

00:00:00	Jesse Thorn	Promo	Thanks for listening to <i>Bullseye</i> ! We'd like to better understand who's listening and how you're using podcasts. Please help us out by completing a short, anonymous survey at <a href="https://www.npr.org/podcastsurvey">NPR.org/podcastsurvey</a> . One word. It takes less than ten minutes. It really helps support the show. That's <a href="https://www.npr.org/podcastsurvey">NPR.org/podcastsurvey</a> . One word.
00:00:22	Music	Transition	Gentle, trilling music with a steady drumbeat plays under the dialogue.
00:00:23	Promo	Promo	<b>Speaker:</b> <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of <a href="https://www.maximumfun.org">MaximumFun.org</a> and is distributed by NPR.
00:00:35	Jesse	Host	<i>[Music fades out.]</i> I'm Jesse Thorn. It's <i>Bullseye</i> .
00:00:37	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.
00:00:43	Jesse	Host	If you're looking for something to stream these days—maybe a reason to laugh—I have a recommendation. A comedy special called <i>Bangin'</i> , by Nikki Glaser. It is so funny. Nikki is, of course, an accomplished standup comic. She's also hosted shows on Comedy Central and MTV. She makes regular appearances in all the roasts. If you've seen her in one of those, you probably remember her delivering the most devastating, cutting joke in a night dedicated to devastating, cutting jokes.  A lot of her standup is about sex. So, we'll be talking a lot about sex in the interview. If you, or someone you're with, might be sensitive to that—just a heads up that that is what we're chatting about. Anyway. Let's kick things off with a clip from her standup special, <i>Bangin'</i> .  <i>[Music ends with a chorus of cheers.]</i>  She's talking about how she often felt like she wasn't pretty enough, as a child.
00:01:34	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:01:35	Clip	Clip	<b>Nikki Glaser:</b> I kind of had an idea that I wasn't that cute. You know? 'Cause I had a really beautiful sister, growing up. Never went through an awkward phase. She was just so stunning. She literally would stop traffic—when I pushed her in front of it. You know.  <i>[The audience laughs repeatedly as Nikki continues.]</i>  Trying to get her out of the way. And I'm the second prettiest sister. And then there isn't another one. But, so, I've got that. But... people would stop my mom, as a child, and tell my mom that my sister should be a model. Like, right in front of me. And be like, "This child needs to be a model!" And they wouldn't see me, at first. And then I'd emerge from behind my mom's legs like Nosferatu. Like, <i>[in a creepy, whispery voice]</i> "What should I beee?"  <i>[Scattered applause.]</i>

Just, like, desperate to be discovered or whatever. And they're like, "You should be—um. You're gonna be a model... train enthusiast, probably. I think you should start collecting soon!"

00:02:28 Sound Effect Transition Music swells and fades.

00:02:30 Jesse Host Nikki Glaser, welcome back to *Bullseye*. It's really nice to talk to you, again.

00:02:33 Nikki Guest It's nice to talk to you again. Thank you for having me!

00:02:36 Jesse Host When you were putting this special together, did you have 20 minutes of sexual material that we can't talk too specifically about on National Public Radio? Or did you develop 20 minutes of sexual material that we can't talk too specifically about on National Public Radio, in order to make this special?

00:02:58 Nikki Guest I already had it. I mean, it was—it was—that's already what I—I don't ever write material in—for anything specifically, when it comes to standup. I'm never like, "Well, this is gonna be a special that says this. Or—" It's just whatever is interesting to me, at that time. So, this hour of material, on *Bangin'*, is what—is just my—I just picked an hour out of, like, two hours of material I'm always doing and kind of, like, was like, "Oh! I guess these are similar themes."

But it all is the same. I've been talking about the same stuff for my whole career, I realize. I'm just getting better at doing it.

*[They laugh.]*

But I have the same interest. Like every—I really—you watch any of my specials and it's just a younger person just dealing with the same stuff. It's just—I'm getting—I'm just getting older. My act stays the same age and I just keep getting older.

00:03:49 Jesse Host I think there's a lot of standup comedy about sex. And there has been for quite a long time. I think yours is a little different. Do you notice that you talk about different things about sex, onstage, relative to—you know—the other folks that you see doing 15-minute sets, before and after you?

00:04:10 Nikki Guest Yeah, I don't really notice that, to be honest with you. I'd have to have someone, kind of, tell me what—how mine is different. I know that I talk about it more. It's a subject that comes up more, to me. But I've never really examined it or judged it, because it's just—it's never felt forced. And as long as something's not, kind of, me trying to be something, there's no need for me to, like, analyze it and be like, "Why am I doing this?" It just is, like—it's just how I think! And it is interesting, to me, though—that I'm kind of known as the sex comic, when I have less sex than anyone I know.

*[Jesse chuckles.]*

And I've had less sexual partners than anyone I know. I mean, I'm really not someone who should be even talking about these things. And I think that's why I talk about them so much, is because I am so scared of it! I talk about what I'm scared of.

00:05:07 Jesse Host Yeah, but I think that sex is a topic that you can go to onstage, because it has a lot of punch. And a lot of comics use it that way. And some do a really particularly great job. One of the things that I was... impressed with about your special is that, with the sheer volume of sex jokes—and some of them really are joke-jokes. You

know, I mean you're a great writer of joke-jokes. You've—you know, that's how you become a celebrated roast performer. You know, you take a premise and write 40 jokes about it, and four of them are perfect and you use those.

*[Nikki agrees.]*

But I think there's something—I think there's something kind of sweet about the sex jokes in your special?

*[Nikki chuckles.]*

Which caught me by surprise every single time. I mean, it caught me by surprise for 20 straight minutes, to open the special.

*[Chuckling.]* You know? And it's not just—it's not—there's, you know—your sex jokes are vulnerable. But it's not just that. I think I'm just so used to seeing people tell jokes about sex that are, like, "BLEH! Ha-ha!"

00:06:16    Nikki            Guest

Yes! I think I know what you're saying. I think... yeah. They're so in your face. They can be so gross. And I can be pretty disgusting. I mean, it's hard to talk about sex without being kind of viscerally unpleasant, at times. But it's never my intent to, like, gross someone out. It's just, like—my intent, if I gross someone out, is to be like, "Can you believe we do this?" And that's what I think so much of my sense of humor stemmed from. Is, like, growing up in a house and growing up in a community that, like—we didn't talk about sex. I didn't know anything about it. I was very... shameful. And I was so curious about it. I was always met with complete silence, whenever I asked my parents about their sex life. Which I did, as a kid.

I was always, like, curious about what sex was and, like, who was having it and when and what did it look like and why. My parents would just, like, ignore me. They wouldn't even be like, "We don't talk about that." They would just pretend they didn't hear me. The time I remember that was the most awkward was I was probably, like, nine. And I just had the realization that perhaps my parents had been with people before each other, like—that they didn't begin with me. And so, I remember just, kind of, be—we were on a long road trip. And it was the beginning of a road trip. My cousins were in the minivan. My mom, my dad, in the front seat. And I just go, "Dad!"

And he's like, "Yeah?"

And I'm like, "Did you ever have sex with someone besides—before Mom?" And I swear to you, no one said anything. It just—we were—we just drove in silence until there—the next rest stop. And then we could all talk again. Like, it was that weird. And so, I learned early on that, like, there was something that I wasn't—that I was—kept—being kept from. There was some world that I didn't get to know about that sounded like so good! 'Cause people are talking about it. Like what are they hiding? And then, as soon as I was able to have sex and my friends were starting to have sex, I was—it turned into a real fear of it. That I was gonna be bad at it. That I—just—I just was—as fascinated as I was by it, I was terrified of it.

And I think those go hand-in-hand. And it continues to be that, for me.

I mean, my special really talks about the difference between being someone who drinks and someone who doesn't, when you have sex. And I think a lot of younger—I think a lot of people have sex because they're able to get drunk enough to do it. But I don't drink anymore, and so I'm kind of exploring having to have sex again. I feel like I'm a child—like a pre-teen again—of, like, how do you even do this?! So, I'm constantly reexamining that, like, curiosity and the feeling that I'm kind of left out from it.

00:08:59 Jesse Host

Did you have the same fear and discomfort around romance that you had around sex, as a—like a—I was gonna say kid, but more like an adolescent? Like a teenager.

00:09:11 Nikki Guest

I think that is what I'm more scared of, now. The idea—I used to yearn for that, as a kid. I used to—romantic comedies, I am—I'm a sucker for all of them. *You've Got Mail* is my favorite movie. I love romance. I've never been in a relationship in which it has been shown to me in any way. I choose people that have no interest in being romantic with me. So, there is some kind of—I think that's my real fear, now, is of sex, intimacy, but romance—I just—I have a pretty—I have pretty bad self-esteem, as most comedians do. I just tend to admit it and talk about it a little bit more, 'cause I don't like it. And it's hard for me to convince myself that someone, like—the idea of romance is like, "R-really? Me? Why me?" Like, I just feel like—whenever someone's, like, attracted to me sexually, I even question that. I'm just like—I just feel like I'm too goofy for that.

So, I just feel like—I really do feel like a clown, most times. Of like, why would you wanna [censored]—or, you know—can I say the f-word on here? I'm so sorry. Why would you wanna have sex with a clown?

00:10:13 Jesse Host

I mean, you already did. [Laughs.]

00:10:15 Nikki Guest

I did. I really. So, you can is the answer. May you? Different answer. I won't again.

00:10:20 Jesse Host

[Laughing.] We will have bleeped it out.

00:10:22 Nikki Guest

Okay, well I won't again, 'cause I'm trying to be better about cussing. But yes. I feel—I feel like a preteen clown, most of the time.

[Jesse laughs.]

I really do. I feel like, just, awkward, middle schooler, like, brace-face and—so, now I've—I'm cool! I'm in the cool kids... like, I'm finally popular. I'm at the popular lunch table, but I didn't get there the way I wish I would have. Which is, like, just by being attractive enough that people like you. I really—I mean, that's what my whole next special is about, is, like—you know. You hear it in that clip. It's just feeling like, "Man, things would be a lot easier if I was a lot prettier." And I resent it. And I know I'm pretty, but, like, I still struggle with it.

00:11:12 Jesse Host

I mean, you went into the field where [chuckles]—I mean, if you're gonna go into the entertainment industry—maybe radio is an even better example, but comedy—standup comedy is pretty much the one where you can go into it being moderately good looking. And

00:11:36 Nikki Guest you get up on a standup comedy stage, you're the—you're the best-looking person anybody's seen all night, you know?  
Yes. I—that was intentional. I mean, I don't think it was intentional, but like I say in—I'm a comedy nine. But, like, take me out of comedy and I'm—you know, I'm clinging to a midrange seven most days. And that's fine, it just is what it is. But yes, I tend to get more attention for being an attractive—"Oh, you're one of—you're attractive for a comedian!"

And I'm like, "No kidding. That's—I chose this for—" Like, I needed to *[laughing]* I needed to pick something where I'd stand out. And, yeah. And I'm not kidding you, Jesse, as soon as I could, I—as soon as I started aging—which you start aging—I've been aging forever, obviously, but like as soon as I started feeling aging, I was like—I couldn't have sprinted quicker to a radio show and building my broadcasting skills.

*[Jesse laughs.]* Because I know where it's going, as a woman. My face is falling. And as much as we love our Frances McDormands and our Meryl Streeps and then after that we run out of examples, 'cause people—like, Hollywood does hate older women and you can't convince me otherwise. There are exceptions, always. It's just not a good show—Hollywood's not a good place to be, as a woman. And that's why I do radio and standup. It's the only place where you're allowed to kind of age. But not even!

00:12:51 Jesse Host One of the things about standup comedy is that when you are a standup comedy performer, the feedback loop is, like, very clear and direct.

*[Nikki agrees.]*

It's very easy to distinguish between people laughing at your joke and people not laughing at your joke. And you started standup comedy pretty young. And I wonder if that was part of the appeal, for you—that here was a place where at least—even if you, you know—most people aren't especially great when they start standup comedy, but even if you're not especially great, you can at least figure out what you can do *[chuckling]* that people definitely like. And you can tell, because they told you by laughing at it.

00:13:38 Nikki Guest Yes. It's that immediate response, that, "These people like me. I didn't have to be—I didn't—" I mean, my sense of humor grew out of the fact that I had a raging eating disorder when I went to school, my freshman year, and I had no friends. And no one wanted to be friends with me 'cause I looked so sick. And I just developed by—I didn't even mean to, but I just became really funny, 'cause I was like, "I gotta—I gotta create a diversion from people thinking I need help." Because I wanted to, like, be in my disease. I didn't want help. I didn't wanna make everyone worried about me. So, I just became really funny and that's what led me to standup.

'Cause people said, "You got—you should do standup. You're funny." And then as soon as I tried standup, that—you're talk—the exact thing you're talking about: the validation, the laughter, the "we like you"—I felt it wash over me immediately. I knew exactly what I wanted to do the rest of my life. It was like—it was like a drug. And it continues to be like a drug. I mean, I don't know that standup is

all—has been all that—it’s given me so many riches in life, but it’s also caused me a lot of pain, because I have become obsessed with it and, until this quarantine, I needed to do it every single night. And if I didn’t, I felt some sort of deficiency. I felt less than.

Because it was also the first time—and I had been searching for—to be something—to be special at something. I was smart, but I wasn’t the smartest. I was good at swimming. I wasn’t the best. I just was always so freaking average. And then the first time I did standup, I was good! Like, I just had a knack for it. And it was undoubtedly, like, what I should be doing. Like, everything—it was the first time something clicked, and I was like, “Okay, yes, I’m finally good at something. I finally am special in some way.” And I think that that’s what a lot of standups are seeking. Is, like, they just didn’t feel special growing up and they finally do. And now, I’m addicted to it. Like, completely addicted to the—to the spotlight. And I realize that it’s empty. And a lot of times in fulfilling in beautiful ways, but it’s still something that isn’t real. You know? It’s not real love, the cheers from a crowd. Or the laughter. Its’ not, like, some—that’s—that didn’t save me during this—my fans didn’t save me during the quarantine. I had to go back home with my parents.

Like, it’s not real love. So, I’m realizing that it’s kind of empty. And especially having to be away from it, I’m like, “Okay, I gotta find something new.”

00:16:08    Jesse            Host

A working comic’s, you know—a big part of a working comic’s life—most working comics—is set, set, set, set, sets. Like, what sets have you got? How many sets have you got, tonight? How many sets have you got, this week?

*[Nikki agrees.]*

00:16:35    Nikki                Guest

How much stage time do you have, this week? And that is not a possibility for anybody, right now.

No, it’s—I’m thinking the same thing. I have more of a handle over it now, and I’ve been doing it so long and have—I’ve gotten burnout from doing it, so many times. In terms of, like, just repetition: set, set, set, set, set. And then I just show up at a club crying, ‘cause I’m so tired and I don’t even know what to say. And I’ve had those—I always, like, overdose. And I need, like, intervention and I was about to hit one right before this quarantine. But I’m seeing comics who haven’t been through it before and are really addicted to it kind of spiraling out. And I worry about them, because these are really lonely men who are not in touch with their feelings and have no intention to become in touch with their feelings. And they don’t realize that the hours—

These guys that used to do, you know, seven hour sets back in the day—like, Chappell would go on stage and people will be like, “He did seven hours!” Or Dane Cook would do, like, four hours at The Comedy Store! I never was that impressed by that, to be honest with you. I’ve always thought that was kind of sad. And I know Dane well, and he’d probably admit it too—you just don’t wanna get offstage ‘cause you don’t wanna feel your feelings. You don’t wanna be back in your life. It’s numbing. And, for me, it’s totally a drug. And so much so that I’ve seen it parallel other things I’ve been

addicted to, in my life. Like, I—towards—right before the quarantine, I was getting onstage. And I would say for the past three years, I've gone onstage every single night at least. You know, 'cause if you add up the multiple sets I do—I just never take a night off. And it got to the point where I would get offstage and someone would go, "How was that?"

And it would be—I was just 30 seconds ago onstage, and I'd—and they're in the other room, so they don't know. And I'd say, "I don't know!" I couldn't even tell you. I wasn't even—the high wouldn't even last to the next room. And it used to be the high would last weeks, 'cause you only get on stage once every two weeks at the open mic. And now, it wouldn't last after I hung up the mic. Like, it was only in the moment that it would feel good. And it was starting to feel, like, not even good then. I could be—I could be onstage and thinking about something totally different. So, like, it kind of got away from me. Even though it was still something I was doing every night. This has allowed me a chance to reflect and be like, "What do I love about it and what do I want to do when I go back onstage?" Have you had any insight, in that reflection?

00:18:52 Jesse Host  
00:18:56 Nikki Guest

The biggest insight I've had is I don't really miss it, to be honest with you. I've really gotten my fill from doing radio and from doing podcast. Like, I feel like I've gotten what I need to out of my system, in terms of being creative. And I'm spreading the message I want to spread. There's—I'm still getting to exercise my ability to joke, right? And to perform a set by doing things like *Bill Maher* or going on *Conan*. Like, there are outlets for me to do organized comedy that isn't just, you know, stream-of-consciousness radio or podcasting.

But standup itself, I—I don't miss it. And I think, to be honest with you Jesse, I think a part of the reason I am not dying to do standup is 'cause no one else is doing it. And as soon as the gates open again and we are able to do it, I'll be back at it, whether I want to or not. Because the compulsion to do standup, for me, is a compulsion to not fall behind, to not be eclipsed. There's only room for so many. You gotta stay good. The reason I'm good is 'cause I've just worked my tail off, and I'm so scared of—you know, I go out every night and do a set, because I think about, "Okay, if I'm not doing this set, someone else is doing that set and they're gonna get better and I'm not."

And [*chuckling*] right now, I'm, like, fine with it 'cause no—everyone's bad right now. Like, I saw someone tweet, recently, like, "We're all gonna have to learn how to do standup again." And I'm like, yeah! This is—it is a muscle. It is a—yes, you'll have muscle memory, but we're all gonna be starting from scratch again, and it's kind of delightful. If I was, like, you know—holed up with broken legs or something and I couldn't do standup, I would be having a much worse time than the fact that no one can do it.

00:20:39 Jesse Host

We'll continue my conversation with Nikki Glaser after a quick break. In just a minute, we'll talk about her work at comedy roasts, including maybe the most savage joke she has ever told, in public. It's *Bullseye*, from [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) and NPR.

00:20:54 Promo Promo

**Music:** Synth-forward, chiming music.

**Speaker:** There's more than one science story out there. If you've ever wondered, "Hummingbird tongues, how do they work?" "Was the movie, *Twister*, scientifically accurate?" Or "What moons are the best moons?" Listen and subscribe to *Short Wave*, NPR's daily science podcast.

*[Music ends.]*

00:21:14 Promo Promo

**Music:** Intense, sci-fi music.

**Narrator:** If you wanna make end's meet in a hip town—the kind with great coffee, lots of dog parts, you're gonna need a side-hustle. In Brooklyn, maybe you drive ride-share. In Fairhaven, it's more like... well, it's more like slaying psychic beasts with your custom-balanced throwing knives.

*[Sounds of chatter in the background.]*

**Speaker 1:** H-hey, are you from Hunter?

**Speaker 2:** Uh, I guess so. Hold on, I have to ask you some stuff. Are you hurt?

**Speaker 1:** N-no.

**Speaker 2:** Do you feel yourself developing strange powers?

**Speaker 1:** I mean, I saw a ghost, once.

**Speaker 2:** Okay, I'm gonna put down no.

**Speaker 1:** Okay.

**Speaker 2:** So, you're having some sort of monster issue.

00:21:54 Promo Promo

**Speaker 1:** Oh, um, it's like a pod? I guess? Um, here it is.

*[The sound of the pod being thumped onto a table.]*

**Speaker 1:** Is—is that what you would call it? Like—like a poood?

**Speaker 2:** Yeah, pod works.

*[Crackling, rustling noises.]*

**Speaker 1:** *[Disgusted.]* Oh, it's opening!

*[Music fades in. Sounds of chaos—grunting, squelching, and squealing as Morgan deals with the pod.]*

**Narrator:** Morgan leaps back and positions the metal spear she's been carrying on her back. She points it towards the bug, which swipes the spear away just as an electrical bolt fires from the tip. It hits the gate to a petting zoo, and a bunch of baby goats come streaming out.

*[The sound of many bleating goats.]*



**Speaker 1:** Can we just take a moment to appreciate how cute this is?

**Speaker 2:** It's great. I hope someone's filming it.

**Speaker 1:** Oh my god, I just love baby goats.

**Narrator:** *Bubble*—the sci-fi comedy from MaixmumFun.org. Just open your podcast app and search for *Bubble*.

*[Music ends.]*

00:22:36 Jesse Host It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. My guest, Nikki Glaser, is a standup comic and podcast host. Her latest standup special, *Bangin'*, is streaming now, on Netflix.

You mentioned, briefly, that some time ago you quit drinking. Why did you quit drinking?

00:22:55 Nikki Guest I really just saw everyone's career who I wanted, and who were the most successful, driven people. And I just saw that they, just, kind of all had a commonality of being sober from alcohol, at least. I just started, like—I don't know. I think it was... it was—or they just, at least, didn't have a problem with it. They weren't getting drunk every night. And then all the comedians I was getting drunk with every night, they just seemed like—nothing ever really grew for them. Like, it just—I just noticed a pattern from my friends. And this was when I was 27 and I was also just drinking every night because you can. You're at a bar and you get free drinks and you're broke, so you just wanna drink the pain away of, like, just being broke. You know? It just—it turned into a problem for me. I wasn't doing anything belligerent. I wasn't putting my life at risk. But I just—oh, you know what it was? It was really, like, the hangover. I think if I still could get drunk without suffering a hangover, I probably would, and my life would be way worse than it is now.

*[Jesse laughs.]*

But the hangover was a real thing that I had to quit, because I just had a come to Jesus moment. I had a really bad hangover, one morning, and I just was like, "I feel like I'm dying. Like, this is the worst I've ever felt in my life." And no one feels sorry for me, you know. It's this—you did it to yourself kind of thing. Like, *[mocking]* "Oh, you're hungover? Like, screw you!" Like, no one cares—the best part about being sick is being babied and nurtured. It's just—being hungover, you get none of that. There's just—it just was—there was no good I could see from it. So, I read a book that—and then I stopped from—after I read a book. And then I was—I was done with it. And then, you know, my addictions switched to, like, a million different things that I still struggle with. But nothing that is as disabling, in the short term, as alcohol. I think I dodged a bullet, with that one.

00:24:47 Jesse Host Did stopping drinking give you perspective on the role that drinking had played, in your life, when you were drinking?

00:24:56 Nikki Guest Yes. Especially when it comes to sex and dating. Like, I didn't know—when I quit drinking—that I would not be hooking up anymore. *[Laughs.]* Like, it was the only reason I was able—or—able to be close to anyone or let someone in or, like, be that

intimate was that I was inebriated. Like, it helped me get to that point. So, when I quit drinking, I just—I didn't see that was gonna be a fallout of it. And then all of the sudden I was like, "I haven't even, like, made out with someone in a really long time!" And that used to be, like, a thing I would do. And I was like, "Oh yeah! It's 'cause you haven't been drunk!" And so, that was the biggest, glaring thing that I noticed.

And then the other thing was just—I just—if you look at a chart of, like, my career and my life, it just—everything started going up from there. I was just able to function better and focus more. It just—it was the best decision I made, but that doesn't mean that I am addiction-free. I'm, like, someone who really struggles with a lot of stuff. But drinking was just one that, you know—in my—with examples throughout my family, I could just see where it was going. I, like, was starting to remind myself of certain family members that their behavior really disturbed me, as a child. And I was like, "Oh, wait, I sound like that when I'm drunk." You know, you see enough pictures of yourself and all this—enough footage that—it just, bottom line, it was getting in the way of my career. And I just—that always has come first for me.

00:26:23 Jesse Host  
00:26:27 Nikki Guest

Do you feel proud of how funny you are?

Uuuuum... nooo. Yeah?! I mean, yes. There are days where I'm like, "Yes, I am so funny! I am, like, one of the best." I, like, truly believe it. I feel it. You can't convince me otherwise. And then there are days—and it really is day by day. It's like—a lot of days, recently, with the quarantine and me not getting the validation I so desperately desire, I've had this—like, I got asked to do *Bill Maher*, last week. On Wednesday, they called me to do Thursday's show—like, to tape it on Thursday. And I was like, "Did they know that I'm not Iliza Shlesinger? Like—do they know that they got the right person?"

*[Jesse laughs.]*

I really did think there was a lapse of judgement! 'Cause why would I—this—I just think of myself as, like, kind of a dumb sex comic—why am I gonna be on this show with Al Gore? Like, it made me—as much as I should have been like, "Wow! This is such a cool opportunity! I can't believe the honor!" I just felt like I had tricked someone or there had been some kind of mistake. And I'm still having trouble thinking that it wasn't—it wasn't an error on some producer's part, to book me. It's hard! It's hard for me. It's daily. It goes from thinking I'm the best to thinking I'm a fraud.

00:27:45 Jesse Host

Before we go, I wanna talk to you a little bit about performing in roasts, which has been an extraordinarily successful part of your career. The roasts, as they exist now—I mean, there are, I think at this point, a few competing roast-battle television projects and stage shows—but generally speaking, we're talking about the roasts that happen on Comedy Central, in which... B+, A- list celebrities are roasted by a series of very skilled joke comics. Sometimes roast specialist comics, but mostly comics who are great at jokes. And they can be really, really funny. It's also a very odd thing. And I think I was most struck by that because I saw you tell an anecdote about doing the roast of Martha Stewart. And I don't think I'm gonna

00:28:46 Nikki Guest  
stun anyone when I say that you had not previously socialized much, with Martha Stewart.  
Right, it was the—it was the roast of Rob Lowe and she was—she was one of the people on the dais, yes.  
*[Jesse affirms.]*

00:28:54 Jesse Host  
And I—no, I had never met her before.  
And you met her, backstage, and kind of—in meeting her—had to decide what material you were comfortable with doing, seconds later onstage.  
*[Nikki affirms.]*

Or, at least, minutes later. And I thought, like, what a bizarre thing to try and decide what kind of jokes to do about somebody in this particular context, where you are allowed to be mean, but also you remain a human being. And, *[laughs]* and, like, there was a time when the—when the whole idea of it was, “Look, at the end of the day, I really love you because you’re my actual friend from real life.”  
*[Nikki agrees with a laugh.]*

00:29:43 Nikki Guest  
And you could always go back to that deep knowledge of what was appropriate, because you had a real, deep relationship.  
Yes! And here I am—she doesn’t know me from—she has no idea who I am. I mean nothing to her. And I’m gonna get up there and just tell her who she is and make fun of the—maybe things in her life that she’s most ashamed of or—you know, and I go hard and I don’t pull back. And I try to go in a different direction than what everyone else is gonna go in. Yeah, I had a—kind of, not an unpleasant exchange with her, but I just expected, like, “Hey, we’re on the same roast!” Like, maybe she would... just be warmer? And I could just tell she’s just maybe—she maybe wasn’t in that moment, she was nervous. Whatever it was, I just didn’t get a good vibe from her. So, I was like, “Oh! Okay. I’ll go a little harder than I normally would. I feel like I’m more justified. The joke I wrote about her being a cold mother is probably true, based on what I’m experiencing backstage, right now. So, I’m gonna do that joke, as opposed to not do it.”  
*[Jesse laughs.]*

But, I mean, it is—like, you hit the nail on the head. It is weird. It is weird, because you meet all of these people at this, like, kind of—you know, half *[censored]* cocktail party beforehand, that they throw you all together and they’re filming it. And they’re filming it and they’re filming you guys interacting. It’s so awkward. And then you go out there and you have these jokes that you’ve been working on, so I know what I’m gonna say. And it’s—it’s a whole different beast, saying it in front of them. And then the commercial break? When it’s awkward again? And everyone’s just onstage, not—and there’s no, you know, assistants up there. There’s no one talking to the stars. Like, makeup people aren’t even onstage. You’re just sitting next to the people you just said the meanest thing about, and you don’t even know them! I mean, it’s so weird.

00:31:27	Jesse	Host	If it's true, does that make it okay?
00:31:31	Nikki	Guest	Uh, yes. I mean, I—unless it's just, like, making fun of—you know, I was—Caitlyn Jenner was on the last roast that I did, and I had jokes about the car accident that she was in, because I was told that, you know, nothing was off limits. And so, I had a joke where I said—I go, "Caitlyn Jenner, what a beautiful woman... you hit with your car, five years ago." Like, I said something like that. And I didn't do the joke, because I found out right before the show, like—the morning of the show, they were like, "If there's a joke about someone—like, her car accident, she'll walk offstage." And I was like, "Oh, okay. Then I won't do those jokes. You guys should have told me sooner."
			It's never my intent to, like, make anyone upset—even if the joke is true. Like, if it's actually gonna trigger them in that way. But if it's something like—I don't know. I just—I feel like if you sign up for a roast, you just sign away any kind of right you have to be like, "That hurts!" You just don't have it. And I do the same thing, you know. All bets are off for me. Nothing's over—off-limits for me, and I've been <u>really</u> hurt before, by jokes. Like <u>really</u> hurt. And I still don't begrudge those comedians from making those jokes. I do, you know, when Bruce Willis is saying a joke that is just scathing about the way that you look, you kind of go, "Well, Bruce Willis didn't write that. What—what comedy writer in that back room was looking at my face and studied it long enough to come up with the fact that I look like Owen Wilson?"
			Like, it's—you start thinking, like, "How dare that writer?" But I never—I never get mad at anyone about the jokes. Like, I can't. And I hope that they afford me the same, you know, leniency when it comes to, like—I don't feel like a bad person when I do these. Even though, man, I have to tap into that side of myself.
00:33:22	Jesse	Host	I wanna play a joke from the time that you were on the dais for the roast of Rob Lowe.
00:33:30	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:33:32	Clip	Clip	<b>Nikki:</b> God, I had such a crush on you when I was a little girl. If only I'd known that's when I had my best shot.
			<i>[The audience laughs.]</i>
00:33:38	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:33:40	Jesse	Host	That is, uh, one of the most intense jokes I've ever seen <i>[laughs]</i> onstage.
00:33:47	Nikki	Guest	<i>[Cackles.]</i> Yeah, it's really twisted!
			<i>[They laugh.]</i>
			Well, you know, um. I don't know how that one came about. I mean, it—I guess it came about from the fact that, like, this guy is, like, such a heartthrob. And although that wasn't true to me—that I didn't have a crush on him—he's someone that I would have had a crush on as a 13-year-old girl, and it—you know, when I was—when I was underage, I dreamed of, like, being with Dave Mathews. Now, if that dream would have taken place, that would have been statutory. You know? So, I think it just stemmed from me thinking about, like—I dreamed of this guy back then, oh! This also fits in with the fact that

he had a sex tape with a girl that was really young. You know, like, the—it all just lined up. And yeah, it's uncomfortable. But that one, to me, didn't even—it would not even cross my mind to not go there. Like, didn't—no second guessing that one, at all. I just—I don't—I never think about these things until later on. And then I go, "Yikes! What did—who made you think you could say that?!" Like, that one was, like—I would say in a level of difficulty or a level of going, like, "Ugh!" that one was, like, zero for me. I wouldn't have even batted an eye.

00:35:01 Jesse Host

What is amazing to me about that joke—I mean, it's a great joke, you know. But so is you saying, you know, Jeffery Ross's face has a dad bod, or whatever.

*[Nikki agrees with a laugh.]*

Like, that's also a really—like that's a similarly funny—like, if it was just purely about joke, that's similarly funny. I mean, I think the thing that makes it devastating is that it is a reminder of something that Rob Lowe did, in real life, that was deeply immoral. And a horrible... act. And maybe—I mean, he was a young man. We could probably say a horrible mistake, but nonetheless, like, something really bad. Like, way worse than Martha Stewart—

00:35:52 Crosstalk Crosstalk

**Nikki:** Being an unloving mother.

**Jesse:** Uh, manipulating stocks.

**Nikki:** Yes!

**Jesse:** *[Laughing.]* Or being in a—you know, although that's also bad. But—

00:35:59 Nikki Guest

Sure! No, you're absolutely right. Like—and I—and I think it's my job to call out, especially men who have been gross, sexually, in any way. And I forget the details of the Rob Lowe thing, truly, but like—you know, I remember—

00:36:15 Jesse Host

He was a—he—when he was a young man, when he was in his early 20s, there was a sex tape of him having sex with a 16-year-old girl.

*[Nikki makes an "oof" sound.]*

00:36:28 Nikki Guest

Was basically the specifics of it. Yeah. Yeah. I mean, there—yeah. That makes me super uncomfortable and the fact that I went there—but the thing is, I don't wanna let people off the hook for anything. I don't—I didn't like when Payton Manning was on the roast of—I believe it was Rob Lowe—and they told us we couldn't make fun of any sexual allegations against him. That was his, like, caveat for doing it. Which—he hasn't been charged with anything, I understood it. You know. I understood, like—but the rumors were there, and I just didn't really care. And so, I wrote a joke about it and I did it and I knew it wouldn't air. There's no chance Comedy Central would air it. I knew Comedy Central would be upset with me about it, in the moment. But I said it! I think I made some joke about him doing something gross and then I was like, "The University of Tennessee paid me 16 million dollars not to say—" I made some joke about a payout he gave someone. I forget what it was.

But I made a very cutting joke about his allegations. And I felt like, “Screw you! You don’t get to be—you don’t get to misbehave like that and then say it’s off limits.” It’s like, well this did happen, and a woman did lose her life—the reason I didn’t wanna do that is ‘cause there was a—I mean, there was a victim in the Rob Lowe one too. I mean, I don’t know. I have no rules for myself. It’s—like, I do joke by joke. But I did—I do have a heart. And I don’t want to bring up things that are gonna trigger people or that are, like—there are other victims involved. Like, but the car crash one I felt bad, ‘cause it was a joke, like, involving the woman who died and, like, her family didn’t sign up to hear that. And so, I was like, “Okay, I understand. Taking that joke out.”

But I don’t let these guys off the hook very often. I just—I can’t. And I’m scared not to, but—especially on these roasts. Oh, come on. You’re gonna get it. You gonna—Alec Baldwin, I’m gonna make fun of you for being a short-tempered a-hole. You know? Like, it’s—you can’t avoid that. We’re gonna call it out. And so, I do. And I hope that if I do anything illegal and do a roast someday, people will call me out for it.

00:38:39	Jesse	Host	Well, Nikki Glaser, I so enjoyed your special. And I’m so glad that you could come back on the show. And I hope we’ll talk to you again, sometime.
00:38:48	Nikki	Guest	Thank you so much, Jesse. I loved it.
00:38:51	Jesse	Host	Nikki Glaser. Her special, <i>Bangin’</i> , is extremely funny. She also hosts her own podcast, which you should check out. It’s called <i>You Up with Nikki Glaser</i> . You can download it with your favorite podcatcher.
00:39:03	Music	Music	Relaxing music.
00:39:06	Jesse	Host	That’s the end of another episode of <i>Bullseye</i> . <i>Bullseye</i> is produced at the homes of me and the staff of MaximumFun, in and around Los Angeles, California—where my colleague, Jesus, captured—in his house—a shiny Pokémon! Now, a shiny Pokémon—my notes indicate—is a lot like a regular Pokémon, but in rare, different colors. This particular Pokémon was yellow instead of brown. So, congratulations to Jesus. Hopefully he won’t get a big head and quit his job. We’re all on a journey.

The show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our producer is Kevin Ferguson. Jesus Ambrosio is our shiny associate producer. We get help from Casey O’Brien and Jordan Kawling. 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.

We’re also on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Just for *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn*. You can keep up with the show there.

00:40:16	Promo	Promo	And I think that’s about it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature sign off. <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.
----------	-------	-------	---

*[Music fades out.]*