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Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: It is the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. I am Bailiff Jesse Thorn. With me is Judge John Hodgman.

John Hodgman: Jesse, my friend, the holiday season is in full swing. I wanna spread some holiday cheer. Should we open the members-only mailbag and share some of our most rollicking of letters?

Jesse Thorn: Indeed, we have some of our favorite letters from almost two years of the members-only mailbag. If you aren't a member, this is some of the stuff that you have been missing. You can join us anytime for \$5 a month at MaximumFun.org/join. When you're a member, you will get access to our entire, huge, monumental library of bonus content.

John Hodgman: As well as our every month members-only mailbag, where we answer any question you might have or endure any complaint that you might wish to provide us. Up first, we'll be revisiting a dispute about a romantasy series that a MaxFun member said made her feral.

Transition: Three gavel bangs.

John Hodgman: Spoiler alert! We have another letter about spoilers. This one, from Amy in Alexandria, Virginia—home of the Birchmere Music Hall. “Please!” Quote, “Please allow me to spoil the ending of a fantasy novel! I went feral reading the *Fourth Wing* books last December. My husband, Reid, agreed to listen to the audio books and catch up with me. Buuuut he ran outta steam in the middle of book two, *Iron Flame*. No spoilers, but the end of *Iron Flame* is so juicy, I was unwell when I hit that last page! And I am dying to talk about it with Reid, but he won't listen for more than 15 minutes at a time.”

(Jesse bursts into laughter and John tries to suppress his own.)

“He says he enjoys it that way. Please order Reid to listen to the last five hours of *Iron Flame* within three days! Or else I get to spoil the ending for him.”

Jesse Thorn: Okay. I now understand. I wanna be clear: I now understand he won't listen to the audio book for more than 15 minutes at a time, not he won't listen to Amy for more than 15 minutes at a time, talking about the part of this book that he hasn't read.

(They laugh.)

(John confirms.)

I now understand that.

John Hodgman: Yes, that was— That may have been more clear in the version of the letter before I edited it. But yes. For length! For length, only. Uh, yes. He won't listen to the audio book for more than 15 minutes at a time. He says he enjoys it that way.

I gotta give Amy some credit for these adjectives. I'd never heard— I've never gone feral reading a book, but I get it. I understand.

(Jennifer chuckles.)

I went feral reading *Middlemarch*. And it's true; I was unwell when I hit the final sentence, which is one of the best sentences in English fiction as far as I'm concerned. I was unwell! And it was juicy. And I'd love to talk about it with you, but I don't wanna spoil it. But can we compel Reid to read the rest of the book in five hours within three days, so that they can talk about it? What do you say, Thorn and company?

Jesse Thorn: I say Reid is meeting his obligation. He didn't say he was gonna listen to it all within three days; said he was gonna listen to it all. He's doing it 15 minutes at a time. That's time. That's his way. That's how I listen to various Bill Bryson books on my audiobook app.

John Hodgman: Yeah! That's how you do your various Triple Bs.

There is an inconsistency in this letter though. Because at first, Amy is saying he started listening to the audiobook of *Iron Flame* but then lost steam during the middle. But that's contradictory to him continuing to listen for 15 minutes at a time. Like, either he stopped reading or he's still reading, just too slowly for his feral wife who is clearly unwell.

(Jennifer titters.)

Do you know what *Fourth Wing* is all about, you two?

Jesse Thorn: No, I only made it through the *Third Wing*.

John Hodgman: *Fourth Wing* is the first book in what is currently a two-book series, although I'm sure there will be more, because the two have done extremely well. And it is a fantasy book series written by Rebecca Yarros about people in a fantasy world. A young woman is drafted to become a dragon rider, and rides some dragons, and gets into some scuffles, and gets into a lot of—apparently, it's a lot of crush-y romance too. And that sounded very derogatory, but I don't mean it that way. I think it gets—it gets sexy among the humans. Not necessarily the dragons, but maybe the dragons too. People are feral for this series of books, and they fall—apparently—into this genre that I've begun hearing about, which is called dark academia? Are you familiar with the dark academia aesthetic Movement?

Jesse Thorn: No, I've never heard of it.

Jennifer Marmor: Now that you say it, I can kind of like—I get it. I didn't realize there was a name for that, but of course.

Jesse Thorn: Academia is my hero, and I've never heard of it! (*Explaining his own joke.*) As in as in the anime—

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—*My Hero Academia*, about which I know nothing else besides its odd name.

John Hodgman: It's sort of the fetishization of—I'll have to swear to say it, but—Yale shit. Like, Hogwarts-y obsession with sort of like prep school-y, Ivy League-y, collegiate gothic libraries and—you know—secret societies at Yale and all that stuff. It's a setting for a lot of stories now. And it sort of retroactively sort of absorbs older books like *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and *Morris* by Ian Forster, and *The Secret History* is more contemporary book by Donna Tartt. But then, you know, they're now— Have you heard of this book, *The Ninth House* by Leigh Bardugo?

Jennifer Marmor: Oh! No.

John Hodgman: Okay. So, I was in Maine visiting some friends, and their teenage daughter was reading this book. And my friend said about the book his daughters were reading, “You'd like this!” This is a book—it's a fantasy book set at Yale in which all of the secret societies of Yale—they're actually full of wizards and witches.

(*Jennifer chuckles.*)

They all do magic. And like, Skull and Bones—which is a secret society at Yale—is really into predicting the future, particularly the future of the financial markets. This is not a spoiler; it's in the first chapter—which they do by reading the entrails of humans. And then other—like, I don't know what Book and Snake is up to, but it's probably like they do a lot of magic regarding books and snakes and so forth. And Wolf's Head, which is a secret society at Yale, is full of what you call werewolves, I think. And they're all in competition with each other, and it's all a secret that they're doing this. And then there's a fictional ninth secret society, a ninth house that the main character is in, which is— Their job is to basically be the police force for all the—so the secret societies don't destroy the world.

And I was like, “Huh.” And how do you think I felt about that, you guys, when I heard about this book?

Jennifer Marmor: I think you went feral.

John Hodgman: I was so feral! I was totally feral and unwell.

(*Jennifer laughs.*)

I was so angry that I was—all I've been thinking about is fucking dark academia Yale obsession since I was 18 years old. Secret societies in particular. I mean, you know, read the book! And I didn't think to write this?! And it's a great idea that I didn't have! And I'm not trying to take credit away from— Leigh Bardugo's a really good writer. And I started to read it. I started to read it, and it's the paragon of dark academia. You can hear me banging my desk right now, members-only. *(He, in fact, bangs his desk.)* But I couldn't read it, 'cause I was just too mad at myself for not being smart enough to have that idea.

Well, anyway. Is this— Tell me if you think this is too close to her idea. It's set at Yale, but it's about a 50-year-old dad who just keeps coming back, 'cause he wants to be in college still.

(Jennifer “aw”s softly.)

And there's magic, I guess!

Jesse Thorn: Where do the entrails come in?

John Hodgman: Yeah. I don't know! I haven't figured that out. But it's like the— It's not a plucky, young heroine. It's a decrepit, elderly, weird dad who's just—who won't let go.

Jesse Thorn: I have a series of fantasy novels about predictions of the financial markets based on the entrails of the UC Santa Cruz Men's Ultimate Club—UCSC's Slug Ultimate. And also, their lady and non-binary rivals, UCSC's SOL Ultimate.

John Hodgman: Why do you wanna read their entrails?

Jesse Thorn: To find out what I should invest in.

John Hodgman: *(Chuckling.)* Oh, okay. I got you. Anyway.

Jennifer Marmor: How else? *(Chuckling.)* How else are you gonna find that out?

John Hodgman: Anyway. You know, I just realized now that the novel that I wrote— And this is a real typical, weird dad blind spot. Like, would people read a novel in which I—a weird dad—can't let go of college and just goes and hangs around the library all the time and pretends to be there? And I realize, I'm not the hero of that story. I'm the villain. I'm the one that the plucky protagonists have to chase out of there and say, “You don't belong here anymore!” I'm a vengeful ghost at my own college. Now that I can acknowledge I'm the villain—! Oof! Weird dads, you gotta remember, you're not the hero anymore. You're the villain of the story. You're the backup character at best.

Jennifer Marmor: Well, and then that gets into like a different type of story though, where you're an anti-hero.

John Hodgman: Yeah. But the plot isn't me sneaking into Yale. The plot is: the people who are appropriately there at Yale and enjoying it have to exorcise me and get me out. *(Muttering.)* It could still be told from my point of view.

Anyway. Dark academia, maybe I'll make a stab at it.

I've not read *Fourth Wing*; lots and lots of people have. I did read a plot synopsis for *Iron Flame*. And you can go on Wikipedia and read the plot synopsis, and I guarantee that you'll not be spoiled, because it will be incomprehensible to you.

Jesse Thorn: Can I give a spoiler for *Fourth Wing* that I got just by Googling “*Fourth Wing* Reddit” and only looking at the Google results, not actually clicking through to anything?

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John Hodgman: Please.

Jesse Thorn: “It's not an assassin school, but young adults murder each other in plain sight, and no one interferes, as if it's business as usual. The *Fourth Wing* fantasy/romance, dragons, enemies to lovers. She fell first, but he fell harder.”

John Hodgman: Is that the log line?

Jesse Thorn: No, that's a different first sentence of a Reddit post. I gotta tell you, *Fourth Wing* seems to be very highly divisive on Reddit. In fact, the first result is “My review of *Fourth Wing* and why I think it's so divisive.”

John Hodgman: Alright, I just read the last sentence of the synopsis on Wikipedia of *Iron Flame*. And you know what? It's pretty juicy. *(Chuckles.)*

Jesse Thorn: “I hated *Fourth Wing*, and I feel like I'm losing my mind.”

(John giggles.)

I'm gonna be honest. Like, I think the crux here is this—from my perspective as a husband. I'm the husband of a wife. You know what I mean?

John Hodgman: And a whole human being in your own right.

Jesse Thorn: My wife is not interested in fantasy romance novels. I think she tried to read that one that everybody liked that was that horny TV show on Starz for a long time. Or maybe it was on one of the other—

John Hodgman: *Outlander*?

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, *Outlander*. She tried to read an *Outlander*, and she wasn't really into it. 'Cause everybody that listened to her podcast, *One Bad Mother*, used to tell her to read *Outlander*. She's not into that kind of thing, you know? But if she were, and she told me to read it or listen to the audiobook? I would. You know why? Because I want to make out with my wife. I want to kiss with my wife. And if she tells me to read a horny book, I'm just gonna be like, "Thank you, dear!" and read it.

(Jennifer and John agree sagely.)

Being horny with one's spouse is one of the best things of marriage!

(Jennifer laughs.)

John Hodgman: It is truly the balm of marriage, hugging and kissing a person that you care about.

Jesse Thorn: And you know what? She's kind enough to watch what makes me horny! Which is old episodes of *News Radio*.

John Hodgman: Every now and then, I think about the fact that I had lunch with Dave Foley once, and it just blows my mind.

Jesse Thorn: The greatest. I drove him around one time for San Francisco Sketch Fest, all morning to various morning radio shows. You know, got up at five o'clock in the morning, went and picked up Dave Foley, drove him around, talked about Patrick Warburton. What a lovely man. What a dream that was.

John Hodgman: Such a sweet dude. Alright, well let's get back to Reid.

Reid? You are ironically named, first of all, 'cause you have a reading problem. Well, no I'm not—I'm gonna take that back. Reid does not have a reading problem. I believe Reid when Reid says that he likes the pace of 15 minutes of the book at a time. Now, he might like that pace because he truly enjoys taking in the story that way; he might like that pace because he really finds the book very boring, and is having a hard time getting through it, and is just doing this as a slog for his wife, but all he can manage to, you know, choke down is 15 minutes of it a day. Either way, you deserve to enjoy a book the way you like to. But if you're not enjoying this book, Reid? I order you to listen to the rest of it in three days, and just get it over with. If you're not enjoying it, I order you to be honest with Amy and just say, "This wasn't for me."

But give her the closure that she needs to discuss the juicy ending. Because she's unwell! I mean, you want your wife—you want your spouse, you want your partner—to be well, not unwell. And maybe you'll find the ending very juicy! I have to say. I read the first paragraph of the plot summary, and I was simply confused. But when I read that last sentence, I was like, "Okay, I can see how this is cool. Now I have something to look forward to." There's something out there for you there, Reid. You should finish this book up. Make your wife happy. And then if you don't like doing this with her, don't agree to read a book with her.

(Jennifer agrees.)

Same deal. Like, you pick— If you've agreed to read something or watch something together, you gotta put in your time. You gotta follow a schedule. That's what I say.

Jesse Thorn: “The bond includes feeling each other's feelings, hearing each other's thoughts, and learning to fly together—via the use of a saddle, no less!”

John Hodgman: *(Snorts into laughter.)* You're saying that they're not riding these dragons bareback?! They actually have a saddle?!

(Jesse confirms.)

That's incredible.

Jesse Thorn: But Reid and his wife are married, so they can ride dragons however they'd like.

John Hodgman: That's true. That's right. This has gotten to be a very horny episode!

Jesse Thorn: *(Chuckles.)* Yeah. Well, you know, we're doing what we can.

John Hodgman: Would you say dragons are horny or just scaly? Some of them have horns!

Jesse Thorn: *(Laughing.)* That's a great question, John!

Look, our MaxFun podcast, *Reading Glasses*, did a show during the MaxFun Drive that I found very educational when I found out that the hot new horniness is fairy men. Fairy men are what everyone is horny for.

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They've been waiting for their ultimate love—like, the love the to which they were fated—for hundreds of years, because fairies live so long. And then they fall in love with a human woman.

(John and Jennifer hum thoughtfully.)

And then they ride a saddle together.

John Hodgman: And thennn... do they apply early to Yale and get in?

(Jesse agrees, holding back a chuckle.)

Leigh Bardugo owns Yale dark academia fiction now! And she deserves to own it!

Jesse Thorn: Did I ever tell you about the time— I applied early to Yale. Did I ever tell you about the time the Yale alumnus came to visit me at my house? You know, for an alumni interview—and we walked to the St. Francis soda fountain in San Francisco's mission district, which is in the lower mission district. I've never seen a man so visibly uncomfortable walking down a public street. (*Laughs.*) The whole time I'm like, “Mm. I'm not gonna get into this university.”

Jennifer Marmor: Oh, wow!

John Hodgman: Whoa!

Jesse Thorn: Anyway! On that note, I think they recently reopened the St. Francis soda fountain. They sort of fancied it up.

John Hodgman: Well, now you can get into Yale. But you'd be the ghost at that point.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, that's true.

John Hodgman: You and I as ghosts in Yale! That would be fun.

Jesse Thorn: That would be a lot of fun.

John Hodgman: That would be a funny— I don't know. Maybe I can— I'm looking for some new project. Maybe this is it.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. Yale ghosts?

John Hodgman: *Yale Ghosts. Ghosts of Yale.*

Jesse Thorn: Guess what? My ghost goes to Brown.

Jennifer Marmor: Mine goes to UC Berkeley, because when my ghost was alive, they sent it—or they sent her two rejection letters instead of one.

John Hodgman: (*Horried.*) Oh god!

Jesse Thorn: Oh wow. My ghost is still on the waiting list for UC Berkeley.

John Hodgman: I am unwell. Let's move on.

Transition: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Here's one from Erin in Philadelphia. “I just saw my—”

John Hodgman: (*Aggressively dropping into his Tom Waits impersonation.*) “TONIGHT, I SHAAAVE THE MOUNTAIN!”

(*Pleasantly returning to his usual voice.*) That's a Tom Waits song.

Jesse Thorn: Erin in Philadelphia?

John Hodgman: No, no. I was just singing a song. Sorry. Go on. Do your thing.

Jesse Thorn: “I just saw my husband open up a box of salad greens, grab a handful, and stuff them in his mouth. He doesn't like salads, so he believes this is the best way for him to reap the benefits of eating greens. I think this is slightly unhinged. Should he be allowed to continue to eat lettuce by the handful?”

John Hodgman: What do you think, Jennifer Marmor? Lettuce by the handful.

Jennifer Marmor: Yeah. I have eaten lettuce by the handful before! Probably not the greens that Erin's husband is thinking that he's gonna reap benefits from. Like, sometimes I just want something crunchy and cold, and I'll just grab a handful of Romaine, and it really hits the spot.

John Hodgman: Yeah! And are you pulling it out of a box?

Jennifer Marmor: Out of a bag, because I'm lazy. (*Laughs.*)

John Hodgman: Yeah. Out of a bag— No, but I mean, you know— Look, Jesse, what about you? Hand lettuce for you?

Jesse Thorn: I would never eat— I presume— When I'm hearing “I opened up a box of salad greens,” I'm hearing that this is like a spring mix. Spring mix is garbage.

(*John agrees.*)

I'm putting myself on the record. Spring mix sucks. You gotta go high or low.

(*Jennifer agrees.*)

Spring mix is terrible. It's in-between. It's too floppy. It doesn't taste good.

Jennifer Marmor: Can't get it on your fork.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. Either give me—

John Hodgman: Slides around.

Jesse Thorn: Either give me like full-on iceberg lettuce—or maybe a crunchy romaine—or gimme a specialized green, which I'm perfectly glad to eat. Specifically, I love arugula, and I've eaten it by the handful many times!

Jennifer Marmor: BOOOOM! Get that peppery handful!

Jesse Thorn: Just—(*garbled, obscenely enthusiastic eating sounds*).

John Hodgman: I would even say baby kale, if you really wanna be—if you want a little vitamin boost, grab some washed baby kale. Or better yet! Wash your own lettuce.

(*They agree.*)

Look, I enjoy a box of lettuce from time to time. And here's the thing. What's the name of this person again?

Jesse Thorn: Erin.

John Hodgman: Erin. And this is their husband who's got an issue with the eatin' hand greens?

(*Jennifer confirms.*)

Alright. Look, if you're doing boxed greens and you want to eat by the hand, first of all, you need a hearty—a hearty green, particularly if you're doing it for nutritional purposes. So, I would say a baby kale. I would say arugula is very good. I'd stay away from that spring mix. Romaine is a classic, crunchy green. But you gotta have your own bag or box. Like, you can't be reaching into a shared bag or box. And it is absolutely fine, Erin, if your spouse has their own private greens stash in the fridge.

And then I would also say that you can—I've been washing my greens lately. Lemme tell you. You wanna know—? I learned this from our friends, Kenji Lopéz-Alt and Deb Perelman—of The Smitten Kitchen—on their podcast, *The Recipe*, which is: no matter how fresh you think your boxed or non-boxed lettuce is, no matter how clean you think it is, do soak it in cold water for 10 to 20 minutes before— Even if it's clean! Even if it's washed.

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The texture difference is dramatic if you give that lettuce some time to soak it up, if you get a bath. It's crisper, it's fresher tasting. And then here's the other thing. This is a Julia Child trick that my wife—who is a whole human being in her own right—passed on to me. We don't have a salad spinner, 'cause it takes up a lot of real estate in our New York apartment, and they don't really work really well. What works really well? Put your lettuces— You know this one, right Jesse?

Jesse Thorn: You're gonna— Are you talking about a like David and Goliath lettuce situation? *(Chuckles.)*

John Hodgman: That's right. Why don't you go ahead and say it?

Jesse Thorn: You wrap it in a tea towel, and then you swing it around your head and throw water on all the walls of your kitchen.

(Jennifer laughs.)

John Hodgman: Yeah, that's right. If you can step outside— Here's what I do. *(Laughing at himself.)* I go into the shower.

(Jennifer cackles.)

And I whip that thing around in the shower. And I'll often use a pillowcase.

(Jennifer and Jesse react with impressed surprise.)

Yeah. You would think that that's a great hack, but it's really hard to get the—

Jennifer Marmor: You need like a toddler pillowcase.

John Hodgman: Well, it's also like once you have— So, you put your wet lettuces into the pillowcase or wrap it up in a tea towel, whip it around. And you become the salad spinner. I think it gets it drier and fresher, and it's good. But if you're doing it in a pillowcase, you are gonna have little remnants of lettuce in the little corners of the pillowcase.

Jennifer Marmor: That's called a midnight snack.

(Jesse chortles.)

John Hodgman: I don't know. Yeah, right. Gotta reach in there while you—yeah. I don't know. You have to— I pull it inside out. That's a little bit of a hassle. Tea towel is great. Also, a flour sack, like a flour— You know that flour—? What's that? It's not a sack made of flour.

Jesse Thorn: Like a burlap?

Jennifer Marmor: No, it's like that sackcloth material, textile.

Jennifer Marmor: No, it's—yeah. It's also—like, they make tea towels out of it too.

(John confirms.)

I bought some blanks to embroider, and they're sitting unembroidered in my pantry.
(Laughs.)

John Hodgman: I've been doing chopped up—big, big chunks—of escarole and radicchio and arugula with a garlicky dressing, and it's been very, very good.

Jennifer Marmor: Lovely.

John Hodgman: And it holds up. That's a salad that holds up.

Jesse Thorn: John, I had a vision of you in that one Petey Pablo video, just going (*singing*), “North Carolina, come on and raise up! Take your—” (*Stumbling.*) What do you call it? “Take your pillowcase! Spin it round your head! Spin it like a helicopter!”

(John tries to join in but fails to come up with the words.)

You know what I'm talking about, Daniel! Daniel knows about PeteyPab.

John Hodgman: I know that the listeners to (*unclear*) that song.

Daniel Speer: I have no idea about it.

Jesse Thorn: He knows about PeteyPab.

John Hodgman: That's a North Carolina sportsy song. Right?

Jennifer Marmor: Yeah. I was just thinking that John whips his greens back and forth.

John Hodgman: I do. Yeah. And my garlic dressing brings all the boys to the yard too!

Transition: Three gavel bangs.

John Hodgman: Wow. Jesse, after this salad greens episode came out, a TikTok trend started called Dinosaur Time. Have you heard of this?

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. This is like—(*starting to chuckle*) this is the thing where people eat salad with their hands like a dinosaur would, if a dinosaur had hands and salad.

John Hodgman: Yeah. I don't even know that a— Well, a T-Rex would never eat a salad to begin with, but yes. And they also play the *Jurassic Park* theme song in the background, which is delightful.

Jesse Thorn: I think that probably—the person who invented this was called SahmthingsUp on TikTok. I think they're probably a *Judge John Hodgman* membo mailbag listener. Seems safe. Right? We're influencers!

John Hodgman: That would mean we're influencers. Yeah, absolutely.

Jesse Thorn: Given that we're influencers, I'm gonna head down to the mail room in case we got any packages of anything from PR companies.

John Hodgman: Oh yeah, good idea!

Jesse Thorn: We'll be back in just a second on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

Transition: Three gavel bangs.

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Transition: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: It's the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. I'm Bailiff Jesse Thorn. We've opened the members-only mailbag here on our program. Do we only hear disputes in the members-only mailbag, John?

John Hodgman: No, Jesse. I said it a little earlier, and I'm gonna reiterate it now. The *Judge John Hodgman* podcast is not about me giving advice. I dispense justice. But for the members-only mailbag? Yeah, we'll offer advice. We'll answer nearly any kind of question. If you— Now that we're influencers, obviously, if you want us to unbox some products, I'll unbox some products! As long as, it's not like a cardboard box full of dead butterflies or something weird you want to send. You know what I mean? Like, be cool.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. At least put that in a nice—like, a glass box or something.

John Hodgman: Yeah, exactly. But no. We'll answer any kind of question, such as Kelsey's question about camp. Let's hear this one now.

Transition: Three gavel bangs.

John Hodgman: Kelsey writes, “I grew up in Girl Scouts, and I went to Girl Scout Camp, and I loved every minute of it. Were any of you in boy or girl scouts, or did you go to camp?” Let's answer the scouting question first. Jennifer, Jesse, any scouting in your past? Obviously, a controversial organization, but certainly it was pretty common when we were growing up.

Jesse Thorn: My father was a very accomplished scout.

John Hodgman: Oh, okay!

Jesse Thorn: He was something—some sort of super eagle scout.

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He, in fact, had— My dad had almost no notable possessions (*laughs*) in his life, other than maybe books. But he did have his scout sash.

Jennifer Marmor: Aw, wow!

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. From his adolescence. And my dad had an absurd volume of badges on it.

Jennifer Marmor: Cool.

Jesse Thorn: But I never scouted.

Jennifer Marmor: I was a brownie. And then I did juniors, but then I didn't stick with it.

John Hodgman: So, Brownies are the cub scouts of girl scouts. Right? They're the little kid version.

Jennifer Marmor: There's daisies before brownies. So, I was—

John Hodgman: Whoa! Hierarchies within hierarchies.

Jennifer Marmor: Yeah. So, I wasn't the lowest—like, the youngest-youngest, but then the next one up.

John Hodgman: Oh. And so, you would go daisy, brownie, junior then girl?

Jennifer Marmor: I guess so. I never found out.

John Hodgman: You never found out?

Jennifer Marmor: I wasn't into it. My mom said, “Do you wanna keep doing this?”

And I went, “No.” But I had fun in brownies.

John Hodgman: What did you get up to in the brownies? What were the activities?

Jennifer Marmor: We sold cookies, of course. I remember knitting at my troop leader's house. We learned to knit. That didn't stick with me, though. I relearned as an adult. We did community service. We did like a toy drive for, you know, families in need during the holiday season. And I remember we went to somebody's house to like deliver presents and sing Christmas songs to them.

Jesse Thorn: It would be very funny if you did a toy drive for affluent families in the summertime.

Jennifer Marmor: Can you imagine?!

John Hodgman: I messed around with the cub scouts for about five minutes, merely out of sick curiosity. I feel like everyone was doing it, so I gave it a little try. I don't remember what the badges were, but I got the lowest badge, and then I bailed out at that point. I think I went camping with my cub scout group one time. It was miserable enough that I knew I was never gonna go again. We all agree that scouting—at least on the boys' side—tends to be—I can't comment on the girls' side, but we've all—you know, those of us who have Bobcat-ed before—not a lot of fun. But camp can be a lot of fun. People love camp. Did any of you go to camp-camp?

(Jennifer confirms excitedly.)

Alright, here we go. Jennifer Marmor.

Jesse Thorn: Jennifer's Jewish.

(John affirms.)

Jennifer Marmor: Yeah! I went to a Jewish summer camp in Southern California. Alonim, for those of you in the know. If you know, you know. And I went starting when I was I think eight years old, and I went every summer through my—going into my second year of college, I wanna say? You know, I was a camper, and then counselor in training, and then counselor, and then art room staff. Took a break, did some other things, and then I came back as—after I graduated college—as like a division head and like head programmer, basically. And I did that for like two years. And it was really fun! I loved it. It was like a little taste of independence. And that really was interesting to me. And I had amazing friends and did—I mean, we went to a Jewish summer camp, so it was like lots of singing, lots of dancing, lots of like—

John Hodgman: Yeah. Do you remember—what are some of the songs you do you remember?

Jennifer Marmor: I don't wanna sing them! It's embarrassing.

John Hodgman: That's too bad. I don't care what you want.

Jennifer Marmor: *(Laughing.)* No, I'm not doing it!

Jesse Thorn: Onward, Christian soldier. *(Chuckles.)*

John Hodgman: Fair enough. Like, *(singing)* “Let us proclaim the mystery of Jewish summer caaamp!”

Jesse Thorn: Our mutual friend Elliott Kalan's wife went to a camp called Camp Tawonga in Northern California, which—

Jennifer Marmor: I know that one.

Jesse Thorn: I had a friend from high school who was so obsessed with Camp Tawonga, he would constantly talk about it when we were in high school. And we'd be like, “Dude, you're in high school now. Like, you're supposed to make out with girls at the high school.” But anyway.

Jennifer Marmor: Right. But everybody made out at camp.

Jesse Thorn: Good dude. I know.

Jennifer Marmor: Except for me. *(Chuckling.)* I didn't. I was a late bloomer!

Jesse Thorn: But he also went to Camp Tawonga. Everybody was always talking about Camp Tawonga. And I found out that Danielle Kalan went to Camp Tawonga, and I was like, “Oh, this guy I knew, Brady Gill, went to Camp Tawonga. He couldn't shut up about it.”

She's like, “Oh yeah, I know that guy.”

(Laughs.) And then now, she packs up their children and sends them off to Camp Tawonga, even though it's in an entirely different region of the United States! *(Laughs.)*

The things I remember from camp— I went to Episcopalian camp. It was nice, because at my church, they would tell my parents like, “Jesse should go to Episcopalian camp.” And they would say, “Hahaha, not gonna happen.”

And then they'd be like, “Well, because you're poor, we'll pay for it.”

And they were like, “Later, chump!”

(They laugh.)

[00:35:00]

John Hodgman: And then they shipped you right off!

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. But it was very nice. But the classic camp activities that I remember were canoes—which I did not want to get involved in. Archery—which everyone wanted to get involved in, so it was really hard to get a spot in archery class. And sloppy joe's, which I still have a great fondness for.

John Hodgman: My camp memories, I went to two separate two-week sessions at Burgess Overnight Camp, which is a YMCA camp on Cape Cod. I did it two summers in a row. Why I went back, I will never know! Because my memories were primarily listening to kids cry themselves to sleep. (*Chuckles.*)

(*Jesse “aw”s.*)

Jennifer Marmor: Oh no.

John Hodgman: And bug juice! And ticks!

(*Jennifer “eugh!”s.*)

My first introduction to ticks, and probably my first introduction to Lyme Disease. We had a big camp— There was an infestation in New England at that time of *lymantria dispar*, which went by a different name, but now we call it the spongy moth—an invasive moth. And the caterpillars would do real damage to trees. So, at the end— We had sort of like Camp Olympics at the end where people would try to, you know, swim as many laps or collect as many leeches on their body from the lake. This is probably one of the reasons that I hate lakes from the start.

And I proposed that we put together a team to smash spongy moth caterpillars and collect a bounty for as many as we could kill. And that was what camp was to me—just like running around in the muck in the woods, covering up the bottom soul of your Keds with the guts of spongy moth caterpillars. It was so gross. I decided I didn't like camp, because I actually love shower curtains and other forms of privacy.

Jesse Thorn: Oh, wow.

Jennifer Marmor: You didn't have shower curtains?!

Jesse Thorn: There was definitely shower curtains in my camp.

(*Jennifer agrees with alarm.*)

John Hodgman: Oh, no. We didn't have shower curtains.

Jennifer Marmor: Oh my! That's like the—

John Hodgman: And all of the counselors were these young people who just were playing mind games with us all the time. They would tell us that Hatchett Harry lived in the woods.

(*Jennifer hums knowingly.*)

And several of them claimed to have seen the Loch Ness monster, because they were from Scotland. And we just believed it all.

Jennifer Marmor: Yeah, we had camp legends like that. Like, Alfonso was the ghost at our camp, who was a—

Jesse Thorn: Alfonso, huh?

Jennifer Marmor: —former kitchen staff employee—or you know, camp person who—

Jesse Thorn: He was mad the kids didn't like his ravioli?

Jennifer Marmor: No, he was mad because somebody spilled hot soup on him and terrorized the kids because of that.

Jesse Thorn: I can understand that. If someone spilled hot soup on me, you know what I do? Terrorize children.

(Jennifer agrees.)

John Hodgman: Our daughter went to camp in Maine and loved it! So, you know, she had a different— She went to the same camp that Ben Stiller went to. Not at the same time.
(Chuckling.) In fact, they told her that Ben Stiller was a ghost who still lived at the camp.

Jennifer Marmor: Oh my god.

Jesse Thorn: Well, someone had spilled soup on him.

(Jennifer agrees.)

John Hodgman: That's right. He was forever— Actually, I made a mistake. Ben Stiller was not the ghost. The terrifying ghost of Hidden Valley Camp was the ghost of Andy Dick.

(Jennifer “ayyy”s.)

Jesse Thorn: Oh no!

John Hodgman: Yeah, scary. Scary stuff.

Jennifer Marmor: That is terrifying!

John Hodgman: Alright, now let's go to a break.

Jesse Thorn: We'll be back in just a second on the memo mailbag.

Transition: Three gavel bangs.

John Hodgman: Say, here's a member of the J squad. Janine in Portland, Oregon—I'm glad to know Janine has not died of dysentery—has a question, not for me, but for you, Jesse!

She says, “I'm an ex-librarian who loves collection management and clothes. Jesse, as a menswear expert with a large wardrobe, do you have a method for managing your wardrobe?”

That's a good question. I never thought to ask how many garments you would ballpark estimate you got, and where do you keep 'em all?

Jesse Thorn: Infinity. (*Chuckles.*) So, like there was no question that when we— In my old house, there was like a semi-finished basement type room. Like, a rec room kind of thing. It was not the greatest of rooms.

John Hodgman: Never is.

Jesse Thorn: But what we ended up doing was we just had some closet people build one of those particle board closets across one of the whole walls of the room. Made the room— whatever—three feet smaller? Two-and-a-half feet smaller? But we needed somewhere to put my clothes. In our current home when we moved, it was like there's no question that we have to move somewhere with some heavy closet space. So, in the bedroom that I share with my wife, in lieu of a reflecting pool, there's a walk-in closet that's as small as a walk-in closet could be—if that makes sense.

[00:40:00]

Like, you can walk into it, but maybe there's two feet of depth of walking in, something like that.

John Hodgman: You're not gonna be filming get ready with me TikToks in there.

Jesse Thorn: No. Not in the slightest.

John Hodgman: Not enough room. Not enough room.

Jesse Thorn: So, I keep my clothes primarily in that space with a rack of— And when I moved in, it was pretty much empty. But Linda Holmes convinced me to go to the Container Store and have the Container store install there—well, my handyman installed it, but I bought at the Container store a closet system.

(*Jennifer “hm”s with interest.*)

John Hodgman: A system! You're a dad with a system.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. Linda Holmes told me, “Just go get the system. It's too expensive, but it's better than trying to figure it out yourself. And you can change it, and they will always

have it at the Container Store, or in Sweden, or wherever it is that they make it. So, I bought the closet system; handyman installed it. So, its—on the left-hand side as you enter, two rows of shirts, top and bottom.

(John affirms.)

Directly in front of you, slide-out shoe racks.

(John whistles and Jennifer “ooh”s.)

To the right: casual coats, sport coats, and a set of bins in which I keep sweaters and stuff. Then in my living room—*(correcting himself)* in my dining—*(trying again)* in my bedroom; bedroom is the room I'm looking to name. I have a chest of drawers.

John Hodgman: In my living—I mean, my den—I mean my rec—I mean my... bedroom.

Jesse Thorn: In my chest of drawers, I keep t-shirts, socks and underwear, pants, blue jeans. I have those kind of like multi-tiered pant hangers in my closet for pants that keep a crease. Everything else is rolled. Things that don't keep a crease are rolled. And then underneath my bed, I have a bin with like a winter coat that I don't wear that much but I love, and a bin with like formal socks. I also have necktie racks in the closet. Didn't mention that. And a thing of scarves, like an Ikea hanger that hangs from a coat rack. You know what I mean? With holes in it? Slots in it? For shoes, I think. But in this case, I keep scarves in it. And then I also have seasonal clothes in the shed *(laughs)* that I rotate in and out upon the changing of the season. So, like four or five months a year in LA you can wear warm clothes, somewhat.

John Hodgman: A little bit.

Jesse Thorn: And then eight months of the year, you kind of gotta wear shorts. Or equivalent, you know.

John Hodgman: You ought to charge admission to that walk-in closet, you know? I think a lot of people would like to walk into that closet.

Jesse Thorn: They're not allowed in there. That's Daddy's special place.

John Hodgman: *(Sagely.)* That's Daddy's special place.

(Jennifer represses laughter.)

Let me ask you this. A bad thing happened, Jesse. And that is: my prized shaggy dog black sweater from J Press that I got for myself as a Christmas present several years ago from the J Press in New Haven has a moth hole in it.

(Jennifer gasps.)

And that's on me! 'Cause I knew that if I put it up on that shelf, that's where the moths go! And we had some moth mitigation, but it didn't work. I also knew not to hang it up on a hanger, 'cause that's bad for sweaters. Right, Jesse?

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. Very bad for sweaters.

John Hodgman: Now my wife—who's a whole human being in her own right—is also a very handy person with needles. And I'm talking about knit craft. I'm not talking about, uh... finding a vein for an IV for me.

(Jennifer laughs.)

I hope that has not happened yet in our marriage, and I hope it never will. But she's gonna affect a repair. But my question to Jesse Thorn is: what are we gonna do about the moths? How do I prevent this from happening in the future? Do you deal with moth mitigation, or is that not a Los Angeles thing?

Jesse Thorn: John, in a few days, I am going to be tenting my home...

(John gasps.)

Because of moths.

(Jennifer gasps.)

John Hodgman: Nooo! Wow! You heard here first, folks!

Jesse Thorn: I will also say that they did not tent my home for termites before I bought it a few years ago. And so, we don't know when it was last tented for termites. So, it probably would be a good idea for us to tent it for term— You're supposed to do that every 10 or 15 years anyway.

Jennifer Marmor: Whoa! For real?!

Jesse Thorn: Yeah.

Jennifer Marmor: *(In a silly, nasal voice.)* Oh boyyy.

(John mimics her.)

Jesse Thorn: But, uh—*(chuckles)* but that said, I'm doing it for the moths. It's not— There's like a little bit of evidence of maybe some termites, but not enough for it to be like, “Oh, we gotta get rid of the termites.”

[00:45:00]

Moth mitigation is really difficult. You can keep moths down; you can keep them suppressed through other means. But actually getting rid of them is nearly impossible if they're endemic in your home.

Jennifer Marmor: Are they moths like in your closet, chomping in your clothes? Or is it like pantry moths?

Jesse Thorn: No, it's clothes moths. We did have some pantry moths when we first moved in, but we got rid of those. Those are relatively easy to get rid of.

John Hodgman: Look, the number one thing that I hate about clothes moths is that they eat your clothes. You know what the number two thing I hate about them is?

Jesse Thorn: What?

John Hodgman: Too hard to say those two words together. (*Annunciating purposefully.*) Clothes moths.

Jesse Thorn: So, there are things that you can do. So, I actually got really intimately familiar with what you do with clothes moths because of this situation. So, obviously you can have pest control people put a sort of like contact poison on your floor. This is safe for people and pets, but poisonous for bugs. They sort of spray that on surfaces, and that will kill the flappers.

John Hodgman: You're talking about the wing-ed moths, the insects that we call moths. Not the happy-go-lucky, transgressive young women of the 1920s who were cutting their hair off and wearing those slinky dresses and challenging—redefining femininity in the urban environment for the 20th century.

Jennifer Marmor: Putting rouge on their knees.

Jesse Thorn: Mm-hmm. Rouge on their knees.

John Hodgman: (*Scatting to himself.*) That's a moth's favorite song.

Jesse Thorn: The pest control will also have you—will also put that in the like corners of your home. Moths like dark places where they're undisturbed. They like to eat dust and natural fibers, especially wool. And they're attracted to the oil on those fibers. You know, wool has lanolin, wool fat, but it also could have the oils from your body if it's clothing. Right? And—

John Hodgman: Yeah. I make my own wool fat. Definitely.

Jesse Thorn: (*Chuckles.*) And they like to hide in places where it's dark and where they won't be disturbed and where they can munch away.

John Hodgman: Now, when you talk about the munchers, I always understood that the munchers were the worms or the larva, and the flappers are the flappers. But they're not the munchers, right?

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. So, there's male and female moths.

(Jennifer laughs.)

It's the larvae that eat your clothes. There's male and female moths, and I can't—I think the males flap around, and the females crawl around mostly. They can fly, and both of them are bad at flying. Like, clothing moths are very bad at flying. Cedar is not demonstrated to be effective. That's a myth.

Jennifer Marmor: I KNEW IT!

John Hodgman: That's me snapping my fingers in discontent!

Jesse Thorn: The things that you can do to kill them are— You can essentially kill them with heat, same as you could with bedbugs. So, if you put something in the dryer for more than about 20 minutes on more than medium, that will kill it. But obviously you can't—

John Hodgman: Maybe if you have some moth eggs or some little, teeny moth larvae that you don't know about. Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. Washing and drying will kill them, and dry cleaning will kill them. But ultimately—like, I just have a lot of wool rugs in my house. And even—I got all my rugs cleaned, and I took all my clothes to the dry cleaner, which was like *(chuckling painfully)* a \$1,000 project or something.

(Jennifer makes a pained noise.)

It was a very expensive project. And you know, getting my rugs cleaned wasn't cheap either. And ultimately, while I did get clean rugs and clean clothes out of that process, it did not completely get rid of the moths. Moth balls also work, but they're super poisonous.

Jennifer Marmor: They smell disgusting.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, they smell disgusting. So, it makes sense to store your clothes with moth balls, but it doesn't make sense to keep your clothes with moth balls in your home.

John Hodgman: So, when you say store your clothes with mothballs—like, out of the winter season, take your wool-fat-rich sweaters and other tempting treats for the munchers and the flappers, and put them away somewhere with mothballs. Do you put 'em in like a— You know, like there are those people who put them in the plastic bags, and they suck the air out of them, and they put them underneath their bed or whatever? Is that something that works or no?

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. Mothballs can damage those bags. So, they say hard plastic is better than soft than plastic. But you know, honestly, I've put them in those bags, and I haven't had a problem.

[00:50:00]

You don't want them touching it directly. But I haven't had a problem. But yeah, it's like this big, complicated thing. There are also ways to detect and suppress them. There are moth traps with pheromones that work very well, but they only attract the flappers. And so, ultimately, like serious pest control people say like that is a good way to monitor whether they are in your house, but it is not a way to kill everything, 'cause it can't kill the larvae. Right?

John Hodgman: If you're catching a lot of flappers with a pheromone trap, that's just an indication that you have a problem. Right.

Jesse Thorn: A problem, yeah. And you also can use this kind of wasp—microscopic wasp that's called a Trichogramma, I think it's called. If I remember correctly. That's what they use to control these sorts of moths in like an agricultural situation, outdoors. And you can buy them live on the internet. They are microscopic and don't do anything to people. You can't see them or anything. You can see where their eggs were in the little card that they give you. They give you like a little, tiny card that has the eggs glued to it. And the eggs are like the size of a grain of sand, but you can see those. But the actual insect that they release, you can't see. And those do eat the larvae, but they have to get to them and—you know, in a big old house like mine—creaky, old, dusty, wool rug house, it just—

All these things that I did that weren't tenting, my house did suppress them. Like, I haven't had clothes ruined since I did all this stuff. But they only suppressed them. They didn't—they haven't—

John Hodgman: They didn't take care of the root problem.

Jesse Thorn: They haven't taken care of them, and I didn't wanna spend the rest of my life—you know—having to defend against them actively. And instead, I prefer to... kill everything in my house. (*Chuckles.*) And then just be more careful about what comes into my house and making sure that it gets cleaned if it's secondhand, before it comes in.

John Hodgman: Now I presume that when you tent your house, y'all are gonna have to leave, and that means going through your walk-in closet to your own personal Narnia for a little while before you can come back into the house. Right? Is that what's happening?

Jesse Thorn: I'm gonna drive to my cabin. The other really intense thing about this is— So, we're recording this in the leadup to Thanksgiving. We're gonna do this over the Thanksgiving weekend. And one of the things we have to do is remove all the food from my house, for the fumigation, you know? So, we're just gonna have to spend a day just dragging everything from our refrigerator, freezer, and closets into the shed where I sit right now—my office shed—including the freezer. We're gonna carry the freezer over here. I think we'll just get rid of what's in the fridge, pretty much. But—

John Hodgman: You're gonna carry the whole—? What do you have? A chest freezer?! It's been a long time since I've been to your house.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, I have a chest freezer. Yeah.

John Hodgman: You're gonna bring the whole freezer over. So, the stuff will remain frozen, right?

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, exactly. So, I don't just have to throw away everything that's in my freezer.

John Hodgman: Right. Okay. I got you. Right.

Jesse Thorn: I got food in there. You know?

John Hodgman: You got food in your freezer.

Jesse Thorn: I buy some meat at Costco sometimes.

John Hodgman: Yeah. Boy, oh boy.

Jesse Thorn: So, and then the other thing is you can't—

John Hodgman: (*Muttering.*) Cover boy over here. Costco connection cover boy.

Jesse Thorn: You have to leave your windows open or something while they do it. And so, you have to remove your valuables from your house while they do it, because—you know—

Jennifer Marmor: Security.

Jesse Thorn: Obviously, someone going into your house is risking their life because of the poisonous gas.

John Hodgman: The fumigation, right. Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: But you can't lock the doors. So, all the jewelry (*chuckling*) has to get put in our cars and go with us to our cabin over the weekend.

John Hodgman: Sounds like a wild Thanksgiving. I just picture your whole family sitting around in the cabin on Thanksgiving feasting on whatever food you have hauled up there, and just draped in jewels, all five of you. Just draped in jewelry.

Jennifer Marmor: So glamorous!

Jesse Thorn: *(Laughing.)* Just wearing all of the jewelry. In my closet, I also have like a— You know what an engineer's tool chest looks like? Like, it has a lid that comes out, and then a front flap that goes out and then down underneath it? Like, it flaps out and then under, and then there's little drawers? I have one of those that has my jewelry in it as well.

John Hodgman: Okay.

(Jennifer whispers a “wow.”)

Well, you heard it here, first, everybody.

[00:55:00]

Jesse Thorn's fumigating his house in a couple of days. That means the Jesse Thorn wardrobe closet will be closed! The Museum of Pocket Squares will be closed for a period of time. Do not try to get in. Jesse, I have been secretly selling tickets to your closet while we've been talking.

Jesse Thorn: I keep my pocket squares in clear, plastic shoe bins.

John Hodgman: Good. That'll help people figure them out when they go into your house to steal them.

Transition: Three gavel bangs.

John Hodgman: Jesse, as of this recording now, it has been almost exactly a year since you tented your house for moths. How'd it go? Any of those little flappers make their way back into your clothes?

Jesse Thorn: I think I got rid of them. I'm like 95%. I've seen a moth, but I think it was just a standard moth.

John Hodgman: Standard moths.

Jesse Thorn: The way you can tell is a standard moth wants to go towards the light bulb, and clothes moths don't care about light bulbs.

John Hodgman: I did not know that! That's a great hack. We're influencers. Great hack.

Jesse Thorn: Thank you. Let's take a quick break. When we come back, more letters from the members-only mail— Wait a minute! The mailbag has moth holes!

John Hodgman: Oh no!

Transition: Three gavel bangs.

Promo:

Music: Plucky orchestral music.

Mark Gagliardi: Ready, go.

Hal Lublin: Knock, knock.

Mark: Who's there?

Hal: *We Got This.*

Mark: With Mark and Hal?!

Hal: Oh, you knew this one! *(Giggles.)*

Mark: *(Sighs.)* We can't put that out as an ad.

Hal: We just did! New episodes every week on MaximumFun.org or wherever you get your podcasts. Now, it's hewn in rock!

Mark: Hewn in rock!?

Hal: Yeah! *(Chuckle.)*

Mark: How do you hew something in rock?!

Hal: With a chisel.

Mark: There's only one “hue” in rock, and it's Huey Lewis. *(Chuckles at himself.)*

Hal: And the news is: *We Got This with Mark and Hal* is available every week on MaximumFun.org!

Mark: *(Flatly.)* I walked right into that.

(They break into quiet laughter.)

(Music.)

Promo:

Music: Bright, enchanting holiday music.

Speaker: Do you need a gift for a MaxFun fan in your life? Or maybe you need some ideas to fill up a wish list of your own. Heck, maybe you just wanna pick up something for yourself as a little treat. Well, the MaxFun Holiday gift guide is here for all of your gift giving and gift wanting needs at MaximumFun.org/giftguide.

Of course, there's show merch—like clothing, hats, bookmarks, stickers, even a candle—but there's also a bunch of other cool stuff made by your favorite hosts, like comic books, graphic novels, music, art, and jewelry. Go check out the gift guide, and make sure you order soon so things get there in time for the holidays.
MaximumFun.org/giftguide.

(Music fades out.)

Transition: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Judge John Hodgman, our shop is full of holiday gift ideas at MaxFunStore.com. Have you heard about all this great holiday merchandise? First of all, we got our new caps.

John Hodgman: The right hat and the wrong hat.

Jesse Thorn: Exactly. Every episode on this program, we say, “Only one can decide.”

John Hodgman: Who's right? Who's wrong? Only I can decide. But guess what? You could make my decision a lot easier if you put hats on your family's head that say right or wrong.

Jesse Thorn: We also have our brand new candle, which comes with a pure justice smell, and our comfy clothes for all you cozy goths out there—matching sweats and a cozy hoodie all at MaxFunStore.com, along with our other great *Judge John Hodgman* merchandise and merchandise from other MaxFun shows!

John Hodgman: Maybe someone in your life doesn't want any more things. I understand it. Maybe they prefer experiences. Well, guess what? We've got an experience! Why don't you get them tickets to our live show coming up in January at San Francisco Sketchfest?! It's always fun when we go back for San Francisco Sketchfest. Indeed, that's one of my most treasured weekends of the year. No joke!

Jesse Thorn: MaximumFun.org/events is where you can find the dates and get those tickets. That link will also be with the other links in this episode description. January 18th at Marines Memorial Theater. And if you live in the San Francisco Bay Area, we need your cases. So, go

to MaximumFun.org/jjho. Make sure to tell us that you're in the Bay Area. We need cases to put on the stage at San Francisco Sketchfest. And if you're looking for a digital gift for someone, you can gift a membership to Maximum Fun. That's the gift of the member mailbag, John!

John Hodgman: That's right!

Jesse Thorn: All you gotta do is go to MaximumFun.org/join. Five bucks a month will do it. \$5 a month at MaximumFun.org/join, and you can be laughing along to the membo mailbag—or your special person can be.

John Hodgman: It's like a whole, separate, monthly podcast that you get along with all of the other bonus content. And indeed, the pleasure and—I hope—honor of knowing that you are supporting not just the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast, but the entire Maximum Fun Network—a listener supported network that is owned by its employees. It's a good thing. Jesse, you've got some stuff available and the Put This On Shop as well, right?

[01:00:00]

Jesse Thorn: Indeed. If you wanna buy a one-of-a-kind special treasure, go to PutThisOnShop.com. Use the code JUSTICE, and we will give you 10% off all of the vintage and antique items in the Put This On Shop, plus everything else—like our baseball caps, which are handmade here in the United States one at a time, or hand printed posters for the Bullseye 25th anniversary, our scarves and pocket squares—which are all handmade here in the United States. All kinds of stuff for men and women and everybody else at PutThisOnShop.com, and you can use the code JUSTICE for 10% off everything.

John Hodgman: All those links are available in the show notes of the show page, as well as on our YouTube page, [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](https://www.youtube.com/@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod). You can get your holiday shopping done right now, but shall we get back to the mailbag?

Jesse Thorn: Indeed.

Transition: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: It's the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. With me is Judge John Hodgman.

John Hodgman: Jesse, you know what I love about the members-only mailbag?

Jesse Thorn: Tell me.

John Hodgman: I have learned about so many niche subreddits. Somehow—*(laughs)*, dogs on roofs, magnet fishing. These are the subreddits that have changed my life. *(Chuckles.)*

Jesse Thorn: r/keychains.

John Hodgman: And somehow you manage to find a new subreddit related to our letters, pretty much once an episode. We're about to share a letter about changing the toilet paper roll. Listener, believe me when I say you'll never guess the niche subreddit that Jesse presents us with at the end of this conversation.

Jesse Thorn: *(Laughs.)* I remember this!

John Hodgman: You're thinking of something, and you're wrong. You should listen to it. Let's go.

Transition: Three gavel bangs.

John Hodgman: We got a letter here. This is a follow up to our last month's membo mailbag. Those of you who didn't hear it, a person named David in Seattle wrote to complain that his wife doesn't replace the toilet paper on the roll when, presumably, she finishes using it—or when it is done for whatever reason. Doesn't replace the toilet paper on the roll. Just leaves a bare, cardboard tube rattling around on there. And he didn't tell us her name, either to protect her identity for this crime. Or! Maybe he forgot her name. I don't know. But we were curious as to why this person didn't replace toilet paper and also what her name was. And guess what? We found out.

Her name is Dora. And boy, did Dora deliver. Dora wrote this letter.

“The reason I don't replace the toilet paper on the roll is simple. I hate it. I hate doing it.”

Which is... actually a pretty good reason. *(Chuckles.)* It's what I speculated was the reason. It's annoying.

Dora goes on to write, “The springy things suck, and it always falls apart.” Again, we talked about this! “I find the sound that the springy—” We're talking about the spring loaded—What would you call it? An axle? What's the thing?

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. *(Beat.)* I'm gonna go with axle.

Jennifer Marmor: Toilet thing...

Jesse Thorn: I like axle.

Jennifer Marmor: Does an axle spin?

John Hodgman: Well, you think the toilet paper roll thingy doesn't?!

Jennifer Marmor: You're right!

Jesse Thorn: The spindle?

John Hodgman: Well, I mean the spindle I think is probably... I think that's about right. If I look—if I—“toilet paper spindle.” (*Keyboard sounds.*) Yeah. It's called a spindle.

Jennifer Marmor: Boom.

John Hodgman: It's called a spindle, and it's spring loaded inside, so that you can angle it in between the two armatures that hold it. And it is very annoying to me. Dora, I agree with you. But I hadn't thought about the sound it makes when it hits the floor. But I should have, because it always hits the floor. It always falls out. And then you have to scuttle around like a bathroom crab trying to find it.

(*Jennifer wheezes into giggling.*)

I think Jennifer Marmor knows what I'm talking about.

Jennifer Marmor: Bathroom crab is so funny!

John Hodgman: Yeah, you scuttle around like a bathroom crab trying to get it, and then you have to— And then you put the toilet paper on it. And then it goes squeaky-squeak as you put it in between the armatures, and then you realize you put it on the wrong way. 'Cause the toilet paper has to come over the top.

Jennifer Marmor: Oh yeah.

John Hodgman: Right? Over the top, into the room.

Jennifer Marmor: No question.

John Hodgman: Jesse's being very silent. I hope you agree with us on this one, Jesse.

Jesse Thorn: I'm thinking about— Bathroom crab just made me think about Bathroom Monkey. Do you remember Bathroom Monkey?

John Hodgman: No, I don't.

Jennifer Marmor: No!

Jesse Thorn: It was a *Saturday Night Live* sketch from one of the lesser years of *Saturday Night Live* in the early 1990s, when things were a little up in the air and messy.

John Hodgman: Yeah. A little dicey. A little dicey on *30 Rock* then.

Jesse Thorn: But a truly special one. And I don't know if Jack Handey wrote it; it has a Jack Handey vibe. It was— Janeane Garofalo was the performer. It was a television commercial

parody. And (*chuckling*) it's for a monkey that cleans your bathroom. For up to eight whole months!

[01:05:00]

And then she says, "I don't know where monkeys come from. I don't know how they reproduce. I don't know how they eat! But I do know one thing. They were born to clean bathrooms. And when its cleaning power is all used up, simply pick up another in any of three decorative colors!"

(*Struggling with laughter.*)

When its cleaning power's all used up! (*Cackles.*)

John Hodgman: Sometimes those *Saturday Night Live* bits, they just hit the right way. They just hit right.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah! You're talking about the topical parodies with politician impressions, right? (*Sarcastically.*) That's always the best part of *Saturday Night Live*!

(*John and Jennifer confirm disingenuously.*)

Oh, we all agree. That's *aa*always the best part of *Saturday Night Live*.

John Hodgman: They call me Cold Open Boy, 'cause I love those cold opens.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. They're never—

John Hodgman: And it's someone imitating a politician and laughing at us.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. Here's the thing that happened this week, slightly differently!

John Hodgman: No, but those timeless weird ones are always fun to me.

Jesse Thorn: Oh, the best. The best.

(*Jennifer agrees.*)

A lot of geniuses working on that television show.

John Hodgman: And by the way? One incredible genius who's writing for *Saturday Night Live* right now?

John & Jesse: (*In unison.*) Carl Tart.

John Hodgman: Carl Tart! If you folks don't know who Carl Tart is, go find out. That's all.

Jesse Thorn: Go watch that video—(*dissolving into laughter*) go watch the video about—

Man, one time I complained on *Jordan, Jesse, Go!* about how long it had been since anyone had called me “young blood,” which is basically like only when I was a young man, but also when I lived in a neighborhood where there were a lot of guys that were likely to call me young blood. And somebody sent me a video that Carl Tart made that was like, “When you're on the basketball court, and an old man is calling you young blood,” and it was so funny. That's all. I'm just saying, Google “Carl Tart young blood”. Watch that on your Instagram reels or whatever, 'cause it is hee-larious.

John Hodgman: C-A-R-L, space, T-A-R-T.

Jesse Thorn: I was grateful you introduced me to Carl Tart! Just the other day— I'd never met him before, and we ran into him at the airport in San Francisco!

John Hodgman: The airport! Yeah. That was really fun. I'm gonna text him this afternoon.

Jesse Thorn: Anyway. If you ask me, this whole thing about the toilet paper roll is nuts.

John Hodgman: What do you mean?!

Jesse Thorn: If that's what they've decided, that's what they've decided. I don't think we should tell them to get divorced.

John Hodgman: What, do you mean Reddit?

Jesse Thorn: I'm gonna presume— Yeah, I know. And I'm gonna presume that David is sincere in answering this question, and he is not just trying to preserve his marriage. Because it isn't worth getting into a fight with your spouse over, for sure.

Jennifer Marmor: Sorry, I don't think that John finished reading the letter, 'cause there's some more information here that I feel like our listeners need to know!

John Hodgman: Right. So, let's get back into it. Sorry about that. So, this is— To remind, this is a letter from Dora, David's wife. Dora does not replace the toilet paper on the roll after she or anyone finishes using it. And this annoys David. And the reason that Dora doesn't do it is because replacing it annoys her! But she counters: “David doesn't even mind replacing the role. I know this, because I asked him. He likes doing it. He's the person for the job! And I am generally the tidier one in our relationship. Let me have this! Finally, while David does replace the roll, he puts the empty tubes—the cardboard tubes—on the shelf in the bathroom instead of throwing them out, and they accumulate there ‘til I carry them all down to recycling. At the end of the day, isn't this tomato/tomahto?”

Now, this is where I get into it. I don't think this is— Is this tomayto/tomahto?! “Tomato, Tomato” is a song about minor differences of pronunciation. It's the same thing, just pronounced a little bit differently. But what Dora is saying here is that: “Doesn't David's laziness, by refusing to throw out the cardboard paper tubes, even out my laziness—” And I think that it's laziness, ultimately. “—in not replacing the toilet paper roll?”

I don't— Tat's not tomayto/tomahto to me. Sorry, Dora. So, let's call the whole thing off in that regard. But Jennifer Marmor, you wanted me to read the rest of this letter. What do you think? Is this a big revelation to you?

Jennifer Marmor: Well, I think the fact that she asked David, and he says he doesn't mind doing it— You know, it's like he really just wanted to write in to call her out! Put her on blast.

John Hodgman: If Dora is a reliable narrator.

(Jennifer “oooh”s thoughtfully.)

Jesse Thorn: That's the thing here! Like, if he didn't mind doing it, why'd he write in? He told her he didn't mind doing it, because what are you gonna say? “Yes, I mind that.” Maybe.

Jennifer Marmor: I would!

Jesse Thorn: *(Defeatedly.)* Okay.

John Hodgman: He should if he does!

Jesse Thorn: Is that why Shane always calls me in tears?

[01:10:00]

Jennifer Marmor: Oh. Maybe

John Hodgman: David, if you have said to Dora that you don't mind replacing the toilet paper roll, and you meant it, then you shouldn't be writing us. If you said it to her, and you don't mean it, and you're writing us to get us to intervene—well, I'm not gonna intervene. You have to communicate more clearly. But Dora, in the mean— And by the way, David? You should be— Like, it's not tomayto/tomahto, but definitely takes two to tah-ngo.

(Jennifer wheezes a laugh.)

And you should be throwing away those empty toilet paper rolls. And Dora, I'm sorry to call you both lazy, but I mean... It's low-scale laziness, but it's like sometimes you gotta do the stuff you don't feel like doing.

Jennifer Marmor: Right.

John Hodgman: And replacing that toilet paper roll is—that's—you gotta do it! You just gotta do it. You gotta be mindful of the work you leave behind for others.

Jennifer Marmor: Or they can just keep their system, because it's like—for whatever reason, David hates taking the tubes down to the recycling or whatever it is. So, it's like, alright; he'll replace the roll, and she'll pick up the other end of that task. There are tasks in my home that I hate to do. And Shane, my husband—for those who don't know, I'm married to somebody named Shane—he'll do the things that I hate. And there's things that he hates doing, and I end up doing them.

And there are times where I'm like, “Okay, I really can't change the sheets today. Can you handle the kids' room?” You know. And he'll do it. If I ask him to, you know, he'll do it. But like, generally there are things that like we've taken on as like, “This is my domain. This is your domain.”

John Hodgman: Right. But here's the thing. I'm with you, Jennifer, in the sense that, if you guys wanna work out a compromise—David and Dora of Seattle—and like, “Well, I'm not gonna refill the toilet paper roll, but I will bring the empty rolls down to the garbage or whatever, 'cause you don't feel like doing that.” Well, look, whatever it takes for you guys to stay married. I'm not Reddit. I want you to stay married. But honestly? You gotta replace the toilet paper roll. It's like cleaning the lint screen on the dryer. You know?

Now there's—I don't wanna get into that whole fight again. I do think that it is ultimately the responsibility of the person using the dryer to double check and make sure the lint screen is clean. It is wise to clean it after you use it, but you can't do it all the time. But if you don't have a clean lint screen, you're gonna get a fire eventually. But! With this, if you use the last bit of toilet paper, and you don't replace the roll because you don't feel like it? I don't care if you've got an arrangement with David! You're setting David or anyone else next up in the bathroom up for a real crisis. That is no good.

Jennifer Marmor: And a reecal bathroom crab scuttle.

John Hodgman: Yeah, you don't— Yeah. Look, you wanna be married to— You know, you wanna be a marriage of two wonderful whole human beings in their own right, not a couple of bathroom crabs. Hey, by the way, Dora sent in a photo of their cats. (*Chuckles lowly.*) Millie, who is a black cat. And Julius—of course—orange. Orange Julius, cat, perfect.

Jesse Thorn: Ohhh. Love it.

John Hodgman: Dora says this photo— Well, I guess we'll share this photo somewhere, right? For the membo-only mailbag?

Jennifer Marmor: Yeah, on the members-only page, the Boco page.

John Hodgman: The members-only—the Boco page! You get to go see it over there.

Jesse Thorn: We can share it on our regular page and taunt people.

John Hodgman: That's true. That's true. Let's share it. Let's share and taunt. There's a lovely photo—actually, it's a very beautiful photo of. And you see Millie, the black cat, in mid-descent from a pretty cool looking piece of orange furniture, and Orange Julius getting ready to pounce—I guess on Millie! It's a real action shot. I like it. Handsome cats. Doris says, “This photo accurately shows the state of affairs between Julius and Millie. The angles are deceiving. So, let me clarify. Julius is normal size. Millie is a four-pound tiny cat.” I guess 'cause Millie is closer? I don't know how this is deceiving.

Here's what I notice here. This is a very tidy home! Dora, you said you're tidier than David, so I'm giving you full credit. You know, I have lived with two cats before, and as the host of *Get Your Pets*, an occasional afternoon talk show where I livestream with people's cats and dogs and other pets, I have seen into many homes that have had 2-24 cats in them. Even a one-cat home like mine, the whole hall pathway is now given over to various pooping and peeing stations that my dumb-dumb cat favors, depending on what day of the week it is. To see a home with two beautiful cats in it that has not been ruined by boxes—

[01:15:00]

You know, like discarded Chewy shipping boxes or whatever. And frankly, that beautiful piece of orange furniture does not seem to have a scratch on it!

Jennifer Marmor: Yeah, impressive.

John Hodgman: Good job. Good job. I feel like I'm looking at a catalog.

Jesse Thorn: Can I just share something that I found on Reddit?

John Hodgman: Yeah, please do.

Jesse Thorn: This is from the subreddit r/TerrainBuilding.

John Hodgman: Here we go.

(Jennifer “ooh”s.)

Jesse Thorn: This, by the way, a 178,000-member subreddit, r/TerrainBuilding. The question is: “most unique thing you've made from paper towel or toilet paper rolls.” Then the body is “using them as the main structure or whatever, what's the most interesting thing you've made?”

Someone made a really handsome Ewok village. That was really nice. That was the top one.

John Hodgman: Wow! Yub, yub!

(Jennifer laughs.)

Jesse Thorn: *(Suppressing a chuckle.)* It was genuinely very impressive. But there were a few other answers that I really enjoyed. One just said, “I built a triceratops for my kids.” Someone explained very carefully how they made some stalagmites. They said, “I used them as the base structure, then mixed white glue, water, and used toilet paper to shape the stalagmite around the roll.”

Someone replied to them, “Used toilet paper?”

And then they said, “Yes.”

Someone said, “With a couple ping pong balls, you can make a proper horizontal chemical tank.” Which suggests to me that there's people out there making improper horizontal chemical tanks. *(Laughs.)*

Jennifer Marmor: Don't even get me started!

John Hodgman: I don't know how you make a tank for anything out of cardboard.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. Someone— Well, if you're a terrain builder, you can.

John Hodgman: Oh, I see what you're saying.

Jesse Thorn: It's not—yeah. LloydRyan76 said, “Did a purple worm I'm quite proud of.”

Jennifer Marmor: That's nice.

John Hodgman: Wait a minute. I love purple worms, and I love all these people, Jesse. But how many of them are Maximum Fun members?

Jesse Thorn: I don't know, but I have one last one to read, John.

John Hodgman: *(Grumbling.)* Alright, alright. I'll allow it.

Jesse Thorn: This is from Grand Mage Bob.

John Hodgman: Only for you, Grand Mage Bob.

Jesse Thorn: “I save a ton of these rolls to use for school and for the kids at my work. I'm a *(unclear)* person, what can I say? But to be *(pronouncing a typo)* hon-ohst, I've never made anything from them, for myself really. What I can do is— Best I can do is I used a slice of a roll for a small part of a fantasy-themed marble maze. Just one circular room. I should make an armor from them for the kids to wear.”

(They chuckle softly.)

Jennifer Marmor: I'm speechless.

Transition: Three gavel bangs.

John Hodgman: Okay. Jennifer, Jesse, Joel, Suzy, everybody who's listening: we have two different cases about how a family should pick movies for movie night. I got two different letters about this. Amber in Bellevue, Washington—that's near Seattle; we're doing a show there—says that their family's rule is that “each member gets to pick their favorite movie” when they're all sitting down to watch movies. She says, “We grownups like to inflict upon our children classic films from our own childhoods. The kids, who are eight and ten years old—always try to make us watch a movie that they've never seen before. The adults argue that a movie you've never seen before can't be one of your favorites. The kids say they wanna pick a movie without others being able to say no.”

Alright. And before we get into the chat, Whitney writes with a similar thing. Whitney's writing from Santa Cruz, Jesse. You ever hear of that town?

Jesse Thorn: Santa Cruz, de California?

John Hodgman: Santa Cruz de California. “My husband and I used to love introducing our 11-year-old son to movies we were raised with, such as *ET*, *Nine to Five*, *Little Miss Sunshine*, and *Clifford*.” Put a pin in that. I'll come back to that in a minute. “But suddenly our son insists on watching movies we've already seen as a family! My husband and I don't want to rewatch movies. Please order our son to accept our choices.” By the way, she's in Santa Cruz. Whitney wants you to know, Jesse, that she's the groundskeeper at Porter. Does that mean anything to you?

Jesse Thorn: Yeah! I was a student at Porter College. What was your college, Jennifer?

Jennifer Marmor: I was a student at Cowell, but I graduated with Porter, because all my friends were Porter, and I wanted to have fun at graduation a little bit.

John Hodgman: Whitney graduated from Cowell in '04! You left Whitney behind to join Porter.

Jennifer Marmor: Well, I graduated in '06. So.

John Hodgman: Talk about before sunrise, before sunset! Richard Linklater should be making movies outta this generational intertwining. This is a novel in this thing. Well, so—wait a minute. So, she went to college with both of you, it would seem like. At least some overlap, right?

(Jennifer confirms.)

Jesse Thorn: I think that's true, yeah.

[01:20:00]

John Hodgman: She was at— Whitney was at Cowell— And frankly, this is all more interesting than this question. Whitney was at Cowell and then graduated instead of going into a career being a cool teen for a Japanese ESL exam.

Jesse Thorn: Hey! You guys want to go to the library and check out some books?!

John Hodgman: Yeah. Instead of doing that, she decided to go on a career path that would lead her back to Santa Cruz. Maybe she never left. She's a groundskeeper at Porter. And meanwhile, her husband Ian is the maintenance guy at Kresge. Am I saying that correctly?

Jennifer Marmor: Yeah!

John Hodgman: Yeah. Kresge's the hippie college.

(John snorts into a laugh.)

Jennifer Marmor: It is!

John Hodgman: What does it mean if you're the hippie college at Santa Cruz?

Jesse Thorn: I mean, it means the formula is powerful. *(Laughs.)*

John Hodgman: Wow. That's like double stuff Oreo of hippiness, isn't it?

Jennifer Marmor: Yeah, pretty much.

John Hodgman: Is there a stuffy jock college at Santa Cruz? Like the—

Jennifer Marmor: *(Definitively.)* College Eight.

John Hodgman: College Eight is the jocks?

Jennifer Marmor: Although they have a name now for it, but I would say College Eight.

(Jesse agrees.)

John Hodgman: Would they wear like blazers and turtlenecks and like walk around with pipes and look down at everybody? Like those snobs in *Animal House*?

Jennifer Marmor: No, it was mostly rainbow sandals and board shorts.

John Hodgman: Those are the jocks?!

(*Jesse confirms.*)

Jennifer Marmor: It's Santa Cruz! (*Laughs.*)

John Hodgman: Got it. Okay. I understand now.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. John, that's where the football team lived, John—at UC Santa Cruz.

John Hodgman: Here's my order to you, Whitney, first of all. I want you to collaborate with Ian, Maintenance Guy. I hope that's his official job title at Kresge. I want you to collaborate on a romance novel about two people falling in love on the campus of Santa Cruz. 'Cause I think that's gonna be a hot story, and you can then turn that into a film franchise. In *Episode IV: A New Romance*, Kresge meets Porter. Or whatever.

But meanwhile, what are these families to do? Is family movie night meant to be for watching new movies or rewatching old favorites? Jesse, you've got some children. Are there movies that they just wanna watch over and over and over again?

Jesse Thorn: I mean, yes. In my daughter's case, she always wants to watch like a *Sharknado* movie.

John Hodgman: (*Snorts.*) There are a lot of *Sharknados* do like. Should I watch them from the beginning, or should I watch like *Sharknado Episode IV: A New Hope* first?

Jesse Thorn: No, you shouldn't watch them.

Jennifer Marmor: At all.

Jesse Thorn: (*Suppressing laughter.*) No, they suck.

John Hodgman: Okay. I have seen a *Sharknado*, actually. I saw *Sharknado* one.

Jesse Thorn: Sometimes somebody is in there, and you're like, “You know what? They bring a lot to the table in this terrible movie.”

John Hodgman: And which one—which *Sharknado* was that?

Jesse Thorn: No, I'm not talking about one of the *Sharknados*; I'm talking about one of the people in the *Sharknados*. 'Cause they got 1,000 people in every *Sharknado*, you know?

(*John affirms.*)

And then sometimes somebody, you're like, “Yeah, this person's great. They're doing a great job. This movie sucks.”

John Hodgman: Joel, you ever watch a *Sharknado*?

Joel Mann: Never even heard of it.

John Hodgman: You watched that Maine, scary horror movie, *A Plague of Scallops*?

Joel Mann: Yes. That's what I'm watching right now.

John Hodgman: *Scallop Blizzard*, I think it's called.

Joel Mann: When Suzy was little, we watched a lot of chick flicks.

John Hodgman: Chick flicks? Like what?

Joel Mann: *Mean Girls*.

John Hodgman: *Mean Girls*? Was that like something that was rewatched a lot?

Joel Mann: No. No.

John Hodgman: No? For our family, we all watched a lot of *Sound of Music* and a lot of *Wizard of Oz*. And in fact, our daughter—who is now a graduate of college and is home briefly before starting her independent life in an unnamed American city in three weeks. The other night I was falling asleep—or no, I was woken up at 2AM by the sound of “My Favorite Things”. *(Correcting himself.)* No, excuse me. “How Do You Solve a Problem Like Maria”. My daughter had been out at a bar with friends and came home, and she was like, “I just wanna watch this movie again!”

(Jennifer laughs.)

Middle of the night. And all I wanted to do was get up and watch with her, but I had to exercise restraint, 'cause it's her life now, and that's her movie now.

Jesse Thorn: When my kids were very small, they loved the *Toy Story* movie so much that at one point, one of them somehow got set to Spanish, and they would just watch it in Spanish. They didn't care.

John Hodgman: That's a plot point of *Toy Story* two or three.

Jesse Thorn: Yes, but no. But what I'm saying is the full film was in Spanish. I don't remember if the part where Buzz Lightyear speaks in Spanish was transposed into English.

John Hodgman: Maybe Japanese!

Jesse Thorn: I was—I couldn't quite remember. But one of them would demand *Floy Story*.

(John snorts a laugh.)

“Floy Story, Floy Story!”

John Hodgman: What do you think? When you're watching movies as a family, should you try to watch as many new movies as possible, forcing your taste on your child as Whitney and Ian are trying to do? Or do you accept that your children wanna rewatch movies over and over and over again?

Jesse Thorn: I'm not opposed to my children rewatching movies, but I can't do it.

[01:25:00]

John Hodgman: You can't rewatch a movie?

Jesse Thorn: No. It takes a lot for me to just watch— Like, I'm cool with watching like a good kid's movie, like— Not like *Totoro* or something like that; that's like a legendary classic. But like *Mitchells Versus the Machines* was a very good.

John Hodgman: Everyone says that. I haven't seen that movie.

Jesse Thorn: Kids Animated film. A lot of fun. A lot of fun, that movie. But I watched it, and I'm not gonna watch it more times. Like, it's for children—like, it's for families, and it's full of stuff that I enjoyed. But like, I don't even wanna rewatch an adult movie that was made for me that I enjoyed. You know what I mean?

John Hodgman: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

Jesse Thorn: That's how I feel about it.

John Hodgman: I know what movie I wanna see again. *Hundreds of Beavers*.

Jesse Thorn: So, that is gonna be my next pick for family movie night. I'm glad that came up.

John Hodgman: Oh, *Hundreds of Beavers*? Yeah. Joel, have you heard of this movie? *Hundreds of Beavers*?

Joel Mann: No. Nope.

John Hodgman: I don't wanna say anything more other than watch the trailer, and you'll understand. It's about a guy in the wilderness of Wisconsin having problems with beavers. Literal beavers. About a hundred of them. Multiple hundreds.

Joel Mann: Sounds good. Sounds very enticing.

John Hodgman: Yeah, it's very good.

I feel like kids get something deep out of rewatching movies that they connect with. And so, I would say that even though it is often boring for adults to rewatch movies—particularly movies that are not that great; you know what I mean? But certain kids' movies, you don't wanna watch them again. Kids wanna watch them again and again and again. Like, I think adults just observe that as being annoying or immature. But I think something's happening. I think kids are really working through stuff and learning—getting a deep knowledge of characters that they clearly connect with when they do that.

So— And in particular, Whitney, if your 11-year-old son is saying, “Yeah, I'd like to watch *ET* again,”—because your taste is very good. *ET*, *Nine to Five*, *Little Miss Sunshine*, *Clifford*, those are all good movies. I don't understand how you grew up with both *ET* and *Little Miss Sunshine*. Maybe you're a time traveler!

(Jennifer chuckles.)

But you know, like whatever— They're very different eras of film. But whatever your son is connecting to in those things where he wants to see them again, I don't think that you should try to prohibit him. Indeed, you know, maybe you should try to figure out what it is that he's really responding to. That said, you know— And same deal, I should say, with Amber in Bellevue, where the situation is reversed; where the parents wanna watch familiar classics, and the kids wanna watch new stuff. I guess— And this was the sad part, because they don't want people to be able to say no to the movies that they pick. They're crying for help here, Amber, because they're feeling that they can't recommend a movie, because every time they do, apparently you're saying, “I've seen it already,” or “I don't want to.” So, they're trying to come up with new stuff, so you don't have an excuse to say no to it.

So, essentially what you need to do as parents is say yes a little bit more. Yes, a little bit more to your kids' choices, whether they wanna watch something new, and you get exposed to something new; or whether they wanna watch something old that you've seen before. Like, the point of exposing kids to culture—whatever it is—is to help them develop their taste and help them develop and explore what they respond to in storytelling. And you need to offer a little grace and not try to be the video DJ all the time there.

(Jennifer agrees.)

There's give and take, but—you know—you gotta give a little grace to these kids. What'd you say, Jennifer Marmor?

Jennifer Marmor: Yeah. I mean, Amber's whole thing is that their family has to pick a movie that's their favorite. But the thing that Amber is forgetting, maybe, is that she and her partner—you know, they have a whole lifetime. I don't know how old they are, but I would guess 30s/40s. You know, they have all of these years of being able to define what their favorites are. Their kids are eight and ten. They're still trying to figure out what their taste is.

(John agrees.)

And they don't have as broad of a library in their mind to go back to.

John Hodgman: Yeah, that's right! They have an advantage. They've got years of favorites to draw upon! The kids don't. Frankly, I wish that there was someone in my life who would just say, "Don't even think about it. Just turn on this movie." Because I am completely paralyzed by choice, every time.

(Jennifer agrees.)

And all I end up doing is just, you know, either letting our daughter march me through the death march of another five episodes of *Love Island UK*—which by the way, I love very much and enjoy quite a bit. Or I'm just watching *Stath Lets Flats* again or *Hundreds of Beavers*. *Hundreds of Beavers* is one of the first new movies I've seen in a long time, other than *Furiosa*. Which by the way? If you haven't seen *Furiosa*, what's wrong with you? Go and see it. It's the best. You see *Furiosa* yet, Joel?

(He hasn't.)

Jesse?

Jesse Thorn: *(Sadly.)* My family wouldn't go with me.

[01:30:00]

John Hodgman: Oh no! *(Chuckles.)* Oh no! I would go see *Furiosa* with you!

Jesse Thorn: I can't go myself.

John Hodgman: Why can't you go by yourself? Too busy.

Jesse Thorn: My life doesn't accommodate it. Yeah. I have to either have a child with me, or I don't get to go.

(John reacts sadly.)

I have a child who's— My oldest child is—you know, she's glad to watch *Sorority Party Massacre*. So, it's not a matter of inappropriateness; it's a matter of it being too noisy.

John Hodgman: Sure. This one is quieter than *Fury Road*, but it's still pretty noisy.

Jesse Thorn: I would say that *Fury Road* is my favorite regular movie of the last decade.

John Hodgman: Yeah. And by the way? This is the thing that I didn't like when I learned it, but it's true. That movie's nine years old. *(Laughs.)* So, get ready to anoint a new movie of the

decade. 'Cause *Fury Road* is in the rear-view mirror. You think they had rear-view mirrors in those war cars?

Jennifer Marmor: No.

Jesse Thorn: That's a good question.

Jennifer Marmor: Too big!

Jesse Thorn: (*Shouting.*) "Ten and two! Ten and two, war boys!"

John Hodgman: You think they had airbags?

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, probably so.

Jennifer Marmor: Well, sure.

John Hodgman: Yeah. Safety first.

Jesse Thorn: They were— I'll tell you this. They didn't have drum brakes. Antilock all the way.

John Hodgman: Yeah. By the way— You see *Fury Road* or *Furiosa* Joel?

(*He has not.*)

No?

Joel Mann: I just stare at TikTok all day.

John Hodgman: Joel, Suzy? *Fury Road*, *Furiosa*? Guess what? You two are having a movie night while you're here.

Joel Mann: *Mean Girls*.

John Hodgman: No! *Fury Road*, then *Furiosa*. And then *Hundreds of Beavers*. Got it? Writing it down? Très bien. Let's move on.

Jesse Thorn: I remember walking out of *Fury Road*—I went to see it with my wife in the movie theater.

John Hodgman: Walking out after it was done. Not in the middle. Right?

Jesse Thorn: No, no. After it was done. Walking out of the movie and standing there and turning to my wife and saying, “Was that the best movie I’ve ever seen?”

John Hodgman: Pretty much. Pretty much.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. From the director of *Babe: Pig in the City*.

John Hodgman: That's right!

Jennifer Marmor: That’s range!

John Hodgman: I mean, George Miller is an incredible filmmaker.

Jesse Thorn: Shares a lot of DNA with *Babe: Pig in the City*. I would say if you watch *Babe: Pig in the City* and then watch *Mad MaxFun*, you'll notice.

John Hodgman: Alright. There's a double feature for you, Joel and Suzy, while you're here visiting. *Babe Pig in the City*, double feature with *Fury Road*. *Mad Max: Fury Road*. Then *Furiosa*, *Mad Max Saga*.

Transition: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: That's it for another episode of *Judge John Hodgman*. If you wanna hear more from the members-only mailbag every single month, it's easy. You can become a member of Maximum Fun today at MaximumFun.org/join. Five bucks a month does it. You'll get access to the mailbag plus a huge archive of members-only bonus content. You can also get your holiday shopping done now with gift memberships for the special people in your life. That's MaximumFun.org/join.

Evidence and photos from the show are on our Instagram. That's [@JudgeJohnHodgman](https://www.instagram.com/JudgeJohnHodgman). We're also on TikTok and YouTube, [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJmHodgmanPod). Follow and subscribe to see our episodes and our video content.

John Hodgman: We're having a lot of fun over there on the YouTube channel, [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJmHodgmanPod). At the end of the episode “Shut Your Pay Hole”, Jesse and I talked a bit about how much we love dish towels. We love dish towels, and we're not the only ones! Our commenter of the week, Kelly Thorngate says, “I feel so seen.” Kelly, we see you, and we are so glad you are seeing us too on YouTube. If you're seeing us on YouTube right now, get in those comments and tell us what movies your family is gonna watch over the holiday weekend! I mean, it's a big weekend. What about a movie? You gonna watch a movie?

Jesse Thorn: Judge Hodgman, my daughter has announced that once Thanksgiving is complete? *Home for the Holidays*, good Thanksgiving movie, in addition to *Planes, Trains, and Automobiles*, the one everybody always cites.

(John agrees.)

But once Thanksgiving's over, until Christmas—through Christmas Day, we will only be watching Christmas entertainment. (Chuckles.)

John Hodgman: Only Christmas entertainment?

Jesse Thorn: I basically am growing a little, tiny Alonso Duralde in my house.

(John laughs.)

She refuses to watch anything but— So, I'm just— If you got a suggestion for a good Christmas episode of a television show out there, hit me up on social media or hit up *Judge John Hodgman* on social media. Because I will take all the suggestions I can get. I think there's only like one or two Christmas episodes of *Cheers*, and then I'm flying blind.

John Hodgman: Maybe the that obscure, you know, *Star Wars* holiday special or other obscure holiday special of a TV show is only available on YouTube. Make sure to share it with us! And while you're sharing things, why don't you share us on YouTube? Just press that little arrow button, and you can share our YouTube episodes and shorts with whomever you like in your life. Make sure to click that like and subscribe and everything else. It really does help people find the show.

Jesse Thorn: *Judge John Hodgman* was created by Jesse Thorn and John Hodgman. Another welcome to our new social media specialist, Megan Rosati.

[01:35:00]

The podcast is edited by AJ McKeon. Our video editor is Daniel Speer. Our producer is Jennifer Marmor.

Speaking of the holiday season, John, we need holiday recipes for our annual holiday party. If your family eats something weird or—let's say—All American, hit us up at Hodgman@MaximumFun.org or submit your disputes at MaximumFun.org/jjho.

John Hodgman: Yep. We've had tomato soup salad. We've obviously had eggnog and orange soda. We've also had eggnog and Sprite. There was a year when we enjoyed some hot mulled Dr. Pepper, I remember, Jesse—as well as all manners of unusual, idiosyncratic, charming, and sometimes... repulsive holiday appetizers and sides and main courses that have been a part of your family's tradition. Go raid Grandma's or Granddad's or Aunt Judy's recipe cards this Thanksgiving and find some nice, weird old stuff for us to make and eat on camera and microphone. Send it all over to MaximumFun.org/jjho!

Jesse Thorn: And of course, we're eager to hear about all your disputes on any subject. No case is too small. Submit those cases at MaximumFun.org/jjho. We will talk to you next time on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

Sound Effect: Three gavel bangs.

Transition: Cheerful ukulele chord.

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