanna give back to you now, financially and in other gestures that are meaningful to them. Now, that's not Genevieve. Genevieve just wants to give all of her money to this Slow Runner dude! I don't get it.

(They laugh.)

I honestly don't get it.

Insofar as that I feel—right?—that having an unbalanced ledger is going to weigh on you, Mike, emotionally a little bit more than I think it weighs on your kids, am going to essentially advise Genevieve: do not expect major changes in Mike's worldview in terms of paying. It gives him pleasure.

[00:55:00]

And it satisfies a sense of pride to be able to provide for his kids. That's how I feel too about our kids, insofar as we were able to help them. But I also advise you, Mike, to be gracious in appreciating that it gives them pleasure too to help you. Right? There are books that are balanced that are not purely financial, and sometimes you need to do a little bit of a different kind of math to keep the balance even.

But that said, Genevieve, I am going to advise you that I do not expect—nor should you—that— Not even a ruling from the esteemed fake judge, John Hodgman, would ease the psychic burden of feeling in debt that Mike feels. And I think that Mike needs to work through that on his own and takes pleasure in sneaking money into your car. And maybe he'll even, you know— What I would perhaps order is that, instead of sneaking money into your car for your birthday, to balance the debt and the ledger that is in Genevieve's heart, Mike, that you let Genevieve pay for this birthday party for herself. You let her give all of the money that she can to this stranger.

(Mike laughs.)

And that if you want to give her a gift and be generous—not that you've necessarily threatened to come in and take over the payment of the rental hall or wherever this is happening—but that instead you go, and you enjoy it, and you let her pay. And if you're gonna sneak any money in, you're gonna sneak money into Michael Flynn's pocket. Literally.

(Mike laughs.)

What I want you to do, Mike, is I want you to take \$100—I know it's a lot, Mike—but I want you to take \$100 bill and slip it into the back pocket of Michael Flynn of Slow Runners' jeans or whatever on the night, and just tell him, “This comes from a mysterious benefactor.” And guess what?! That's me! I'm gonna Venmo you, Mike! So, it's all even-Steven!

(They laugh.)

So, in the overall, I have to honor Mike's honor. And Mike's gonna fight you tooth and nail to let you pay for stuff, and that's just the way it's going to be overall. But in the particular, for your birthday, I rule in your favor, Genevieve. The Slow Runner concert is all on you. This is the sound of a gavel.

Clip:

Speaker: *(A baby's voice.)* You pay! Now!

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.)

Mike, how do you feel right now?

Mike: Well, I feel that I have a job to do, come Genevieve's birthday. And that judgment will be honored.

Jesse Thorn: Genevieve, how are you feeling?

Genevieve: I am feeling pretty good. I think that the judge is correct that there's only so much we can expect from changing the habits and mentality that my dad brings to the table. But I am glad that in this case, at least, he will be able to come and enjoy the show and have a role at the party without being out of pocket. *(Chuckles.)*

Jesse Thorn: Mike, can I have some Now & Laters and a Home Run pie? I'll leave the money on your dashboard.

(They laugh.)

Mike: Yes, that would be fine.

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

Genevieve: Thank you for having us.

Mike: Thank you very much.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Another *Judge John Hodgman* case is in the books! We've got Swift Justice in just a second. First, our thanks to Redditor u/SomethingFoul for naming this week's episode "Shut Your Payhole". We usually name those episodes over on the Maximum Fun Reddit. That's [Reddit.com/r/MaximumFun](https://www.reddit.com/r/MaximumFun). So, go join up, and join in the fun. If you wanna see evidence from our program, join us on Instagram at [Instagram.com/judgejohnhodgman](https://www.instagram.com/judgejohnhodgman). I'm on Instagram at [@JesseThornVeryFamous](https://www.instagram.com/JesseThornVeryFamous). John is on Instagram at [@JohnHodgman](https://www.instagram.com/JohnHodgman). We're also on TikTok and YouTube at [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](https://www.youtube.com/JudgeJohnHodgmanPod). We host full episodes of every program on YouTube! So, go over there and share it with a friend who might enjoy it, and also smash those like and subscribe buttons.

[01:00:00]

John Hodgman: Yeah. You know, over on YouTube, we have a chance for you to leave comments, and we always pick one comment—the YouTube comment of the week. This

week comes from user AlanHome-HV9QB, as in boy. That's AlanHome-HV9QB. AlanHome-HV9QB says, "I don't want to cause anyone any pain, but Jesse's reactions made me laugh very hard." This was in reaction to our recent case about a couple playing 20 Questions.

Jesse Thorn: Oh yeah. (*Chuckles.*) That was wild. I liked them a lot.

John Hodgman: And there were many comments, not just from AlanHome-HV9QB, commenting on the incredible facial reactions to some of the stumpers that were offered in that 20 Questions game. And it's true! It is something that you can enjoy on the YouTube that you can't enjoy anywhere else. And indeed, AlanHome-HV9QB says, "I hope we get more of this energy in the future." And you absolutely do. Anytime you—if you've enjoyed listening to an episode, it might make sense to go to the YouTube just to see how it plays out in a visual context!

Jesse Thorn: Our thanks to Robert Vogler at 274 Podcast Hub in Mount Airy, North Carolina for the North Carolina side of our conversation. *Judge John Hodgman*, created by Jesse Thorn and John Hodgman. Social media help this week from Natty Lopez. Our podcast is edited by AJ McKeon. Our video editor is Daniel Speer. Our producer is Jennifer Marmor. Okay, you ready for Swift Justice, John?

John Hodgman: Yeah, I'm ready for Swift Justice. Yes.

Jesse Thorn: Okay, Joan Arkam—classic Reddit username—

John Hodgman: Oh yeah, I know Joan Arkam!

Jesse Thorn: —asks on the MaxFun subreddit, "Is it okay to hang dish towels on the handle of the oven, or should you ball them up and squish them into the corner of the countertop on top of the spices?"

John Hodgman: Well, that sounds like a trick! This doesn't sound— Well, this sounds— This is a question asked in medium faith. I think that Joan Arkam has someone in their life who balls them up.

Jesse Thorn: The obvious answer here is por que, no los dos?

John Hodgman: Yeah, no. I mean, I certainly do both. I certainly do both. Yes, it is okay— obviously—to hang dish towels on the handle of the oven. Joan Arkam, I get the sense that perhaps you don't like a person in your life balling them up and squishing them in the corner. Maybe that's you, maybe that's someone you share a home with or whatever. I do both. But yes, I would say the ones in the oven tend to be decorative in my house. And the ones that are sort of out on the counter and squished up are the ones that are in use. The important thing is that if you're a person who likes to have a balled-up dish towel that you're using, when you're done using it, go put it in the laundry or something. Don't just leave it there. It's fine to have it out in use, but once it's done, go take care of it. Okay, Joan Arkam?

Jesse Thorn: I love dish towels. John, did you know that?

John Hodgman: They're terrific!

Jesse Thorn: I love dish—I got a buddy at the flea market who's a textile dealer or rag dealer. And I'll buy these gorgeous dish towels from her. Oooh! I'll use them. So absorbent! Like, old linen dish towels. Just give her—I'll give her \$5 for those all day long. Ooh, I love it! Greatest pleasure in my life.

John Hodgman: I just bought a pack of three brand-new flower sack style dish towels. And I honestly—you know, I share a life with someone. So, you know, there—we have differences of preference. For example, the way Joan Arkam does, like someone hangs towels; someone smushes them around. If I were living alone, I would only have flower sack, white dish towels. And I would have 100 of them! That would give me so much pleasure.

Jesse Thorn: (*Cackles.*) Yeah, come to my house, John. You wouldn't believe how great my dish towels are.

John Hodgman: Just a pile of the exact same dish towels, to me, is very pleasurable—even though I appreciate decorative dish towels too. Most of all though, I'm really, really happy to share my life with someone, even though it means compromise. I hope that helps, Joan Arkam.

Meanwhile, we are inching closer to the holiday season. You are probably already hearing about Black Friday sales as we speak. As of this recording at the end of October, we haven't even had Halloween yet, but Christmas is trickling into every big box store. And I want some winter holiday cases! Do you wanna change your friend group's white elephant gift exchange? Are you trying to rent an Airbnb that looks like Kate Winslet's house from Nancy Meyers' *The Holiday*, but your family is over that movie? This feels very specific to Jennifer Marmor here. This feels like a real Jennifer Marmor situation.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah,

John Hodgman: Has your professional colleague not seen *The Holiday*, and you want them to? (*Laughs.*) Any of these holiday submissions! Jennifer Marmor's favorite movie is *The Holiday*, and we want holiday submissions. Now is the time to send us your family holiday recipes as well. Now, you know, we always have our holiday leftovers episode, usually in January—

[01:05:00]

—where we collect strange holiday recipes for hors d'oeuvres or even main courses, whether it's tomato soup cake or eggnog mixed with Fanta orange soda. We want your strange, your unique, your customary, your regional holiday recipes. Anything gelatinous is something that we want to try. Send them in to us now. We'll get them ready for our annual holiday leftovers party that we have, usually in January. We can't wait to see what you all come up with this

year. Send your holiday cases and your recipes, as always, to MaximumFun.org/jjho. Or you can email me directly at Hodgman@MaximumFun.org.

Jesse Thorn: And of course, we love hearing about all your disputes. MaximumFun.org/jjho is the place to go to submit them. 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!