

00:00:00	Music	Music	Gentle, trilling music with a steady drumbeat plays under the dialogue.
00:00:01	Promo	Promo	<b>Speaker:</b> <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of <a href="http://MaximumFun.org">MaximumFun.org</a> and is distributed by NPR.
00:00:11	Jesse Thorn	Host	<i>[Music fades out.]</i> I'm Jesse Thorn. It's <i>Bullseye</i> .
00:00:13	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.
00:00:21	Jesse	Host	<i>Hope Gap</i> is a movie about divorce, only it's not really the movie that comes to mind when I say, "a movie about divorce". The marriage in question has been going on for nearly three decades. The husband and wife are both of retirement age. They have an adult son who's come back home to visit them. Edward, the husband, is played by the English actor, Bill Nighy.
			<i>[Music fades out.]</i>
			He's distant, a little checked out, and preoccupied. His wife, Grace, is played my guest, Annette Bening. He leaves her early on and the film focuses on the wreckage that is left behind. Bening's character is blindsided. She had a plan for her life, and this wasn't it. And that's sort of the film's focus: can she move on? What does her new future look like? It's an intense character study and part of what makes it so compelling is that Bening is so in tune with her character. In <i>Hope Gap</i> , you're more than just a witness to her pain. You feel it.
00:01:24	Sound Effect	Transition	Here's a pivotal scene, from the movie. Edward tells Grace he's going to leave her. Music swells and fades.
00:01:26	Clip	Clip	<b>Edward:</b> I know this is all a shock. But I do truly believe you'll come to see it as the best.
			<b>Grace:</b> <i>[Whispering.]</i> For the best?
			<b>Edward:</b> I—I'm no good for you, Grace. I don't give you what you want.
			<b>Grace:</b> You don't give me what I want because you're not even trying! You found a way to sneak out of it. Well, I won't let you.
			<b>Edward:</b> I'm sorry. I... I made up—I've made up my mind.
			<b>Grace:</b> Well, you'll have to unmake it, won't you?! This decision involves me. You have to consult me!
			<b>Edward:</b> <i>[Softly.]</i> Don't do this, Grace. It'll only make it worse.
			<b>Grace:</b> You can't just walk away after 29 years! You have to try!
			<b>Edward:</b> I have tried.

00:02:06	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:02:07	Jesse	Host	Annette Bening, welcome to <i>Bullseye!</i> It's great to have you on the show.
00:02:09	Annette Bening	Guest	Thank you very much.
00:02:10	Jesse	Host	I have a comedy podcast and my cohost on my comedy podcast, Jordan Morris, has a running bit on the show where he talks about a recent film that he saw with a British actor playing an American character?

*[Annette hums in acknowledgement.]*

And when he does it, he says—this is my impression of his impression, but it's sort of like, *[with an exaggerated American accent]* “Uh huh! Yeah! Yeah! Uh huh! Yes!”

*[They laugh.]*

And I wonder—it's so unusual for an American actor to play an English character.

*[Annette agrees.]*

			Whether you had to hype yourself up to <i>[laughing]</i> take the part for that reason?
00:02:49	Annette	Guest	<i>[Chuckles.]</i> Yeah! I think that's a good way of describing it. I mean, I've done it before, but every time I do it, I—you feel like—I guess, I feel, um—I gotta sorta re-approach it, 'cause it's the character, it's the story. It's... it's always a bit different. But, you know, I worked on it and I had a coach I worked with beforehand, I liked very much. And put a lot of energy into that and gave it my best!
00:03:18	Jesse	Host	The thing that would worry me is that you have to get it to a place where there is no concern for—I presume that you have to get it to the place where there is no concern for the technical, so that you can <i>[chuckles]</i> be a craftsperson and artist!
00:03:36	Annette	Guest	Hopefully. Exactly. And not be thinking about it. That's the goal, for sure.
00:03:42	Jesse	Host	Did people correct you on set? Did you ever get anything wrong?
00:03:44	Annette	Guest	You know, I—I invited everybody to, because of course, they all had very real accents. So, I was very—you know—all over everybody saying, “Please correct me if you—if you hear something, let me know. I'd be more than happy to hear that.” And so, I just sort of trusted my comrades to kind of give me a poke if I needed one. And thinking, also, in a movie, you can always correct it afterwards, if there's a problem. So, yeah. So.
00:04:12	Jesse	Host	One time, Dick Van Dyke told me—Dick Van Dyke, who by the way, is the most delightful human being on earth! <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:04:17	Annette	Guest	He's the nicest! He's the nicest man. He—he is incredible. I love him.
00:04:22	Jesse	Host	You can't believe—you can't believe how thoroughly he's delivering on the promise of talking to Dick Van Dyke. But, uh, Dick Van Dyke told me—he's like, “Yeah, nobody told me I was doing a bad job!” <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:04:33	Annette	Guest	I know! I feel for him! He gets so much teasing about that. Um, yeah.

00:04:39	Jesse	Host	I don't care. I'm on—I'm on team Dick Van Dyke in <i>Mary Poppins</i> .  <i>[Annette agrees.]</i>
00:04:43	Annette	Guest	He's so great in it, who cares? <i>[Chuckles.]</i>
00:04:46	Jesse	Host	Me too! I'm totally on that team. I adore him. So, in this film, your character is in a very long and somewhat troubled marriage.  <i>[Annette laughs.]</i>
00:05:28	Annette	Guest	Locked into a—locked into kind of a pattern of missed communication, where your character looks for connection by poking bruises. And Bill Nighy's character, your husband, walks away and is distant. And is nice but doesn't engage. And I wonder which of those you identify more with, in real life? Aaah, that's a good question. I'm proobably—let's see. Well, I definitely, sometimes, avoid confrontation to a fault. So, I think I'm getting a little bit better with that, but... yeah. She does—that's a great way of putting it. She does nudge him. She sort of—well, she's at a point, I think, when she—that she does that. And I know that—I think that annoys some people about this woman. And I kind of like that, that she's—that's her thing. That she's doing that and, maybe, to a fault. But then it—there's an argument to be made, obviously. I tried to play her that way—that, yeah, well, she's trying to—she's trying to scratch what's under the surface. She's trying to scratch the scab to get what's underneath there, because something—she's intuitively understanding that there's something wrong.
00:06:27	Jesse	Host	One of the things that she does, as a character, is kind of—you know, either—I was gonna say “suck all the air from the room”, but she kind of inflates <i>[laughing]</i> every room that she's in! You know what I mean?  <i>[Annette laughs.]</i>
00:07:13	Annette	Guest	Like, she really—she really expands outward to fill the space, whatever it is. And she doesn't do it maliciously, at all. But that just is the nature of what she does. And I wondered how you feel about being a movie star and knowing that, like, every room you walk into, you're a movie star. And so... do you have to, like, modulate or be aware of that effect that you can have on a room, by virtue of your—you know—your career? Sometimes I'm aware of that, but most of the time not. Most the time, it doesn't feel like that. And also, I don't—I don't see myself as that kind of presence in a room, even if people recognize me. I tend to, kind of—not always, but sometimes I kind of want to be smaller. Like, if I'm going into a room. I don't really want to attract attention. Um—and most of the time, I don't. <i>[Laughs.]</i> I mean, you know, it's all like—I don't feel that all the time. I'm really lucky that I just, you know, kind of live my life. You know—grocery store, I see my neighbors, and I have a pretty normal day-to-day kind of existence.  And then, every once in a while, I'm doing something where I go and suddenly, like, people are taking my picture. It still seems kind of funny. I'm very happy to not be in that position of, like—you

know, people making a fuss. And I'm lucky, 'cause I haven't had to. I mean, I've—especially having all these kids. And now that my kids are grown, I'm really feeling it. Because, as my—as I was having children and—I would be in and then I would disappear. And then I would go off in my life. It was a wonderful—always a wonderful, kind of, respite.

00:08:30 Jesse Host  
00:08:33 Annette Guest

But you would, like, visit work and showbusiness, do you mean? Yeah, and then I would just be on the floor, with my kids. So, that was always, just for me, such a joy that I could kind of walk away. And I still feel that. Except that now, I'm not chasing all these children. It's just a different life. It's great!

00:08:49 Jesse Host  
00:08:51 Annette Guest  
00:08:52 Jesse Host  
00:08:58 Annette Guest

You're a Kansan, right? Originally? I was born in Kansas. So, what got you to San Diego and eventually San Francisco? My dad was offered to go—first of all, he went from Iowa to Topeka, to run an office for an insurance company. Then they went to Wichita. They were only in Topeka for a year. Went to Wichita for six years, and then we moved to San Diego, because he had a choice between moving to Denver—I think it was—and San Diego, to run an office. And he picked San Diego. So, we moved there in 1965.

00:09:26 Jesse Host  
00:09:28 Annette Guest

San Diego's a whole other thing. San Diego's a whole other thing. It's a—but it's very conservative, and it certainly was then. I think it still is. And a military town. Big military town. You know. It's beautiful. It's sunny. And the beaches are awesome. But it's definitely conservative. And so, during the Vietnam war—you know, that's where I was, in San Diego. And I remember visiting the veteran's hospital, downtown, where we worked there. We were brought in to just kind of go in and talk to—I was, like, in junior high, high school—to go in and talk to these guys who were in the hospital, because of the war. There were a lot of veterans. There were a lot of military families around me.

When I was in junior high—it's so funny, I have this really strong memory: one of the girls in my class, her dad was a POW. So that would have been the group that John McCain was in. And I remember when they were let go—you know, let out—and we had a big—like, a very patriotic assembly at school, where we honored him and sang "You're a Grand Old Flag". And so, I was really raised in a very Republican, conservative atmosphere.

00:10:35 Jesse Host  
00:10:37 Annette Guest  
00:10:42 Jesse Host

How old were you when that was happening? I would have been junior high. Yeah. San Diego is very distinctive from Los Angeles, where we are now.

*[Annette agrees.]*

And, like, my experience of San Diego is that it has that military town conservatism. It is also super Southern California-y.

00:11:01 Annette Guest

*[Chuckles.]* Like—  
Very. Like, flip flops.

*[Jesse agrees.]*

The beach. For sure. And we lived in the suburbs. My parents still live in the same house we moved into when I was ten.

00:11:11 Jesse Host Were you able to match San Diego's level of chill? Or were you like, "I gotta go to New York, or something."  
00:11:19 Annette Guest Well, I was getting interested in doing plays, just because of my high school teacher that I liked a lot, and Archer, and I went to a huge high school. They barely, like, knew you were there. It was thousands of kids. And then I was working, and I worked on a boat and I kind of had graduated early, just because I had so many classes. Not, you know—I mean, I was a good student, but I wasn't, like, great or anything. I was okay. But I took a lot of classes. So, then when I was in my junior year, the counselor was like, "You know, do you realize that you actually could just graduate after—?" And then they stopped letting people do that. They allowed people to graduate a semester early, after that. But not a year. Anyways.

So, then I was suddenly, kind of, out. I was working. And I worked for a while. And then I thought, "Well, I'll go to community college." You know, which was a dollar a unit. And I went to Mesa College, which was this... I stumbled into this little theatre program that they had that was run by these two guys, Milt Woodruff—who's still around—and Art's no longer with us. But they—one was the techie guy and one was kind of more the artsy guy. And then he was—he was also an actor, and he would direct the plays. And—but they just ran this little theatre, basically! And it was great! I'm so grateful for that.

And I also liked my other classes. I took woman's studies and I took poetry and I had to take one math class, which I hated. But there was, like, this great guy who taught math for people who hate math. So, it was a—that's why I just, like, I don't know. When I encourage people to go to college and go get educated, it doesn't have to be at a fancy place. It can just be it—it's more, just, like how you do it, than where you are.

00:13:02 Jesse Host Was there, like, a production that you were in or even saw that was—that made it such that you were like, "This is actually not just a thing that I'm doing casually. This is something that I want for my life."

00:13:16 Annette Guest I don't know. I mean, I definitely started getting serious about it—and my high school teacher was a very serious woman, and she did do this show with us called *Man and God*, and it was like you could do scenes from whatever you wanted with that theme.

*[Jesse chuckles softly.]*

And I have this very clear memory—we had done one show and then we were on the second show, in the intermission of the second show, she came backstage and she was so angry! Because we weren't giving it our all. We weren't doing what we had done the night before. And she took this table. *[Speaking through gritted teeth for dramatic effect.]* She was standing, she was furious. And she grabbed the edge of the table and she picked it up and slammed it down! She almost threw it. And I was so impressed. I was so like, *[whispering in awe]* "Oh my god! She's incredible."

That did make an impression on me. And then I just continued to follow my interest. So, it was very—what's the word? Kind of—it was—I didn't have a lot of, "Okay. This is it. I'm doing—" It was like,

“Oh, I love this.” That I happened to go to Mesa, which happened to have this great theatre—so, I just started—kept auditioning, kept doing stuff. And then once I finished that, it was like San Francisco State. I wanted to get away from San Diego. I could only go within the state. My dad would pay for me, if I stayed in the state. So, I wanted to go to a city. So, San Francisco was the logical city, and I knew San Francisco State—I learned a little bit about it. But, you know, I mean I just applied to one place and I just went there. And they also had a good, big—they had a big theatre department, let’s say. It was big, you know.

00:14:55 Jesse Host  
00:14:56 Annette Guest  
00:14:57 Jesse Host  
00:15:00 Annette Guest  
00:15:01 Jesse Host  
00:15:02 Annette Guest  
00:15:03 Jesse Host

You’re a real hero, there. Just so you know. I took—  
*[Surprised.]* Really?!  
I took a—I took a theatre class at San Francisco State.  
Get out!  
And, yeah. That’s—  
Who was your teacher?  
It’s basically—I don’t remember what her name was.

*[Annette giggles.]*

00:15:10 Annette Guest  
00:15:12 Jesse Host

It was—I was in high school, at the time. My high school abutted San Francisco State, so I would take classes at—  
Oh! You lived right in that neighborhood!  
—San Francisco State. Well, I lived elsewhere in San Francisco, but my high school was there.

*[Annette agrees.]*

00:15:19 Annette Guest  
00:15:20 Jesse Host  
00:15:22 Annette Guest

Anyway, you’re a hero at San Francisco State.  
Well, that’s good to know. I like—  
Aaall the Golden Gaters.  
*[Laughs.]* I try to go back as often as I can. The guy that—he just retired, who ran it for many years, a guy named Les Wong, was a wonderful—is a wonderful guy. I still hear from him every once in a while. But just a fantastic person. A lot of people in public education are like that. It’s like they have kind of a mission. And I loved it. I loved my teachers. I feel really, really grateful. You know, so, I started—I guess it would have been the fall of ’78. So, that was the year that Harvey Milk and George Moscone were sadly murdered, downtown, by Dan White.

It was kind of the beginning and the end of an era, because when I first moved there, everybody was out. It was a place you came—everybody moved there to come out and to be who they were. And it was such a tolerant—it still is, but it was really a tolerant place. And I like that. I’m down with that. You know, being in a place that’s very open. And of course, AIDs hit then, soon after. So, then things got very difficult very quickly. But, you know, before AIDs, there was a few years there where I did get to experience what that was like. And the gay bars were incredible and there was an open atmosphere—tolerant, I should say—and I really like that about city life.

00:16:41 Jesse Host  
00:16:45 Annette Guest  
00:16:46 Jesse Host

And you ended up doing conservatory training at ACT—American Conservatory Theatre—right?  
Yeah, after college.  
They’re also very proud of you. And Denzel. But you as well.

00:16:52 Annette Guest *[They laugh.]*  
Denzel always says, like, “I barely went there.” ‘Cause he told me that—that they take credit for him.

00:16:57 Jesse Host *[Annette agrees several times as Jesse speaks.]*  
Hey! If Denzel Washington came by my house for dinner, I’d put up a plaque. That’s all I have to say about that.

*[They laugh.]*

00:17:58 Annette Guest  
I pretty much bronzed my eyes after I watched him, at a *[laughing]* WTGA screening of a movie, do a Q&A! But that was, like, a really distinctive time in San Francisco history. You mentioned the assassination of Harvey Milk and George Moscone—the mayor and supervisor and Harvey Milk, for—probably most people listening know, but was one of the first out gay elected officials in the United States and was murdered by a former fellow supervisor. And it’s like a weird, in-between time where there had been this blooming of the idea of San Francisco, in the 1950s and ‘60s, from the—you know, from the Beats through to the hippies. And that was, like, the first really, really scary thing that happened.

When we first moved to California, from the Midwest, we were very much like the dorky Midwesterners. And the first trip we took, we took to San Francisco—‘cause I think it was because we were visiting my uncle and maybe he was getting married, but we drove down Haight-Ashbury with our windows rolled up.

*[Jesse chuckles.]*

00:18:30 Jesse Host  
To look at the hippies! *[Breaking into laughter.]* So that was—yeah, that would have been 19—you know—66, ‘67, right in there. But then I ended up, of course, like living in that neighborhood and having a whole taste of that world.

00:18:36 Promo Promo  
We’ll wrap up with Annette Bening after the break. Stick around. It’s *Bullseye*, from [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) and NPR.  
**Music:** Pleasant, chiming music.

**Manoush Zomorodi:** Change is hard. Transitions can be even harder. But they’re also an opportunity to explore and discover and reimagine things you thought you knew. I’m Manoush Zomorodi, the new host of NPR’s *Ted Radio Hour*—and with all this in mind, we’ve decided to make my entire first episode about reinvention. Subscribe or listen, right now.

00:18:58 Promo Promo  
*[Music fades out.]*  
**Music:** Dramatic organ/piano music.

*[Background noise throughout: a howling wolf and cawing crow. April speaks in a sinister voice.]*

**April Wolfe:** Hello there, ghouls and gals. It is I, April Wolfe. I’m here to take you through the twisty, sca-a-a-ry, heart-pounding world of genre cinema on the exhilarating program known as [Switchblade Sisters](#).

*[Sinister echo on the title.]*

The concept is simple: I invite a female filmmaker on each week, and we discuss their favorite genre film. Listen in closely to hear past guests, like *The Babadook* director Jennifer Kent, *Winter's Bone* director Debra Granik, and so many others every Thursday on [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org). Tune in! If you dare...

*[Thunder booms, something growls over April as she cackles evilly, and then all sound abruptly cuts.]*

**April:** *[Rapidly]* It's actually a very thought-provoking show that deeply explores the craft and philosophy behind the filmmaking process while also examining film through the lens of the female gaze.

So, like, you should listen.

00:19:45    Jesse            Host            *[Same sinister echo effect] Switchblade Sisters!*  
Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. My guest is the great actor, Annette Bening. She's starred in *The Kids are Alright*, *American Beauty*, and *20<sup>th</sup> Century Women*. Her newest film, *Hope Gap*, focuses on the end of a nearly 30-year marriage. It's in theaters, now.

You worked in theatre for a long time, after you left conservatory, doing especially a lot of classic theatre. You did Shakespeare festivals and stuff like that. One of, if not your first screen role, was on *Miami Vice*.

*[Annette chuckles.]*

00:20:20    Annette            Guest            Was that literally your first or among your first?  
Oh, for sure among my first. That was supposed to be another girl, and she for some reason backed out or couldn't do it at the last minute. So, yeah, I think that they just called my agent—and I really was just starting. And so, yeah. 'Cause I remember going to Miami and being in a hotel on the beach and thinking, "Woah! This is so amazing!" And, you know, I was nervous, 'cause I didn't know what I was doing. But I was, like, the bad guy's girlfriend and I think I just had—I never got to meet, you know, Don Johnson or anybody fancy.

*[Jesse chuckles.]*

00:20:57    Jesse            Host            I was just part of the, kind of, the bad guy crew. Yeah! That was—that was fun. It was just a couple of days.  
Great news. We're gonna listen to a scene.

*[Annette laughs.]*

00:21:20    Sound Effect            Transition            You are, indeed, the bad guy's girlfriend. The bad guy is a—is a corrupt cop. And *[chuckles]* and there's—this is just—it's just some really great episodic television work, here, that we're gonna take a listen to, that definitely has not aged at all in the last 33 years.  
Music swells and fades.



00:21:21	Clip	Clip	<p><b>Music:</b> Heavy rock music.</p> <p><b>Girlfriend:</b> Glenn, I don't like it.</p> <p><b>Glenn:</b> Everything is under control.</p> <p><b>Girlfriend:</b> That's not what I'm talking about. The cop they killed yesterday—I thought the one in Broward was a mistake. But I don't think so, anymore.</p> <p><b>Glenn:</b> I have no control over these people. The way they do things—</p> <p><b>Girlfriend:</b> I'm not blaming you.</p> <p><b>Glenn:</b> They're not boy scouts. They're very serious people.</p> <p><b>Girlfriend:</b> But I can't go on like this, forever.</p>
00:21:49	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:21:50	Annette	Guest	Oh dear. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:21:51	Jesse	Host	Don't worry, everythiing is cool.
			<i>[They laugh.]</i>
00:22:08	Annette	Guest	I feel like <i>Miami Vice</i> is—like, I've—I somehow—we've had, probably, five actors on this show who are incredibly accomplished actors, whose first part was on <i>Miami Vice</i> .
00:22:09	Jesse	Host	No kidding?! And I think it's because <i>Miami Vice</i> was this weird combination of the most, like, regular television show in the world—because it's, like, at the end of the day, it's a police procedural. But also, like, Luis Guzmán's first part was on it.
			<i>[Annette agrees.]</i>
00:22:34	Annette	Guest	You know what I mean? Because—and it was because Miguel Piñero was writing on it and was like his old buddy! <i>[Laughs.]</i> You know what I mean?
00:22:37	Jesse	Host	You're kidding! I didn't know that! Amazing!
00:22:38	Annette	Guest	<i>[Laughing.]</i> Not at all! Yeah.
00:22:41	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	Wow! Well, it was—it was considered very stylish. <b>Jesse:</b> Right! And it was very stylish!
00:22:45	Jesse	Host	<b>Annette:</b> You know, 'cause of the colors and the—and the way the guys dressed and— It still looks really good!
00:22:46	Annette	Guest	Yeah, really hip... compared to—I don't know what, like, <i>Adam-12</i> , or something.
00:22:53	Jesse	Host	Yeah. How did you feel about that, at the time? Like, did you feel like, "I'm getting a big break and I'm gonna be a screen actor, now." Or did you feel like, "Well, I backed into this job and I'm glad—"
00:23:02	Annette	Guest	Oh, you mean <i>Miami Vice</i> ?
00:23:04	Jesse	Host	Yeah. "And I'm glad to stay in a hotel for three days and then get back to, uh... Ibsen."

00:23:07 Annette Guest Oh, yeah. I mean, I was doing a—let me see, I was probably—I was—I don't remember what part of the year it was. So, I'd never done any—I was in New York. I got an off-Broadway play that moved to Broadway. And so, that took a while, that whole process. But it was like—so, I think it must have been just before that, that I got *Miami Vice*, or right around that time. So, no. I really hadn't ever, you know—really. I still was very green, having done anything on camera. I was still just kind of auditioning and kind of trying to get something. So, I didn't have any experience or anything.

00:23:42 Jesse Host I mean, you had been working for a while by the time you started starring in movies.

[Annette agrees.]

00:23:51 Annette Guest But you had not been working on screen for all of that long.  
No! No, no, no! I wasn't at all!

00:23:52 Jesse Host A few years.

00:23:53 Annette Guest No, not even that! I mean, by the—you know, when I got a movie, I really—you know, really had barely done anything. So, I was learning on the—you know, on the job learning. Which is fine. But I guess I knew how to act. At least I knew how to do that. And I just thought it was so cool that we had to get up so early.

[They laugh.]

I don't think it's cool, anymore. But I remember thinking, "Oh, god, we have to get up at four. This is amazing! We have to get in the van at 4:45? Awesome! Let's drive around the lake, or whatever it is." I thought that was so—I was just, you know, making SAG minimum. I thought, this is the best! I was really excited. I still am, but it's not the same. You know. It's different.

00:24:32 Jesse Host Did you have specific goals? Or were you, like, just riding a—riding a wave?

00:24:39 Annette Guest Well, I had to make a living. So, I was just trying to, you know, make enough money to kind of—you know, I needed to make some money. No—well, I was, you know, I was just trying to get the best stuff that I could. And there were something things that I went up for that I just didn't get, that weren't very—I think very good—I don't really remember, now, what exactly they were. But there were some things I would have done that would have been considered kind of tacky or that I just ended up not getting. But my first movie was a Dan Aykroyd, John Candy movie—which was super fun to make.

00:25:12 Jesse Host What movie was that?

00:25:14 Annette Guest *The Great Outdoors*. That was such a kick, you know. It was such a great experience and fun and an adventure. And [chuckles] you know, it was great!

00:25:26 Jesse Host What was it—how did the experience of being in a movie, like having a big part in the movie, how did that compare to your expectations of what it would be like? Or your imaginations of what it would be like?

00:25:41 Annette Guest When I went—the next film I did was called *Valmont*, which was this period drama that—directed by Miloš Forman. He had just done *Amadeus*, so it was this epic period movie. And I had literally never been to Europe. And I was going there to play a French [wheezing into a laugh] aristocrat!

00:26:02 Jesse Host So, you called John Candy to ask for advice.

00:26:03 Annette Guest Exactly. “John, what do I do here?” And I—but I had auditioned so much for Miloš Forman by the time I got the part that sort of knew, kind of, how he worked. And he was very demanding and smart. I just adored him. But he was tough! And he did not mince words. He was not from the American school of “butter them up and make them feel really great about themselves and then you’ll get the best”. And he knew I was very inexperienced, but...

So, I learned a lot from him, because he would just—we would do something and he would, *[in an exaggerated French accent]* “No! No, no! Natural! Natural!” We were all phony, basically, I think. And so—or, at least I was. And he was—he was trying really hard to make us natural and he was a wonderful man. I learned a lot from him. It was an incredible experience. I mean, they literally had the tailor for the movie—was in Rome. So, the first time I went to Rome, I was just going to a fitting! Which is—blows my mind, now. But, you know. Blew my mind, then! But I definitely, sometimes felt like, “I can’t believe—this is, like, a mistake that I have this and...”

00:27:15 Jesse Host Was there anything that you did in those very early years of your career on a set that was totally wrong?

00:27:23 Annette Guest Wrong in the, like, silly or stupid?

00:27:25 Jesse Host Not, like, in the moral sense!

*[They laugh.]*

00:27:28 Annette Guest I don’t think—

00:27:29 Jesse Host I did plenty of that!

00:27:31 Annette Guest Did you murder anyone?

You know, I remember on the—on the pilot that I did, they said, “Sit into the shot.” And I thought, *[whispering]* I don’t know what that means, and I should know what that means. “Could you just sit into the shot?” And so, I just kind of sat forward in the chair and, of course, what I remember is everybody kind of chuckling, but not—I don’t know that they actually did. But, in fact, is all that means is the camera’s on—the camera’s set. It’s set on the chair. And when they say, “action,” you actually are seen entering and sitting down into the chair, in the shot. Sit into the shot. But I didn’t know what that meant.

So, those little things that you learn that take—I don’t know—a half of a day and then you can—it’s like, “Oh!” Someone says, “hit your mark” or “sit into the shot” or whatever it is, you know what you’re doing. It’s not like rocket science. The acting part of it’s much harder. But I learned a lot from working with Miloš, because he would—we would do it a lot. We did a lot of takes and he would... if it—if it wasn’t right, he was very tough. It—we—all of us that worked on the movie sort of bonded over that, because he was so critical. But he was right!

*[Jesse chuckles.]*

As they say. I always defend him, ‘cause he was right, and I really appreciate that. I think some people, he was actually too hard on and he was quite hurtful to people. But, with me, I felt more like he was helping me, ‘cause I thought he was right. ‘Cause when you start doing period work, suddenly you sit a little more stiffly and you

maybe speak in a more pedantic way. Which, he's saying, "That's not—stop doing that! That's not how people behaved. They behaved like we are behaving now."

And so, I'm—I've—I'm very grateful to him for that. And he was kind of a taciturn guy, but authentic. Wonderful man.

- 00:29:21 Jesse Host *[Annette agrees several times as Jesse speaks.]*  
Did you feel like you had to... scheme over the arc of your career, because of the limitations for actresses and the fact that you started, kind of, as a—you know—as a grown up. Like, you were whatever—30ish or something, when you—when you started. And so, like, you started playing—like—hot babe roles and then, you know, it was not very long after that you were playing mom roles. And then there's, like, a long desolate stretch ahead of that, in a lot of actresses' careers, 'cause of the kinds of parts there are.
- 00:30:09 Annette Guest  
Did you have to, like, come up with a scheme of, like, "This is how I'm gonna figure this out?" Or was it—  
No. There's no scheme. No, I just sort of followed things as they came. And I also did plays, in Los Angeles. I wasn't going to New—I wasn't going back to New York, 'cause I couldn't. I didn't want to be gone. But, as my kids were growing, I—it took a while. I mean, I didn't do one for about ten years, I think it took me. Yeah. That's right. And then I started doing plays again. So, I would occasionally do a play, which also was kind of great for my own, sort of, sense of work and what I enjoyed and what I was interested in pursuing. But I found things along the way. I was lucky. And things came to me that I really loved and there were a few things I didn't do, I suppose I would have done, but that I—you know, I barely remember what they are. There's a few that I didn't wanna do, because I just couldn't—of the timing, I didn't wanna leave my kids, so.
- 00:31:05 Jesse Host *[Annette agrees several times as Jesse speaks.]*  
Well, that's another thing. Like, you have four kids. And during the time when they were little, you know, I was looking at your IMDb, and like, between *American Beauty*-ish and *The Kids are Alright*-ish, you know—there—you were in a movie every other year, or something. Not two or three a year. And I understand why anyone would make that choice. I have kids, myself. But it's a—you know—it's a scary and perilous choice for an—for an actor who's reliant in part on having some juice to get a good part. You know what I mean? Like, there's a lot of talented actors. *[Chuckles.]*
- 00:31:51 Annette Guest  
Mm. Well, yeah. I just sort of would stop and start and I remember—after my last one was born—I think it was a couple years. I took a couple years off. Which is a blur. *[Laughs.]* Because I had, you know, four little kids. But yeah. I was lucky, 'cause I always wanted to have kids. I still dream about babies.

*[Jesse chuckles softly.]*

I—it's like the most recurrent theme in my dreams, is there's usually a baby involved somewhere, and I'm taking care of them. Or something. Anyways. So, yeah. It was just so in my nature, from when I was little. I wanted to have children. I was a babysitter. I started babysitting when I was really 12, like, practically. Oh, and

even before that. I worked in the nursery at church. So, I was just always enamored of that and that felt very natural, to me. And, you know, so—yeah, I did. I made, you know, fewer movies there. And—but that’s fine. Going away is good. Going away—especially being in the spotlight and stuff. It’s just—it, you know—it’s nice not to be.

*[Annette hums in acknowledgement several times as Jesse speaks.]*

00:32:58 Jesse Host

One of your kids is trans gender, and he transitioned when he was, like, a young teenager or mid-teenager. And one of my kids is also trans. And when she transitioned... like, it really made me realize how much of my idea of who other people were—including people who were really close to me, who I really cared about, like my kids—was wrapped up in gender identity. Like, as a person with no—you know, not even at the—beforehand, like, no ideological or even—um, very little, even practical discomfort with the idea of being trans gender. I mean, you know, I’m a—I lived Los Angeles. I’m from *[chuckling]* San Francisco, you know what I mean? Like, I had trans friends and stuff.

But, like, one of the things that really struck me, was feeling weird and guilty about how much of my idea of my kid—who is a human being—was tied up in my, as it turned out erroneous, presumption that she was a boy. And like, I was like, “Oh wow!” Not just with her, but I was like, “Am I doing that with everyone in my life?!” Like, “Am I—I think I’m pretty—I’m a pretty cool dude who’s pretty—that has a pretty liberated mind! But like, uh oh!”

00:34:33 Annette Guest

Well, in a way it’s one of the great gifts of having a trans kid, because then you be—I, now I know for me, that I wasn’t even aware of how I saw the world in this binary way. And really, when you think about it, it makes no sense, that everyone is on a spectrum, and—all of us—and that at different points in our life, some people, you know—some people recognize their own feeling like their trans at a different point. Some people suppress it, or some people just don’t even really kind of come to that until they’re older.

I think that that’s a beautiful thing. I really appreciate that about having a trans kid—that I really began to understand that gender is something that happens in your mind. And that a lot of people who are trans, that’s their experience. And that this notion that there are males and females and that if you, you know—the gender identity that you’re assigned at birth is the one that you are. When you love someone so deeply who you see as having this experience, not just him but many other people too that I—that I’ve come to know—I feel like I really get it. I feel like, “Oh wow! That was just such a—such a limited way of looking at people.” Maybe if that connects to what you’re saying, at all.

You know, and it really is—it seems very natural, to me now, that some people are trans and some people are cis and it doesn’t have anything to do with the way you look or the way you present or whether you’re femme or butch or masculine-looking or feminine-looking or any of that. Which is another big, sort of, stupid stereotype about trans people. So, I love that! I feel very grateful to

my kid for opening my eyes and now I've got to meet all these terribly interesting people, through my kid, because of this world. Yeah.

00:36:45 Jesse Host Well, I appreciate you talking to me about that.

[Annette agrees.]

00:36:51 Annette Guest And I also really appreciate you coming on *Bullseye*.  
00:36:52 Jesse Host Thanks.  
00:36:55 Annette Guest I was so happy to get to talk to you, Annette.  
00:36:56 Jesse Host Thaaaank yooou.  
00:36:57 Annette Guest I so appreciate your extraordinary work.  
Thank you. And thank you for asking me to do your show, with you. And it was really fun talking with you. Thanks.

00:37:04 Jesse Host Annette Bening. *Hope Gap* is in theaters, now. We didn't get to talk about it in the interview, but she was so amazing and brilliant in the amazing and brilliant film, *20<sup>th</sup> Century Women*—which came out a few years ago, if you didn't see that. So, there's two hot Annette Bening pics, for you. Enjoy them.

00:37:21 Music Music Thumpy transition music.  
00:37:24 Jesse Host That's the end of another episode of *Bullseye*. *Bullseye* is produced at [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) world headquarters, overlooking MacArthur Park in beautiful Los Angeles, California—where they were shooting *The Rookie*, a network procedural starring the very funny and charming Nathan Fillion. When a network television show comes to town, it is quite the operation.

Our show is produced by speaking into microphones! Our producer is Kevin Ferguson. Jesus Ambrosio is our associate producer. We have help from Casey O'Brien. Our production fellow is Jordan Kauwling. 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 in the can that are available to you to listen to for free. Mike Mills, he writer/director of *20<sup>th</sup> Century Women* also was on the show. I'm sure he had some things to say about Annette Bening, although I don't remember what they were. I do remember that it was a great conversation. You can find all those on our website, at [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org), and you can find them—you know—in your favorite podcast app or wherever else. We're also on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Just search for *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn* and keep up with the show.

And I think that's about it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature sign off.

00:38:47 Promo Promo **Speaker:** *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn* is a production of [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) and is distributed by NPR.

[Music fades out.]