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|----------|-------------|-------|---|
| 00:00:00 | Music       | Music | Gentle, trilling music with a steady drumbeat plays under the dialogue.   |
| 00:00:01 | Promo       | Promo | <b>Speaker:</b> Bullseye with Jesse Thorn is a production of <a href="http://MaximumFun.org">MaximumFun.org</a> and is distributed by NPR.  |
| 00:00:12 | Jesse Thorn | Host  | <i>[Music fades out.]</i><br>I'm Jesse Thorn. It's <i>Bullseye!</i>   |
| 00:00:14 | Music       | Music | "Huddle Formation" from the album <i>Thunder, Lightning, Strike</i> by The Go! Team plays. A fast, upbeat, peppy song. Music plays as Jesse speaks, then fades out.   |
| 00:00:22 | Jesse       | Host  | Chris Morris is an absurdist, sort of. I mean, just about everything he's made has been absurd. He was the host and creator of <i>The Day Today</i> , the BBC news parody where he'd read headlines like, "Sacked Chimney Sweep Pumps Boss Full of Mayonnaise". Then there was <i>Brass Eye</i> , another brilliant news parody where he'd con elected officials into warning kids to stay away from a fake drug called Cake.   |
|          |             |       | I say he's only sort of an absurdist, though, because as time has gone on, his work has gotten more and more deeply rooted in reality. His last two films revolve around the world of terrorism and counterterrorism. In preparing for them, he read court transcripts, talked with journalists, even attended actual trials.   |
|          |             |       | His newest is called <i>The Day Shall Come</i> . It's a story about a guy named Moses Al Shabazz, played by Marshawn Davis. Moses leads a small religious group—a <u>very</u> small religious group—called the Star of Six. He talks to God through animals, lives on a commune in a little apartment in Miami with his family, and he preaches for a black revolution: one that won't be achieved with guns or explosives, but with crossbows and a lot of duck walking. Shabazz eventually catches the interest of the FBI. |
|          |             |       | <i>[Music fades out.]</i>   |
|          |             |       | With the help of informants and undercover agents, they begin to not only infiltrate his life, but to make offers to help him: guns, money, a horse. The way the FBI agents see it, once they can prove he closed a deal to buy arms, he's an open and shut case for the courts. Only none of it pans out like they'd planned. Shabazz is more concerned with paying rent than he is with revolution and every new tactic the FBI tries backfires. Sometimes hilariously, sometimes tragically.                               |
| 00:02:14 | Jesse       | Host  | It's a complex and often bizarre story that, as you'll hear, is almost entirely based on real things that happened in the counterterrorism world.   |
|          |             |       | Morris's comedy is still absurd. He just doesn't have to make that much up. Here's a scene from the beginning of the movie. The FBI is closing in on a different terror suspect. They've got the target in a car with an undercover agent. The agent has handed him a phone that he says is connected to a bomb that's ready to detonate, and all the suspect needs to do is dial the code. Only there's one hitch: the code includes the number five.  |
| 00:02:50 | Clip        | Clip  | <i>[Transition music swells and fades.]</i>   |

*[Sounds of people talking and yelling muffled in the background.]*

**Suspect:** Not five! Give me another!

**Agent:** Look, it's five!

**Suspect:** I'm scared of fives!

**A voiceover or flashback:** Five is evil, brother!

**Suspect:** The halfway digit. The saluting snake! No.

*[POV shifts to other characters observing the scene unfold. The sounds of chaos, outside, are muffled.]*

**Speaker 1:** Did we know he was a pentaphobe?

**Suspect:** *[Over the radio]* I'm scared of fives. No fives.

**Speaker 2:** Or is he just backing out?

**Rick:** No way. I groomed this psycho.

**Speaker 3:** No, no. Jihad has no off-switch, Rick. It's like that feeling in a dream when you've killed a child.

**Suspect:** *[Over the radio]* No. It's the unflushable number.

**Speaker 1:** *[Groans]* Oh. Okay, you can just bring up the whole number.

**Rick:** *[Sighing in frustration]* That number is a plague of *[censored]* fives.

**Speaker 4:** If the guy's afraid of fives then that number's a real soup sandwich.

**Agent:** *[Over the radio]* The next number is a two!

*[POV shifts back to inside the car.]*

**Agent:** So, it's like a 52.

**Suspect:** That's a five, brother! It's still a five!

*[Transition music swells and fades.]*

|          |              |       |   |
|----------|--------------|-------|---|
| 00:03:39 | Jesse        | Host  | <i>[Laughing]</i> Chris Morris, welcome to <i>Bullseye</i> . It's—it's nice to have you back on the show. Nice to get to talk to you, again.  |
| 00:03:45 | Chris Morris | Guest | Thank you. Thank you for having me.   |
| 00:03:46 | Jesse        | Host  | I'm glad that now—I just looked up, nine years later, uh—I'm glad that you're still mining comedy from obsessively reading court transcripts. |

|          |       |       |   |
|----------|-------|-------|---|
| 00:03:55 | Chris | Guest | <p>Actually, I went to a few, this time. I went to a trail in Portland where, uh, somebody's dad had gone along to the FBI and said, "I'm a bit worried that my son is maybe becoming radicalized."</p> <p>And the FBI said, "Good call. Thanks very much. Don't worry. We've got his back." And then spent 18 months winding him up to the point where he thought it would be a good idea to try and detonate a truck bomb.</p> <p><i>[Jesse makes a disbelieving sound in the background.]</i></p> <p>Rather than, perhaps, spending three months just leading him gently off-course and saying... something like, "Brother, my Imam says that maybe we should do this stuff through leaflets or through conversation, or whatever." No! They set up a big old machine to turn his brain to violence.</p>   |
| 00:04:37 | Jesse | Host  | <p>What was the story that became the impetus for this particular film? I mean, you have a graphic at the beginning of the movie that says, "Inspired by a hundred stories and there are things pulled from everywhere." But I feel like there was something that, you know, got the ball rolling.</p>  |
| 00:04:55 | Chris | Host  | <p>Yeah. The reason it got the ball rolling is because I saw this news story on British TV, and it was announcing that the FBI had arrested an <u>army</u> in Miami that was planning a full-scale ground war against United States. And I sort of believed it. I thought, "An <u>army</u>! Full-scale ground war!" I mean, the attorney general made the announcement.</p> <p>And three years later, I was in the states and I bumped into somebody—quite by chance—who was involved in the trial. And that was the trial that was of the so-called Liberty City Seven. And he said, "Remember that full-scale ground war? You know what it actually was? It was seven construction workers who were planning to take over America by riding into Chicago on horses."</p> <p>And I said, <i>[dismissively]</i> "C'mon." Wh—you know. "What are you talking about?"</p> <p>He said, "Yeah. That—that's basically—they... they fell in with someone they didn't know was an FBI informant. This person was offering them money to come up with a plan against the government. So, their first idea was—well actually, their very first idea was to get some work boots, because theirs were all threadbare. And some new overalls and some other tools to carry on their construction trade. And then they wanted to... ride, u-uh, horses on a procession to the governor's house to protest about conditions in the projects.</p> <p>I mean, that would have been something to see. But the informant was not gonna give them fifty grand for that. And instead said, "Look, you gotta come up with something more spectacular. You guys are construction workers. Let's think about buildings." And in the end, they riffed this idea that they could knock over the Sears Tower into the lake, swamp Chicago with a tidal wave—</p> <p><i>[Jesse huffs a quiet laugh.]</i></p> |

—which, by the way, is impossible—and then, once the water subsided, ride in on horses because, they said, a man respects a guy on a horse.

00:06:32 Chris Guest So, this was a—this was supposed to be the biggest plot since 9/11, and it was ridiculous. It took three trials to get them to jail, but they were all jailed as terrorists. In fact, they were jailed as Al-Qaeda terrorists, even though six of them were Haitian Catholics. So, there was a degree of distortion going on here that was kind of irresistible. It meant I had to ask the next question and the next question, and I found a whole range of cases that had this same architecture.

And the reason that one stood out was because it was relatively early in the timeline and the FBI was still developing their modus operandi. But it was all kicked off by 9/11 and they just adapted various bits of their old plumbing to put brown and black communities under surveillance and then pay a lot of attention to somebody who stood out.

00:07:18 Jesse Host I mean, there's such an extraordinary volume of resources that, in the past—now almost 20 years—has gone into... counterterrorism a-and the—and the—the incentives are so weird and muddled and problematic. Largely because, you know, you can—you can spend an unlimited amount of money, but if you're spending it on something that, you know—trying to prevent something that, in a worse-case scenario might happen every five or ten years, like—it's really hard, in between, to prove that you're succeeding.

And that seems like it is the motivating factor for the—for the FBI and the law enforcement forces in your film is that they just need to do something to show that they're doing something.

00:08:11 Chris Guest Well, you are wandering around a big garden watering a lot of plants, there.

*[Jesse laughs.]*

And I think *[laughs]* you—you're right. You're right, there is the bureaucratic box-ticking element. There's also the fact that it's difficult to spot who's going to attack you. And, in fact, it's easier to turn an eccentric into a convicted terrorist than it is to find the real one. If you look at Boston, the FBI spent over a year winding up a schizophrenic to come up with a crackpot plan to fly model planes into the dome of the Capital. Now, that guy was arrested. He went to jail. But at the same time, they ignored the Tsarnaev brothers who were actually planning a real bombing.

So, if you get too caught up in this ghost chasing project—which works, bureaucratically, and it works in terms of your end of year results, and it works in terms of securing you the funding—then, you take your eye off the ball. I mean, that would be the constructive point, out of this. And it comes from—uh, I mean, as you say: many, many sources. I mean... remember back in the day when George Bush said, "Either you are for us or against us"? He created the perfect, brand new wedge just to divide society in two, like that.

Well, guess who's profited from that, recently? But the point is that he then puts anyone—so the government, if you're working for the government, it's basically "us and them". And if you're looking at them, then what are you gonna do about them? And as the head of counter terror of the FBI said, shortly after 9/11... It used to be a case that we would say, "Can we prove that person is a terrorist?" We now operate on the basis of saying, "Can we prove that they aren't?" And if we can't, then we move forward. And so it goes back to what you were saying, just then—that once you've decided that I cannot prove that person isn't a terrorist and I'm gonna use all my resources to proceed on the basis that they might be, well then you will find a terrorist somewhere, even where there isn't one.

Because if you put a million dollars into... ten square miles and say, "We're gonna get the—we're gonna get—we're gonna find the terrorist here." Well. You're gonna end up with somebody. Y-you—it's—it's—just because they're gonna keep—you gonna keep—you're trying to prove a negative. And so, you'll end up with the person who seems most like a terrorist to you. And you'll use a very well-oiled machine to send them to jail.

00:10:41 Jesse Host

When you told me the story of seven construction workers trying to push, uh, the Sears Tower into the lake to cause a tidal wave to swamp Chicago and then... take it on horseback...

00:10:54 Chris Guest

Mm-hm.

00:10:55 Jesse Host

I laughed. Because that is goofy.

00:10:59 Chris Guest

Maybe it was the way I told it.

00:11:00 Jesse Host

[Laughs] Yeah. Well you're a—you're a—you're like some kind of professional humorist, in some ways.

00:11:06 Chris Guest

Apparently.

00:11:07 Jesse Host

But I also immediately felt... pretty uncomfortable and guilty about my laughter, because that case had real-life implications for—well, for two reasons, frankly. One, because—as absurd as that idea is—any pushing over of the Sears Tower would be a horrific tragedy, but prob-probably more than that, because this situation had direct, real-life consequence that actually happened to those seven construction workers.

And I—I wonder how you hear a story like that and think, "What is funny about this? What is tragic about this?"

00:11:58 Crosstalk Crosstalk

**Jesse:** And where do I... you know, what do I... what do I do, tonally, with the fact that both of those things are so strong?"

**Chris:** Yeah.

00:12:07 Chris Guest

That is a question that really guides your process. So, you hear about the architecture—that basic FBI sting—and you essentially go to two areas of inquiry. One: what's going on inside the FBI; how did they get here? And two: what's it like for the people on the other end? And given that it's this ridiculous, how ridiculous was it for them, at the time? So, I just had to go and meet a load of people and a load of—and—not just in that case, but on both sides of lots of cases.

In fact, I met—I met people involved in the Liberty City case. Their relatives and, uh, supporters. Those guys laughed when they were arrested. [Beat.] I mean, the thing seemed utterly ridiculous to them,

because they were being arrested as terrorists and they were like, “W-we’re not terrorists!”

And the FBI agents were going, *[smugly]* “Hahaha, yes you are!”

So, laughter during the arrest, but it ends up with them going to jail and the FBI ticking another box and moving on. So, the human side of the story was something I definitely, definitely had to get in touch with. And, time and again, wherever I went, the feeling was approximately the same. These were not... radicalized people. I mean, I’ve met people who may more fit into that category. These were not them! These were people who were eccentric or had ideas that maybe didn’t fit with the general orthodoxy, but they were not radicalized, violent people.

And therefore, you have a combination of ridiculousness. I mean, there was a case—I met the aunt of somebody who was part of the Newburgh Four, so-called. There’s a documentary about them called *The Newburgh Sting*, which is great. Which shows, again, the architecture of this case, where four guys had to be offered \$250,000 before they finally agreed to do something. Now, that was at—the offer came from an informant. And, by the way, the informant, in court, was then asked by the defense, “Hang on a second. You offered these guys a quarter of a million dollars to do this.”

00:14:14 Chris Guest

And he said, “Ah, ah, ah. No, I didn’t.”

And they said, “What do you mean? It’s—it’s on the video. You saying that.”

And he said, “Yeah, yeah. But that was code.”

And the defense attorney said, “What do you mean code? What do you mean—code for—for what?”

And he said, “It’s code... for... \$10,000.”

*[Jesse laughs.]*

And—and... the—these guys still went to jail. In fact, the—the defense attorney then said, “Hang on. Did anyone else, apart from you, know this code?”

And he went, “No.” But—th-they—?

*[Jesse laughs.]*

00:14:47 Chris Guest

They still went to jail for 25 years! So, you see, you’re laughing again, but there’s a human consequence to this and that was really what guided me—was, essentially, on the one hand, the ridiculousness of the... contrivances. And then—then, somehow, the fact that they work. That is still ridiculous. And then when you look at the—the result. I mean, like, so the—the—the—the lady I met, her nephew had joined these Newburgh Four be-because of the money! And he wanted to raise money to pay for his brother’s cancer treatment! But he—instead he went to jail for 25 years.

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| 00:15:43 | Jesse     | Host      | <p>So, yes, you could criticize a lack of wisdom, maybe, but I wanted to stay in touch, too, with the human consequence of this because that's really what makes... that—that—that gives you the point of actually doing this amount of research, is—really—what happens at the end to these people.</p> <p>So, you've made two feature films and they're both comedies. And, you know, I think I—I learned in maybe middle school, reading... you know, <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>, or something—</p> <p><i>[Chris chuckles in surprise.]</i></p> <p>That comedies are supposed to end in two of the characters getting married <i>[laughs]</i>, right? And...</p>   |
| 00:16:02 | Crosstalk | Crosstalk | <p><b>Chris:</b> That's traditional, yeah.</p>  |
| 00:16:04 | Jesse     | Host      | <p><b>Jesse:</b> You—yeah.</p> <p>And you have—you've made two comedies that both end with... horrible tragedies. Your first film, <i>Four Lions</i>, is about a somewhat inept domestic—group of domestic terrorists in the UK who end up, through a long series of farcical events, setting off a bomb. And, you know, presumably, with, you know, the consequences that go with that.</p>  |
| 00:16:32 | Chris     | Guest     | <p>Sure! There's—there's death in that film. There is no death in this film. I don't think that's a spoiler alert, but you know. Yeah.</p>  |
| 00:16:38 | Crosstalk | Crosstalk | <p><b>Chris:</b> I mean, that—</p> <p><b>Jesse:</b> Yeah, but this—</p> <p><b>Chris:</b> It was...</p> <p><b>Jesse:</b> But this—there's—</p> <p><b>Chris:</b> Curtains!</p> <p><b>Jesse:</b> While there's no death in this film, nobody—nobody gets married. <i>[Laughs.]</i></p> <p><b>Chris:</b> <i>[Decisively]</i> No.</p>  |
| 00:16:50 | Chris     | Guest     | <p><b>Jesse:</b> And all the—and all the conflicts are resolved in, uh, sad ways.</p> <p>A downward direction. Well, yes. Not that there weren't people, along the way, saying, "Hey, man, why don't they—why don't they just get away? Or what—<i>[they both chuckle]</i> It'll be... we'll maybe get ten times the number of people to see this if—if they get away!"</p> <p>And you go, "Are you a <i>[censored]</i> idiot?!"</p> <p><i>[Jesse laughs.]</i></p> <p>"I mean are you—seriously, do you—have you not—do you not know where this film is coming from? What's the point of making this film if they get away?! Why are we here?" So, you know. Yes, you're going to make something which—<i>[stammering]</i> I'm driven to make something because a worthwhile story, to me, doesn't seem to be one where it's all better in the end. I'm not criticizing all stories</p> |

with a happy ending, but if you're—if you're inspired by something—if you want to drive a sort of critique at something—I mean, after all, this is a sort of... critique with jokes, because—frankly—how could you not make jokes when things are this ridiculous?

But you have—you would be deserting your post if you didn't... ride those jokes into a wall. And if you just let them all evaporate, I just think you've done a different thing. I'm not against the idea of, you know, a—a—a large dose of sugar, but you get films like *Dr. Strangelove*, where the punchline is the end of the bloody world. And that's a comedy.

00:18:09 Jesse Host

Do you think you have always been driven by that same thing or is that something that has changed over the course of your career and your life?

00:18:19 Chris Guest

I think you're always driven by what is ridiculous and then, if you're telling a story—which these last two projects have. So, they're three-act structures, essentially—then they do have a beginning, middle, and end and... that requires you to pay attention to the consequence. Quite often, with comedy, the—the consequence—you are relieved from weighing the full consequence of somebody's actions, because they always get away. And it's like a left-right footstep. Left-right, left-right, left-right, and you always—the next step always takes you out of the trouble that the previous step got you into.

And if you cut the beat at the point where somebody's walked into trouble and they never walk out again, then it becomes tragedy. A-a-any number of Buster Keaton scenarios could be tragedy but for the fact that he gets out with the next step. So, the two are very closely related and if you come across a situation in real life where, repeatedly, somebody ends on the wrong step and they never step out of the trap, then that's where you're going.

An I think that in, you know, the—the—the humor, it's—it sort of makes it worse, because if you look at it from the point of view of the FBI... the fact that they're playing this like a game and, in a way their work banter is strewn all the way through the management of this case... it kind of makes it worse. And the fact that the twists and the turns and the pushing around of people in a sort of contrived, *Truman Show* script—which is written by the FBI and acted unknowingly by their targets—is also ridiculous. Makes it worse... when it ends badly for the targets.

00:20:10 Jesse Host

So, it seems to me, you can't really do anything else. You'll hear the rest of my interview with Chris Morris after we come back from a short break. Still to come: we'll talk about *Brass Eye* and *The Day Today* and what Morris says is the central theme in all his work. It's *Bullseye* from [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) and NPR.

00:20:25 Music Music

Jazzy music plays.

00:20:29 Jesse Promo

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| 00:20:59 | Promo | Promo | <p>[<i>Music fades out.</i>]</p> <p><b>Maddie Sofia:</b> Maddie Sofia, here. Host of the new, daily science podcast from NPR, called <i>Short Wave</i>.</p> <p><b>Music:</b> Futuristic music fades in.</p> <p><b>Maddie:</b> We'll bring you new discoveries, everyday mysteries, and this week: Randall Munroe—professional nerd and creator of <i>xkcd</i>—explains how to use science to tell if you're a 90's kid. Listen and subscribe to <i>Short Wave</i> from NPR.</p>  |
| 00:21:18 | Promo | Promo | <p>[<i>Music fades out.</i>]</p> <p><b>Music:</b> Twangy country music plays.</p> <p><b>Tusk Henderson:</b> Hello. My name is Tusk Henderson and I am an outdoorsman.</p> <p><b>Benjamin Partridge:</b> Are you looking for a new comedy podcast? This month's episode of Beef and Dairy Network podcast has, as it's guest, the wonderful Nick Offerman playing the part of Tusk Henderson: adventurer and outdoorsman.</p> <p><b>Tusk:</b> Think about fitting yourself, a month's worth of provisions, and a half-ton cow into a kayak.</p> <p><b>Benjamin:</b> So, if you've never listened to the show before, this might be a good place to start.</p> <p><b>Tusk:</b> I string a bowstring between her horn-tips, and I can fire a spear off the top of her head. And, uh... I took in some very delicious cod.</p> <p><b>Benjamin:</b> So! If you're after a new comedy podcast, why not try the Beef and Dairy Network from Maximum Fun! Download it now!</p> <p>[<i>Music ends.</i>]</p> |
| 00:22:09 | Jesse | Host  | <p><b>Tusk:</b> You flip a cow upside-down, they make an excellent toboggan.</p> <p>It's <i>Bullseye</i>. I'm Jesse Thorn. I'm talking with Chris Morris. He's the director of the new film <i>The Day Shall Come</i>. It's a satire about terrorism and counterterrorism, in the US. He's also the creator and star of several British television shows, including the brilliant news satires <i>The Day Today</i> and <i>Brass Eye</i>.</p> <p>I think one of the things that I admire most about the two films that you've made is that, while they are satirical and they are reflective of, you know, broken systems and ways that human beings are deeply flawed that lead to horrible things—they also are about human beings who you can relate to and think of, like, as being a person like you are. Like, you—the viewer—are. And—and I include in that, the very inept but actual terrorists in your first film, <i>Four</i></p>   |

*Lions*, but also I'm—I was just in love with Moses Al Shabazz, the leader of this tiny, semi-group of weird religious eccentrics, that is at the center of *The Day Shall Come*.

And I wanna play a little clip from the movie where he comes back to their farm. Calling it a farm is very generous, but they call it a farm. Uh, it has—does have chickens.

00:23:39 Chris Morris

Yeah, well if a—around Little Haiti, around that part of Miami—to Liberty City, Little River, Little Haiti—there are—there are chickens and ducks wandering around. There's a—it's got a strange, rural sense, uh, of—sort of—I don't know. Rural life, very close to the middle of town. It's quite odd.

00:23:56 Jesse Host

*[Amused]* Yeah, I had that experience. I've only been to Miami one time and only for, like, six or eight hours, but I took a couple of busses out to this famous store that sells, uh, guayaberas—which is, you know, a... Cuban, kind of, shirt.

*[Chris agrees.]*

And, uh, and as I was walking from the bus stop to the, uh, to the place where these shirts were, I—yeah, I—I passed, like, seven chickens and a dead dog and a few other things that were just kind of wandering around and it felt like I was—it felt like I was 250 miles *[laughing]* from the city. Despite the fact that I'm here in this city of, like, multiple millions of people.

00:24:35 Chris Morris

That's one—that was actually the deciding reason for setting it in Miami. It was not because of the Liberty City Seven case, but it was because the contrast between the beach that we all know—we've seen from the, you know, countless movies or holiday brochures, or whatever. You're kind of like a mile from these—this barrack housing project built in the 30's, neglected ever since, that is Liberty City.

And to travel from the first to the second would tell you everything you needed to know about... the conditions that Moses was living in.

00:25:13 Jesse Host

I'm gonna play this scene and it's Moses coming home to his—his wife and his two followers and his daughter and she's—he's brought a treat back for the family and also—important context, here—he thinks, uh, that ducks talk to him. Like, w-we can't play this clip without knowing that he thinks that ducks talk to him.

00:25:33 Clip Clip

*[Transition music swells and fades.]*

**Venus Al Shabazz:** Breakfast surpriise!

**Rosa Al Shabazz:** *[Gasps]* Donuts!?

**Venus:** Uh-uh. Donuts are twice a year, baby girl. On your birthday and the day that your daddy founded this mission.

**Moses Al Shabazz:** Mm-hm. The day God talked to me through a duck! Usually, it was Satan talking through the duck. But one day, Satan wasn't looking, and the duck said, "Quickly! This is God talking. You need to build me a farm." And that's why we're here.

**Venus:** *[Singing]* Da-da-daa-daaaaa!

**Speaker:** Is this surprise from a dumpster?

**Venus:** No. It's not from a dumpster. I picked it up from Wendy's, yesterday.

**Speaker:** When they throw everything in the dumpster.

**Venus:** Before they threw it in the dumpster.

**Speaker:** Just before?

**Venus:** Look, the dates are good and plus? We're taking from the rich to give to the poor. What don't you like about that?

**Speaker:** [*Dejectedly*] Nothing.

**Venus:** Is the smart thing to say, right now.

|          |           |           |  |
|----------|-----------|-----------|--|
| 00:26:27 | Chris     | Guest     | <p>[<i>Transition music swells and fades.</i>]</p> <p>Can I make a point about that? I mean, you might have a question about it, but—but I wanted to jump in there, because that—you—you've sort of landed on a... a kind of cultural intersection point, because if people here or, in certain cool parts of town—hipsters, let's say—were getting food from dumpsters at the back of a supermarket, that may be called freeganism. I don't know if you've come across that term, but people who basically get stuff that's just beyond its sell-by date, but perfectly edible.</p> |
| 00:26:55 | Crosstalk | Crosstalk | <p><b>Chris:</b> For free.</p> <p><b>Jesse:</b> Chris, I may have gone to college at, uh, the University of California at Santa Cruz.</p> <p><b>Chris:</b> Right.</p> <p><b>Jesse:</b> Uh, which may or may not be the world headquarters of the freegan movement.</p> <p><b>Chris:</b> Fine! Okay!</p> <p><b>Jesse:</b> [<i>Chuckles quietly.</i>]</p> <p><b>Chris:</b> So, now! I met people—</p> <p><b>Jesse:</b> Also, hacky sack.</p> <p><b>Chris:</b> Yeah.</p>  |
| 00:27:13 | Chris     | Guest     | <p><b>Jesse:</b> And performance unicycling.</p>   |
| 00:27:16 | Jesse     | Host      | <p>Uh, don't. You've got a beard, right?</p>   |
| 00:27:17 | Chris     | Guest     | <p>I do, yes.</p> <p>[<i>Disappointed</i>] Oh dear. Okay so, look—if you take that idea and transpose it to somewhere like Liberty City, where I met people who took food out of dumpsters because they were hungry and poor enough to need to do that, you come across something different.</p>   |

And I was talking to the cast about this and about that very scene, where they've got cheese from Wendy's on the day it expired.

And one of the them said to me, "Yeah, we would never—we would never say that we were dumpster diving or freegans or anything like that," but they recalled that their aunt used to go along to Dunkin' Donuts and get all of the donuts that had just expired and then bring them home and hand them 'round, like it was Christmas.

And... the point was that, no matter how poor you are, you play it... as big as you can. You don't buy into the self-image of being poor. So, the way that scene played out came from conversation with the actors about how Moses and Venus would play this. So, it's just a little, sort of, sociological point that happened to arise from that clip that you played. Doesn't play a great part in the FBI sting, but there's a kind of an example of a detail that I wanted to get correct, if you see what I mean.

00:28:32    Jesse            Host

You have made... so many different kinds of intense comedy, you know? The first thing that—that I ever saw of yours were two news parodies, uh, or they're probably news satires. Uh, *The Day Today* and *Brass Eye*, which are—remain among, particularly *Brass Eye* is among the most intense comedy things that I've ever watched.

And I wonder if, in all of the various... times you have waded right into it and played with big feelings and big ideas, whether any of those are ones that you would take back, now?

00:29:16    Chris            Guest  
00:29:17    Jesse            Host

Well.

And I also, Chris, I'm gonna give you a chance to answer, but I also wanna stipulate that those two examples that I gave are two of my favorite comedy things of any kind, ever.

00:29:28    Chris            Guest  
00:29:29    Crosstalk       Crosstalk

[*Flattered*] Aw, well. Thank you very much.

**Jesse:** So, I'm not approaching this—

**Chris:** That—I didn't—that throws me off the question! No, no, no, no!

**Jesse:** [*Laughing*] I'm not trying to be hostile. I'm—I'm—

00:29:36    Chris            Guest

**Chris:** No, I understand—no I completely understand.

I think it's an interesting question, because you're talking about—I mean, uh, when your DNA is as broken and abused as mine, you know, it's, uh—you've got—you can look back, 25 years plus, to see if there's anything in that fossil record that you regret. No. Without wishing to sound psychotic. [*Determined.*] No, I don't regret anything.

[*Jesse laughs.*]

I—I simply—I sort of almost don't hold myself in a position to do that. I think I would regret something that I repeated. And of course, there are all sorts of mistakes. LOOOADS of mistakes! God! I mean, if you look back through the timeline, it's just one mistake after another and you're just, "How did—how did—how did no one spot that?!"

But I think—I don't—I don't think I made a decision in bad faith and tried to get away with it. I think that would be something I would genuinely, sort of try and expunge from the record. But no. I mean, I think they're all honest perceptions, at the time. And, you know, you're just doing your best to... hurl your particular kind of, uh, nonsensical weapon [*chuckles*] at the monster that's bearing down on you.

So, uh, no. And that's rather dull, isn't it? I—I should have a sort of terrible—a kind of conversion moment and regret using—I don't know? Regret... being so mean?

[*Jesse laughs.*]

[*Laughing, at a loss for words.*] I don't know! No! Can you spot one for me and then I can, you know, and then we can focus? No, I'm not sure I do!

00:31:11    Jesse            Host

[*Chris laughs.*]

00:31:23    Chris            Guest

I do think it's interesting. I do think it's interesting that you... frame it as a matter of—something that you would regret would be something that you did in bad faith.

Well, yeah. It's—in other words, it's like you—you kinda knew it at the time, but you got away with it and afterwards it would be yours to regret, even if no one else had called you on it. I wouldn't like that.

00:31:36    Jesse            Host

You did these two news satires—*The Day Today*, which is more of, uh, it's a little sillier and—and less brutal, but it's—it's also about a more, kind of, down the middle kind of television news. Um, and the *Brass Eye*, which is about this absurd tabloid television news. And you did them at a time when newspapers and television were the primary, if not the only, sources of news for most people. And they were elevated in status such that even an—even a show like *Inside Edition*, or whatever, was speaking from on high. Claiming to present the truth.

00:32:38    Chris            Guest

And that is obvious, great material for comedy, because anyone—anyone—anytime anyone has that great an idea of their own status, you can prick that balloon. Especially if it's, you know, potentially dangerous and—and a big problem that they—that they—  
Yeah.

00:32:39    Jesse            Guest

—feel that way about themselves.

The media landscape is so dramatically different, now, twenty-some years later—in that there are no... voices from on high, and even those that might exist are being attacked from all corners. Many people are trying to treat them as, you know, relative truths rather than absolute truths. Or, at least, as close to absolute truth as you can get.

I—I wonder how you feel about this new media landscape where, you know, a YouTube video that lists what Hollywood people are Satanists, is on relatively flat ground with *The Washington Post* and CNN and Fox News and your local news that, you know, may or

00:33:37 Chris Guest may not have its content determined by a big corporation with other interests. You know? Yeah. It's different and I think what I did was definitely formed by what I grew up with and was still there when I developed the means to attack it. That, sort of, unified voice, authority, and all the rest of it. However... you know, if I—if I was now 15 and I was going to look at the next 10 years, I've no doubt that I would be responding to something that was... as it were, giving it to me without my asking for it. And would therefore demand some sort of punch in the face. Now, what that would be, I could only tell you if I was 15.

*[Jesse chuckles.]*

'Cause I can only look at it from my angle, now. Looking at it from my angle now—yes! I mean, these are choppy waters and I would say, again, there is never more, uh, suitable time to exhort people to think. Because what—when you describe it, as you describe it, in terms of the internet, you can unleash all kinds of—of demonic nightmares in your own brain. “Oh my god! People will believe that and not this! And where's the rigor and all the rest of it?”

But, certainly in my life—and I do bump into quite a lot of people who are not like me. So not just from my social circle—I do not find that I am now bumping into swivelized, slaving maniacs.

*[Jesse chuckles.]*

00:35:40 Chris Guest Who—who are only informed by these, kind of, unleashed demons of nonsense on the internet. So, somewhere, one needs to check one's own hysterical reaction in relation to what could possibly happen, with the apparent sleep of reason that is given to us by the internet. So, I'm not sure—I mean, you know, I—I—I don't know, and I don't have all the measuring tools. I think what all one has to do is keep your eye on things that are verifiable. And in a way, it was always the same, it's just that the means of spreading that information have proliferated and they're more visible to all of us. But that was one of the things I objected to about the—the sort of—the self-appointed stunk power of the old media was that it was—it—it quite pushed you against the wall. And it seemed to me to get in the way of thinking as opposed to what it thought it was doing, which was to give you the facts of the day. And I think thinking is your weapon.

And, you know, I can respond like an old geezer, now, to how these things hit you, off the internet, and what—what possibly might go wrong, but actually, underneath, the same power dynamics are always at play. The same human power dynamics are at play. You see what I mean? So, it's—it's kind of—there's always—if you can get down to something that you—that's tangible, that's where you have to operate your, sort of—your judgement and assessment. Not in the kind of paranoia—

I mean, the later in the day, I'd say your feelings are gonna get worse and worse about what—what crazy beasts are u-unleashed by the... myriad of nutty belief systems that are available on the internet. But you—you know. You just gotta keep your brain in.

|          |           |           |   |
|----------|-----------|-----------|---|
| 00:36:53 | Jesse     | Host      | I wanna play, before we go, 'cause you have a family to get home to, uh...  |
| 00:36:58 | Crosstalk | Crosstalk | <p><b>Chris:</b> Thank you.</p> <p><b>Jesse:</b> This one sketch from a television show you made called <i>Jam</i>.</p> <p><b>Chris:</b> Ha.</p>  |
| 00:37:04 | Jesse     | Host      | <p><b>Jesse:</b> Um, on British television.<br/> <i>[Trying not to laugh]</i> And I—this—this show is really something. And, uh, this sketch is really something. Uh, basically what we're about to hear is a family who have called a television repair man because there are lizards in their television.</p> <p><i>[Beat.]</i></p>   |
| 00:37:26 | Clip      | Clip      | <p>Which works. The TV works.<br/> <i>[Music swells and fades.]</i></p> <p><b>Music:</b> Soft, peaceful music plays quietly in the background.</p> <p><b>Repairman:</b> <i>[Calmly]</i> Have you checked with the cable company, sir?</p> <p><b>Woman:</b> <i>[Angry]</i> Well, it's nothing to do with them!</p> <p><b>Repairman:</b> <i>[Tone unchanging]</i> Have you checked with the cable company?</p> <p><b>Woman:</b> No!</p> <p><b>Man:</b> <u>No</u>, we haven't!</p> <p><b>Repairman:</b> Well, all I can say is that I do suggest y-y-you check with them and—and maybe they'll be able to help you.</p> <p><i>[The sound of papers being shuffled.]</i></p> <p><b>Woman:</b> You trying to tell me the cable company's sending us lizards?!</p> <p><i>[Beat.]</i></p> <p><b>Repairman:</b> <i>[Voice small]</i> Maybe, yes.</p> <p><b>Woman:</b> <u>What?</u></p> <p><b>Repairman:</b> Down the wire. Went by mistake, d-down the wire. Th-the lizards.</p> <p><b>Man:</b> Now, hang on! Look, mate. Look. It's quite simple, alright? You sold us the telly. You delivered it, yesterday. You set it up. And the first time we start using it, it starts pouring lizards! So, we want <u>you</u> to come up with a solution, right?</p> |

**Repairman:** *[Quietly]* Sweep them up.

**Woman:** Sweep them up?!

**Repairman:** Yes.

**Woman:** *[Furious]* Oh, you sweep them up, then!

**Repairman:** No, you sweep them up.

*[Music swells and fades.]*

00:38:14 Jesse Host  
00:38:15 Chris Guest

*[Laughing.]*

Yeeeah. It's a much-used premise, the old lizards-in-the-telly, really. It's a standby classic from musical.

00:38:21 Jesse Host

*[Jesse tries to get himself together as he talks, and briefly does, only to wind up laughing again.]* It's really, truly—there—I just feel like there was a time in your career when you were like... when you were like, “Well, if we just had one of the characters talk a little more flatly in a—in a comedy sketch, and then we put *[singing]* “do-do-doo-dooo-dodo-do.”

00:38:40 Crosstalk Crosstalk

**Jesse:** How—

**Chris:** Yeah.

00:38:47 Chris Guest

**Jesse:** How distressing could we make an otherwise very *[starting to laugh]* straight-ahead comedy sketch be?

Well, the whole thing of that show—actually it started on the radio—and it was basically conceived as sort of—I wanted it to go out at 3AM. And it was called *Blue Jam* on the radio. And I wanted it to go out at that point where your brain is furthest from the reassuring, uh... daylight of reality, so that you are—you can be—even if you're awake, it can feel more like a dream state and your fears can come in to haunt you. And I wanted to make something about that. Which—I guess—just curdled everyday life and the frustrations of it into something relentless.

And, yes, I do remember saying to the actors, “Slower. Slower. Just like—half speed.” Because—I don't even know why, except that, tonally, it felt better. You know? It was kind of led by the nose. It was—and—and, you know, we experimented, and I experimented in how I put it together.

But yeah. And I think it some—it sort of—I do not even know what it's—I think—I'm trying to work out if that falls under the, um, the general remit of “think”.

*[They both laugh.]*

Think a bit more and appeal to rationality. It probably does. It's—a lot of it is actually about—is about frustration and about the—about the system. Um, and about powerlessness. So, I—I don't know. I give up on the essay, there. But I'm glad you brought that out.

00:40:19 Jesse Host

*[Laughs.]*

*[Laughs]* Well, I'm glad you came on *Bullseye*. Thank you very much for making the time. I—I hope we get to speak again in less than a decade.



|          |       |       |  |
|----------|-------|-------|--|
| 00:40:28 | Chris | Guest | Thank you, Jesse! And yeah, I've just thought actually—it was all this, um, post-analysis—is that, actually... if you're looking at some sort of... haiku to define, uh, <i>The Day Shall Come</i> and <i>Four Lions</i> and various other bits of work I'd done—is the fact that it's—it's the difference between—it's—it's human contact without human connection. That is what the ultimate target of something like <i>Four Lions</i> or, indeed, <i>The Day Shall Come</i> , is it's—it's—it's criticizing human contact without human connection, because <u>that</u> was how I saw the FBI's relationship with the people it targets. |
| 00:41:04 | Music | Music | Interstitial music fades in. A slow, relaxed beat with sounds of people cheering interspersed occasionally into the audio.   |
| 00:41:05 | Jesse | Host  | Well, that's pithy. Maybe we'll just run <u>that</u> instead of the whole interview.   |
| 00:41:07 | Chris | Guest | <i>[Laughs in surprise]</i> Just time-stretch it.  |

*[Jesse laughs.]*

And put some wavy music in the background.

|          |       |       |  |
|----------|-------|-------|--|
| 00:41:18 | Jesse | Host  | <i>[Sound effect of people cheering^.]</i><br>Chris Morris, everyone. His new film, <i>The Day Shall Come</i> is available now through Video On Demand. His last film, <i>Four Lions</i> , is absolutely brilliant and it can be a little bit tricky to watch <i>The Day Today</i> and <i>Brass Eye</i> . They're not on any of the major streaming platforms, except for certain <u>Tubes</u> that <u>You</u> can watch. You can also just buy the British DVDs of <i>Brass Eye</i> from UK Amazon, or whatever. Uh, they work on American DVD players. |
| 00:41:52 | Music | Music | A new, bouncier tune replaces the other music.   |
| 00:41:56 | Jesse | Host  | That's the end of another episode of <i>Bullseye</i> — <i>Bullseye</i> produced at <a href="http://MaximumFun.org">MaximumFun.org</a> world headquarters, overlooking MacArthur Park in beautiful Los Angeles, California, where—on our ninth-floor ledge, a large chunk of Styrofoam—I mean, I'm talking about like a 12, 14 inch chunk of Styrofoam—appeared. Uh. It was <u>very</u> confusing as to how it got to the ninth floor. Uh, but after a few days? It blew away.  |

The show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our producer is Kevin Ferguson. He's the one who writes those *[repressing laughter]* scintillating park updates. Jesus Ambrosio is our associate producer. It's good. It gives him a chance to shine. We get help from Casey O'Brien. Our production fellows are Jordan Kauwling and Melissa Dueñas. Our interstitial music is by Dan Wally, also known as DJW. Our theme song is by The Go! Team. Our thanks to them and their label, Memphis Industries, for letting us use it.

And! We have decades of interviews, including one that we did a decade ago with Chris Morris about his movie *Four Lions*, which had—also—a lot of other talk about his past work, including *Brass Eye* and *The Day Today*. Amazing interview. He's an amazing interview, as you heard on this week's show.

You can check out all of our past interviews on our website at [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) or on your favorite podcast app. We're also on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Just search for Bullseye with Jesse Thorn. You can keep up with the show there. You can also

|          |       |       |
|----------|-------|-------|
| 00:43:33 | Music | Music |
| 00:43:35 | Promo | Promo |

find us, these days, at [NPR.org](http://NPR.org)! I think that's about it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature signoff.

Transition music plays.

Bullseye with Jesse Thorn is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.

*[Music fades out.]*