

00:00:00	Music	Music	Gentle, trilling music with a steady drumbeat plays under the dialogue.
00:00:02	Promo	Promo	Speaker: <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.
00:00:12	Jesse Thorn	Host	I'm Jesse Thorn. It's <i>Bullseye</i> .
00:00:15	Music	Music	"Huddle Formation" from the album <i>Thunder, Lightning, Strike</i> by The Go! Team. A fast, upbeat, peppy song. Music plays as Jesse speaks, then fades out.
00:00:22	Jesse	Host	I am really excited to welcome Maria Bamford back on <i>Bullseye</i> . My favorite comedian in the world. She is, of course, a veteran stand-up, with eight specials to her name. Her comedy is quite the experience. She changes voices, sometimes almost like she's been possessed, channeling friends and family members. It's not what you'd expect to see on a stand-up stage, but it's also concrete and relatable. She talks about career anxiety and relationships and mental illness, which she still struggles with today. The brilliance behind Maria's work is in its humanity. What's she been up to these days? Well, after working for two seasons as the star and creator of <i>Lady Dynamite</i> on Netflix, Maria has another new special out. It's called <i>Weakness is the Brand</i> . It's out now on pretty much every platform. Let's listen to a little bit from that new special. Doesn't need much setup. As you're about to hear, Maria is making the case for why greatness—greatness in all things—is overrated.
00:01:24	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:01:25	Maria Bamford	Clip	<p>Why <u>does</u> everything have to be so good?</p> <p><i>[Audience laughs and applauds multiple times throughout.]</i></p> <p>There's a lot of talk in society about, "That's amazing! That's genius! He's a pig of productivity! She's a kaleidoscope of can-do!"</p> <p>Yes, there are certain people in society who have a tremendous amount of talent, you combine that with an unbelievable work ethic, it <u>is</u> greatness.</p> <p>Is it really that interesting? Haven't we seen it before? Einstein, Beyoncé, the Muppets, Japan! I adore a two-star experience.</p>
00:02:13	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:02:14	Maria Bamford	Guest	<p><i>[Jesse laughs.]</i></p> <p>I do. I do.</p>
00:02:18	Jesse	Host	<i>[Through laughter]</i> Maria, here—so you're in here, uh, living along with your comedy central, like no one since—I think one of the Pointer Sisters once sang along with herself.
00:02:32	Maria	Guest	Oh yeah! <i>[Laughs]</i>

00:02:33 Jesse Host In the studio, but.

00:02:34 Maria Guest I'll sing a little bit along with myself, yes yes.

00:02:35 Jesse Host Um, Maria, welcome back to *Bullseye*. It's very nice to see you.

00:02:39 Maria Guest Thank you so much for having me on the *Bullseye*. I'm delighted.

00:02:42 Jesse Host Uh, you've been doing this thing lately where you recruit people to practice your stand-up on.

00:02:50 Maria Guest Yes. Off Twitter.

00:02:52 Jesse Host So, most stand-up comics, when they're working on material, they work it over a little bit themselves and then they maybe bring it to the stage and see how it flies or see if new stuff occurs to them as they do it, or—they—they refine on stage. Especially a headlining stand-up comic lives in LA or New York or something, they're building up an act to take on the road by, you know, working it over and in clubs.

00:03:18 Maria Guest *[Sighs]* Yeah.

00:03:20 Jesse Host You decided—

[Maria laughs.]

You decided that the way that you would go through this process was invite one stranger from the Internet—

[Maria affirms.]

—to meet you at a coffee shop at 11 o'clock in the morning and just go through your act with you.

00:03:37 Maria Guest Yes. Yes. And there's no pressure. They don't have to react any certain way. I've definitely had people not laugh. But that is not unlike a show in Los Angeles. Often there are not many people in the audience, so yeah, it wasn't too different from a regular show.

[Both laugh.]

Where it's mostly comedians in the audience, and yet—yeah, I can name the time, I could—it could be geographically very close to me. And uh, and also it was definitely gonna be a fan, you know, somebody who follows me on Twitter. Unless of course, I—it hasn't happened yet that somebody, you know, decided to punk me and show up and go, "I hate you!" Which, that's gonna be exciting when that happens. But yeah, it was—I'm a fabergé egg sitting on a velvet pillow.

[Jesse laughs uproariously.]

I need to have pleasant experiences. More pleasantries! And some comics totally disagree. You know, "You gotta toughen yourself up, make sure you can do any crowd! You know, you're not a real comic!" Which is fine. If I'm not a real comic, and I don't have to do those gigs, then yaaay!

00:04:53 Jesse Host Yeah, I feel like there is, you know, a couple of years ago the stand-up comedian Bill Burr did an interview where he spoke up against uh, the softness of an alternative room where you can just shoot—his description of an alternative room, I'm gonna be frank, sounded like 1997 to me. It involves people reading jokes off of note cards and something like that.

I don't know if he spent—how much—how facetious he was being, I don't know how serious he was. But, uh, his points seem to be—and Bill is, uh, in my experience, a nice man and certainly is a brilliant stand-up comic—but his perspective seemed to be, "I have been through hell performing for audiences who hate me. You should, too."

00:05:37 Maria Guest Which I completely respect that, and I think it is—I—one of my favorite things to watch is Bill Burr being booed by the entire city of Philadelphia.

00:05:46 Jesse Host Oh, that's one of the best videos on YouTube.

00:05:48 Maria Guest Oh, it is a delight to watch him counting down the minutes. I have—I've done shows like that. Um, not as severe. I've gotten teary-eyed on stage once. I think—I don't know if it's a product of getting older and knowing that there's only so much time left, going, "Yeah, I've had a terrible night, I've done it." To the extent that it starts crushing my spirit.

I don't know how useful me doing one-nighters in North Dakota is really gonna make me a better comedian. Maybe it will! Maybe it would. And if I've lost my edge or, you know, if I ever had an edge. I think some people could argue that point, that I was never um, very good. YouTube commenters. But, uh, yeah, then, well, I've had a nice life.

[Both start laughing.]

I've had a nice life. Um, yeah, that's not—the machismo. I love machismo, and I love the whole idea of like, "I'm gonna [beep] kill it." But as a—you know what, and I used to do more dealing with hecklers kind of stuff, of anger, of uh, "Oh, guess what, you guys don't think this is a comedy show? Well it isn't. It's an intervention. We're all here to gather to tell you how you're [beep] at live entertainment events. I'll go first. We're going around the room using 'I' statements. I feel like you should shut the [beep] up."

Like, even that, I just feel like that anger—I just don't want to go there anymore. Or like people come in a MAGA hat to a show, they didn't realize who they were coming and seeing, because they were like, "Oh, it's a blonde woman! I'll like it!" Nope. Um, you know, and they start boo—I'm gonna just, you know, talk to them and try to be loving towards them and say, "I think you've made a terrible mistake. I know I have, coming to Buffalo for a full weekend. Uh, I should have just done a Tuesday-Wednesday and done a door deal. But I did not. Shame on both of us."

00:07:50 Jesse Host What do you get out of rehearsing with a stranger sitting across

from you at a table in a café?

00:07:57 Maria Guest Uh, human connection! I'm lonely! Oh my God! We live in Los Angeles, where you barely see human beings, so it's—I am grateful to meet a smiling, pleasant person. And uh, yeah, I just—and I want others to have a good time.

Like, there's nothing more miserable—like, I feel bad when people come to a show and they're pissed off and they've had two drinks and they're drunk and then they're like, "I don't like anything this person's saying and I don't think it's funny!" I feel bad. Jeez, that sucks. Um, and then you're squished and you're kind of lit. Especially clubs kind of light the audience, too, and so you can't leave, and ugh. Listen. I'm not gonna say they're victims, but—

[She breaks off, laughing.]

00:08:48 Jesse Host Maria, I'm—I'm glad that someone is finally speaking up on behalf of the misunderstood people who get too drunk and heckle at comedy shows, ruining the experience for everyone else.

00:09:02 Maria Guest Well, oftentimes they're not drunk! Oftentimes they're just pissed. Uh, I've—I should—giving them, uh, more of an alcohol problem than they usually have. Usually people are fairly sentient and upright when they say, "You [beep] suck!" Alright. Well.

[Jesse laughs.]

Seems like some feelings are coming up. Um, let's have some curiosity about this. As my therapist says—

[She caws like a crow and then they both laugh.]

00:09:35 Jesse Host Interrogate your hecklers as you would interrogate your feelings?

00:09:38 Maria Guest Yeah. Well, it is fascinating, because you never know why someone's upset or even if they are upset. Sometimes somebody's making a noise that sounds aggressive, but in fact it's an interesting laugh, or some form of cerebral palsy. Like, you just, you've got to really see the person.

That's the problem too is that it's dark oftentimes, and so you can't always see exactly what is going on. Is someone having a great time, confused, um, any number of things. Sometimes they don't even know what they're feeling, which is even more exciting.

[Both laugh.]

I had one man uh, come up on stage with me. He just walked up. I was—it's like—there's bouncers and security. No, no, they didn't stop him. The guy gets up, stands up on stage, and then he—I think he was really high, he was on drugs. And I asked him what he needed. Uh, he's very tall, and he said, "Just wanted a hug." Gave him a hug, and then I led him off stage. But I mean, that's what you want to go to a live performance for is to see, will the comedian get killed?

[Jesse chortles.]

Is tonight the night? No. Uh, no, it turned it it was fine, but um, but—I think—I do like the challenge of live performance, but yeah, to the point where I'm gonna feel bad about existing? Mm. I'm out.

00:11:09 Jesse Host

You have a new show called *What's Your Ailment?!*

00:11:12 Maria Guest

Yes. [Topic.com](#).

00:11:14 Jesse Host

Where—on [Topic.com](#)—where you talk to people of note, I would say is the broad category, interesting people of note about their mental illnesses. What is your current state of health, if I may ask?

00:11:28 Maria Guest

Very good! Very good. And uh, of course, as my mentals have made me a millionaire, it's a bit of a concern, but—

[They both laugh.]

Um, yeah, a um, uh, yeah the idea for the show—topic—came up with it and I thought—they thought it would be a helpful thing to discuss mental health with other people. And I thought, I would—that sounds fun, to uh, talk about it. Um, my thing that I was interested in hearing other people's—what have they gotten for free for health care, and what terrible health care have their received that was weirdly helpful in the end? For example, I went to a free clinic, and the therapist was so overwhelmed by my problems. Like, "What are you gonna do?"

[Jesse laughs.]

That I was like, "I'm gonna be fine. Are you—should I check in on you next week? Like, what? Huh? I got plans."

Uh, yeah, so that kind of thing. And what have you gotten for free? 'Cause it's less interesting to me, I think, to ask people who are in in their int—in th—

[She breaks off into babbling as the result of a tongue twister.]

—n the entertainment industry who are usually earning fairly well or union members. And you—it's relatively easier to get health care than it is for your average bear. Uh, and there's much more acceptance in the workplace, I think. So I try to ask people have they ever lost a job because of, um, what they think was an illness issue, and uh—because that has happened to me. Or, not hap—you know, but happened as a result of health issues. So yeah, I ask questions that I wanted non-answers to.

00:13:25 Jesse Host

What have you figured out in your working life as a stand-up comic, working the road, and working in film and television, makes it possible for you to do your work, you know, sustainably for you?

00:13:38 Maria Guest

Well, total self-employment. Like, I can say no to whatever I want. Also, stand-up is two hours a night, at the most, of performance, and then uh, yeah, if you go out and sell merch. I dunno if you're a merch guy, Jesse, but I love to sell merch. Um, with my friend,

Jackie Kashian. It also feels good to the brain, uh, the uh, bursts of uh, joie from the audience. That feels tremendous.

So, it can be good if uh, I'm sure if I were doing other things, drugs and alcohol and that kind of thing, I think then things can become chaotic. But yeah, it's been a very good job. Very good job.

00:14:28 Jesse Host

I know you travel—speaking of Jackie Kashian, comedian Jackie Kashian. You've worked the road a lot with Jackie, who's a great stand-up comic, and also just, you've often toured with a pal.

[Maria responds affirmatively.]

And I think sometimes of a time I was at conference, and I have uh, very severe, frequent migraine headaches. And I got a migraine in my—and I was in my hotel room, and I couldn't—I was like literally on the floor of the hotel room, and like, was trying to come up with a plan to get into the bed. That's where I was at.

[Maria makes a sympathetic noise.]

And I knew I had to eat, because if I didn't eat, I wouldn't—my headache would get worse and worse. It would be a big trigger for me. And I was there with uh, the for—one of the former producers of this show, Nick, and I texted him and said, "Hey Nick, can you bring me some food? I'm on the floor of my hotel room." And he said, "Yup, I can," and brought it to me.

But that, I think, having had that experience had two effects on me. One was—well, I mean, I was—had undying loyalty to my friend and colleague Nick for doing that for me, 'cause it was so important in that time. But it also—it reminded me of how vulnerable I was if I was on the road by myself. Like, I was like, what would I have done, if I—'cause, you know, I have to travel by myself sometimes. Is that part—is that part of the reason that you often bring somebody with you on the road?

00:16:00 Maria Guest

For sure. For sure. Like, it uh—it does feel so g—Jackie totally saved me, I think it was ten years ago now, btu um—and I, prior to the current meds that I'm on now. And I was just bombing so terrible at some Erie, Pennsylvania club. I got off stage and I just burst into tears, and she's like, "Get her some chicken wings! Get her some chicken wings!"

[Jesse laughs loudly.]

And uh—and which did generally help. And then Jackie switched. She was the headliner for the rest of the week, which really uh, used to help a lot in the beginning, because—because before the Internet, people were less likely to know what they were coming to see. So I had the credits to headline, but then people were confused and frightened when they said, "*[Makes confused, high pitched-noises]*"

"Do you know what kind of comedy it is?" "No!" "We're coming out!"

			So, uh, yeah, it's great to have uh, a pal. And somebody who will love you kind of no matter how the show goes is very nice. Very nice.
00:17:13	Jesse	Host	Let's hear some more comedy from my guest, Maria Bamford and her new special which is called <i>Weakness is the Brand</i> . It—in this clip she's talking about having been invited to do a commencement speech at her alma mater which is the University of Minnesota, and she gives some sage life advice.
00:17:32	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:17:33	Maria	Clip	Okay, class of whatever year this is! You'll find it doesn't matter, okay? You guys, don't move to Los Angeles with the promise of a touring Star Trek show. Uh. Hook up on a one-night stand with a Vulcan. He gives you an STD that you let go for so long that when you finally go to the Planned Parenthood in Hollywood, California, the doctor says, "Why did you let this get so bad?" Don't do that!
			Don't send in your 10-40 IRS forms with, "Sorry, don't get it, smiley face, exclamation point!"
00:18:22	Maria	Guest	<i>[Both laugh.]</i> You can, but they <u>will</u> bill you. They'll send you an invoice. <i>[Laughter continues for several seconds.]</i> Yes. Yes.
00:18:34	Jesse	Host	What I love about that story around you giving the commencement speech—and you did. This is a real speech that you really gave.
00:18:45	Maria	Guest	Yes. Yes, I did. Yes. You can see it all on YouTube, where I'm—it's—I did it so poorly. I make little eye contact. Anyways, I'm not the best speaker.
00:18:55	Jesse	Host	<i>[Laughs]</i> But there's a couple things that happen over the course of this story. One is comedian Jackie Kashian's 83 year old dad gives you some advice on how to ask for money to give a commencement speech.
00:19:07	Maria	Guest	Never say no without a number. That means if you're not even sure you want the job, put out something ridiculous. Something you never got before in your life. That way, either you get a ton of money or you don't have to do it. Genius.
00:19:18	Jesse	Host	He's right about that. He's right on target. Uh, and then by the time you are ready to collect the money, which they initially had resisted paying you anything on the grounds that it is an honor to be asked to be—to give a commencement speech. <i>[Maria laughs.]</i> Um, but anyway, you are so racked with guilt about the prospect of collecting this money that you decide to give it away to someone in the audience to pay off their loans.

00:19:51 Maria Guest Pay all their student loans. Well, and you had to—I had to do two speeches that day. So I gave it away in increments of four checks, \$25,000 apiece, to blank checks. Or to Sally May. I did four Sally May student checks. So, I asked uh, any two kids, you guys got Sally May? And then two kids ran up, uh, from the audience. I was like, “Good hustle. Good hustle.”

And um, uh, yeah, and the good thing, uh, about that, it was a good math lesson. ‘Cause, uh, about negotiating. Had I negotiated for more, I could’ve given away more, which is uh—

00:20:26 Jesse Host *[Through laughter]* Somehow you’re—Maria, somehow you are spinning this story in—

00:20:29 Maria Guest Yeah, that I’m a bad person.

00:20:31 Jesse Host Where—into you being a bad person.

[Maria laughs.]

You went on a trip to a place that is a four hour, five hour flight from where you live. You went, you delivered a public good.

00:20:45 Maria Guest The old country.

00:20:46 Jesse Host You offered the wisdom that you had to offer to young people who required wisdom. You then gave away the money that you earned to help those young people. And you are now telling me why you’re a bad person for having done this.

[Maria laughs.]

You do this in the special, too! When you tell this story, you’re like, if you’re gonna do something good, you start being self-deprecating about it.

00:21:08 Maria Guest Yeah. Well, because I mean it is—it is true. Like, if I could have a little camera on my head every time I did something good so that people could see, you know, I do like—one of the first times I did some charitable act, I remember, was when I was a kid. I saved up 20 bucks, and I put it in the communion thing as it was passing, the communion bowl. And I remember going, “Is everybody seeing this? Is everybody—everybody got an eye on this?” Nobody cared.

And uh—like, I do have that instinct, which totally takes, from what I’ve heard from Jewish culture, it takes the blessing out of it if you are uh, not doing something anonymously. To which I say, “Can’t we have any fun?”

[Jesse laughs.]

00:21:57 Jesse Host The conclusion of my interview with Maria Bamford coming up after just a minute. Don’t go anywhere. It’s *Bullseye*, from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

00:22:06 Promo Promo **Speaker 1:** You might know Nick Kroll from his very raunchy animated show on Netflix, *Big Mouth*.

Speaker 2: Are you the puberty fairy?

Speaker 3: The puberty fairy? I'm the hormone monster! I'm not a fairy!

Speaker 1: Well, now he's starring as a romantic lead in a movie set at the Olympics. Actor and comedian Nick Kroll, next time on *It's Been A Minute* from NPR.

00:22:25 Promo

Promo

Music: Straightforward, thump-y electric bass guitar beat with light drums.

Laurie: Hi. I am Laurie Kilmartin.

Jackie: And I'm Jackie Kashian.

Laurie: Together we host a podcast called:

Jackie: *The Jackie and Laurie Show.*

Laurie: Uh, we're both stand-up comics. We recently met each other because women weren't allowed to work together, uh—uh, on the road or in gigs for a long, long time, and so...our friendship has been unfolding on this podcast for a couple years. Jackie constantly works the road; I write for *Conan* and then I work the road in-between.

Jackie: We do a lot of stand-up comedy, and so we celebrate stand-up—

Laurie: Yes.

Jackie: —and we also...bitch about it.

Laurie: We keep it to an hour; we don't have any guests. We somehow find enough to—to talk about every single week. So find us—you can subscribe to *The Jackie and Laurie* show at MaximumFun.org, or wherever you get your podcasts.

Jackie: *[Nonplussed]* K, bye.

[Music ends.]

00:23:12 Jesse

Host

Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. My guest is Maria Bamford. She is a brilliant stand-up comic and actor. She has a new special out called *Weakness is the Brand*. You can rent or buy it online pretty much anywhere. She is also the host of a new talk show. On *What's Your Ailment?!*, Maria talks somewhat seriously about mental illness with folks in comedy like Rachel Bloom, Baron Vaughn, and Tom Arnold. It's streaming now on Topic.

Let's get back to our conversation. Um, you've been married for a few years now, to your wonderful husband, Scott.

[Maria affirms.]

He comes up in the special a lot. How has being married after many years of very fitful romantic life—

[Maria laughs and affirms.]

Uh, how has it—how has it changed your life?

00:24:02 Maria

Guest

Uh, it's uh, been spectacular. I can only—yeah, I definitely didn't have the willingness to go through any discomfort of intimacy before. Uh, even so much as far as uh, friendships and my family. I mean, I moved away from my family, 2,000 miles, so I don't—I don't have to have those kind of intense interaction with anybody on a regular basis. And stand-up is certainly a controlled way of connecting with people.

So, uh, yeah. It's been wonderful, and neither of us were very good at it. He also had not had any long-term relationships or ever been married before, and so we were both like, "Come on, let's do this!"

We went to the Gottmans. I don't know if you've ever heard of the Gottmans. They um, they have a theory, they call it the love lab, where they've done scientific studies of couples for over 30 years doing blood pressure monitoring and other things over the course of a 72-hour weekend to see what are the things that cause people to divorce.

And um, so we went to go see—went to one of their conferences and uh, you don't—what do—the four signs of the apocalypse in a relationship are criticism, let's say I go, "Oh, I have a sailboat!" Criticism, "That's a stupid sailboat." Contempt. "You and your [beep] sailboats." Defensiveness. "What sailboat?" And stonewalling.

[There's a pause, and then Jesse laughs.]

00:25:45 Maria

Guest

And that's when you say—you say absolutely nothing. That's the silent treatment. Which, I have a friend who does that. She—that's her way of expressing anger is a silent treatment, and uhm, and yeah. It just—to have more willingness to try to understand someone else's point of view and to see my own foibles. Um, anyways, it's been delightful. And to let myself be loved by somebody, I think, is new. And to take the risk, you know, because even though you love somebody, there is always that sense of like, "Well, what if you do break up?"

You know, 'cause people are always saying in those magazines like, "I never knew," and I'm like, "I guess that can happen to anybody." But I always think, well, if I find out something later, I'll just feel like, *[Through laughter]* "God, that's amazing he kept that from me! For decades! There were bodies in the backyard?!"

He was—I better—of course I don't think that of my husband, but I just, you know, just uh, I think it's good to risk in life. I'm grateful. I'm grateful that I—that we've been together. It's been wonderful. And that's also part of the reason I don't want to do shows at night, is because we're at home snuggling.

[Jesse laughs.]

I gotta snuggle!

- 00:27:10 Jesse Host Bring him out to the show! Have him snuggling while you do your shtick!
- 00:27:14 Maria Guest *[Sighing]* Oh, god. Ugh! And he does do stand-up. He does it in support of—he started doing it about three years in, because he had fear of public speaking, and I’m just like, “Oh my god, do stand-up. Nobody’s paying attention.” And um, so he’s done it. He’s really funny, he’s really good, and he’s let me use a lot of his bits, which is very kind. But he’s a painter. He’s a painter. Scott Marvel Cassidy. ScottMarvelCassidy.com.
- 00:27:41 Jesse Host One of the things that you describe in—I guess it was in an episode of *What’s Your Ailment?!* is that your thoughts have slowed a little.
- 00:27:52 Maria Guest Yes. Yes, for sure.
- 00:27:54 Jesse Host And you’re such a careful writer. I mean, I think of all the stand-ups that I know, which are, you know, many, I think you are the most careful and uh, maybe one of the best writers of any stand-up.
- 00:28:08 Maria Guest Aww.
- 00:28:09 Jesse Host And like, your diction is always very specific.
- 00:28:15 Maria Guest Yes. Oh, I love words. I love them so much, and so I want to use what I think are the right words. Sometimes I don’t always look it up and then uh, I use a word that’s like the word that I mean to use. But uh, oh wait, what was the question?
- 00:28:29 Jesse Host So, the question—
- [He breaks off, laughing.]*
- The question was how does your mind being a little slower affect your process of making stand-up? Because you’re a comic who, you really write your jokes, and like, you write them in paragraph form.
- 00:28:47 Maria Guest Yeah. I mean, I write—I’ll write beats. I just write beats out and then sometimes I write it out to remember it, or try to get exactly what I’m trying to say with uh, a joke. Sometimes you get away with, “Why was I even—why was this even interesting to me in the first place?”
- Um, so uh, yeah, it’s slower. I think I said on the show that sometimes I’ve taken less meds so that I can kind of speed things up a little bit and get some—which, eh, is not so great. That is not the greatest. Um, but um, I don’t think I—I haven’t done that in a few years, and I’m—uh, yeah, I’ll—I just—now it’s just a slower process.
- I still have new bits. I have one I’m excited about, about children’s books and Richard Scarry’s *Busytown*. Have you ever heard Richard Scarry’s *Busytown*?

[Jesse responds affirmatively.]

Of course you have. It's—if you don't know it, it's anthropomorphized animals and then they have little jobs in a big scene. So, if you don't know how to read, it says “baker” next to the cat and the cat's wearing a, uh, an apron and a puffy hat.

00:30:03 Jesse Host Cat bakes donuts, by the way. I'm just like, come on, let's fry our donuts. Let's fry our donuts.

00:30:08 Maria Guest Well, they, yeah, but you know he's a baker 'cause it's steaming, you know, whatever he has steaming is so beautiful. And the great thing I love about those things, you know, they have a taxi driver as an alligator, and the cop is chasing him but he's a mouse, the mouse is—there's no backstory.

You know, you don't have to hear the whole, all the details behind it, like, “Oh, the cat inherited the business, actually, and he's—he's not—there's not as much passion there. The recipes are the same, but everything tastes different.”

[Jesse laughs loudly.]

Because I would like to think in that scene I would be a bear, and it would say “comedian” right next to me, and you know, schoolhouse type face. And you would know that I was the comedian because I would have a big bowtie and a flower that squirts, and you don't—nobody goes, “Oh, is she any good?” No. Of course. It's the town com—she makes the whole laugh.

So yeah. I just—the—I'm still coming up with ideas but I think it's slower.

00:31:20 Jesse Host Let's hear some more comedy from my guest, Maria Bamford and her new special, *Weakness is the Brand*, which is on almost all platforms.

00:31:28 Maria Guest Oh god, yes.

00:31:29 Jesse Host Almost all platforms. Um, in this clip, Maria is portraying two very near and dear to her persons who have come up in this conversation already. Her soft-spoken and very Christian mother, and her sweet and somewhat timid husband, Scott. And uh, her mom is trying to talk Scott and Maria through some issues. The first voice you'll hear is the—is the mom.

00:32:01 Music Transition Music fades and swells.

00:32:02 Clip Clip *[Throughout the clip, Maria alternates between imitating her mother and her husband, starting with her mother.]*

“Mom”: Now, Scott, do you have any concerns?

“Scott”: Uh, yeah. *[She makes a long, high pitched, stressed whine. The audience laughs.]* Maria, I love you. *[The whine is repeated.]* I love that you put a bench on the front lawn, but now uh,

there is a man living there. Which is fine, we live in Los Angeles. But now when you leave your keys in the front door overnight over and over and over again, I feel terrified.

Maria? It's just—that's where they fit. Maybe—maybe I could ask the guy on the bench to remind—

“Mom”: Honey. No. Okay, shut it down. Shut it down.

00:32:52 Music Transition Music swells and fades.

00:32:53 Jesse Host *[Both laugh.]*

Yeah, I know that you really did put a bench in front of your house.

00:32:58 Maria Guest *[Emphatically]* Yes! And it brought all sorts of wonderful—it—I read in a study from the Netherlands that if you provide a place to sit, it builds community. So uh, provided it, and it did! People came to sit babies and uh, young lovers would have a smoke and a snog on the bench. And then also, uh, a man lived there for a certain amount of time. There was some light prostitution happening between it and a white van parked outside our house.

Yeah, so, all sorts of things came to the bench, and now we live in a different neighborhood and we have just put out a new bench. So, very excited to see what's going to come.

00:33:41 Jesse Host Congratulations, not just to you, but to the people of Altadena, California.

00:33:44 Maria Guest *[Laughs]* Come have a seat!

00:33:48 Jesse Host You have done a lot of material about your parents over the years.

[Maria affirms.]

You also did an entire stand-up special where the audience was just your parents.

[Maria affirms again.]

Um... are your parents proud of your career?

00:34:06 Maria Guest Well, interesting you should ask that, because uh, I did—I got a write-up for this special in the *New York Times* and in the *New Yorker*. And so, I kind of waited for my mom, you know, “Mom, are you gonna call me?” And she did, and she told me everything that she ate that day, and—

[Jesse laughs.]

—there was this—we went out to this Cuban place and had just wonderful fish. I love—you know, I could live on meat, beans, and rice. I really could. I could live on beans and rice, beans and rice.

And I had to prompt her. “Mom, I was just in the [beep] *New York Times*. And, is that—” “Oh, honey, I know. I saw that! That's so

great.”

I had to prompt her. “Mom, can you please say ‘I’m proud of you’?”
“Oh. Oh, I didn’t think—I didn’t think you’d need that. Alright. Uh, honey, I am very proud of you. I am very, very proud of you.”

And now every time she calls me, the past few times, she says, “I am proud of you. I am prooouud of you.” Which I don’t know. I mean, I think it’s just as meaningful even if I’ve given her a script and a line reading.

[Both laugh.]

It felt sincere. Uh, no. They’re very—they’re extremely supportive. Um, they have me on Google alert. How much more supportive can you be?

00:35:45 Jesse Host Are you proud of your career, Maria?

00:35:47 Maria Guest Yes! I’m very proud! Oh my god! I’m done!

[Jesse laughs.]

I’m the sole—is this it? It’s finis—I’m very—yes, I’m very proud of myself. Um, yeah. Because it is, I mean, it is about hanging in there. And also, I also want to acknowledge that I’ve been extraordinarily privileged. Uh, I’m given a full ride scholarship through life from the age of 24 by my parents, and uh, so yeah. Though I’ve had some setbacks, for the most part it’s been gravy.

So, uh yeah. But I’m proud of myself, because you still gotta show up. That’s one thing everybody has some power to do is to show up in whatever way you can. So, I have done that uh, for the most part. If I can’t show up, I can Skype.

[Jesse laughs.]

Skype in if you can.

00:36:46 Jesse Host Maria, I’m always glad to see you. I loved your new special, and I loved your show.

00:36:50 Maria Guest Aw, thank you.

00:36:51 Jesse Host And I thank you for coming and doing this with me.

00:36:54 Maria Guest Oh, thank you so much! I uh, am so grateful to be on the show. It’s a wonderful show.

00:37:01 Jesse Host Maria Bamford. Best in the business. Her new stand-up special, *Weakness is the Brand* is fantastic. You can rent or buy it pretty much everywhere. Her show, *What’s Your Ailment?!* is available to watch now on the streaming network Topic.

00:37:15 Music Music Laid back, jazzy music.

00:37:19 Jesse Host That’s the end of another episode of *Bullseye*. *Bullseye* is produced at MaximumFun.org world headquarters, overlooking MacArthur

Park in beautiful Los Angeles, California, where this week, our colleague Chuy brought avocados from his dad's avocado orchard in Temecula. So, thanks for the avocados, Jesus and Dad Ambrosio.

The show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our producer is Kevin Ferguson. Jesus Ambrosio is our associate producer and brings the avocados. We get help from Casey O'Brien. Our production fellows are Jordan Kauwling. Our interstitial music is by Dan Wally, also known as DJW. You can find a collection of music that he has made for *Bullseye* on Bandcamp and it is pay what you will. Just search there for DJW, *Bullseye*.

Our theme song is by the band The Go! Team. Thanks to them and their label, Memphis Industries, for letting us use it. And we have decades of interviews in our archives at MaximumFun.org or in your favorite podcast app. You can also find them on YouTube. There are a bunch, years' worth, with Maria Bamford, who I have long felt is America's greatest stand-up comic, so make sure to find those.

We're also on Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube. Search for *Bullseye* with Jesse Thorn there. And I think that's about it. Just remember, all great radio hosts have a signature sign off.

00:38:40 Promo

Promo

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

[Music fades out.]