

Jesse Thorn: Welcome to the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. I'm Bailiff Jesse Thorn. This week, "Requesting an Immediate Hinge Junction." Stephanie brings the case against her husband, Lee. Stephanie and Lee live in one half of a duplex. It's a side-by-side, two-family home in New Orleans that's been in Lee's family since the '70s. The other side is used by Lee's mother and other relatives. Stephanie says it's inconvenient to go outside from one unit to the other. She yearns for a door inside to connect the two halves. Lee says, "Keep dreaming! That's ridiculous." And he wants to close the non-adjointing door on the topic forever. Who's right; who's wrong? Only one can decide. Please rise as Judge John Hodgman enters the courtroom and presents an obscure cultural reference.

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

John Hodgman: "Once in a local gin cafe, said one, 'Let's have a song fest.' All in a unit did they sway, alert. 'We will be the best.' When on a garden farm, they gaily enjoyed all food, the entire group was charmed. All were happy. Not nude. When in a dance cafe, they were of one accord. Their bodies did naturally sway—one, as a Model T Ford."

Bailiff Jesse Thorn, please swear the litigants in.

Jesse Thorn: Lee, Stephanie, 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 his home has no doors?

(They swear.)

I've been there. You go in through the windows.

John Hodgman: Uhhh, well. Also bead curtains.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, that's true.

(They laugh.)

You live in a video store from the 1980s.

John Hodgman: Shall we proceed?

Lee: We shall.

Jesse Thorn: Wait a minute! How come they said that?!

John Hodgman: I don't know. Because you didn't.

Jesse Thorn: That's a good point. First of all! Lee, Stephanie, I will announce when we can proceed. So, shut your pie holes. Second of all: Judge Hodgman, you may proceed.

John Hodgman: Thank you. Lee, Stephanie, please be seated and open your pie holes to make a guess, if you will, as to the piece of culture that I referenced obscurely as I entered this courtroom.

(Chairs squeak.)

Hint: 'twas a poem. Or as my father-in-law would say, a poym. Stephanie, why don't we start with you? What's your favorite poym? "Whose woods these are, I think I know. His house is in the village, though."

Stephanie: I would say my favorite poet is Robert Frost. I do not think that it's Robert Frost.

John Hodgman: Uh, that's sort of a poem in itself! Frost rhymes with Frost. Good job. I like it. Oh, I gotta write it down. And Stephanie says, "Robert Frost, a poem by." Let's say it's *Stopping by Woods On a Snowy Evening*, the only one I know. Alright, Lee, it's come to you. You've had some time to think it over. You've had the advantage.

Lee: Uh, it didn't help.

John Hodgman: Now it's time for you to take it. Lee, do you have a favorite poem or poet?

Lee: I do not have a favorite poem or poet. Um. Well, uhh...

John Hodgman: I'm writing down "Lee hates poetry."

Lee: Yeah. No, the only guy I can think of—

John Hodgman: Not a lyrical fellow, here.

Lee: —is, uh... oh, what's the guy's name? Waldo. He wrote some like environmentally friendly poems back in like '40s or '30s.

Jesse Thorn: (*Obviously gleeful.*) Where is—now, where is he?

John Hodgman: Yeah. Where is this guy?

Lee: He lived on a pond, I think, something like that.

John Hodgman: Yeah, but how could you find him amidst all the other people there?

Stephanie: Yeah. Where is Waldo?

John Hodgman: Ahhh! Stephanie got it, Lee!

Lee: Yeah, alright. (*Laughs.*)

John Hodgman: It went from Jesse to me to Stephanie and finally to you.

Lee: Yeah, that might be the order of operations on this the whole time.

John Hodgman: (*Giggling.*) Where is Waldo? Maybe you mean Ralph Waldo Emerson, the transcendentalist? Or maybe you mean Walt Whitman, the famous poet.

Lee: The former.

John Hodgman: Did you have a prepared guess? Something that you find enjoyable in your obscure cultural life?

Jesse Thorn: Hey, Lee, I could give you a guess to guess if you need a guest to guess.

Lee: Oh, I definitely need a guess to guess.

Jesse Thorn: The greatest American poet of them all, Mr. Bob Dylan. Mr. Bob Dylan, the greatest poet of them all! Bob Dylan!

Lee: It did sound like Bob Dylan, now that you say that.

Jesse Thorn: Oh! If it's not the original—if it's not the original rapper, Mr. William Shakespeare—

John Hodgman: It's gotta be the greatest poet of all time, Bob Dylan. Okay.

Jesse Thorn: (*Swooning.*) Mm! Bob Dylan. Bob, I call him.

Lee: Absolutely. That'll be my guess. Yep.

(*They laugh.*)

John Hodgman: My bailiff is extra spicy today. You guys are in for it. But all guesses are wrong. Those were, of course, a number—but not the complete number of stanzas from the poem *Idiot* by Ernest Noyes Brookings. Now, he's one of my favorite poets. You may not have heard of Ernest Noyes Brookings. Some of you in the audience I bet have, because you might be my age. You might have come up through zine culture in the '80s and '90s. And you might know that Ernest Noyes Brookings was a retired machine parts engineer from Newbury, Massachusetts. And in 1979, he went to go live in a Boston area nursing home where he met one David Greenberger, a recently graduated art student who was working at the nursing home as the activities director. And Greenberger had begun in that year interviewing the residents of the nursing home, asking them unusual questions such as “What is embarrassment?” or “Who was Frankenstein?” or “What denominations of money would you like your face printed on?” and collecting the often insightful, often amusing, and always interesting answers in a self-published zine that was introduced to me by a friend named Fancher Layne in 1987. And then I became a big fan of this zine, and I used to buy it at Newberry Comics—though I don't know where all my copies of the zine are.

And among the respondents, among the residents of the nursing home, was this person— Ernest Noyes Brookings. David Greenberger encouraged Brookings to

write poems for the zine, and he soon became a reader favorite, including a favorite of mine. Brookings wrote about 400 poems on subjects ranging from alcohol and after dinner mints to weddings, white worms, and your cheating heart. They were eccentric, insightful, and sometimes surreally illuminating—especially as they got twisted around Brookings' insistence that they always rhyme. Always must rhyme.

Here's the last bit of a poem that he wrote, called *My Jobs*.

“After returning from Midwest, went to my home, to Hill Place. God organized all the rest. We did not plummet into space.” That last line, “we did not plummet into space,” became the title of Brookings' first collection of poetry published by Greenberger in 1983. And later his poems would be set to music in, I think, four volumes of albums called *Lyrics by Ernest Noyes Brookings*. They were set to music by bands like Yola Tango and The Young Fresh Fellows and XTC, all of your alternate favorites of the '80s and '90s. Brookings passed away in 1987, but Greenberger continued to publish the zine and advocate his work well until the day of now! I believe the zine stopped publishing in 2010. The zine, of course, took its name after the nursing home, which was called The Duplex. The Duplex Nursing Home.

Stephanie: Oooh!

Lee: There you go. Alright.

John Hodgman: The zine was called *The Duplex Planet*. And Greenberger is still active today as an artist and a musician. In fact, he's the focus of a documentary that just premiered at South by Southwest in Austin last week in March—depending on when you're listening—2026. It's called *Beyond the Duplex Planet*. It's one of my favorite things. And thank you for giving me this opportunity to revisit it, as we are here today to talk about a duplex! Not in Boston, but in New Orleans. What do you call it, Lee and Stephanie? New Orleans or New Orleans?

Stephanie: New Orleans.

Lee: Lens, like the thing you wear on your eyes.

John Hodgman: New Orleans. Okay, I got you! (*Adopting their pronunciation*) You're in New Orleans, Stephanie. First question for both of you: do you put potato salad on your gumbo? Yes or no?

Stephanie: No. No.

John Hodgman: Have you ever heard of that?

Stephanie: Yes. And I think it's wrong.

John Hodgman: (*Laughs.*) What about you, Lee?

Lee: Nope. Nope. Never tried that one. I generally have a problem with foods touching. So.

John Hodgman: Uh, well, yes. I probably wouldn't put potato salad in your gumbo then. That was a case that we adjudicated onstage at our Night Court show in the Bellhouse. And I just had to ask, because apparently some people do it. But other people—like you, Stephanie—think it's wrong. So, Stephanie, if you're not putting potato salad on your gumbo, and again, that is not a euphemism. That's a real thing that some people do in Louisiana—though not that often in New Orleans. How do you spend your time down there? What's going on down there in the Crescent City?

Stephanie: We spend a lot of time with our friends going to listen to music—we have a lot of musician friends—and hanging out with our six-year-old doing a lot of soccer, baseball, Cub Scouts.

John Hodgman: You ever go to the Spotted Cat Music Club?

Stephanie: Yes!

John Hodgman: Yeah, that's a good spot. You ever go to the Spotted Cat Music Club, Jesse? We gotta go there someday. We gotta do this show in New Orleans one of these days. (*Muttering inaudibly.*)

Jesse Thorn: We should go there sometime! You know, my best friend Pete Fields of Slow Motion Cowboys lives in New Orleans. So, go see Pete sometime!

John Hodgman: Yeah! Yeah, go see Pete Fields sometime.

Lee: Fun fact, Spotted Cat's on Frenchman Street, which is named after a French man.

Jesse Thorn: That is fun.

John Hodgman: Alright, I'm about to give this one to Lee, Stephanie. That was good. But there is a dispute, and you seek justice. What's the nature of the justice that you seek?

Stephanie: So, like you said, we have a duplex. It's family owned. It's been in the family since 1978. And Lee's mom actually—in the '80s, when she was living in the house, wanted to put a door in connecting the two sides. But then my father-in-law's job got transferred to Georgia, and Lee and his brother ended up growing up there. And they used it as a rental property until after Katrina, when Lee and his uncle moved into the two sides.

John Hodgman: To be clear in terms of what a duplex is, for people who don't know—and it has different meanings in different places. But you're talking about a freestanding building, right? That has two homes in it.

Stephanie: Mm-hm, mm-hm. Yes.

John Hodgman: And two separate entrances to those homes. So, it's one building but two homes, separated by what is now a completely contiguous, unbroken wall.

Stephanie: Yes!

John Hodgman: And you want to break through.

Stephanie: I want to break through the wall.

John Hodgman: You don't want to have to go outside to get into the other home. So— Alright, I got you. Because in New York City, where I guess I live, a duplex would mean an apartment that has two levels in it—like, an interior staircase. Or if it's a triplex, like the first apartment that I lived in with my friend Adam on 22nd Street, that means it's got three levels. It's got a main level, which is about 10 feet below street level. Then it's got a second level above, which is an overhang where Adam and his girlfriend could sleep and watch me sleeping below. And then an even more recessed lower level where the bathroom and the kitchen was. And that was mainly—that whole level was mainly designed to accrue sewage due to frequent flooding. That's what a triplex is.

Jesse Thorn: John, as a longtime New York City resident, would you say it's the number one city in America for a living space with a six-inch-tall window that is at forehead height?

John Hodgman: Absolutely! Although our window, our single window was at forehead height. It began at like completely level with sidewalk level and then went up another five feet. So, it was just like a viewing gallery from the outside. People could look at us and watch us and often pee on our window late at night.

Jesse Thorn: *(Cackles loudly.)* Awesome.

Lee: That also happens on Frenchman Street. So, *(unclear.)*

John Hodgman: I can imagine it happens on Frenchman Street.

Jesse Thorn: *(Shouting over them in a stereotypical New York accent.)* HEYYYY! I'm peein' here!

John Hodgman: Yeah. Yeah. I'm sure on Frenchman Street, people often laissez les bon temps pee-éh. as well.

Lee: Yeah, just not on windows, I guess. I don't know.

John Hodgman: So, the living situation is, right now, you—Stephanie—and Lee are living in one half of the of the two-family home. One home within the two homes. And who's in the other one at the at the moment?

Stephanie: At the moment, no one is living there full-time. My mother-in-law stays there when she comes to visit, and other family members stay there when they're in town.

John Hodgman: I gotcha.

Stephanie: And I will say, my mother-in-law—who is the actual owner of the duplex—supports my side.

John Hodgman: Whoa! And we're talking about Lee's mother here, or do you have another marriage? I don't know how it goes in New Orleans! So, I just want to make sure.

Stephanie: (*Chuckling.*) Yes, Lee's mother supports my side.

John Hodgman: So, Lee, this home has been in your family for a long time.

Lee: Yeah, that's the case.

John Hodgman: Stephanie, what is the benefit to you of adding this door?

Stephanie: Easier access, better flow when the family is in town. Lee likes to joke that it's not that big of a deal to just walk outside. But we did have a historic snowstorm in New Orleans last year. And his uncle, who was still living in the home at the time, could not leave to come to us to get food during the snowstorm. And so, that was when I really said, “Hey, we need a door that we could just walk through without having to deal with rain or the historic snow.”

John Hodgman: Is this when you started to get the idea for the interior door?

Stephanie: Yes.

John Hodgman: When you were taking care of Lee's—or you were helping to take care of Lee's uncle at the time? He wasn't well?

Stephanie: Yes. Yes.

John Hodgman: And let me ask you about this snowstorm. How many inches of snow did you get?

Stephanie: 12.

John Hodgman: (*Shocked.*) No!

Lee: Yeah, in our backyard.

Stephanie: In our front yard. Yeah.

John Hodgman: No, you didn't!

Lee: Yeah, it was crazy.

Stephanie: Yeah. Yeah. The official recorded amount at the airport, I think, was 10. But—

Jesse Thorn: But you got extra.

Stephanie: —we kept a yardstick at our house, and it was 12.

Lee: Got a couple trash can lids and sledded down the levee.

Stephanie: Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: Down at the bottom, there's a two-inch layer of shrimp.

(They laugh and agree.)

John Hodgman: Uh, wow. I am truly taken aback. I truly thought you were gonna say, “Oh, about half an inch,” but that was enough.

Stephanie: That's what we expected!

John Hodgman: That must have been quite the thrill.

Lee: That was what everybody thought was big up until last year. Yeah.

John Hodgman: But this is still a fairly unusual occurrence—isn't it, Stephanie?

Stephanie: That is an unusual occurrence. Massive amounts of rain that floods our yard is not an unusual occurrence.

John Hodgman: Mm-hm, mm-hm. Gotcha. And then your yard just becomes a gator pool.

Stephanie: Yeah.

(Lee laughs.)

Transition: Three gavel bangs.

(ADVERTISEMENT)

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Jesse Thorn: Let me ask you this. How common of an occurrence is it for you to have to get food from an uncle or bring food to an uncle?

Stephanie: Well, at the time it was a nightly thing. Now it's really more about just ease of walking back and forth when family is in town. When his parents are here, they stay over there as far as like sleep and whatnot, but they're constantly coming back and forth. And our six-year-old loves to go back and forth to see them when they're here. And so, he's having to walk out, go through the yard, go over. Yeah.

John Hodgman: Walk— Well, yeah, tiptoe through the gator pool to go see grandma.

Stephanie: Yeah! Yeah.

John Hodgman: And Lee, you don't want this door, because you don't want your mother getting anywhere near you, and you don't want your kids to get to know their grandma, correct?

Lee: (*Sarcastically.*) Yeah. Oh yeah, sure.

Stephanie: I have that on record!

Lee: Yeah. So, to specify, my uncle sadly passed away last year after we had done our best to take care of him. He had prostate cancer.

John Hodgman: Oh my gosh.

Lee: But so, now we've got that side open. But he had a sizable estate that's very interesting to deal with. Nothing like— I can't say it's not valuable, but it's basically a bunch— He was a mechanic, so he's got just a bunch of half-working cars, two properties. And my mom is the next of kin who is now having to deal with all that. So, she's coming into town pretty often to just deal with the aftermath of that.

Jesse Thorn: Just combine half cars and...

Lee: Yeah, exactly. That's kind of what we're doing right now is combining cars together and trying to get properties up and running and stuff like that.

Stephanie: And she would like to be able to walk through the house.

Lee: Yeah, but when my mom's not here—which is three-four times a year nowadays, it's basically empty. And the long-term plan would be to rent it to somebody.

John Hodgman: Do you feel that adding an extra door, the connecting door, would decrease its rental value? Or what's your argument against the door?

Lee: Uh, well, um. In the submitted evidence, if you look at where the door would be, it would basically be right in the middle of the living room.

John Hodgman: Okay, let's take a look at the evidence. And we'll start with Exhibit A. All of these will be available on our social medias. And of course, if you're watching on our YouTube channel right now, please subscribe and hit that bell to get those notifications! We have full video episodes up of every episode, plus more. You're looking at it right now. Okay, this is your home there in New Orleans. And it is a modest and handsome two-story home. Normally I expected to see two doors in the front of this home. Um.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, I was about to say this looks like a single-family home. Is there a foyer behind the one door that we can see?

Lee: There is, yeah, most duplexes in New Orleans are double shotguns. So, it's like two symmetric doors in the front, two symmetric houses. Ours is really weird. So, basically it looks like a single home in front—designed that way—but if you look to the left, there's like an—

John Hodgman: (*Stammering.*) But it's a party in the back?

Lee: Yeah, it's a party on the back-left side, is where the party basically is. But that's the front door for the other side. It's just on the side of the house.

John Hodgman: Oh, yeah. So, if we go down here to Exhibit B, Jesse, we can take a look at that. We can see in the back of the house, two separate doors, two separate homes. And a lot—and a very—yeah, and this is a deep home, by the way! Deep home.

Jesse Thorn: I also see here a feature that I love, which is a well for boys.

John Hodgman: (*Chuckling.*) Oh, I'm sorry? What is—what is it?

Jesse Thorn: You see the well for boys there?

John Hodgman: So, to enter the other the other home—or the other unit, let's call it—you have to go in the backyard to access the second unit?

Lee: No, if you go back to Exhibit A, you can see where the front door is. There's an awning to the left that kind of sticks out right over the gate. That's the—

John Hodgman: Oh, okay. So, just yeah, just past the driveway on the left. That's the entrance.

Lee: Yeah. You can kind of barely make out the sidewalk that leads up to it on the left.

John Hodgman: And just out of curiosity, do you both have access to both floors, or do you have—does one lead to the top, one lead to the bottom?

Lee: No. The divide—if you look at the front door, the window to the left of that, if you draw a line straight up and down, that's the divide of the house. And our front door—if you were to walk straight through the wall into the back—leads to the patio you saw between the two.

Jesse Thorn: And then the windows are placed completely miscellaneously. *(Laughs.)*

Lee: Yeah, they're totally miscellaneous. Yeah.

John Hodgman: Do you have a sense of when this house was built? Just out of curiosity.

Stephanie: 1976.

John Hodgman: Mm-hm! Oh, look at that.

Jesse Thorn: Was the home built as a duplex?

Stephanie & Lee: *(In unison.)* Yes.

Jesse Thorn: Just a weird one.

Stephanie & Lee: *(Once again in unison.)* It's a weird one.

Jesse Thorn: In Los Angeles, there are plenty of single-family homes that have been subdivided and might end up with a weird door on the side and miscellaneous placed windows. But this was built into weirdness.

Lee: No, this one started off that way. Yeah. An architect did that. Yeah.

Stephanie: Yeah. It started out this way. The windows bug me, I have to say, because they're not centered, and it drives me crazy.

John Hodgman: Yeah. (*Chuckling.*) I gotta say that, uh, I'm not sure there was necessarily an architect here.

Lee: Yeah, there's that. And oddly enough, the room that's above the front door? That window has plenty of room to come over to the left there. So, it could have been centered. They just didn't do it.

John Hodgman: Yeah, I hadn't even noticed how these windows were misaligned until Jesse mentioned it, and now it's all I can see.

Lee: It's rough.

John Hodgman: It's—like it's—

Jesse Thorn: You know how they say like sometimes instead of an architect, there's just a contractor. I think literally just like the mason that was working on the front of this was like, “(*Dopily.*) Oh, a third window, boss? Oh, alright. I'll take out a few bricks.”

John Hodgman: Yeah, exactly. Yeah, (*stammering*) it is what would be described in Lovecraft terms as impossible architecture, designed to drive a man mad. You got Cthulhu living in one of your units over here? Cthulhu?

Lee: Yeah, it might be—might be uncomfortable for him.

John Hodgman: Exhibit C, however, brings us into the interior of the home. Specifically, Stephanie, I think where you would like to punch a hole into the wall, correct? And I mean build a door, not punch a hole out of frustration.

Stephanie: I mean, if you listen to Lee, that's what I want to do—just punch a hole into the wall and be done with it. But yes, this is the wall that connects. And so, because of the way our door is recessed, the wall on our side is basically like halfway into the living room on the other side. So, it's like right in the middle of the room.

Jesse Thorn: So, this looks like—it looks like what we're seeing here is your sort of foyer or mud room or something like that. It also appears to be where you store various bicycles. So, it's your parking garage as well.

Lee: Yeah, parking garage, hats, coats, shoes, bikes. Yep.

Stephanie: I also want it noted that the bikes are in the house, but we do not live in New York City, where it would be common for bikes to be inside. Most people around us have them in a garage or a shed.

Jesse Thorn: This is not a—you know that r/MaleLivingSpaces subreddit, John?

John Hodgman: *(Chuckling darkly.)* Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: Where all decor—

John Hodgman: I'm digging deep in there.

Jesse Thorn: Where all decor is either guitars hanging on the wall or bicycles hanging on the wall. *(Laughs.)* This is—

John Hodgman: Yeah. Sometimes samurai swords.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, that's a good point. This is not that. This is basically just a pile of bicycles on the wall. I don't know how you could pile bicycles on a wall, but that's what it looks like in this picture.

Lee: In fairness, before we got married, it did look like it was gonna be on that Reddit. So, yeah.

(John chuckles.)

Stephanie: Yeah. This is a holdover.

Lee: We've added to it since then, yeah.

Stephanie: This is a holdover to his bachelor days.

John Hodgman: Did you—? So, you inhabited this space obviously before Stephanie. It's a family home.

Lee: Yes.

John Hodgman: You lived here as a bachelor for a period of time?

Lee: Yes. Not— Well, technically a bachelor, but I had roommates. Yes.

John Hodgman: And did you grow up in the home as well, or just as an adult?

Lee: Early on. We moved out of New Orleans when I was like three. So, I was brought home from the hospital to this house, but we moved out at three years old, and I spent most of my life growing up in the North Atlanta area.

Jesse Thorn: At some point, you were like, "Ooh, free house!"

Lee: Yep, nope, that's it!

John Hodgman: The other exhibit we have here is the other side of the wall. This would be the empty unit, the currently used by itinerant family members unit. Correct?

Lee: That's correct. Yes.

Jesse Thorn: And what we're looking at here appears to be just the main wall of the living room.

Lee: Yep. It's a wall in a—

Jesse Thorn: The main wall of the not-that-big living room. I mean, like this—

Lee: It's not big at all, yeah.

Jesse Thorn: This is not a lot of extra door space.

Lee: This picture is taken from the front door. So, like, yeah. There's nothing left behind you, then.

Jesse Thorn: If you were to put a door in here, given that it already contains the door to the rest of the house and the entrance door to the apartment or unit, you would have a room that was roughly—what would you say?—40% door?

Lee: Yeah. (*Chuckles.*) And the closet to your left, yeah, that's more door. So, yeah, all door.

John Hodgman: Although, there's a there's an awfully nice tapestry or quilt on the wall there. There's a world in which you hide a little door or portal behind it, and do it, you know, *Shamshank Redemption* style. You know what I mean? Like—

(*Stephanie agrees immediately.*)

Lee: That's about what Stephanie wants. Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: Get Stephanie a spoon! Let's do this!

Stephanie: Just start digging!

John Hodgman: So, Lee, is your argument against the door here—having looked at this evidence—more about not wanting to add to the labyrinthine madness of your already confused house? Or is it to keep your relatives away from you?

Lee: It's a small part of all of that. It wouldn't be great for the flow of the other side. It would cost money, and we've got other projects we can put door money towards.

John Hodgman: Such as?

Lee: I would love to either have a bigger shed to put the bikes in or a garage to keep the cars out of the crazy sun that we have that causes them to rot five years after you buy them.

John Hodgman: Right now, you don't have a garage or a shed of any kind.

Lee: There is a shed, but it's very tiny, and it's already chock full of stuff.

John Hodgman: Stephanie, are you opposed to a shed or a garage or both?

Stephanie: I am not. However, those can come before the door, because I agree he needs to move the bikes out of the foyer.

John Hodgman: Uh, yeah. Why not both? Why not everything?

Stephanie: Yes! Why not everything?

Lee: But yeah, I also think it would be harder to rent the place out—or at the very least, make it less soundproof.

John Hodgman: Stephanie, do you share Lee's mission of renting out that other unit?

Stephanie: Yes. And to that argument, it is not uncommon in New Orleans with a duplex like ours to have a door that connects the—

Lee: There are no duplexes like ours.

Stephanie: Yes, there are!

John Hodgman: Well, there are duplexes, but none quite as *In the Mouth of Madness* as this one.

Jesse Thorn: John, in the '70s there was a program where fifth graders in New Orleans drew pictures of houses and then professional house builders built them.

(They all titter.)

John Hodgman: Oh, that would explain the turrets and the underground pool and the secret rooms. And the pew-pew stations where you get to shoot your lasers at invaders.

Stephanie: Yeah.

John Hodgman: It's a pretty cool house you guys have, I must say.

Lee: It's fun.

John Hodgman: Lee, it says here you're a tour guide.

Lee: I am, yeah.

John Hodgman: And Stephanie, you're a social worker?

Stephanie: I am.

John Hodgman: Wonderful. And you're also part of the Krewe of Iris! What is that?

Stephanie: It is the oldest all-female Mardi Gras krewe.

John Hodgman: Krewe spelled K-R-E-W-E, which is like a social organization that marches in the Mardi Gras parade.

Stephanie: So, the Krewe of Iris is a Mardi Gras parade.

John Hodgman: Oh, excuse me.

Stephanie: It has the largest number of participants of any of the Mardi Gras parades.

John Hodgman: Oh, I didn't realize! Okay, so there are lots of them. Each krewe has its own parade?

Stephanie: Yeah.

John Hodgman: And yours is the only all-women krewe?

Stephanie: There are two others. We're the oldest.

John Hodgman: Oh, cool.

Stephanie: We date back to 1917.

John Hodgman: That's fun. Must be fun to live in New Orleans.

Stephanie: It's a blast.

John Hodgman: Do you wear special outfits?

Stephanie: All the time.

John Hodgman: So, your mom is the owner of the home, and she is living there part-time, and she is agreeing with Stephanie that an inter-home portal would be a good idea. Is she onboard with renting the unit out?

Stephanie: She is. Eventually, not immediately. But the idea would be to not have a long-term tenant, but more of like a short-term, rent it to travel nurses, things like that. So that she could still have access when she needed it.

Lee: Also, in fairness, my mom is having some cognitive dissonance with the idea that she wants to rent it and the idea that she also wants to move into it.

Stephanie: Yes, she is setting the home up as though she's living there.

John Hodgman: Is your point that your mom is not competent to determine what to do with her own home?

Lee: Oh, not at all. I'm just saying she hasn't been forced into a decision. In the meantime of not making that decision, she's practically moving in.

Stephanie: I was gonna say, you might want to be careful. She may listen to this podcast.

Lee: To a place that she's in for three weeks out of the year.

John Hodgman: Oh well, I'm gonna be hand delivering this podcast to her personally next time she and I are both in New Orleans. Because honestly, I'm wondering like why am I not talking to her? She sounds like a hoot! And also, she owns the home. She's the only one who can authorize changes to it one way or the other.

Lee: I figured she might help Stephanie's case, but Stephanie didn't try to bring her on. So.

Stephanie: Well. I pointed out her desires. I will say the only thing I have actually asked Lee to do in this debate is— We have a friend who is an architect, and I just want his opinion on if it would be feasible. Because my mother-in-law has been talking about this since the '80s. And so, just rule it out or rule it in. Is it possible?

John Hodgman: Yeah, it says here you want Mark to take a look at it. Is Mark your other husband or the architect that you mentioned?

Stephanie: He's our friend who is an architect.

John Hodgman: Lee, why don't you want Mark to take a look at it?

Lee: He could have! Stephanie could have called him!

John Hodgman: I mean, is there another place for the door? Because I mean, I have to agree with Lee here, Stephanie. It doesn't look like a door is going to enhance livability in either space, other than allowing you to pass through the wall. Is there any other place?

Stephanie: Yes, our son's bedroom connects to one of the bedrooms next door.

John Hodgman: That's great. Because you can just say to him, “Hey, we're going to put a secret door in your bedroom that's going to allow grandma to access your room while you sleep.”

Stephanie: He's actually very excited about the possibility of a door. *(Laughs.)*

John Hodgman: That would—so, it would be an inter-bedroom doorway.

(Lee and Stephanie confirm.)

But that would be upstairs.

Stephanie: But that would be upstairs. Yeah. And I will say, the idea I had for a door would not be like a traditional door. It would be a pocket door so that it's not—you know—taking up a lot of space in either room.

Jesse Thorn: And that way you can take out more of the supports that hold the building up.

Stephanie: Of course! I mean, the ultimate goal is to have the house fall down, clearly.

Lee: I do have something else I want to submit.

John Hodgman: Okay, please.

Lee: Since our backyard is an alleyway, we park in the back, and we walk to our cars through the alligator ponds and the snowstorms at least four times a day to get to and from work and the school and whatnot. And I measured that distance from our side.

73 feet to my wife's car. And then from our back door to the other back door, 44 feet. From our front door to the other front door, 42 feet. So, this distance we're trying to traverse, we're doing that already at least four times a day, individually.

Stephanie: Not in bad weather.

Jesse Thorn: I'm just excited that Lee bought one of those wheels on a stick that you use to measure distance when you're going for a walk!

(They laugh.)

John Hodgman

Laissez-le stick wheel rouler!

Jesse Thorn: Lee, what kind of tour guide are you?

Lee: Uh, I do city tours.

Jesse Thorn: *(Interrupting loudly.)* Please say fan boats! Please say fan boats!

Lee: Oh no, not fan boats. Those look like so much fun. But I would probably get eaten by an alligator. No, it's a city tour. It takes about two hours, and we basically do a quick lap around the whole town on a minibus. We pick people up downtown, go around in a circle, bring them back downtown, and talk about the city in the meantime.

Jesse Thorn: Do you think a first step to becoming a fan boat tour guide would be to purchase a miniature fan boat to get to your car when the backyard's flooded?

Lee: It's not the worst idea. *(Chuckles.)*

John Hodgman: Lee, this door is not the only change to the home that you are protesting. There is also the suggestion of putting some storage underneath those carpeted stairs. Tell me about what Stephanie's proposing there and why you're opposed to it.

Lee: Yes. When my mom and Stephanie get together, they talk about a whole bunch of fun stuff—like putting doors in. And one of the more recent ones, also about the same time they were talking about the door, was storage under the staircase right

there. My protest to that was also cost, but access as well. Because the best place for it would, I guess, be a door next to the toilet? Or where the dogs are hanging out in that one image?

Stephanie: False.

John Hodgman: Yeah. What's your plan for the—? I mean, because I'm looking again at this picture of the staircase. I'm not really sure where I see this under the stairs storage happening.

Stephanie: So, the way this came about was we had a lot of work being done next door. And at one point they had to cut into the wall of the closet in the corner. And when they cut the sheetrock out, we saw that there's almost a whole room under our stairs. And so, my mother-in-law and I said, “Hey, we don't have much storage in this house because it's such an open-concept house. This would be a great place to just, instead of putting sheetrock back, to put a door there and have some storage.” So, you wouldn't get to the storage from our side. You would get to it from that side.

John Hodgman: But what you're proposing is that underneath these carpeted stairs there's extra space that could be accessed by some kind of hatchway—not in your home, but in the other home.

Stephanie: Yes.

John Hodgman: And this will improve storage.

Stephanie: Yes.

John Hodgman: Which sounds wild. But why are you opposed to it, Lee? Why not have some more storage if you can get some more storage?

Lee: More storage would be wonderful, but if the access to it is where Stephanie is proposing, those plumbers—where they cut that hole out in the first place—put pipes in that particular spot. And the access where they cut, it's only maybe a foot—

John Hodgman: Stephanie says no, that didn't happen.

Lee: —by a foot and a half that was just large enough for a plumber to slide into. So, it would be a closet in a closet that only had about a foot and a half by foot access space.

John Hodgman: Stephanie, you're shaking your head no.

Stephanie: The pipes were not placed in a way that would prevent us from having a door big enough to put Rubbermaid bins through.

John Hodgman: What are you gonna put in those Rubbermaid bins? Mardi Gras beads?

Stephanie: All of my Marti Gras throws.

John Hodgman: Lee, is it that you're just resistant to change, or is this a terrible idea?

Lee: I think it's a terrible idea.

Stephanie: He's resistant to change. Also, he comes from a family of hoarders. So, I will give him this. He is terrified that more storage space will lead him to hoard more items, like his family.

Jesse Thorn: But what I'm hearing—correct me if I'm wrong—is that you want to put a weird storage window underneath your stairs that's accessible only from the other apartment. So, you'd have to either go through the gator area or through this other door that you're also proposing to put in there. And also, that the other apartment's living room, if I'm not mistaken—and look, I'm no 10-year-old; I don't know how to design a house. But if I'm not mistaken, you're describing a 17th door for the living room in the other apartment! (*Laughs.*)

Lee: Yes, and that door is inside another door. So.

Stephanie: I mean, honestly, you could just expand the closet. You don't have to have a door.

John Hodgman: Have you considered turning the stairs into a trapdoor *Munsters*-style in order to walk into the storage area and then exit through a secret door on the other unit, thus creating not another door, but a cool secret passage between the two units?

Stephanie: I would not be opposed to that.

Lee The six-year-old would like that, yeah.

Jesse Thorn: How big are the HVAC ducts? Could you just *Mission Impossible* this thing?

John Hodgman: Yeah. What if, instead of a door you walk through, there's a ceiling hatch that you drop through on a tension wire?

Lee: That might be easier, honestly.

John Hodgman: Lee, Stephanie said that you come from a family that has some hoarding tendencies. I don't know how serious this issue is in your family, but they've got some extra stuff, and this is something that is a little bit of a red flag for you?

Lee: A little bit, yeah. My uncle probably would have been bad enough to get on a TV show, but my mom currently isn't.

John Hodgman: And yet, you are going out of your way to point out all the stuff that she's planning to move into the other unit—sewing machines and so forth. Are you a little concerned that she's setting up a horde station next door?

Lee: Yeah. I mean, we have had this problem in our family before, specifically with my mom. When we were living in Georgia when I was a kid—high school—they moved to a new house in North Georgia, and we had already had a house closer to Atlanta. And they furnished the new place. I graduated; my brother graduated; and then my parents were left as empty nesters with two houses worth of furniture. *(Chuckles.)* So, over-furnishing places when you probably shouldn't is something that has a history in my family.

John Hodgman: How does it make you feel to think about your mom moving in more and more stuff next door, including herself?

Lee: I would be fine with it if she was actually moving there. But if she's only going to be there three weeks out of the year and we could be renting it to people in the meantime who don't want our personal belongings in there with them, then no.

John Hodgman: Do you think the way that your mom is aiming to decorate the other unit, it won't be rentable to others? Like—?

Lee: It currently isn't. Again, with the hoarding tendencies, it's already filled with a lot of my uncle's old personal belongings and her personal belongings that she's brought here. So. Yeah, it looks like it is somebody's lived in home currently, not something that just has furniture you could rent.

John Hodgman: And to further delve into your feelings for a moment, Lee—Stephanie and your mom are colluding actively against you.

Lee: Constantly, yes.

John Hodgman: Coming up with—*(cutting himself off.)* Oh. Okay, well. Alright. I guess I didn't—

Jesse Thorn: *(Gleefully.)* Yeah. In what other areas? Tell us about it!

John Hodgman: Yeah, go on.

Lee: For better or for worse, my mother and my wife are more or less best friends. They talk to each other way more than they talk to me.

(Jesse laughs delightedly.)

John Hodgman: And how does that make you feel?

Lee: I'm fine with it. I'm closer to my mom than I ever have been *(laughing)* because of my wife.

Stephanie: You're welcome. You're welcome.

John Hodgman: Lee, obviously, we wish your mom a very long and healthy life. But do you foresee a time when she is no longer with us, when this will be your decision? In other words, you're going to own the house next, presumably. You have a brother though, also. Right?

Lee: I do, yes.

Jesse Thorn: Are you going to end up splitting the house with your brother? Or when this house is passed on to the next generation, will you guys be renting out that other apartment for sure? And that money will be important to you.

John Hodgman: Well, it's got to be that just because how are they going to split this two-family home? How are they going to decide how to split the house?

(Jesse laughs.)

Lee: Yeah. Technically, if my brother wanted to move in next door, he would be more than welcome, legally speaking. But they live in Georgia as well, so I don't think that is part of their plan.

John Hodgman: But it's part of his legacy, too. Is this something you feel like you would need to bring him in on before you made any changes? I'm trying to think of ways that you can slow walk this process.

Lee: Yeah, no, he is currently involved in many of the situations involving my uncle's estate. But he also doesn't have much of an opinion on this, as far as I know—or if he did, he didn't say it.

John Hodgman: It sounds like your uncle's estate is fairly modest in that it mostly is made up of old car parts and pieces and some weird properties or whatever. But I mean, is there a situation where there might be a small windfall that would allow you to make some renovations in that house? Or—?

Stephanie: There is money for renovations in the house.

John Hodgman: So, you do have some money socked away for a potential renovation of this kind. It's just that, Lee, you would—*(backtracking to specify)* or coming down the line. Lee, you would rather use that money to do what? Build a shed, a garage? What is your priority? If I'm gonna make it happen for you magically right now, what would be your priority?

Lee: My priority—*(sighs)* I'm torn. Because it would be either one of those other two projects. Or any money that doesn't go to home renovation goes into like kids' college funds and, you know, savings accounts and stuff like that. And I think that's a better use of that than doors and extra closets and stuff like that.

John Hodgman: I mean, the amount of money that is being spent on a connecting door is nooot gonna buy you a whole lot of semesters worth of tuition at Tulane.

Lee: *(Laughs.)* That's for sure.

Stephanie: No.

John Hodgman: I mean, that said, if you're within the sound of my voice and you have kids, I don't care how old they are, get money into a 529 plan now!

Lee: Yep.

John Hodgman: It was a profound lifesaver for our family. It's incredible.

Tell me quick about Mark for a second. Is he a licensed architect? Does he have talent?

Stephanie: Yes, he is a licensed architect.

Lee: Yeah, he is. As far as I know, in the architecture world, he's a fairly good one for sure. And that's another reason I didn't think about asking Mark, is this seemed like more of a question for like a general contractor—whereas he's an architect. Kind of seemed to me like—I don't know—asking a— If you had like a buddy who was a famous hockey player to teach a kid softball. I don't know.

Jesse Thorn: I mean, it's ultimately a question for a structural engineer, right? The question is whether your house is gonna fall down—

(They laugh.)

—if you put a hole in the wall.

John Hodgman: Yeah, but I mean— Do you do you feel, Lee, that Mark could come in and would be willing to come in and give it a friends-and-family rate eyeball and just give you some basic advice?

Lee: Potentially, if we decided we really wanted to push towards that route. But I didn't even think we were at that point.

John Hodgman: I appreciate your trying to respect Mark's professionalism and not getting him to work for free, but he's not exactly a hockey player teaching softball.

(Stephanie laughs.)

He's an architect who is a friend who you would be consulting for expertise in his own field.

Lee: Yeah. Like I said, I feel like that's something my wife can do if she wanted to go that route. *(Chuckles.)*

Stephanie: And I will say Mark has done this for other friends. He has gone to their house and given them suggestions.

Lee: Did he?

Stephanie: Yes. That's where I got the idea! *(Laughs.)*

Jesse Thorn: And hockey players are too busy making out with each other to get involved in teaching softball.

(Everyone agrees sagely.)

John Hodgman: Stephanie, if I rule in your favor, you want me to—what? Come down there, live in your additional dwelling unit for a little while, punch a hole in the wall personally, and get and get some airflow and mom-flow through that duplex, or what?

Stephanie: Absolutely.

John Hodgman: Alright, but besides that.

Stephanie: But besides that, I just want you to tell him—rule that he has to be okay with Mark just coming by and giving us an opinion.

John Hodgman: And Lee, if I were to rule in your favor, you want me to send you back in time to when you were 25 years old just playing video games, eating food, and thinking about termites again? And get and get all these meddling women out of your life?

Lee: As fun as that sounds, no. But like, some sort of moratorium on bringing it up in the first place.

John Hodgman: Moratorium—a gag order, if you will.

Lee: Something like that, yeah.

John Hodgman: You want your mom and your wife—both of whom are whole human beings in their own right—to stop talking to you about their dumb door idea. Can they talk about it amongst themselves?

Lee: Uh yeah, I can't stop anybody from doing that. I don't know if you can.

John Hodgman: I don't know if you can— *(Stammering.)* Well, I'm a fake judge.

(Lee laughs.)

Jesse Thorn: You have experience with stopping her from talking to Mark.

Lee: There's that.

John Hodgman: Alright, I think I've heard everything I need to in order to go into my chambers. It's going to take me a little while, because I've got to walk out of this building and walk across the street and get into the other building. And then it's— I just wish that there were a portal or a zip line of some kind. But in the meantime, Jesse's going to ask you about how you're feeling. And I'll be back in a moment with my verdict. And! A book that I'm going to throw at one of you.

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

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

Lee, how are you feeling about your chances in the case right now?

Lee: Oh, pretty good! I think this can only go well for me. It seems like we keep the status quo of talking about the door and even putting a door in; or I get what I want, and we stop talking about it. *(Chuckles.)*

Jesse Thorn: *(Laughs.)* How many doors do you think, Stephanie, you could fit into that one living room?

Stephanie: I mean, I think we could fit like four doors in there.

Jesse Thorn: Why not make it like a—you know, like a *The Prisoner* or *Severance* type situation; where it's one of those rooms where all the walls are painted white, and there's doors everywhere, and most of the doors lead to some kind of—you know—dangerous beast or like existential crisis?

Stephanie: Absolutely. I'm all for the dragon under the stairs popping out.

Jesse Thorn: How are you feeling about your chances right now, Stephanie? You think you're gonna get this door?

Stephanie: I think I could get the door.

Jesse Thorn: At least you could borrow Lee's phone so you can call Mark, right?

Stephanie: Exactly!

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

Transition: Three gavel bangs.

Promo:

(Triumphant trumpeting.)

Announcer 1: *(With a tinny, canned effect like old radio.)* Let's get ready to recooord!

Narrator: Maximum Fun, bringing you the finest of podcasts from the worlds of comedy and culture!

Announcer 1: Almost a perfect episode!

Narrator: Made by real people!

(Gasps from the crowd.)

Announcer 2: *(Also with a tinny, canned effect like old radio.)* Oh no, I think that's gonna cost him!

Announcer 1: Ya hate to see it!

Narrator: Supported by people just like you.

Announcer 2: They're only five seconds away from the longest stretch without saying "um." Two... one...

(Roaring cheers.)

And he's done it, folks! A new world record!

Announcer 1: Amazing!

Narrator: MaxFunDrive is coming soon.

Announcer 2: And they hit the cute interruption trifecta! Cat!

(A meow.)

Dog!

(A bark.)

And sleepy toddler!

(Baby babbling.)

(The audience "aww"s.)

Narrator: The best two weeks in podcasting starts Monday, April 20th. Bonus content, gifts, games, and great episodes, and so much more. Follow [@MaxFunHQ](#) and all your shows on social media so you don't miss a thing!

(Music cuts out.)

Promo:

Music: A bright, playful tune.

Emily Fleming: I'm Emily Fleming!

Jordan Morris: I'm Jordan Morris.

Matt Lieb: And I'm Matt Lieb.

Emily: We are real comedy writers!

Matt: Real friends—

Jordan: And real cheapskates!

Matt: On every episode of our podcast, *Free With Ads*, we ask, “Why pay for expensive streaming services when you can get free movies from apps with weird names?”

Emily: Each week we review the freest movies the internet has to offer—classics like *Pride & Prejudice*.

Jordan: Cult classics, like *Point Break*.

Matt: And “holy (*sensor beep*), what did I just watch?” classics like *Teen Witch*.

Emily: Tune in every week as we take a deep dive into the internet's bargain bin.

Jordan: Every Tuesday on MaximumFun.org or your favorite pod place.

Music:

Free with ads!

(Music fades out.)

Transition: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Judge Hodgman, the MaxFunDrive is right around the corner.

John Hodgman: That's absolutely right! MaxFunDrive is coming. It starts on April the 20th and goes all the way through May 1st. Now, if you're new to *Judge John Hodgman*, we are part of the Maximum Fun Network of quality podcasts, I dare say. Maximum Fun being a network that is almost entirely member supported. That is to say, we exist because of the support from listener members like you. And if you're not one yet, MaxFunDrive is the time to become one. It's the best time of year to become a member of Maximum Fun and support the shows you love.

Jesse Thorn: We have a lot of really special stuff planned for the MaxFunDrive. First of all, we're going to have a special, members only bonus episode in addition to the Membo Mailbag. We're going to talk about that at the end of the show, because we need some stuff. We need your help for that.

John Hodgman: Yeah, that's right. This is a fun— This is gonna be a fun bonus episode. And yeah, stay tuned.

Jesse Thorn: We're going to have all kinds of live streams throughout the drive, clearing messages from the Membo Mailbag. And I want to be clear; these this will not be membo specific; these will be for everyone.

(John confirms.)

And we're also going to be giving out cool thank you gifts, as we always do to people who join at MaximumFun.org/join. So, for all those reasons, we hope that you will mark your calendars for this special time of year.

John Hodgman: There's going to be something fun going on every day, wherever you get your podcasts and your streams. If you're not already subscribed to the Maximum Fun YouTube channel or the *Judge John Hodgman* YouTube channel, please go over there, subscribe and hit that bell, so you won't miss any of the fun and live streams that we're going to be doing during the MaxFunDrive. And it will all culminate in a *Judge John Hodgman* live show in Los Angeles. That's right! I am going out to LA to join my friend Jesse Thorn to adjudicate some MaxFun host disputes. And it's all going to be streaming on MaxFun's YouTube channel at the end of the drive as well.

Jesse Thorn: I'm so excited about this. I already talked to— You know, my cohost on *Jordan, Jesse, GO!*, Jordan Morris? He does a show on the network called *Free with Ads*

with Emily Fleming—the brilliant, talented, hilarious Emily Fleming, who holds many strong opinions about many things. And I don't know what their dispute is! But I am excited to find out what Emily is mad about. (*Laughs.*)

John Hodgman: It's going to be a ton of fun! So, please make sure to tune in. Follow us on Instagram at [@JudgeJohnHodgman](#); go to [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](#) or the Maximum Fun YouTube channel. Make sure to hit that subscribe and the bell and everything else to stay on top of all the fun stuff we have planned. And of course, if you remember only one thing from this momentary break in our show, remember [MaximumFun.org/join](#). That's how you can become a supporting listener member and keep us and all of the fine podcasts at Maximum Fun going so that you can enjoy them for many, many years to come.

Jesse Thorn: April 20th through May 1st is this year's MaxFunDrive. We'll see you then. Let's get back to the case.

Transition: Three gavel bangs.

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

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

John Hodgman: Well, I've looked and I've looked and I've looked all over my office here, and I cannot find my old *Duplex Planets*. Which makes me very upset, because I want to have them. And I know that they're somewhere. They're somewhere, I think, probably in a Rubbermaid box in a storage area in Maine. It makes me very nervous to think about. One, because I want to lay hands on them. Two, I wanted to throw one of them at you. Because you may or may not know, but my ceremonial gavel was confiscated at the San Francisco International Airport recently. And so, we're making a new gavel thanks to Offerman Woodshop. And it's going to be a real beaut. But in the meantime, I've been selecting books for my office that I've read and enjoyed and want other people to read and enjoy to throw at you in the purpose of justice. I will find or maybe buy a *Duplex Planet* to send to you both, there in New Orleans, as thanks for being on the show. But in the meantime, I'm going to throw this book at you. This is called *Lowdown Road* by Scott Von Doviak, who is a crime writer and a longtime pop culture journalist for *The AV Club*. And I read and enjoyed this book a

lot the last time I sailed on the Grace Bailey schooner. And Jesse and I are gonna go on the Grace Bailey schooner in Maine in a few weeks, and it's gonna be a lot of fun. I believe all the berths are sold out. But why don't you go over to SailGraceBailey.com and double check that there hasn't been a cancellation, or see if you can be on a waiting list, or check out another of their sailings. It's a lot of fun.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. Sail without us.

John Hodgman: Sail without us! I'll tell you what, if you know you're going on the Grace Bailey and they're coming into (*unclear*), tell Captain Sikkema to let me know, and I'll come and say hi. Point is, I'm gonna throw this book at one of you.

Jesse Thorn: John, that just sounded like a string of made-up words.

(They giggle.)

John Hodgman: Like all words.

Jesse Thorn: In a lot of ways, Maine is just a string of made-up words.

John Hodgman: What was the thing I was just watching where the character said, “All words are made up?” “That just sounds like a made-up word,” and the other guy goes, “All words are made up.” Like, oh.

(Lee laughs.)

That's a good obscure cultural reference that I'm missing. I just watched it! What was it?! Something (*unclear*). Anyway, it doesn't matter. Point is, I don't know why I'm talking to either of you. You don't own this house. Your mom does! Or mom-in-law. I hate to use this adverb on this podcast, but legally, neither of you have any standing here to be punching holes in anything. This puts you in an awkward position, Lee, because Stephanie's got your mom's ear on this one, and she owns the home! They can do whatever they want. You're absolutely right. They don't have to consult you. They can just punch a hole in that, put a door in there. They can do whatever they want. They could put in a secret passage, if you wanted to make it like a real 10-year-old's house.

And yet, Lee— I mean, here's the thing. I don't want anyone to go against your wishes. You live there; you've lived there. It is—at least sentimentally, if not legally—

your family home. Eventually, it will be your family home. It's part of your family legacy. The family that you have joined and created with Stephanie is part of their legacy, too. So, you should consider it thoughtfully and carefully. Obviously. I don't know why you're so against this idea. You have the opportunity here to create your dream home! I don't necessarily mean the home that you dream of living in, but the home that pops up in your dreams. Everyone's had this dream, right? Where they find a secret door and discover a whole new wing to their house!?! That could be you! You could have a dreamlike home!

But the thing that I'm thinking about most when considering my verdict here is something you said just before I left to go into my chambers, which is that you just want to stop talking about it, Lee. And here's the thing. I'm not an expert in the various mental differences that cause literal hoarding problems in some people and families. But from a lay person's colloquial understanding about hoarding, not talking about it is how it happens! I should say that I mean avoiding hard decisions is exactly how you end up accruing detritus—whether physical or emotional—that you feel uncomfortable in and yet won't get rid of, because you don't want to think about it or talk about it.

And having looked at these few photos of your home, it is obviously a well-loved home. You have great memories in it. But you acknowledge that it is a house that has some goofy misalignment of windows and some strange layout issues and some storage—or lack thereof—issues; that the flow and the movement through the house is challenging. And I think it's time, clearly, to stop avoiding thinking about this and to start at least thinking about doing something about it. I don't think that this goes... I think, ultimately, even that small step of consulting Mark and getting Mark to walk through the house and say, “I think a door could go here” or “I don't think a good door could go here” is a positive step in terms of fostering a conversation—not just about what to do about a door or not, but also what is the future of the home? What is everybody's and the family's idea of what's going to happen with this house? Like, what are the plans? How do we set those plans in order? It's not just about desire, but it's also making sure that the home is useful to your family for as long as possible.

And I think that that's a conversation that clearly needs to happen. Particularly—even though it doesn't sound like Stephanie's going to be in a caretaking position again—First of all, *incredible* appreciation—which I know that you share, Lee—to you,

Stephanie, for taking care of a family—not only a family member, but a but an in-law family member during a very challenging and hard part of their life, which is the end of their life. It's a huge gift that you've given to the family, and not one that you took on lightly, I'm sure. And not one that—even though you don't see it happening real soon—you just don't know if you don't plan for it. And it's a good idea to have the conversation about, “Look, if there is someone in the family who needs care again,” whether that's something you both are willing to repeat in terms of that level of intense, one-on-one close quarters care; and if everyone is comfortable with that, how to best plan for it. And a door might be part of that.

But you can't have any of these conversations until—and I'm just going to suggest this—until Stephanie goes out on a date with Mark.

(Jesse wheezes into a laugh.)

Sorry, OKCupid. New Orleans is a romantic city. And I think Stephanie needs to go out to the carousel bar at the Roosevelt Hotel—

Lee: There we go.

John Hodgman: —and have a cocktail with Mark on that rotating bar.

Lee: It's one of Stephanie's favorites.

John Hodgman: *(Puffs a laugh.)* Yep. And then bring Mark home to your marital home. And the three of you walk through both sides of the house and literally consider both sides of this argument—not just in terms of a feasibility study, honestly, regarding a connecting door. Look, I can appreciate why that would be useful if the home remains in the family. But if you are renting it out to visiting nurses or to whomever, it could be a little bit of a “What the huh?!” to it. Like, I remember one of the times I did an Airbnb in Los Angeles in this beautiful home with my own family, up in Laurel Canyon. And our hostess, who is very lovely—Desi, her name was; a former ballet dancer—greeted us at the home and walked us through. And then she said, “And if you need me, I'll just be right over there.” And she pointed at the wall.

I'm like, “On the other side of the wall?”

She said, “No, that's a door. A secret door.”

I didn't love that!

(Stephanie laughs.)

I didn't love that. Although, if you if you truly made a secret door, Stephanie—like, if you truly made a secret door, the tenant would never need to know that you have special access.

Lee: It's true. If you only got short term nurses coming in and out three months at a time...

John Hodgman: Yeah. If you put an incredible revolving bookcase in that wall, that could be fun.

Stephanie: There you go.

John Hodgman: But all of it can't happen until there's a conversation between both of you, your mom, and Mark—not just about this door but, frankly, to go down a checklist of all of the problems that's going on in this house. I don't know that you're in a position of selling off your uncle's half-cars to actually do a full gut renovation of this house. But there are a lot of things clearly, beyond just this door, that need to be talked about. How to— Is there a way to put in a car port or some sort of protection for your cars? How to deal with flooding in the backyard? How to handle— I mean, look. If you were genuinely concerned, Lee, about a hoarding situation, it would make me—*(stammering)* you would— I mean, maybe you do feel profoundly uncomfortable looking at that weird pile of bikes you have in your foyer!

(They laugh.)

I know when you have little kids, things tend to get messy. But I would venture to say that not everything is operating at full efficiency in the home as it is, never mind the door. And I would invite Mark into your home—both homes—to walk through and get a separate point of view. Tell them all of the things that are not working for you in the house and get Mark to suggest to you what he thinks is feasible in terms of a complete—you know, how many different changes and what they're going to cost and

what's structurally feasible, et cetera. And then to have the conversation, and then to make a decision.

I am ruling in Stephanie's favor to pursue this further—not necessarily because I think that this is absolutely the best place for a door, but because avoiding this conversation does not solve it. And if anything, it just increases the unsightly mental horde in your own brain. And Stephanie's! And your mom's! Getting clarity and talking about this is the way to go. And Mark is the way to do it, as well as maybe the three of you have a romantic date at the at the carousel bar in New Orleans. And I'll see you down there next time I'm there.

This is the sound of me pretending this book is a gavel.

Clip:

Adam (*Beetlejuice*): In case of emergency, draw a door.

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

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

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

Stephanie, how do you feel about this verdict?

Stephanie: Wonderful. I can't wait to call my mother-in-law and let her know.

Jesse Thorn: Do you think she's going to make a special trip down?

Stephanie: We're seeing her next week, so we'll see. *(Chuckles.)*

Jesse Thorn: Well, you gotta see if Mark's available. But yeah, I think this is gonna be good.

(Stephanie agrees.)

Lee, how are you feeling?

Lee: Oh, I'm all right. Status quo on that. I'm actually looking forward to it. I'll invite Kelly, Mark's wife—who is a human in her own right—over, and we'll have drinks at the house, and you guys can come over and talk about the door after you're done with your date.

Stephanie: *(Wheezes a short laugh.)* Perfect.

Jesse Thorn: Kelly sounds cool too.

Lee: Oh yeah.

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

Stephanie: Thank you.

Lee: Thank you. Appreciate it.

Transition: Three gavel bangs.

Jesse Thorn: Another *Judge John Hodgman* case is in the books. We're going to have Swift Justice in just a second. First, thanks to Redditor u/kadendoo for naming this week's episode. If you want to name an episode, [Reddit.com/r/maximumfun](https://www.reddit.com/r/maximumfun). That's where Jen posts the requests for name ideas. It's fun! Honestly, it's just fun to just take a look at those threads.

John Hodgman: I love Ka-den-du or Kadden-du or Kadu-whatever “Requesting an Immediate Hinge Junction”. That was a terrific one. I'm gonna give a rare runner up to our old pal, Dr. Colossus of Rhodes, with “Voir Door”.

(Jesse agrees.)

If we ever have another door case, Dr. Colossus of Rhodes, remind me of that one. I want to use it. “Voir Door” was good too.

Jesse Thorn: By the way, have you been to Kadendoo Island? It's up there in Maine.

John Hodgman: *(Giggling.)* You're just making up words.

Jesse Thorn: Okay. Evidence and photos from the show are on our Instagram account. We're also on TikTok and YouTube at [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](https://www.instagram.com/JudgeJohnHodgmanPod).

And John, by the way, speaking of video. At the end of the MaxFunDrive this year, May 1st? I hope that everyone will check out the live, free streaming *Judge John Hodgman* show featuring us judging disputes between MaxFun hosts. I think that is going to be a lot of fun.

John Hodgman: Yes, I've said it before, and I'll say it again. Please go to [@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod](https://www.youtube.com/@JudgeJohnHodgmanPod). Subscribe to the YouTube channel. It costs nothing! And hit that bell, so you get all the notifications of all the fun stuff that's gonna be coming up for the MaxFunDrive—including that big May 1st live show that's gonna be live streaming. Meantime, I got a YouTube comment of the week coming to us from Roux Rube. Roux Rube actually left a comment on one of our YouTube shorts. We put we put full episodes on there. We also put up other fun little things there.

Roux Rube says, “I didn't think I could love the *Judge John Hodgman* show more than I already did, but this new, quote/unquote, ‘YouTube’ is really ratcheting my enjoyment up by several notches.”

That sounds like Emeril Lagasse with “kick it up a notch” for Roux Rube. “The cute little faces of our judge and our bailiff bring me joy in these dark times.” I didn't say that! Although, I do enjoy seeing the cute little face of Jesse Thorn when we record. But Roux Rube said that in the YouTube comment of the week. You can leave a comment there as well and perhaps become a YouTube comment of the week. And we would love it if you would. Because liking, sharing, subscribing—subscribing in particular—and commenting all help people discover the podcast. Not just on YouTube, but throughout the world! And by the way, just tell someone about it if you like the podcast. You don't have to go through social media. Just turn to a turn to a loved one. Knock on the door to the other unit in your duplex and say, “Are you listening to *Judge John Hodgman*? Give it a try.” Thank you very much for your support.

Jesse Thorn: *Judge John Hodgman*, created by Jesse Thorn and John Hodgman. This episode, engineered by Kevin Griffin at Beaucoup Media in New Orleans, Louisiana. I wish that everybody could have heard Kevin talking in the background, because it was so New Orleansy.

John Hodgman: Kevin was very New Orleansy.

Jesse Thorn: Megan Rosati runs our social media. The podcast, edited by AJ McKeon. Our video editor, Daniel Speer. Our producer is Jennifer Marmor. Are you ready for Swift Justice, John?

John Hodgman: I'm ready.

Jesse Thorn: Ardsley Park, who is on MaxFun subreddit r/MaximumFun, says, “My wife and I disagree on which orientation is meant when a cat is ‘upside-down’.”

John Hodgman: Hmm. Hmm!

Jesse Thorn: What's the upside of a cat?

John Hodgman: I mean, I'm not sure where there is a dispute there. The paws are the downside. The back is the upside. If you want to see an upside-down cat, I've just sent you a picture of our daughter's cat—our Maine Coon cat—

Jesse Thorn: Here it is! HA! Cool. (*Cackles delightedly.*)

John Hodgman: If you're watching the YouTube right now, you can already see it. And that's the only place I'll allow it to be shown!

Jesse Thorn: This cat is so cool. I want a giant Maine Coon cat.

John Hodgman: That cat is definitely upside-down. That'll be a good visual reference for you, Ardsley Park. I hope that solves the problem for you.

Jesse Thorn: Hey, we've got the MaxFunDrive around the corner on April 20th, John.

John Hodgman: That's right, Jesse! You mentioned it before, and I'll mention it again. The MaxFunDrive begins April 20th. It's the two weeks of the year when we ask you to consider supporting the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast and all of your favorite podcasts at Maximum Fun. And we're gonna have a lot of fun, and we're gonna be doing a lot of fun stuff. Not to mention the *Jordan, Jesse, GO!* sub-dom live stream every day. It's just the iceberg tip of the fun stuff we're gonna get up to. And it all starts on...? 4/20. That's right, April the 20th! And when people say 420, sometimes they think about certain things like munchies.

Jesse Thorn: I am so excited about this, because we got a—ohhh man, we got a munchie idea.

John Hodgman: Yeah. We want you to tell us what are your favorite munchies, so that we can rank and rate them. Your favorite post-party snack combos, your weirdest, late-night guilty pleasures. Send us all of your munchies, favorites, and disputes at MaximumFun.org/jjho. And if it's easier to take a picture, it's probably easier to just send it to me at Hodgman@MaximumFun.org.

Jesse Thorn: Whatever you can eat with an O'Boisie, I'm onboard for.

John Hodgman: MaximumFun.org/jjho or Hodgman@Maximumfun.org. This is your mission; your mission is munchies. Get it in for the MaxFunDrive as soon as possible.

Jesse Thorn: And of course, your disputes, please send them in at MaximumFun.org/jjho—no matter what the topic. They can be munchies related! 4/20 is right around the corner. But any topic, MaximumFun.org/jjho, submit it there. You can also just email it into Hodgman@MaximumFun.org. Big or small, we judge them all. We will talk to you next time on the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

Transition: Three gavel bangs.

Transition: Cheerful ukulele chord.

Speaker 1: Maximum Fun.

Speaker 2: A worker-owned network.

Speaker 3: Of artist owned shows.

Speaker 4: Supported—

Speaker 5: —directly—

Speaker 6: —by you!