

00:00:00	Music	Transition	Gentle, trilling music with a steady drumbeat plays under the dialogue.
00:00:01	Promo	Promo	Speaker: <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of MaximumFun.org 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> .
00:00:14	Music	Transition	"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	There's a new special on Netflix that I wanna tell you about. It's by a comic named Tom Papa. I loved it. It's called <i>You're Doing Great!</i> . Tom's been a comic for a long time. He played the Comedy Cellar in the early '90s. He toured many times with Jerry Seinfeld. And he has half a dozen specials on his resume. This one, though, is a little bit different. Tom has never exactly been a cynical comic. He's always been the friendly, observational type. But on this special, he worked hard to erase the cynicism from this act.
			<i>[Music fades out.]</i>
			Which, in my mind, is partly why it's so remarkable that it's so funny. The essential message of <i>You're Doing Great!</i> is that you're doing great! That the modern world is remarkable. That we actually have beautiful lives. And that maybe we just need to readjust our expectations of what it is to be happy or successful. <i>[Laughing.]</i> Also, one heads up: if it sounds like Tom and I recorded this interview inside our houses, uh, that's because we did record this interview inside our houses. You might actually, at some point, hear my dog bark at a squirrel.
			That's kinda what it's gonna be like, moving forward, for a little while here on <i>Bullseye</i> . So, we're doing our best. It's a great conversation.
			In Tom's new special, <i>You're Doing Great!</i> , much of his material focuses on the little triumphs in what can otherwise feel like a very mundane life. Tom captures this perfectly in a bit about the sense of accomplishment you get when you finally remember to cross a small errand—like buying toothpaste—off your to-do list.
00:02:01	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:02:02	Clip	Clip	Tom Papa: You run out of toothpaste. You need more toothpaste! You tell yourself that for a week and half.
			<i>[The audience laughs. They continue to laugh repeatedly as he continues.]</i>
			Tom: Standing on it! Squeeeezing it! Pushing <u>through</u> the hole from the inside! Just trying to get one strand on your brush so you don't feel like a monster out in the world. You finally stop at CVS on the way home, you slide that fresh tube out of that looong box? You feel like you did something, don't you?
			<i>[The audience applauds and cheers.]</i>

00:02:33	Sound Effect	Transition	Tom: Yeeeah! You feel like a winner! Music swells and fades.
00:02:35	Jesse	Host	<i>[Laughs.]</i> Tom Papa, welcome to <i>Bullseye</i> ! Thanks for coming on the show.
00:02:39	Tom	Guest	Thanks for having me. I love your show.
00:02:41	Jesse	Host	<i>[Surprised.]</i> Oh, thank you! What unusual circumstances <i>[laughing]</i> for us to be speaking in!
00:02:47	Tom	Guest	<i>[Laughs.]</i> So many times, I was driving around LA listening to your show and thinking, “I’d love to get in there, one day.” And— <i>[Jesse giggles.]</i> Here we are. Almost in there. <i>[They laugh.]</i>
00:02:59	Jesse	Host	You’re like, “Gosh, I hope that—I hope that one day I’ll have to close my doors and make sure that my kids know not to open them and make sure the dog is quiet. And...”
00:03:09	Tom	Guest	<i>[Chuckling.]</i> Yeeeah. Very unusual.
00:03:12	Jesse	Host	I’m thrilled to have you on the show. One of the things that comes up, on this special, over and over again is kind of readjusting your—one’s expectations of one’s own life. <i>[Tom hums in agreement.]</i> And... I don’t wanna <i>[laughs]</i> —the verb that comes to mind is “settling”, but it’s not settling. It’s, like—it’s almost—it’s almost fundamentally optimistic, what you’re—what you’re pitching to us.
00:03:42	Tom	Guest	Mm-hm. Yeah, it’s not—it’s not settling. It is readjusting your expectations in a very realistic way, I think. You know, I think we... have gotten caught up, for a long time, in thinking—for all these different reasons—of thinking that life is supposed to be this nonstop spectacular. <i>[Laughs.]</i> And all of these things that are dangled in front of us, we think that those are gonna bring joy and happiness and meaning and they’re not. They’re really not. And when you just recalibrate and realize, like, what are the important things in your life, you realize, “Hey! This is more realistic and I’m actually doing pretty great.”
00:04:33	Jesse	Host	Yeah, I think often—as an adult, now—of when I was a kid and my stepmother would tell us a story about, like—she grew up in Belfast, in Northern Ireland, and her father died when she was young. And she had a bunch of brothers and sisters. <i>[Tom hums in acknowledgement.]</i> And she’d, like, tell us a <i>[chuckling]</i> story about fighting with her sister over a piece of bacon, because they got a piece of bacon once a week. <i>[Tom laughs and agrees several times.]</i> Like, that was their meat for the week, you know? And I think, “Oh my gosh!” <i>[Laughs.]</i> Like! Maybe she was—she was either trying to teach me a lesson or just very resentful of me.

[Tom laughs.]

00:05:22 Tom Guest

Either way! One or the other. Maybe some of each. Yeah, a little bit of—a little bit of each. My grandmother—grandparents were the same way. And they would—they just had this—*[sighs]* I don't think they resented what we had, but they just had this really ingrained perspective of life. And they had been through so much, through the world wars and the great depression and everything that followed. And they just had this other way of looking at the world that was very realistic and very... do you have time for a short story?

00:06:02 Jesse Host
00:06:06 Tom Guest

Yeah. This is public radio, Tom.
[Laughs.] Nothin' but time, baby. Um. On 9/11, I was at Newark Airport and I was trying—I was on my way to fly to a gig and everything happened. And—before I even boarded the plane—and I was living in Manhattan, at the time, and watched as the towers came down from Newark Airport. And I couldn't get back into the city to get to my girlfriend, who I lived with. And—but my grandmother lived around Giant's Stadium, like by the Lincoln Tunnel. Like, 20 minutes outside the city. And I figured, well—like, I'm in a cab, after everybody kind of got a grip of—we got a—shouldn't stay at the airport all day. I guess we should go somewhere.

I couldn't get into New York and I said, "Oh, I'll go to my nana's house." And I drove up to my nana's house in this cab. And like, she opens the door. And this is a woman who—you know, battled all these kinds of illnesses. She lives alone in this little house and she'd been through all the things I listed before. And she... was so excited to see me. And I was like—I immediately started to cry as soon as I saw her. I'm like, "Did you see what happened?" I was just in shock and you see someone that you love and you kind of let your guard down.

And she said, "Oh, yeah! But look at—how luck am I that you get to visit?!" And she *[chuckling]* brought me inside and I turned on her little TV and I'm watching the news and she came in and said, "Okay, I have to go to my bridge group, now."

I was like, "W-woah, what?"

And said, "I have—today's whatever day it is. I have—I play bridge with my lady friends."

I was like, "B-b-b-but—but do you see what's happening?!"

And she goes, "*[Clicks tongue.]* Oh, look at you. You're upset. Here you go. Here's half of my tuna sandwich. You sit here. I'm gonna go play bridge. I'll be back. We're gonna be fine." *[Laughs.]* And she took off. And I just carry that with me to this day. They just had a real understanding that life can be so much harder at any moment and we've seen the hardest that they could throw at us, and we're still here and still going along. And that just really, kind of, stuck with me as a dose of reality—of, yeah! Yeah. I mean, anything at any

00:08:24	Jesse	Host	<p>time can happen. And if you're still standing, you actually are doing pretty great.</p> <p>You've been a comic, now, for more than 25 years.</p> <p><i>[Tom hums in agreement.]</i></p>
00:08:39	Tom	Guest	<p>Do you find that that attitude is one that you share with your comedy peers?</p> <p>That we all carry that perspective, you mean? Or that I share it with them, verbally?</p>
00:08:45	Jesse	Host	<p>No, no, that they—<i>[laughs]</i> that they have that attitude that you just expressed.</p>
00:08:48	Tom	Guest	<p>Oh. No.</p> <p><i>[They laugh.]</i></p> <p>No. No, they don't. Um... yeah. No, they don't. There's a—I don't know. I mean, it's hard to say what they—Marc Maron has a new special out, now. And his is called, like <i>Fun End Times</i>.</p> <p><i>[They laugh.]</i></p> <p>And I was listening to it, and I love Marc, and I was listening to it. And we touch on a lot of similar subjects. We're similar ages and we touch on similar potential disasters and things that come up in your life. And I said to him, "You—we go down the same road and then you get off at this exit, which is pretty dark and nihilistic and I take the next exit up on the left, which is on the sunny side of the street."</p> <p><i>[They laugh.]</i></p> <p>And I—yeah, and I think that is, kind of, where I—I think most of the comics are getting off with Marc. <i>[Laughs.]</i></p>
00:09:45	Jesse	Host	<p><i>[Tom agrees several times as Jesse talks.]</i></p> <p>I mean, I think that there is an idea that being a friendly comedian is the easy way to go. But—whereas the other—or, the alternative is to be an edgy truth teller who tells people things they can't handle, or whatever. And I'm—that's not an opinion I'm ascribing to Marc, who's also a friend of mine. But it feels to me like it is pretty easy to get a group of people onboard for "this thing sucks".</p>
00:10:31	Tom	Guest	<p>Whatever it is, that is a relatively easy flag to rally around. Relative to "this thing is nice".</p> <p>No, 100%! I think it's much more difficult. And, you know, most comedy is—lives in cynicism and negativity. Which is great! And it's very funny and it's... filled with tension. And I have to go towards that as well, to expose what I wanna talk about, but I... do not believe in living there. <i>[Laughs.]</i> I don't believe and carry my life—with my life in a way where I hang out in that area. And when I was touring, over the last two and a half years, I just started to really get this response from the audience that—when I would tell them that they were doing great and I was telling them that, you know, things are difficult but we're gonna be okay and all this—people were</p>

coming up to me after the shows everywhere in the country and literally thanking me.

And saying, “Thank you for saying I’m doing okay, ‘cause I’m so full of anxiety. I’m so filled with this—” And they were just responding to that. And I said—well, you know, this is going to be a little bit of an experiment, I think—to do—continue with my act but lean in for the first time. Lean in a little bit harder in something that’s less cynical and more positive. And it really just started to work. But it’s only in looking back do I realize, “Oh, that was kind of something—I kind of pulled something off.” *[Laughs.]* Because that isn’t—that isn’t the—that’s not in the brochure of how to be a standup comedian.

00:12:02 Jesse Host
00:12:06 Tom Guest

Were you worried that you would turn lame?

No, I was always kinda lame.

[They laugh.]

I was never the guy who—you know, leaning against the back wall smoking a cigarette. But because I love standup and come from New York and was around—you know, Dave Attell and Nick DiPaolo and Colin Quinn and... you know, Dave Chappell and all these crazy, great people—I knew—I—being lame in comedy is being hacky or being retread or—and not being honest, or being false. And I—so, I had that filter and knew what not to do. And in the beginning of my career, I would try and be a little edgy. And I would try and be a little—try and mimic that attitude. But that’s not me and the audience also knows it’s not me. And it was only through years and years of trying to create an act with integrity while being completely myself does it end up not being lame.

00:13:09 Jesse Host

Did you just decide that you were going to be a standup comic at some point?

00:13:14 Tom Guest

I did. I consciously did, in seventh grade. I was always funny, and I was going through—sixth, seventh grade I was going through—I was always funny, but I really saw that this was more than something casual. I was using it to befriend all of the older kids that had stayed home in the summer and that were around. Like, all my friends—I didn’t have a lot of kids my age at the time. They would all go away for the summer and we stayed in town. And to hang out and be accepted by some of these older kids, I was—I remember you know, like, “funny is my role” kind of a thing.

And then I went through this moment of—in what seemed like a week, who knows, maybe it was longer—I walked into my friend’s older brother’s room, and it was a bunch of kids in there. You know, all older and intimidating. And they were listening to Steve Martin’s *Let’s Get Small* album and they were all just cracking up. And I was laughing too, even though I didn’t understand a lot of the jokes. And then, later on, was at my other friend’s house and listening to George Carlin’s *Class Clown*, on vinyl. And it really struck me at that—after seeing that—hearing that second album, like, “Oh, these are grownups! And this is a job! Like, these—these are just funny people who are now men—maybe I don’t have to go into sales!”

[They laugh.]

00:14:54	Jesse	Host	“Wow!” That was, like, a huge realization. And literally, from that point on, I just thought, “I’m gonna go that direction.”
00:14:59	Tom	Guest	But it—did it seem like something that you really could do?
00:15:01	Jesse	Host	Sure! <i>[Laughs.]</i>
			That’s <u>wild</u> to me! Like, when I—‘cause I had similar moments when I was that age, but I think when I was that age, it seemed like an—they were characters from a story! Not human beings! Like, the prospect, the—
			<i>[Tom laughs and disagrees.]</i>
00:15:15	Tom	Guest	You know what I mean?
			Yeah, no, I get what you’re saying and that makes—that’s totally—that makes more sense than what I was thinking.
			<i>[Jesse laughs.]</i>
			Which was... <i>[laughs]</i> which was, “Oh! They’re all—wait ‘til they meet me!”
			<i>[They laugh.]</i>
			“They’re waiting for me! Right? John Belushi—when I can finally get a car!” <i>[Laughs.]</i> I always just thought, “No! That’s—I’m going there! And of course—that’s—that’s where I’m—yeah!” I didn’t—I didn’t think about it being—I mean, we had nobody in showbusiness in our life, or anything. So, I wasn’t thinking about—I don’t know. At that age, you don’t think about the odds or what you’re up against. You’re just like, “Man, I can make this whole class laugh. And that’s all they’re doing. And I—I’m just gonna keep doing that! I’m gonna—I’m gonna get on TV, too! I wanna do all—I wanna just—yeah!” It just seemed—it just seemed natural. It wasn’t until I actually started doing it that I realized, “Oh, this is—this might be tough.”
00:16:15	Jesse	Host	<i>[They laugh.]</i>
			You know, you <u>say</u> that at that age you don’t think about the odds. <u>All</u> I thought about at that age was the odds. By then, I had already adjusted my plans from “major league baseball player” to “maybe umpire?”.
00:16:29	Tom	Guest	<i>[They laugh.]</i>
			Yeah, no. No. I did, like—I was in sports. I was—I played football my whole life. And I remember—I knew there was an end to <u>that</u> . I knew. And I was big and—you know, I was captain of the football team at the same time I was class clown. But I <u>knew</u> , “This class clown thing I can really work. That other thing? I, you know—I’m not... there’s a limit, here. These guys are gonna get much bigger and much faster and they—gonna—they really... have to really want it.” And I was like, “Nooo.” But the other way—you know. I just thought, “I could—you could do this forever!” You know. Sports seemed so hard and limited. This thing just seemed like, “Well, if—as long as I can just keep making milk come out of this kid’s nose <i>[laughs]</i> , I’m still in the game.”

And then I picked a school that their football program was on suspension. Because of some kerfuffle. And my father had wanted me to play division three football and I was like, "No." You know. When I was done, in high school, I was done. And I—when I realized they had a theatre department, but they didn't have football, I was like, "Alright, I'll go there." And that was calculated.

[Laughs.]

00:17:47	Jesse	Host	Even more with Tom Papa when we come back from a break. Stick around. It's <i>Bullseye</i> ! From MaximumFun.org and NPR.
00:17:55	Music	Music	Electronic music plays.
00:17:58	Jesse	Promo	Support for this podcast and the following message come from Kohler Intelligent Toilets.

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[Music fades out.]

00:18:37	Promo	Promo	Music: Fun, upbeat music.
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Dave Hill: Hi! I'm Dave Hill. From before. And I'm very excited to bring [Dave Hill's Podcasting Incident](#) back to Maximum Fun, where it belongs! You can get brand new episodes every Friday on MaximumFun.org. Or, you know, wherever.

And what my partner Chris Gersbeck and I might lack in specific subject matter on our podcast, we make up for in special effects! Chris, add something cool. Right here!

[Gunshot or whip snap.]

Also, we have explosions!

[Explosion.]

Animal noises.

[A goat braying]

And sometimes, even this!

[Two comedic timpani "boings," a springier "sproing" sound, and what sounds like a human scream.]

Dave Hill's Podcasting Incident! Every Friday on Maximum Fun. Chris, do another explosion right here.

[Another explosion, right here.]

00:19:22	Promo	Promo	Music: Suspenseful music.
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Speaker: Right now, every household in the country is being asked to fill out the US Census. It's the form that helps us determine how voting districts are redrawn, where to build public schools and hospitals, how to spend federal money. So, why are some people afraid to fill it out? We're getting into all that this week, on NPR's *Code Switch* podcast.

00:19:42	Jesse	Host	<i>[Music fades out.]</i> You're listening to <i>Bullseye</i> . I'm Jesse Thorn. I'm talking with comedian Tom Papa. Let's listen to another clip from Tom Papa's new special, <i>You're Doing Great!</i> . A lot of Tom's material is about his family life. He has two daughters who are coming up on college age. And while a lot of parents might feel overwhelmed at the prospect of an empty nest, Tom Papa has big plans. Music swells and fades.
00:20:04	Sound Effect	Transition	
00:20:05	Clip	Clip	Tom: I gotta get the kids out. They gotta move out about their life and they gotta do all that. That's another weird thing. I just realized, again. But they leave—they're leaving! I have a 17-year-old! She's leaving! It just struck me! I was like, "Wait a minute! Waaait a minuuute! I didn't want any of this! I didn't want this house! I didn't want this dog! I didn't wanna live in this town! I did this for you! And now you're just gonna leave?!" <i>[The audience rumbles with laughter.]</i> Tom: But then I thought, "But wait, when they're both gone, what's stopping me? What's stopping me from going back to the life that I had before? How much can a corolla be, on eBay?" <i>[The audience laughs.]</i> Tom: I'm gonna get a backpack, fill it with everything I liked when I was 19. Some Van Halen CDs, a little weed. I'm gonna walk up the driveway and blow the house up behind me, like <i>Die Hard</i> . Music swells and fades.
00:20:47	Sound Effect	Transition	
00:20:48	Jesse	Host	How old were you when you first tried standup?
00:20:52	Tom	Guest	Uuum, I was... I guess—I don't know what the age was. I was—it was in 1993—it was June 12 th , 1993. So... I was, like, late 20s.
00:21:09	Jesse	Host	If your whole life had been leading up to that and you knew what you wanted, what kept you out of the club until after college?
00:21:20	Tom	Guest	'Cause they wanted me to get a degree and that made sense, to me.
00:21:26	Jesse	Host	The people at the college?
00:21:28	Tom	Guest	<i>[Stumbles into laughter.]</i> Yeah, those people. No, my parents! They really wanted me to get a degree and that made sense. And, you know, they knew I had designs elsewhere, but they were like, "You know, you gotta do this." And I was cool with it. And I was, you know—spent all my time in the theatre. I just took classes and was in every single play from freshman 'til I graduated. And I just lived in there. And I went to one—I went to one interview, in New York, through a friend of a friend who was in an ad agency in this cubicle. And this guy was so unhappy with his job, and he's interviewing me

and I'm like, "Why would I be trying to get a job here, to become this?"

[Laughs.]

And then that was—and I remember literally going back to campus, driving back from New York to campus and running across the parking lot, back to rehearsal, and it was like, "Ugh, yeah. This is—I just—I could breathe again." And, but I—but the degree was important. So, I did the—I got the degree and then came out and I tried to get—because I was acting so much, I tried to get some roles in New York and studied and that and... I had the standup thing, but I didn't really—you know, I was on this actor thing. So... but then I realized, "Eh, you gotta get—someone's gotta hire you to become an actor." And I looked in *The Village Voice* and it was like, "If I just call this number and the New York comedy club is—if I bring three friends who will buy drinks and sit in the audience, I can go on stage."

And that was it. Then, once I did that, then that was it. Then the acting thing—that whole route was like, "Uh, okay. I don't have to—I can just go and get onstage." This was—seemed like a funny little secret entrance into showbusiness.

00:23:26 Jesse Host
00:23:28 Tom Guest

Did it go well, the first time?

Um, it went well enough. It was—it wasn't, you know, I'm literally—my three friends—it was probably five friends, 'cause they were all excited I was doing it. And... on the show it was me and Greg Giraldo and—saw a guy, Gary, who—I always space on his last name. He works at *Kimmel*. And it was just the three of us. There was nobody—you know, it was like five in the afternoon in the summer. [Laughs.] It wasn't—it was—so, it was mostly my friends. And it didn't go great. Like, I thought I had a bunch of material for five minutes, and I was done in about 30 seconds.

[They chuckle.]

But I told one joke that was actually in the form of a written joke that worked. And that was, like, the big win of the day. And then I just kind of screwed around and was probably not that great. But that I got that one joke out and that it worked was, like—oh, it was a thrill. 'Cause, you know, that's different than just making your buddies laugh. And yeah, so—well enough. Because that was—I was completely hooked.

00:24:34 Jesse Host
00:24:38 Tom Guest

At what point did you feel like you were a comedian?

Uuuuuh, [makes "tsk"ing sounds]... it's interesting. I don't know. I mean, there's a big thing when you quit your day job and are actually making money at it. But before that, you kind of—I kind of felt like—I guess it was when I was running around doing shows on a regular basis. When I was, like, starting—like, in the beginning you—you know, I started in '93, but those first, like, three, four years are so confusing, and you don't really get many spots. You go months without even getting onstage. But then, when you—you kind of turn the corner and they start giving you regular spots. I was hosting a lot. They were asking me—they... we had this—I had a pretty quick trajectory where you knew that, like, you were doing it

every week. You were doing it, like, two or three times. That's when it really started to feel like I was a comedian.

And I would do shows with Giraldo and Gaffigan and we would put on these little shows in the bottom of restaurants and—it's, like, when you're doing it regularly enough, that—I guess that's probably—you know, it's not a clear-cut “on this day” but around that time, when it's like, “Oh, we no longer have to wait months in between spots. This is a regular thing.” That's when it really started to feel like we were at least comedians in our head. Even though we weren't getting paid, yet.

00:26:04 Jesse Host

Do you feel like when you came to middle aged and had children, you were, like, entering the golden age of your performing career? Like, “Yes! Finally, what the audience assumes about me when I walk onstage [*chuckling*] is something I actually have something to say about!”

00:26:27 Tom Guest

[*Chuckles.*] Yeah, not so much the expectations of what—of how they—the audience is looking at me, but I knew, clearly, that getting around this age was going to be about when I would start becoming valuable. I would have more life experience and know—and be coming from a place of real knowledge that I could actually speak on a multitude of issues with some depth and some clarity. And that also I would have amassed enough skill to then take those ideas and put them out there. You know. I was never, like, the young, cool guy that was gonna get swept up because he just had—he was just quirky and had that cool energy. My stuff is very human and very all through, like, a familial lens and it's—you know, it's... it's human, is the way that I always try and describe it. It's more the human condition and I could not comment on it with... with real clarity at the age of 28 to 32. You know. I mean, that's—you're just figuring it out! You know?

00:27:45 Jesse Host

This is—now, I feel like I'm starting to—I'm starting to get it. You've worked a lot, over the years, with Jerry Seinfeld. One of the greatest standup comics of all time, certainly, by any measure. I don't—I've never met the man. But when I watch his television program, I'm struck by the extent to which he seems to process everything in the entire world into a joke.

[*Tom agrees several times.*]

And usually [*laughing*] a good, too! Not just, like—like, I think there are—like, I think there are a lot of comics who are extraordinarily witty, or have a really funny persona like—you know—you know, you could hand Tracy Morgan the phone book and it would be funny to watch him read it, you know what I mean? But I feel like you can look into Jerry Seinfeld's eyes and see him—you know—like a chemistry set. Whatever input is going in there is being broken down into its constituent parts so it can be reassembled into humor. And I wonder what you've learned—both from watching him onstage a lot, as a—you know, you've done a lot of road work with him, but also from talking to him about doing comedy?

00:28:57 Tom Guest

Yeah, he... funny is a real currency to him. And it really, purely comes down to that. Like, “Is this thing—is this thing—funny is just his filter. His nonstop filter. I mean, he'll have serious moments, of course, but there is—he has this gear where it—he knows that that

is his job. *[Laughs.]* His job is to see it, translate it, and push it back to you in a—in a very, very funny way. But the greatest thing I got from him—and it's kind of a combination of him as the joke writer and as the... man, as the person that he is, and how to carry yourself as a comedian—but the combination of it all is that this is a real, real craft that has real, real value. And if you put real, real hard work into it, you will be rewarded for it.

And how lucky are we that we have the ability to be in this world of comedy? And treat it with joy and treat it with gratefulness, but also treat it as something that has to be worked at much, much harder than most comedians work at it. *[Laughs.]* And I really—I—that was the biggest—the biggest gift I got from him. Because, in the beginning, you're just—you're just funny and you're doing these shows and you're running around and you're just trying your best. And to actually think, "No, I can, like, sit down and work at this and get better," was really a relief, as a young comic.

00:30:46 Jesse Host That was—that was the biggest thing I got, from him. Sometimes when I see him looking for the joke in something on the—on the TV show, I honestly worry about him.

[They laugh.]

00:31:10 Tom Guest It's—it's for—and I'm like, I know—I'm like—for a moment, "He's on television, TV shows are supposed to be funny. This is edited." Yeah. Well, there was—I mean, when he talks about it—doing that show, it's all—it's like there's—there's a bit of a PTSD. *[Laughs.]* Because there was a, "This has to be—" There was no, like, "Oh, this is good enough." You could tell. You could tell, from just the way he talks about how they went through it. And he's kind of that way with his act. It's never just, like, "Oh, that—that'll, eeeeh, they'll get it." *[Laughs.]* It was always—and he still does that with jokes that are solid, in his act for a long time. And he'll be like, "What if I just changed this word? What if I just changed that word? Could it get funnier?" And he would give it to me! He'd be like, "You say this, but if you just said it like that."

00:32:20 Jesse Host And I'd be like, "That doesn't make any difference!" But he's watching me from the side of the stage so I'll try it, and then it would be—the laugh would be bigger. *[Laughs.]* I'm like, "Damn it! He's right!" Uh, it's—yeah. He—it's—you're not wrong for feeling that. There was a lot of self-imposed pressure he put on himself by trying to be that—that much of a perfectionist about comedy. There's a bit in your new special, *You're Doing Great!*, where you say—and I'm paraphrasing a little bit, because we're on the radio. I probably wouldn't play it straight up on the radio.

[Tom agrees.]

00:32:51 Tom Guest Even though it doesn't have any swear words in it, or anything. But you say, "Imagine being a man and taking the worst part of yourself out of your pants—the worst part of your body out of your pants and showing it to someone." Yeah. Presenting it to a woman like it's an award she'd be happy to receive.

[Jesse agrees.]

00:33:03 Jesse Host

That that's your—that that's your “hello”, your first move. *[Laughs.]* And, I mean it's—it struck me for two reasons. You kind of... segue into a discussion of how, you know, being aware of what... men have done is so important and changing people's—the context in which they live their lives and their workplaces is so important.

[Tom agrees several times.]

00:34:02 Tom Guest

But, you know, it's obviously—or maybe not obviously—but it seemed to me obviously like directly reminiscent of what Louis CK did to a number of other comics. And, you know, you're working in the LA and New York comedy scenes, where he was a very, very big deal. And I wonder if... you were worried about how to manage the tone of something like that when that was always going to be part of the context?
Um, no. Not at all.

[Jesse makes a surprised sound.]

I—there was no—no. I think, when—in my mind, you know it's funny, we always have, like, these little things in our own brain of what we're—our jokes live, in our brain. Like, I talk about a certain thing and it's—my picture of it sometimes is different from the listener's picture of it. Totally aware of his thing, but unfortunately, he's not the only one. *[Laughs.]* And that that is—seemed to be a move by a large number of men. *[Laughs.]* That—all this time of trying to court ladies *[laughing]* throughout my life and trying—of all the ways I would think of how to get some girl to like me, that was never in my mind of a possibility! *[Laughs.]* Of you just—you just reach in and “ta-da”. And, as far back as hearing politicians that would do that move, and comedians, and producers, and it just seems to me like such a—almost like a—it was like a surprise. Like, as being part of—as you know, like, being a guy. You're still surprised when you hear that guys were doing that! It's like, “Wait! What?!”

00:36:11 Jesse Host

So, it's so clearly wrong. And it's so clearly out of the realm of thinking that—no. I mean, what could possibly make me feel like not talking about that? Because somebody in somewhere near our world did that, too? Well, it doesn't make it any less *[laughing]* wrong! You can't make—you can't make—I guess you can't be on that side of the argument and be like, “Dude, that's not cool” and get me to say—say you're right! It's like, no! I have daughters and sisters and I work with a lot of women and I think we're all in agreement that that move, by whoever you are, *[laughing]* is creepy and wrong! So, I—yeah, I never gave it a second thought. I found it kind of comforting to have a bit... where the premise, I think, was an—you know, I'm speaking for you here, so correct me if I'm wrong—but, like, the premise is both “that is a horrible thing to do and it's horrible that people are doing—that people do that” and also that “it's great that... something is changing about people doing that.” That the people's—you know, people's lives and

			workplaces are improving, because we're saying out loud that that's horrible.
00:36:53	Tom	Guest	Yeah! Yeah. You know, I've got kids that are about to go out into the world and they've gotta go meet all of these dudes, in their lifetime. And, you know, it's enough to navigate guys in general. And to think that at least at work, this won't happen anymore is like, "Oh, god! What a relief!" You know? I can't believe it took this long! But yeah. Thank god, you know, that everybody—you know. It... once you mix—when you mix sexuality in, it's a very—it's a very muddled and difficult place to navigate, but at least we're writing a real, solid rulebook for how you work and how we treat each other while we are working. That is at least a—at least some progress. It's like—and then you can decide whether or not you go to happy hour and meet this hairy <i>[laughing]</i> jerk doing shots, afterwards.
			But at least, in the workplace, we've got that sewn up and everyone's on the same page. Thank god.
00:37:52	Jesse	Host	Well, Tom Papa, I loved your special. I really enjoyed it, both before and after the cataclysms <i>[laughing]</i> taking place in the world.
			<i>[Tom agrees with a chuckle.]</i>
			And I really appreciate you taking the time to be on <i>Bullseye</i> . Thank you very much.
00:38:09	Tom	Guest	I appreciate it. Good talking to you.
00:38:12	Jesse	Host	I apologize for my dog barking in the background, I think it was a squirrel.
00:38:15	Tom	Guest	You never apologize for that. Come on! It's okay.
00:38:17	Jesse	Host	There was a squirrel outside.
00:38:19	Tom	Guest	<i>[Laughing.]</i> Yeah, I think you should get used to that.
00:38:21	Jesse	Host	Tom Papa. You can watch his terrific new special on Netflix. It's called <i>You're Doing Great!</i> . Tom is also the host of the show <i>What a Joke with Papa and Fortune</i> , on SiriusXM's Netflix channel, which airs Mondays through Thursdays. Tom also writes and appears on the public radio show, <i>Live from Here</i> . In May, Tom will release his second book from St. Martin's Press: <i>You're Doing Great and Other Reasons to Stay Alive</i> .
00:38:50	Music	Transition	Thumpy electronic music.
00:38:53	Jesse	Host	That's the end of another episode of <i>Bullseye</i> . <i>Bullseye</i> is currently produced out of the <i>[chuckling]</i> homes of me and the staff of MaximumFun, in and around Los Angeles, California.
			Now, normally we would give you an update on what's happening outside our office, in MacArthur Park. But instead, here at my house my wife overheard this exchange between my six year old son and eight year old daughter, after my daughter noticed that there was some whipped cream in the fridge: she said to him, "Hey, I noticed we have a little something that goes on top of hot cocoa? In a blue spray bottle in the fridge?"
			My son, Oscar, said, "GATORADE?!"
			The show's produced by speaking into microphones. Our producer is Kevin Ferguson. Jesus Ambrosio is our associate producer. We get 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. Thanks to them and their label, Memphis Industries, for letting us use it.

And! We're also on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Search for *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn*. You can keep up with the show, there. And I think that's about it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature sign off.

00:40:11 Promo Promo

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

[Music fades out.]