

*(Three gavel bangs.)*

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Welcome to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. I'm Bailiff Jesse Thorn. This week, "States Rights... and States Left". Stephanie brings the case against her husband, Brandon. Stephanie says she's lived in 11 states, but Brandon says no! She's only lived in nine! Who's right? Who's wrong? What is Brandon talking about!? Only one can decide. Please rise as Judge John Hodgman enters the courtroom and presents an obscure cultural reference.

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

**Judge John Hodgman:** "I want to go to college for the rest of my life. Sip Bankers Club, drink Miller Light on Thirsty Thursdays and Tuesday night ice, and I can get pizza a dollar a slice."

Bailiff Jesse Thorn, please swear the litigants in.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Stephanie and Brandon, please rise and raise your right hands.

*(Chairs squeak.)*

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

*(They swear.)*

Do you swear to abide by Judge John Hodgman's ruling, despite the fact that he lives—*(correcting himself)* is from a commonwealth? He lives in a state.

*(They swear.)*

**Judge John Hodgman:** I live in a state, but I'm from a commonwealth.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** You live in a state, but you're from a commonwealth.

**Judge John Hodgman:** I'm from a commonwealth but live in a state.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Judge Hodgman, you may proceed.

**Judge John Hodgman:** , first of all, you may be seated.

*(Chairs squeak.)*

Brandon, Stephanie, thank you for being here. I am in a state... of happiness!

*(Jesse cackles.)*

Do you know why? I'm here at the new Max Fun HQ!

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** It's nice here, huh?

**Judge John Hodgman:** Sitting next to my buddy and bailiff, Jesse Thorn; joining you, Stephanie, and Brandon—away in Delaware, I believe. Am I correct?

**Stephanie:** Correct.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Fantastic. And I did a little obscure cultural reference. I sat down with my friend Jesse for lunch today before recording at one of the 17 shawarma places on one block, here in downtown LA. And he picked the best one. And I've—

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** (*Brightly.*) Jewelers love shawarma!

**Judge John Hodgman:** I don't know! I don't got a cultural reference, and he suggested not one but two! You heard one of them, Brandon and Stephanie. Can either of you name the piece of culture that I referenced as I entered this courtroom? Uhhh, why don't we start with you, Brandon? Can you guess for an immediate summary judgment in your favor what I was quoting? I'll give you a hint. I've already forgotten it.

(*They laugh.*)

**Brandon:** I don't know why, but the only thing that comes to mind is like—I think it's *Dazed and Confused*?

**Judge John Hodgman:** *Dazed and Confused*!

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** The film *Dazed and Confused* is the guess.

**Judge John Hodgman:** The film *Dazed and Confused*. Now, I understand the guess. And you know what? It's a good guess, and so I'm gonna write it down in the guess

book. Anyone watching on our YouTube channel can see that I'm not lying. I am writing it right down.

Alright, Stephanie, it's your turn to guess. What is your guess, if I may ask?

**Stephanie:** So, my prepared guess was *Breaking Away*, but I don't think it's from *Breaking Away*. So, I'm gonna say a Tim McGraw song.

**Judge John Hodgman:** A Tim McGraw song!? I don't know much about Tim McGraw. What's your what's your theory there?

**Stephanie:** It sounds like a country song to me. Like, I don't think it's a Tim McGraw song, but he's literally the only country singer that I can think of at this moment.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Alright, let's take a look at the board. Show me Tim McGraw song! (*Beat.*)

(*Mimicking a fail buzzer.*) BAH! All guesses are wrong, right, Jesse?

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** All guesses are wrong.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Alright. I bought enough time. I can't remember what it was. You suggested it to me.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** It's the frat-hop classic "I Love College" by Asher Roth!

**Judge John Hodgman:** By Asher Roth, the frat-hop classic "I Love College"!

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** One of the dumbest songs in the history of rap music. (*Laughs.*)

**Judge John Hodgman:** But you had said that your prepared guess was *Breaking Away*. Guess what the obscure cultural reference two that Jesse suggested to me was?

**Stephanie:** Was it *Breaking Away*?

**Judge John Hodgman:** It was *Breaking Away*.

**Stephanie:** Augh! (*Laughs.*)

**Judge John Hodgman:** It was Mike's monologue from *Breaking Away*. “These college kids out here, they're never going to get old or out of shape, because new ones come along every year, and they're going to keep calling us cutters. To them, it's a dirty word. To me, it's just something else I never got a chance to be.” One of the great monologues from one of the great movies about a college town. Which plays a part—specifically the college town of Bloomington, Indiana—which plays a part in today's dispute. Isn't that right, Stephanie?

**Stephanie:** It's correct. And I really wanted to wear my Rose Bowl Championship sweatshirt today, but I didn't want to buzz market.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Well, it would have been meaningless to me! So.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, I'm so tired of people buzz marketing colleges.

(*Stephanie laughs.*)

I guess now that all college football teams are actually professional sports teams where the students just travel from campus to campus getting paid by local car dealers or something?

**Judge John Hodgman:** I certainly don't know.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, it's a whole thing.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Is it University of Indiana?

**Stephanie:** Indiana University.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Indiana University. Did they win the Rose Bowl this year?

**Stephanie:** They won the national championship on Monday.

**Judge John Hodgman:** (*Blandly.*) Good jooooob, sports. And you, Stephanie. Because you went there, did you not?

**Stephanie:** Thank you! I did go there.

**Judge John Hodgman:** But you live in Delaware.

**Stephanie:** Correct.

**Judge John Hodgman:** You went to school in Indiana, at least undergraduate. But where are you from originally? Where are you from? What's your hometown? (*Ominously.*) If you have one.

**Stephanie:** This is a really tough question, because I don't feel like I have a hometown. We moved a lot when I was growing up. As you stated in the intro, I've lived in 11 states. So, I don't really feel as if I have a place to call a hometown.

**Judge John Hodgman:** You say that you've lived in 11 states.

**Stephanie:** Yes, correct.

**Judge John Hodgman:** That's your that's your wild claim that Brandon says is false. Brandon, where are you from?

**Brandon:** I am born and raised in Delaware; originally from the southern part of Delaware but now living in the northern part here.

**Judge John Hodgman:** The difference between the southern part and northern part of Delaware is about seven miles, if I remember correctly.

**Brandon:** Something like that, but you'd be surprised.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Very different worlds! Because I have driven down the Delmarva Peninsula. And it gets quite rural, does it not?

**Brandon:** It does. Very much.

**Judge John Hodgman:** That's the part of the world that you're from: the rural, southern part of Delaware on the Delmarva Peninsula.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** John, I think it's remarkable that you remembered something about Delaware.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Look, if you've ever driven down the Delmarva Peninsula, you will never forget it. *(Beat.)* Well, I almost forgot it.

*(Jesse chortles.)*

But the reason that I remember is it's got a very handy, uh— What do you what do you call a thing that helps you remember?

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Mnemonic?

**Judge John Hodgman:** Yeah, that's it. *(Chuckling.)* I gotta get a mnemonic for my mnemonic! I didn't even remember what that was!

Delmarva stands for Delaware, Maryland, Virginia. That whole peninsula, three states! Right? Right, Brandon?

**Brandon:** Correct. Yep, that is correct.

**Judge John Hodgman:** So, what is the name of your hometown? It seems like it's an easy question for you to answer.



**Brandon:** Yes, my hometown is Millsboro.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Millsboro, Delaware. Alright. Is it on the coast?

**Brandon:** No, it is inland a little bit. It's like central part of Sussex County, which is the bottom county of Delaware.

**Judge John Hodgman:** The bottom county of Delaware. *(Chuckles.)* That's its famous motto.

*(Brandon agrees with a quiet laugh.)*

Stephanie, you mentioned that that your hometown was a hard question to answer, because you moved around a lot. What was the reason for your moving around a lot?

**Stephanie:** For the first six years of my life, it was—my dad was a Marine. And then after that— I like to say that my parents just like to move, and they excused it with my dad getting promotions and transferred to other places, but he had to put himself up for those. So, I think it was partially my dad's job; partially I think my parents got bored being in one place for too long.

**Judge John Hodgman:** So, Brandon, Stephanie mentioned that she lived in 11 states growing up because of her father and family itinerancy. You say that she's wrong. Why is she wrong about her own life?

**Brandon:** So, I think she's counting some extras places she's lived and that she was going to school in some of those states. And sort of the crux of the case here is, you

know, I don't think that because you are going to school somewhere, you can actually say you've lived there.

**Judge John Hodgman:** (*Puzzled.*) Mmm, okay. Are you saying I never lived in New Haven, Connecticut?

**Brandon:** Were you going to school there at the time or for like—?

**Judge John Hodgman:** (*Mockingly.*) I don't know. Have you ever listened to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast before? All I can do is talk about it.

(*They chuckle.*)

Yeah, I went to Yale University, accredited four-year college in Southern Connecticut—specifically the New Haven campus. Do you claim that Jesse Thorn never lived in Santa Cruz?

**Brandon:** Uh, yeah, I guess so. If it's that's where he went to school. (*Laughs.*)

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** He disagrees with that cop who gave me a ticket for having my stereo too loud that one time.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Yeah! If you had known Brandon at the time, you could have told that cop, “Shut up and talk to Brandon. I don't even live here!”

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** So, the guy says, “Why is your address on your driver's license in San Francisco then?”—when I told him I lived down the street.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Oh yeah, right. Maybe— Well, wait a minute, was Brandon the cop?

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** I guess! And I said, “Well, you know, that's my home address. I'm from San Francisco. I'm here for college.”

And he said, “If you're here more than 30 days, you're supposed to change your driver's license, young man.”

**Judge John Hodgman:** Is that true?

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Yes, it is! And then he gave me a ticket that I had to drive from San Francisco to Santa Cruz to contest.

**Judge John Hodgman:** You mean if I go and spend the summer in Maine, and I don't change my driver's license every summer, I'm in violation of the law of Maine?!

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** In California it is! California's got a real short— It might have been 60 days, but yeah.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Whooooa. That's even in the same state!

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Yeah.

**Judge John Hodgman:** How about that? So, Brandon, your contention is that that Stephanie lived in two—is inflating her state count by two. One of them is Indiana, I presume. Right? Because that's why you love Bloomington so much, Stephanie?

**Stephanie:** Correct.

**Judge John Hodgman:** What'd you do in Bloomington, Indiana? You went to undergrad?

**Stephanie:** I got my—yeah, I did my undergrad there.

**Judge John Hodgman:** And what did you major in, if I may ask?

**Stephanie:** I majored in English.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Terrific! What'd you write your thesis on?

**Stephanie:** Uh, I wasn't in the honors program, so I didn't write a thesis in my undergrad. unfortunately. Not 'til grad school.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Niceee. A real cutter. She's a real cutter.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Yeah. She majored in English. What was her thesis about?  
Crumpets?

**Judge John Hodgman:** And you went to graduate school in in Bloomington as well?

**Stephanie:** I actually went to graduate school— I got my master's at Syracuse, and then I got my PhD at University of Illinois.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Oh, okay, excuse me. I thought—alright, great. So, you got your master's degree in English at Syracuse in New York?

**Stephanie:** *(Chuckling.)* I got my master's degree in television, radio, and film. And then I did my PhD in media and communications.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Oh! Oh, okay. Well, thank you, Dr. Stephanie. And that was in Illinois. Where did you go to school in Illinois, did you say?

**Stephanie:** Oh yeah, University of Illinois in Champagne.

**Judge John Hodgman:** University of Illinois in Champagne.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Sorry, Urbana.

**Stephanie:** And Urbana. Yes. *(Laughs.)*

**Judge John Hodgman:** You're out of here, Urbana.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** John, if it's in Urbana, it's just sparkling wine.

**Judge John Hodgman:** *(Laughs.)* Setting aside Illinois and Indiana—the two contested states for the moment—name the other states that you claim to have lived in, if Brandon so approves.

**Stephanie:** Okay. It was California, was born. Then I was in Japan, which isn't a state, obviously.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Ah, I would say that's a prefecture.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Although, (*chuckling*) stuff's been going down with re: geopolitics.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Yeah, that's true. By the time this is released, who knows? It might count as a state.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** I haven't looked at the master list of what's supposed to be a state. And be grateful for it.

**Judge John Hodgman:** But for the time being, at least when you were there, Japan was a sovereign nation and not a state.

**Stephanie:** Yes.

**Judge John Hodgman:** This is when your dad was in in in the armed forces.

**Stephanie:** Yes. So, that was the military base that we lived on. I guess so. Maybe. I don't know. Does that count as a state?

**Judge John Hodgman:** I don't think so.

**Stephanie:** (*Chuckling.*) And then I was in Maryland. Pennsylvania.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Alright, that's a commonwealth!

**Stephanie:** Oh, okay.

**Judge John Hodgman:** So, we can scratch that one right off!

**Stephanie:** Okay, take that one off. Then Alabama.

**Judge John Hodgman:** You might win this one by accident, Brandon.

(*Brandon chuckles.*)

If I hear one more commonwealth in this list!

**Stephanie:** I don't think I have any more.

**Judge John Hodgman:** I could give you Indiana and Illinois, and you still would have only lived in nine states. So, let's go, let's hear it.

**Stephanie:** Alright, Alabama.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Pennsylvania.

**Stephanie:** Oh, yeah. Pennsylvania. Then Alabama.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Uh-huh. State.

**Stephanie:** And then I went to Indiana for school. My parents moved to Ohio, and I lived there in the summers.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Ohio is a state.

**Stephanie:** And then—oh my gosh. Then New York.

**Judge John Hodgman:** New York is a state! They call it the New York state of mind.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Mm-hmm. You mean concrete jungle, where dreams are made of?

**Judge John Hodgman:** Where dreams are made of is the lyric. Our friend and occasional guest bailiff, Jean Grae, was just complaining to me about that lyric the other day.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** It's unbelievable that it made it to the final recording.

**Judge John Hodgman:** I mean, honestly.



**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** It is awe-inspiring. I mean, there's a lot of malapropisms in hip-hop music broadly, and I think you could broadly define that as a hip-hop record even though a lot of it is sung. But that is like an all-timer. “Concrete jungle, where dreams. Are. Made. Of.”

**Judge John Hodgman:** Where dreams are made of. They didn't have an Indiana-trained English major look over it before they finished the song.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** No.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Okay, we got you to Indiana. So far I've got Maryland, Japan—doesn't count—California, Pennsylvania—question mark—Ohio, New York.

**Stephanie:** Alabama.

**Judge John Hodgman:** That's five.

**Stephanie:** We missed one.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Alabama. Right. Okay. Thank you.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Maryland?

**Judge John Hodgman:** We already heard Maryland.

**Stephanie:** We've got Maryland, yeah. So, then it was Delaware—the first time.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Delaware, a state.

**Stephanie:** Yes. And then Illinois.

**Judge John Hodgman:** No matter what they say, it's a state.

**Stephanie:** (*Chuckling.*) Yes, barely. Wait. And then Illinois was after that.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Illinois is still in contention.

**Stephanie:** Oh yes, in contention. Then Missouri.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Missouri is state.

**Stephanie:** And then Pennsylvania again.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Okay.

**Stephanie:** And then Delaware again.

**Judge John Hodgman:** I still only get to eight.

**Stephanie:** (*Softly, shocked.*) You get to eight!?

**Judge John Hodgman:** Let's start again, one more time.

*(They laugh.)*

**Stephanie:** What if I made some up in my head? Wait, oh I missed Louisiana!

**Judge John Hodgman:** Louisianaaaa. I think that brings us to nine. Minus Pennsylvania, because that's a commonwealth. But you never lived in the commonwealth of Kentucky.

**Stephanie:** Maybe I was counting Japan as one of the states, because I didn't know how to classify it.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Well, that would be an error.

**Brandon:** It wasn't—you were only in Louisiana for school, weren't you? For like a semester?

**Stephanie:** It was a year.

*(John laughs.)*

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Louisiana was also a school?!

**Stephanie:** Yes. I think Brandon forgot about that one in this dispute, that Louisiana was also a school state.

**Brandon:** Yeah. She only went there for a year.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** (*Distressed.*) We're gonna—we're gonna need to get this straight!

(*Stephanie laughs.*)

Because what I'm hearing is that we don't have a list of 11. I'm hearing that Brandon's dispute is based on whether they were schools! And he's only counting three of the four schools school places!

**Judge John Hodgman:** Yeah. What about New York, Brandon? Does that not count?

**Stephanie:** I also—I stayed in New York after school, so he gives me that one. So, I lived there apart from being in school, also.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Well, this is what I remember now. Maryland. That's about where it stops for me.

(*Stephanie laughs.*)

Maryland. Japan.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Weirdly, no. All I—

**Judge John Hodgman:** *(Talking over him.)* Alabama. Ohio. Illinois—that's in contention; I'm taking it away for a moment. Pennsylvania—technically a commonwealth, but I'll allow it. Louisiana. New—did I do New York already? I can't keep track.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** The only one I remember is Delaware, ironically.

**Judge John Hodgman:** That's weird.

*(Three gavel bangs.)*

*(ADVERTISEMENT)*

*(Three gavel bangs.)*

**Judge John Hodgman:** Anyway, you've lived all over the place. You've lived in many different regions and many different nations, and yet it says here that you have a Midwestern spirit. You consider yourself to have a Midwestern spirit. Is that correct, Stephanie?

**Stephanie:** I do. Yes.

**Judge John Hodgman:** What does that mean to you?

**Stephanie:** I think percentagewise, I've spent the most time in the Midwest; in Midwestern states.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Indiana, Illinois, Ohio. So, what does a Midwestern spirit mean to you?

**Stephanie:** Oh yeah. So, it's like I've been there the longest, but also I think that like people there are chatty. Like, I could talk to people at the grocery store in line and they wouldn't think that was weird. They think that's weird here. I would smile at people in the street, and they didn't like give me a grimace. And I feel like on the East Coast, they tend to do that more often.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Yeah. When did you meet and where in all these different places did you meet?

**Brandon:** We met when she was—we were both actually living in Pennsylvania at the time. And we met online, and she was teaching at Westchester University. And I worked in Westchester, so that's where we first met and started dating. And then eventually we moved to Delaware and been there ever since.

**Judge John Hodgman:** So, you were teaching at Westchester University. Is that in in the Pittsburgh area?

**Stephanie:** It's like a suburb of Philly.

**Judge John Hodgman:** But Brandon, you were teaching at the school as well? Did I understand that correctly?

**Brandon:** No, I was just living in Westchester for my current job that I have.

**Judge John Hodgman:** So, how many states have you lived in, by your own rubric?

**Brandon:** So, for me, I've only lived in two.

**Judge John Hodgman:** And they are Delaware and Pennsylvania.

**Brandon:** Right, which may be a commonwealth. (*Laughs.*)

**Judge John Hodgman:** Well, I'm gonna allow it in this case, because I'm already too confused. Did you go away to college to any other state or Japanese prefecture?

**Brandon:** I did not. I stayed in-state and went to school in Delaware.

**Judge John Hodgman:** So, when did this come up in your relationship that you decided that Stephanie had not actually lived in the states where she had—I don't know how you would put this—lived?

*(Stephanie laughs.)*

**Brandon:** So, I believe we were driving somewhere, and we were discussing the question of where you're from, and Stephanie was going through the list of all those places that she was just trying to explain. And you know, I questioned—I was like, “Well, wait a minute, did you actually live there? Or were you from that area? Or were you just going to school at that point?”

**Judge John Hodgman:** Well, those are two different questions, Brandon. Being from an area and living in an area. There are lots of people who live places where they are not from.

**Brandon:** Right. Right. Yeah. So, it was more of just saying, like, “Well, can you say that you actually lived in this place and actually claim that is a place you've actually

lived in and experienced,” versus “Well, I just was going to school at that point in time.”

**Judge John Hodgman:** Like, where were you in your relationship when this came up in this car trip to unspecified place? I presume because it doesn't count for some reason.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Also, I wanna know what date it was.

**Brandon:** So, we were married at that point, if that if that's kind of—

**Judge John Hodgman:** Oh, you were married! You had never asked her where she was from or where she had lived until you were already married.

**Brandon:** I did ask her where she was from, I believe, on our first date—and kind of got the same sort of response about— That was a very confusing question for her, and she explained why.

**Judge John Hodgman:** But you waited until you had a locked it down before you started saying, “(*Clicks teeth.*) Sorry, you never lived in Illinois or Indiana.”

**Brandon:** Correct.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Right. Stephanie, do you remember this conversation in the car, and do you remember where you were going?



**Stephanie:** We were driving from our house to go to Philadelphia to see my sister and brother-in-law and nephew. And yeah, he'd never brought this up before. Like, this is the first time he's ever contested it, and it's been like four years of us knowing each other. (*Chuckles.*)

**Judge John Hodgman:** So, it was four years at the time of this drive. You were already married, and all of a sudden he's saying to you, “No, that doesn't count.”

**Stephanie:** Yes, correct.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Why doesn't it count, Brandon?

**Brandon:** I think that if you are going to school somewhere, and let's say something happens—like you have to leave school and can't stay on campus anymore—then where would you go? Would you stay in the state? Or would you go to your home, which probably is going to be your parents' residence or something to that effect?

**Judge John Hodgman:** Hmm. So, when my son took a leave of absence from the Savannah College of Art and Design but lived in Savannah and worked in Savannah for a year, was he living there or was he not living in Savannah?

**Brandon:** I would say he could be living there.

**Judge John Hodgman:** So, if you're enrolled in school, you're not living in the place.

**Brandon:** Right.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Because college towns don't count as real places? I mean, that's an argument that I could almost hear someone making.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, I think they're like a more of a liminal space.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Yeah. It's more it's more of a more of an airport plus patchouli kind of situation.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, well. I mean, in some regions, a gathering of local football fans.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Yeah, that's another—a different region, yeah. But in the same way that if you land at an airport but you don't leave the airport, have you actually visited that place? And I would make the argument, no, you haven't. But this is the same sort of argument? It doesn't count if you're going to school?

**Brandon:** Right. Yeah. I would agree with what you're kind of saying about—yeah, if you were flying through, and you made a connecting flight to someplace, then yeah. You hadn't really visited that area.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Yes. Well, we agree on that, Brandon. But I need to hear more about the full theory of why if you go to school and live in that place for four years—or four and a half years, as I did in New Haven—if I worked in that place and paid taxes in that place and voted in that place— I lived both on campus and off campus in that place while I was going to school, and yet you would say I never lived there. Why?

**Brandon:** Well, I guess the question is did you have to change your license to whatever the address or place you were living at the time? Or did you have a—

**Judge John Hodgman:** Whether I had to or not, I never did.

*(Brandon chuckles.)*

Is that the criterion?

**Brandon:** That's one of them, yeah, yeah. I think that's sort of the main criteria of it is like, you know, you didn't really have to like adjust anything to say you were living there. You were just kind of staying there at the time, and most people would probably go back home after that.

**Judge John Hodgman:** You know, I hate to suggest any prejudice on my part. I would agree that reasonable people might disagree over this issue, and I would say that most reasonable people would disagree with you. But I really want to know why this is important to you to discount people who live while going to college in a place—that that counts as living. Why is that dismissible?

**Brandon:** So, I think the main reason why for me is because— You know, when people usually go to school in Delaware—we have a fairly large university in the state—and a lot of people actually come from out of town to go to the school there. And it's mostly people from like New York, New Jersey—you know, the surrounding states that usually come to the school there. And so, it's like I don't think that you get to kind of claim—you shouldn't be able to claim that “You know, well I lived in Delaware for a few years, but only just because I was going to school at the time.”

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** I think people just want the social prestige that comes with having lived in Delaware.

**Judge John Hodgman:** (*Laughing.*) I don't want to run down Delaware anymore, because Delaware is his home state.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** It's nice, right?

**Brandon:** It is the first one.

**Judge John Hodgman:** It's nice. Would it be fair to say— It sounds as though—and this is something that I do understand—that you feel somewhat protective about your home state.

**Brandon:** Yeah, a little bit. I mean, you know, it being I think a small state— It's one of those types of places where, you know, if you actually run into somebody from Delaware, you almost kind of feel like you know them in a sense. (*Chuckling.*) Or you might be able to sort of find a mutual friend in between, probably in some cases. Even though you've never talked to this person, but—

**Judge John Hodgman:** Right. Unless they're one of those loathsome, from-away people who just come into—swan into Delaware to study English for four years and then go away.

**Brandon:** Right. Yeah. (*Chuckles.*)

**Judge John Hodgman:** I mean, I could see a— I mean, certainly I'm sure there are people in New Haven who wouldn't consider me to be a resident of New Haven. They were townies, and I was a gown-y. Indeed, I'm wearing a gown right now.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** So am I!

**Judge John Hodgman:** Well, no, you're not! You're wearing a bailiff's outfit.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** *(Muttering defensively.)* You don't know what's on underneath.

**Judge John Hodgman:** *(Chuckling.)* That's true.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** I'm going to a party later.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Wearing a little gown-y?

Okay, I get that. Okay, I understand you a little bit better now.

Stephanie, it says here that you feel that you have no hometown. Obviously, Brandon has a very strong sense of home. And yet you feel you have no sense of home. Is that accurate, what I'm reading here?

**Stephanie:** Yes.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Tell me more about that.

**Stephanie:** Yeah, I mean, whenever I meet people, they truly try to get— Like, it makes them upset when I say don't feel like I'm from somewhere. And they're like, “Well, where do you like the best? Like, where do you feel like you would claim?” And I don't feel like I can claim anywhere. I didn't live anywhere longer than I think eight years. And that was when I was pretty young. And so, I feel like an anthropologist almost.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Which was the eight-year state?

**Stephanie:** That was Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Pittsburgh. Okay, gotcha. And what were your ages in Pittsburgh?

**Stephanie:** I was 6-13.

**Judge John Hodgman:** 6-13. It's pretty formative years!

**Stephanie:** Yeah. But it's been so long.

**Judge John Hodgman:** 13 is a tough year to move too, by the way!

**Stephanie:** It was. I did throw a hissy fit.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Where did you move when you left Pittsburgh? Was that—?

**Stephanie:** That was when I went to Alabama.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Alabama. Oof. Okay. No offense to Alabama, but okay.

**Stephanie:** I wasn't happy about it.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Where in Alabama?

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Pittsburgh's a nice town.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Pittsburgh's a nice town.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** There are a lot of marine bases in Pittsburgh?

**Judge John Hodgman:** No, he was in the steel industry at that point.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Oh, okay, got it.

**Stephanie:** Kind of stereotypical, I guess.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Are we playing nose tackle? (*Chuckles.*)

**Judge John Hodgman:** When you were living in Pittsburgh, did you see a lot of Oscar Meyer Wienermobiles? Right, Jesse? We saw that there.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, we saw ‘em. Oh man! You guys aren’t gonna believe this! John and I went to San Francisco Sketchfest in San Francisco, California. Then we both—our next stop was Los Angeles. But we had different flights.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Different flights.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Pardon my French, but guess which (*sensor beep*) sends me cell phone pictures of him on the Oscar Meyer Wienermobile without me?! I'll give you a hint. It's not me. It's John.

**Judge John Hodgman:** (*Softly.*) I did it.

This is the weirdest interstitial outtake from *When Harry Met Sally* ever.

(*Jesse laughs.*)

So, anyway, you moved around a lot, and you don't feel like you have a hometown. But what I wanted to get back to is like—when you mentioned that “When I tell people—” This is what I remember you saying. “When I tell people I don't have a hometown, it upsets them, and they ask me to figure out where I most feel at home” or something like that. Right? I'm paraphrasing. What do you think is going on, Stephanie, between Brandon—who wants to deny certain places where you lived—and other people who don't want to acknowledge that you don't really have a hometown in the classic Brandon sense? Why do you think people care about this?

**Stephanie:** I mean, people have really strong connections to the place that they're from. And I think that it like unsettles them a little bit to meet somebody who doesn't have that connection. Yeah, I can see Brandon also being very protective of his hometown and his home state in a way that I don't totally understand and that I'm a little bit jealous of.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Was there a college near where you lived in Delaware? I know you mentioned that there's a big— I mean, there are a number of colleges in Delaware, but were you living in a college town, Brandon?

**Brandon:** No, I wasn't living in what I would call the college town for Delaware, which is Newark. But yeah, University of Delaware is like the main university school here.



**Judge John Hodgman:** And those kids when they come to school, are they monsters?

**Brandon:** A bit. (*Chuckles.*) I think for a little while there, University of Delaware was considered like one of the—I guess—larger, like top-five like party schools, I think, for a good while.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** UC Santa Cruz was where Jennifer and I went. I was always like, “That's a weird— I feel like there's so little like binge drinking or whatever.” It just turned out that like binge drinking got you one point and psychedelics got you like ten points.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Oh, on the party school scale?

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, and everybody was always lying in a field eating mushrooms.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Ohhh! I say yeah. Or they were lying under a tarp back in the woods, right? You went to college, Brandon, did you say?

**Brandon:** Yes. I only attended University of Delaware for one semester. But I finished going to school at Wilmington University, which is a smaller school here.

**Judge John Hodgman:** But all in Delaware. You kept it all in Delaware.

**Brandon:** Correct.

**Judge John Hodgman:** What else should we know about your hometown or your home state, your home region, that is often low overlooked because people like Jesse are making fun of you all the time?

**Brandon:** Yeah. Well, we were—are? I don't know if it's still here actually—is home of the Punkin Chunkin Festival.

**Judge John Hodgman:** OH! The Punkin Chunkin Festival is where you catapult. You catapult pumpkins, see how far they can go.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Is it a catapult or a trebuchet?

**Judge John Hodgman:** I don't know.

**Brandon:** I think it's a mixture—I think there's like two different versions. You can have ones that are mechanical that, you know, use weight and gravity. And then there's others that are powered through compressed air or something to that—you know, gas power and all that.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Do you ever chunk a pumpkin yourself?

**Brandon:** Not like that. But I mean, I have tried to throw one.

**Judge John Hodgman:** What else should we know about this place where you lived?

**Brandon:** I mean other than that, I think—you know, it's got sort of a mix of little bit of everything, in that—I kind of mentioned Rehoboth earlier, you know, as a

somewhat-known beach town. But I don't think when people think of Delaware, they would never know that there's an actual beach resort town in the state.

**Judge John Hodgman:** So, Brandon, this is your chance. I realize that I've made you feel a little bit put on the spot. So, I'm going to give you a little chance to think about it and really think of like two or three things that really embody your home state, your hometown, your sense of home in *(freezes up briefly)* Delaware. I almost said Maryland by accident. I apologize. But like, sing us a song of Delaware in a moment. Just think about it for a second. Because the case hinges to a degree on the sense of a home place and what it means to live in a place, versus what it means to live briefly in a place.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** John, you say that, but I feel like Brandon made a pretty compelling argument when he said, "They like it in Delaware that people have to drive through Delaware and don't know that they're in Delaware."

**Judge John Hodgman:** Is that something that people like?

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** I mean, that's what—I'm paraphrasing Brandon! I heard him say that! Out of his mouth-hole.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Stephanie, I'm gonna ask you the same question, but I'm gonna put you on the spot right now. I'm not giving you any time to think about it. Three things I loved about living in Indiana—Bloomington specifically. Go.

**Stephanie:** Alright. Bloomington is a—I mean, they're having problems right now with— It doesn't matter. Um. *(Chuckles.)* They're having problems right now, but it was a very liberal, progressive spot—a blue dot in an otherwise red state. And I really—

**Judge John Hodgman:** College town. Doesn't count. I got it. Mm-hmm.

**Stephanie:** (*Laughing.*) What'd you say?

**Judge John Hodgman:** Not real Americans. Understood.

**Stephanie:** Okay, I won't say it that way. We'll say it's a very open-minded—

**Judge John Hodgman:** No, no, no! I'm not making fun of you. I'm agreeing with you!

**Stephanie:** (*Laughing.*) Okay. Yeah, so it had like a hippie, cool vibe. Loved that. I loved the— Like I said, I loved the— Everyone's very friendly and open in Indiana. I loved that. And I... Oh no, I'm gonna— A lot of it has to do with school, (*giggling*) and now I'm trying to think of an Indiana-specific thing.

**Judge John Hodgman:** (*Noncommittally judgmental.*) Mm!

**Stephanie:** I know. And I liked the— Oh, you know, it's beautiful down in Bloomington. Like, it's actually not as flat as you would think in that part of Indiana. There's a lot of trees and lakes and the countryside was really beautiful.

(*Jesse cackles.*)

**Judge John Hodgman:** It's not as flat as you would think!

**Stephanie:** It's not!

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Indiana!

**Judge John Hodgman:** Not as flat—

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** In script, on the screen:

Bailiff Jesse Thorn & **Judge John Hodgman:** (*In unison.*) But not as flat as you'd think.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Well, so. How do you feel when Brandon started denying your existence in Indiana and Illinois? And New York got a pass, because you had continued to live in New York after your academic program, right?

**Stephanie:** Yes.

**Judge John Hodgman:** (*Chewing the word.*) You are a Syracusannnn? Brandon is Stephanie a Syracusan in your eyes?

**Brandon:** Uh, when you were living in New York.

**Stephanie:** Oh yeah, to be fair, I moved to New York City after I graduated.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Oh! Where dreams are made of?

**Stephanie:** Correct.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, concrete jungle.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Where did you live in New York?

**Stephanie:** I was in—(*chuckling*) I moved like so many times too. I moved from—I was in, uh—ugh, what's it called? Inwood? Up in like—really high up in Manhattan. I lived in Red Hook.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Sure! Very the northern tip of Manhattan, sure.

**Stephanie:** Yeah. And then Red Hook.

**Judge John Hodgman:** And then Red Hook. Oh, all the way down to the western edge of Brooklyn!

**Stephanie:** Yeah.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, I also knew that.

**Judge John Hodgman:** You lived in the margins.

**Stephanie:** I did. (*Chuckling.*) Very top, very bottom.

**Judge John Hodgman:** So, when Brandon in this road trip said to you, “No, sorry. You never lived in Illinois or Indiana,” how did that make you feel?

**Stephanie:** It made me feel insulted and sad. And also, because those are two places I actually spent a chunk of time when there's a lot of other places I lived for only a short amount of time, like taking pieces of the places I actually feel an affinity towards away and like making them not count as much.

**Judge John Hodgman:** I mean, Brandon—you know, Stephanie only lived for four years in Alabama, during which she was attending school, literally. High school. Did she live in Alabama? Yes or no?

**Brandon:** I would say yes, she did live in Alabama at that point.

**Judge John Hodgman:** So, it's college only.

**Brandon:** Correct, yeah. Specifically, I'd say undergrad. Because I think once you get into the graduate levels they like—I think you get paid and stuff like that. (*Chuckling.*) I never had a graduate degree, so I wouldn't— Don't know the ins and outs of it!

**Judge John Hodgman:** But you heard Stephanie say that she felt insulted by your contention that she never lived in Indiana or Illinois. I presume because you love her and you're married to her, you would not want to insult her. And yet you persist in it. Why is it important to you to maintain that she did not live in these places?

**Brandon:** I mean, for one, I know—I sort of—I also feel bad that she doesn't have a place that she could like call home, in a sense. So, I do feel that—you know, for her sake, I wish she had could have a place where like, “Yeah, I'm from here. This is this is where I lived and feel a sense of pride.” But you know, because she's moved around

so much, she's—you know, it's hard for her to kind of pinpoint. And that's why I think she picks those areas to say she lived, because that's— You know, maybe she was only there for a short amount of time but—

**Judge John Hodgman:** I mean, Stephanie, I mean— The way you talked about it before, I wonder if maybe you agree with Brandon that you feel a little sad for yourself that you don't have a hometown per se.

**Stephanie:** I do feel sad!

**Judge John Hodgman:** Why do you feel sad? You've lived an interesting life!

**Stephanie:** I know. I mean the flip side is, yes, it's easy for me to make friends. I don't get freaked out any more about moving. I can acclimate really quickly. But I always think about how I love people's regional accents, because it shows like they have like a claim to a part of the country. And I don't have that. And I don't know. I wish there was somewhere that I could go back to consistently that felt like a landing place.

**Judge John Hodgman:** You live in Delaware now, but where do you live now in Delaware, more or less? Wilmington, right?

**Stephanie:** Yeah.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Yeah. (*Uncertain.*) Which is the biggest city in Delaware?

**Brandon:** Yes.



**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Except for Baltimore.

*(They chuckle.)*

**Judge John Hodgman:** Yeah. And Ocean City, Maryland.

Stephanie, do you feel that Brandon had something in his hometown that you didn't? And what would that be? Have you been to his hometown?

**Stephanie:** Yes. My parents live there now, also.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Okay. *(Beat.)* Your parents live there now?!

**Stephanie:** *(Laughing.)* They live close to it, yes.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Are they roommates with Brandon's parents? That'd be cool.

**Stephanie:** They're like 20 minutes away from Brandon's parents.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Okay! So, I put it to Brandon to give me three reasons why his hometown is great. And Brandon, you're still thinking about it, right?

**Brandon:** Yeah, I think I can kinda come up with three sort of things now.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Alright, let's do it this way. Since you know his hometown because your parents live near there, Stephanie. Let's alternate it. Brandon, you give

me one; then Stephanie, give me one. I want to know all about this hometown! Brandon, hit me. “I love my hometown because it has—” blank or whatever.

**Brandon:** Maybe a cop out, but it's like—there's like a sense of community or pride, I guess, that that is different from being such from a small state. In that, because even though I lived and grew up in the southern part, it's like you still feel a connection to all parts of the state in general, instead of just being like, “Oh, I'm from this one specific town or area.”

**Judge John Hodgman:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Sure. You like being part of a small state.

**Brandon:** Right.

**Judge John Hodgman:** You feel a community cohesion.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** In a way that I might not, as a Northern Californian—

**Judge John Hodgman:** *(Interrupting.)* Living in exile.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Living in Southern California or visiting actual Northern California or Central California.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Okay! Alright. And that feels good to you? You feel part of a cohesive community. I gotcha. Stephanie, this can be anything. Like, if I were to talk about my hometown, I would be like, “I worked— I love the Coolidge Corner movie theater.”

**Stephanie:** Yeah. I mean, it's close to the beaches without having as horrible of traffic as if you've lived closer. So, you can get to the beach but without having to be in the thick of all the tourists.

**Judge John Hodgman:** You're really tugging at my heartstrings here.

*(Jesse sighs wistfully.)*

Close to the beach, little traffic. Got it. Okay, Brandon, you're up next.

**Brandon:** Yeah, to sort of piggyback off of what she was saying. So, we have beaches. We also have— Like, we might maybe not have a like a professional sports team, but we have the Dover racetrack, which is like a big track for NASCAR, that they race here every year.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Okay. Stephanie, you want to give me one more?

**Stephanie:** Umm. Okay, I don't like this, but everyone else loves Grotto's Pizza. That's like the thing.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Okay, this is what I'm talking about! This is what I'm lookin' for!

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Yeah. Finally, we got to the pizza. I was like, “At some point, somebody's kind of mentioned a special kind of pizza or ice cream!”

**Judge John Hodgman:** Grotto's Pizza. *(Announcer style.)* What makes it what makes Delaware-style pizza the next hot pizza that's going to take Instagram by storm?

**Stephanie:** Yeah, Brandon, you gotta take this one, because I think it's gross.

*(Brandon laughs.)*

**Judge John Hodgman:** *(Delightedly giggling.)* Yeeees! Now we're talkin'!

**Brandon:** I think Grotto's Pizza is like probably the perfect beach pizza.

**Judge John Hodgman:** *(Baffled.)* Go on.

**Brandon:** In that like—

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** *(Giggling.)* It's sand repellent.

**Brandon:** *(Chuckling.)* No, it's like a it's really like a really thin crust.

**Judge John Hodgman:** In the tomato sauce, they use sunblock.

*(Jesse agrees with a laugh.)*

Sorry. Go ahead, please. Grotto's Pizza

**Brandon:** It's like a thin crust pizza. It's a little—can be a little sweet, depending on if you like that about your pizza or not. But—

**Judge John Hodgman:** Why is it important for you to have a hometown, Brandon? And why is it important for Stephanie to— (*Beat.*) What is Stephanie missing?

**Brandon:** I just think that—you know, that—sort of like I said, the being able to have a place to claim sort of as your hometown and where you're from and that kind of thing. It gives you sort of like a sense of pride to be able to I think say something like that and to, you know, be able to be like, “Yeah!” It sort of—it kinda gives people like a sense of like what your roots may be, as far as kind of like where you're from or that sort of thing.

**Judge John Hodgman:** How long ago was this road trip where Brandon first denied your lived experience?

**Stephanie:** I think it was like just in November, not that long ago.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Oh, quite recently! So, this is a fresh dispute.

**Stephanie:** Correct.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Stephanie, when you were going to school, how much time did you spend in Indiana or Illinois, versus—say—your parents' home in Ohio?

**Stephanie:** In Indiana, I was spending summers in Ohio. And when I was at Illinois, I would—I was just living in Illinois. I never went I never really went back to where my parents were.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Alright. So, Brandon, during her college and postgraduate career in these “I” states—Illinois and Indiana—she was spending either a majority or 100% of the time in those states. So, while she was living there, a majority 100% of the time in those states. If she wasn't living in Indiana, Illinois, where was she living?

**Brandon:** Uh, I would say sort of like in a—I guess in a void of sorts? Of like—

*(Jesse chortles.)*

**Judge John Hodgman:** Like a limbo.

**Brandon:** Right. Yeah.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Yeah. So, like—like, Brandon, if you were traveling and you got stranded at an airport; and you weren't allowed to leave; and you were stranded, say, in—what's a good airport?

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** *(Incredulously.)* What's a good airport!?

**Judge John Hodgman:** I would say the Santa Fe, New Mexico Municipal Airport. And you were sleeping in there, but you weren't allowed to leave the premises, that would be a void, right? You wouldn't be you wouldn't be living in Santa Fe. You'd be living in the airport.

**Brandon:** Right.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Sorry, I'm still trying to think about this question you asked me. What's a good airport?

**Judge John Hodgman:** (*Amused.*) Yeah, okay, I understand. Bad question.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Only John Hodgman—only John Hodgman, get-to-the-airport-early enthusiast—

**Judge John Hodgman:** I did think— I did suggest what I think is a very good airport, which is the Santa Fe Municipal Airport.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Right now, John is going, “God, I wish I was in an airport right now!”

**Judge John Hodgman:** There is part of me that feels that way.

*(Jesse laughs helplessly.)*

Stephanie, when you were in Bloomington, did you vote in Indiana?

**Stephanie:** I did not. I voted in Ohio.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Okay! Interesting. Absentee, I presume?

**Stephanie:** Yes.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Okay. Did you have a job? Like a part-time job?

**Stephanie:** Yes. I did.

**Judge John Hodgman:** What was your part-time job?

**Stephanie:** I worked at Starbucks, and I worked at Outback Steakhouse.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Chains only?

**Stephanie:** Yes. (*Laughs.*) That's all we had.

**Judge John Hodgman:** No local! No local businesses.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** John, when the boomerang go, it come back. You will too.  
(*Singing softly.*) “Outback...”

**Judge John Hodgman:** Yeah. That's an outback steakhouse thing?

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** (*With his whole chest.*) “Outback steakhouse! Outback steakhouse from the land down underrr!”

**Judge John Hodgman:** (*In the same tune.*) They don't sponsor usss.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** I'd take that sponsorship.



**Judge John Hodgman:** Sure!

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** You ever had one of those bloomin' onions?

**Judge John Hodgman:** No, I hear I hear they originated in Bloomington, Illinois.  
(*Correcting himself.*) Indiana! Indiana. Sorry. Whoops!

**Stephanie:** There is also a Bloomington, Illinois. So.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Oh, maybe I'm thinking of that. Alright, I think I've heard everything I need to in order to make my decision. I'm going to go into my special, LA-edition chambers here at Maximum Fun New HQ in downtown Los Angeles. That means I'm going to lie down on this couch for a minute while Jesse talks to you guys, and then I'll get back up again, I promise. And I'll be back in a moment with my verdict.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Please rise (*dissolving into laughter*) as Judge John Hodgman exits the courtroom.

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

Brandon, how do you feel about your chances right now?

**Brandon:** Um, I feel somewhat—pretty op optimistic, I think. I feel like there's some good arguments as far as to being able to, you know, claim that you lived anywhere.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Stephanie, how do you feel?

**Stephanie:** I feel, uh— I feel pretty good, I think!

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Alright, we'll see what Judge Hodgman has to say about all this when we come back in just a minute.

*(Three gavel bangs.)*

**Promo:**

**Music:** Cheerful, chiming music interspersed with animal sounds.

**Ella McLeod:** Hey, Alexis.

**Alexis B. Preston:** Hey, Ella.

**Ella:** What animal has the most teeth?

**Alexis:** I would guess a shark.

**Ella:** A snail?

**Alexis:** No, snails don't have teeth.

**Ella:** They have thousands and they are freaky looking.

**Ella:** No, I don't want that to be true.

*(Alexis giggles.)*

Okay. Did you know that the hippocampus in your brain is named after the half-horse, half-fish sea creature found in Greek mythology?

**Alexis:** I didn't know that. Buuut we are meant to be doing animal trivia, and hippocampus isn't a real animal.

**Ella:** Well, that doesn't matter on *Comfort Creatures*.

**Alexis:** You're right. It doesn't matter at all. *(Laughs.)*

**Ella:** *Comfort Creatures* is a cozy show for lovers of animals of all shapes and sizes—real and unreal.

**Alexis:** If that sounds like your cup of tea then join us every Thursday for new episodes on [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org).

*(Music ends.)*

## Promo:

**Music:** Soft, inspiring piano.

**Kumail Nanjiani:** Are you a celebrity? Are you searching for meaning, connection, and a little levity these days? Hi. I'm Kumail Nanjiani: actor, writer, and—yes—a celebrity too. And I've got four words for you: *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn*.

*(The music swells.)*

Are you tired of junkets? Red carpets? Sick of the endless spicy snacks you have to eat? Do you want to connect with someone who gets your work and laughs with you a little?

Join me, André3000, Tom Hanks, Tina Fey, and many more, and become a guest on *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn* from NPR and Maximum Fun.

*(Music ends.)*

*(Three gavel bangs.)*

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** It's the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast, and we are headed to New York City. And! The high seas.

**Judge John Hodgman:** That's true! In just about a month, we will be in Brooklyn, New York—one of my many hometowns, and one of my very favorite places to perform. And yours too, I dare say, Jesse. The Bellhouse! March 6th and 7th, Friday

and Saturday, Jesse and I are returning to the Bellhouse with a brand-new show known only as Night Court. It's a little after-hours. It's going to be a little wild. Both shows are going to be brand-new and all-different. So, I hope you'll get tickets for both! Go to [MaximumFun.org/events](http://MaximumFun.org/events) or the Bellhouse's website. And Jesse Thorn, you weren't lying when you said that we're gonna be on the high seas.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** We are joining the Grace Bailey!

**Judge John Hodgman:** That's right!

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** A historic sailing ship sailing the coast of Maine, June 14th-18th. This is gonna be a pretty exciting time. We're on this boat that's co-owned by our friend Marc Evan Jackson from television.

**Judge John Hodgman:** That's right. I have been on the Grace Bailey before, on a sailing with Marc before. It's a beautiful, historic, and small-and-intimate sailing vessel. I think they only have berths for about 25 people.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** So, we ask: please, no murderers.

**Judge John Hodgman:** (*Chuckling.*) That's right. Please. Please, it's not a murder mystery! It's not a *Death on the Nile* situation. It's maritime law! It's John and Jesse at sea with thee! If you are there. Go to [SailGraceBailey.com](http://SailGraceBailey.com). That's [SailGraceBailey.com](http://SailGraceBailey.com) for all the details. It's gonna be really special, and I love to bring people to Maine and show it off, especially from sea. I'm gonna be reading from *Vacationland*. You and I are gonna dispense some maritime law, Jesse. Maybe you'll give some people some nautical outfit tips. I don't know! We're just gonna have a good time with our friends.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** (*Chuckling.*) Ascots will be worn.

**Judge John Hodgman:** That's right. And you're our friend, so please join us at sea. [SailGraceBailey.com](http://SailGraceBailey.com). And of course, our Bellhouse shows: [MaximumFun.org/events](http://MaximumFun.org/events).

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** John, you know this television program *Haha, You Clowns*?

**Judge John Hodgman:** Yes, I do. It's incredibly funny. On Adult Swim.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Yes. This is like my new favorite show on television, ever since I lost my bomb-uh. That's something they say on that show.

Anyway, Joe Cappa, the creator of that show, is the guest this week on *Bullseye*. And then let me let me ask you this question, John.

**Judge John Hodgman:** I want to answer it.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Have you heard of a comedy group called Monty Python?

**Judge John Hodgman:** I have.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Full name, Monty Python's Flying Circus?

**Judge John Hodgman:** Yes, I have heard of them!

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Well, next week on Bullseye is an entire week dedicated to Monty Python, featuring interviews with four different members of Monty Python, conducted by me. All now in various states of aliveness and canceled-ness.

*(John chortles.)*

But they're all wonderful interviews! Just really incredible experiences.

**Judge John Hodgman:** I think one of the very first interviews I remember listening to you—frankly—smash was Terry Jones from Monty Python.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Ahh, what a sweet—

**Judge John Hodgman:** Years ago!

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** What a lovely man. I grew up reading Terry Jones's book of *Fairy Tale* stories.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Oh yeah, that's very funny.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** One of my favorite things ever. And so, it was such an incredible honor. He was like— He was working on the like reissued, definitive version of *Time Bandits* at the time. I just— What a—what a lovely man he was. Yeah. It's Eric Idle, John Cleese—

**Judge John Hodgman:** Michael Palin!

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Michael Palin—no, not Michael Palin.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Oh, sorry.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** It's Eric Idle, John Cleese, Terry Gilliam, Terry Jones.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Whooooa. So, there's four!

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Four Pythons on *Bullseye*.

**Judge John Hodgman:** That's amazing. And if you haven't heard me say it before, I'll say it again: Jesse Thorn's one of the greatest interviewers—I dare say, conversationalists—that I've ever met and had the pleasure to listen to. It is how I came to know Jesse, by listening to him interview me and other people. And if *Bullseye* is not on your weekly rotation, you've made a grievous error. Go subscribe to *Bullseye* right now so you can hear those incredible interviews. Not just these, but all the others! And please again go to [MaximumFun.org/events](https://MaximumFun.org/events) to join us at the Bellhouse and [SailGraceBailey.com](https://SailGraceBailey.com) to join us at sea!

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Let's get back to the case!

*(Three gavel bangs.)*

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Please rise as Judge John Hodgman awakens from his slumber and presents his verdict.

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

**Judge John Hodgman:** You know, uhh... If you sleep on a couch somewhere, it means you live there.

*(Jesse cautiously agrees while chuckling.)*

Or a love seat, in this case. That was a nice little disco nap I had there. It was a very comfortable new headquarters, Jesse. Thanks for inviting me by.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** You're welcome, and you're welcome for the cocaine earlier.

**Judge John Hodgman:** *(Laughs.)* Okay! I thought that I was just sniffing that wonderful new seasonal candle, the Judge John Hodgman Justice Smell candle, available at [MaxFunStore.com](http://MaxFunStore.com). You can see one right here on our coffee table.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Now available in Colombian White.

**Judge John Hodgman:** No. *(Chuckles.)* You know, while I was taking a little nap there, I thought to myself, “Did I really live in New Haven, Connecticut?” I mean, unlike you, Stephanie, I did work in a local business there. A couple of them. I worked at Claire's Cornucopia, alongside a bunch of people who did not go to the college known as Yale. And then I worked for a couple of years at Filmfest Video, the original location on Temple Street. And then I moved with them to their downstairs location at Chapel Street.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Oh, right there on Chapel Street?

**Judge John Hodgman:** Right there on Chapel Street! It's now a hair salon. I paid taxes, obviously, because they were garnished from my wages. I voted in— I voted



my first presidential election! I voted in Connecticut, in New Haven, Connecticut. I lived off campus there, both with friends and I had my own lease! Does that mean I lived there though? You know, I began this episode thinking to myself, “Absolutely yes.” And now, after talking to Brandon for a while, I wonder if I really did. Talking to Brandon was a little bit like (*chuckles*) going to the Maine subreddit. I spend a lot of time in Maine, and I and I would not say that I am from Maine any more than I would say that I'm from New York City. Even though I've lived in New York City for more than 30 years.

Being from a place is different from living in a place. Obviously. And in Maine, as in—I think—Delaware, there is an element—and really in all sort of college towns or cities like New York that attract a lot of transients and transplants, there is an anxiety surrounding people claiming to live in a place where they have no history or people or background or whatever. You know what I mean? Like, going to the Maine subreddit is like talking to Brandon a little bit, because everyone who goes to the main subreddit goes to a mega-thread that they have pinned at the top of it saying, “Ask all your questions about visiting Maine here.”

And people take the bait, and they come in. They say, “Tell me about your hidden gems. Tell me what you love about Maine!” And it's just a trick. It's just a trap.

It's for the Mainers to go say, “Go away and never come here. There are no hidden gems. We hate you.” Just over and over and over again. And you just watch all these people like fly onto the fly paper and then get caught in this invective against people from away. Now, in Delaware they're more polite, obviously. Brandon isn't out here, you know, being mean to people from Delaware. But he likes it when they just drive on through. He doesn't like it when they come to Delaware, and they go to college there for four years, and they party for four years and then claim that they lived there.

And honestly, I understand! There is a sensitivity and a protectiveness of a place that leads you to hide your light under a bushel and not tell Judge John Hodgman about Grotto's Pizza until you're forced to, after maybe 25 minutes of conversation! And the reality is that while there are smaller states that have—like Maine and like Delaware, that have fewer people in it and therefore sort of by default a certain amount more of cultural cohesion, it's not exclusive This is really a time to remember that where we live is A) all stolen land, and B) a place where people have come from all over to make lives, to live. To live.

Now, while I appreciate your point, Brandon—and I really do. And I think that—you know, I don't think Stephanie would claim to be from Bloomington, Indiana; or Champaign-Urbana, Illinois; or Syracuse; or any of the places that she lived. Because she's too decent to claim that.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Certainly not Urbana.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Certainly not Urbana. No one's from Urbana.

But to say that—To deny her—I understand the impulse to deny her her claim to have lived there. And it is—going to school is a different kind of living there than living there. But I think it's a bad time in history to say that certain people's residency doesn't count. In light of what's going on—and I understand that this is personal and low-stakes between the two of you. But in the larger picture, if someone makes a life somewhere, either studying or working or whatever, to deny them legitimacy—I think—is not—It's not a good faith thing to do. Especially in your case, Brandon. Because what you're protecting, Delaware, isn't under threat by Stephanie. What you're protecting, Delaware—Bloomington doesn't care if Stephanie claims to have lived there or not.

You spend a life—it's a different kind of life, living in college. But it would be the same thing as a different kind of life if you were stationed in Japan! You wouldn't say that you were Japanese. But did Stephanie live in Japan? Absolutely, she did. So, I'm afraid I have to find in Stephanie's favor in this case—if only because of the broader point, that people deserve to make their lives where they want to and not be questioned and doubted because of where they came from. So, with that in mind, I am going to find in Stephanie's favor. I will suggest a soft apology. But I'm not going to impose severe damages, because I don't think you're coming from a bad place of heart, Brandon, at all. This is the sound of a gavel.

**Clip:**

**Speaker:** (*Muffled and staticky.*) Or imagine being able to be magically whisked away to... Delaware! Hi, I'm in Delaware.

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

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

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

Brandon, how do you feel right now?

**Brandon:** You know, as John put it, I think— You know, I see where he is coming from, and I think I would agree with what he was saying. You know, it's— I think he's right in that, you know, even if you only live there for so long—you know, it is part of your life. So, I think that, yeah, you can get to claim some of that.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Stephanie, how do you feel about the decision?

**Stephanie:** I feel very vindicated.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Brandon, Stephanie, thanks for joining us on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

**Stephanie:** Thank you!

**Brandon:** Thank you.

*(Three gavel bangs.)*

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Another *Judge John Hodgman* case is in the books. We're gonna have Swift Justice in just a second. First, our thanks to Redditor u/mkbecker. You can join us on Reddit at r/maximumfun; u/mkbecker named this episode.

**Judge John Hodgman:** “States Rights... and States Left.”

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Evidence and photos from the show are posted on our Instagram account. That's [@JudgeJohnHodgman](#). We're also on TikTok and (*flubbing the word*) You-taub.

**Judge John Hodgman:** (*Delightedly.*) You-taub! We're on TikTok and Yuh-top!

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Evidence and photos from the show are posted on our Instagram account. That's [@JudgeJohnHodgman](#). We're also on TikTok and YouTube, [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](#). Follow and subscribe on all of those platforms, please.

**Judge John Hodgman:** I have it right here, Jesse Thorn, hot off the new Maximum Fun HQ laser printer. The YouTube comment of the week.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** (*Shouting.*) YouTube comment of the week with John Hodgman!

**Judge John Hodgman:** It comes from our most recent episode posted on our YouTube channel, [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](#). It comes from Miko Simonen. Miko Simonen. And they said, “Emerging from the podcast mines, shielding my eyes from the light. How strange I see no more JJHO on my pod feed. Am I finally... caught up?”

This is someone who's been watching and listening to every episode from the beginning. Finally caught up. Congratulations! Guess what? There's another one

coming your way. In fact, we just recorded it! What's more, can I encourage you, please, to become a member if you are not one already, Miko Simonen? Thank you for watching us on YouTube—I trust that you might be a member—by joining us at [MaximumFun.org/join](https://MaximumFun.org/join), starting at just \$5 a month. And if you are already a member, Miko Simonen or anyone else watching the YouTube, please click that subscribe button. It costs you nothing.

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**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** *Judge John Hodgman* was created by Jesse Thorn and John Hodgman. This episode, engineered by Christopher Bruce at King Creative in Wilmington, Delaware. Megan Rosatti runs our social media. The podcast, edited by AJ McKeon. Our video editor, Daniel Speer. Our producer, Jennifer Marmor. Alright, Swift Justice.

JD Instagramz on the Max Fun subreddit says— The perfect Reddit name.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Perfect Reddit name.

Judge John Hodgman & **Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** (*In unison.*) JJD Instagramz!

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** “Is the shorthand name for Instagram Gram or Insta? I think it's Gram. My friend Rob says it's Insta.”

**Judge John Hodgman:** I've heard young people saying, “Putting it on the Gram.”

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, but I've never— You would never say, “Put it on Gram.”

**Judge John Hodgman:** No, you would never say, “Put it on Gram.” Unless you're balancing on top of your grandmother's head.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Or you're betting on a horse named, maybe, Graham Cracker.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Yeah, that could be.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** It would seem like the horse name.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Uh, no, it's Insta. Insta is shorthand for Instagram, in my opinion. Insta is what it is.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Insta. (*Unclear.*) Both make you sound like a jerk.

**Judge John Hodgman:** No offense, JD Instagramz—your very name! With a Z, by the way. But yeah, no. I'm afraid you're wrong. Rob is correct. It's Insta.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** John, it's the most wonderful time of the year. A time that, in my opinion, should be generating conflicts.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Spring?

**Judge John Hodgman:** Yeah.

**Judge John Hodgman:** I can't believe that it's almost spring. It's right around the corner. It's a time for renewal. It's a time for blooming. Time for cleaning. What is the best cleaning product? (*Chuckling at himself.*) This is our spring-cleaning call to action for disputes.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Yeah. And why is it 409?

**Judge John Hodgman:** Do you like 409?

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Ooh, what if it's OxiClean?

**Judge John Hodgman:** What about Scrubbing Bubbles? I love those little bubbles.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** It's definitely the best animated cleaning product mascot.

**Judge John Hodgman:** Is springing forward good or bad? How do you feel about daylight savings schemes, everybody? A lot of you love spring because they're ready for light and warmth, but is spring actually just winter part two?

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Wow! That's an interesting, potential hot take.

**Judge John Hodgman:** That's a potential hot take. If anyone has it out there—

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Stephen A. Smith, give us a call!

**Judge John Hodgman:** —or anything else like it, we're looking for your spring disputes! Anything to do with flowers and Easter Bunnies...

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Did you originally read that one in “King's Things”? The 3-dot column by Larry King?

**Judge John Hodgman:** *(Laughs.)* No. Never read that one. Never read that one. But if you have a spring-based dispute, anything to do with flowers—

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** *(Theatrically imitating an animated Larry King.)* Is spring actually winter part two?!

**Judge John Hodgman:** Did you did you ever—

*(Chuckling.)* That's right. That sounds like him! Yeah, now I get it.

Do you have any spring disputes? Anything to do with flowers? Did you ever rescue a bunny in Santa Cruz? Do you have any—

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Do you have any little boys saying, “*(Softly.)* Excuse me? I think you found my bunny? *(Softer.)* Excuse me.”

**Judge John Hodgman:** Yeeeah, that's a spring one, isn't it? Anything to do with ducklings? Do you have any duckling disputes? That's a good spring one.

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** Yeah! *(Laughing.)* They won't make way!



**Judge John Hodgman:** What about little lambs? Do you know, I know a person in Maine—a woman named Ari who has a sheep company? She keeps herds of sheep on inhabited islands!

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** (*Whispered.*) Wooow.

**Judge John Hodgman:** If that's you, Ari, send in a dispute. Won't you, please?

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** It's spring lambin' season, and I have dispute with veterinary!

**Judge John Hodgman:** There you go! Let us know at *Judge John Hodgman*—well, I should say [MaximumFun.org/jjho](https://MaximumFun.org/jjho). That'll send you a cute little form that you can fill out to submit all of your disputes. And we do want all of your disputes—whether it's spring, summer, winter, or fall. Or anything else, right, Jesse?

**Bailiff Jesse Thorn:** [MaximumFun.org/jjho](https://MaximumFun.org/jjho). Big or small, we judge them all. We'll talk to you next time on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

(*Three gavel bangs.*)

**Transition:** Cheerful ukulele chord.

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