

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.
00:00:12	Music	Transition	<i>[Music fades out.]</i> “Huddle Formation” from the album <i>Thunder, Lightning, Strike</i> by The Go! Team.
00:00:19	Jesse Thorn	Host	It’s <i>Bullseye</i> . I’m Jesse Thorn. Carrie Coon, the actor, is said to exude a Midwestern pragmatism. At least, that’s how one <i>New Yorker</i> article described her. I guess you can say it’s in the way she carries herself. As a performer, she’s confident—never timid. Usually warm, not always. You can see it in some of her most iconic roles. As Nora, in <i>The Leftovers</i> , she’s angry and kind of tightly wound, traumatized by the loss of her family. On season three of <i>Fargo</i> , where she played Police Chief Gloria Burgle: brave in the face of danger but also baffled at humanity’s capacity to be so violent and cruel. She’s starring in the new film <i>The Nest</i> . <i>The Nest</i> was directed by Sean Durkin, who previously made the acclaimed film <i>Martha Marcy May Marlene</i> . In <i>The Nest</i> , Carrie plays Allison. Allison is married to Rory, played by Jude Law. Together, they and their two kids move from upstate New York to an estate outside London, where Rory grew up. Indirectly, the move causes their marriage to crumble. I say “indirectly” because—as you see in the film—the new home doesn’t create any new issues for the couple. It just brings up their existing problems. Before we get into the interview—which is conducted by the wonderful Linda Holmes from NPR’s <i>Pop Culture Happy Hour</i> —let’s listen to a little bit from the film. In this clip, Allison has just learned that her husband has received the job offer that will take the family to the UK.
00:01:46	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:01:47	Clip	Clip	Allison (<i>The Nest</i>): This would be our fourth move in ten years. Rory: <i>[Softly.]</i> Don’t look backwards. Look forwards. This is a fresh start. Allison: This <u>was</u> our fresh start. This was our permanent move, remember? Rory: Yeah, well. Things don’t always work out as planned. Allison: <i>[Interrupting.]</i> Yeah, things never work out the way we plan. <i>[Sounds of shuffling.]</i> Rory: I moved back here for you, to be near your family. <i>[Beat.]</i> It’s not working for me. I... I don’t know what else to tell you. <i>[Beat.]</i> Allison: Oh, for <i>[censored]</i> sake, Rory.

00:02:18	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:02:19	Linda Holmes	Host	Carrie Coon! Welcome to <i>Bullseye</i> .
00:02:21	Carrie Coon	Guest	Thank you so much for having me.
00:02:23	Linda	Host	This is a—
00:02:24	Carrie	Guest	I'm such an NPR nerd.
00:02:25	Linda	Host	Oh! Good! Well, perfect. That's a—that is the perfect place to start. You know, listening to that clip, it's a very tense marriage.
00:02:32	Carrie	Guest	Mm. Aren't they all, right now?
			<i>[They laugh.]</i>
00:02:36	Linda	Host	Yeah, that's right, these people are sort of cooped up together. They're relocating to London, but they're not even—they're, yeah, that's true. They're not even stuck in the pandemic yet. They're just very, very tense. What did you like about that role and that kind of marriage as a thing to play with?
00:02:52	Carrie	Guest	Oddly, the marriage felt—to me—egalitarian in a way that marriage movies don't always feel. And it was also motivated by factors that didn't include catastrophic events like a divorce or the death of a child or infidelity. It was really about marriage and it was about the unwritten rules of a marriage, the tacit agreements we make in a marriage, about renegotiating a marriage when things aren't working, or walking away from it—you know, that's often what those stories are about. And so, I really loved that it was about those dynamics and I just had never seen anything done quite that way. And it also felt like a true lead in a film. I wasn't the wife who was supporting the husband's story. It was a story about these two people.
			And frankly, I'd—I just don't get invited to those parties very often, either. So, it was flattering to be asked and I—it was really specific, and it felt very real to me. And it reminded me a little bit of the marriages I had grown up around. Not the tension! <i>[Laughs.]</i> The egalitarian part.
00:03:51	Linda	Host	Yeah. It's interesting that you mention that, 'cause I think if I were trying to describe to someone kind of what this movie is about, I think that's the only thing I would really—you sort of wanna say, "Well, it's about this marriage. It's about this family where they move and then they have to just kind of figure out what comes next." And as you say, it doesn't really have that big plot incident. And it is, in that way, I think an unusual structure.
			<i>[Carrie agrees.]</i>
			Why do you think there aren't more scripts that get made that are like that?
00:04:21	Carrie	Guest	Well, I think often smart scripts don't get made. And we had the benefit of, you know—Sean had such a wonderful debut with <i>Martha Marcy May Marlene</i> and so people were hungry for his second feature. And so, we were able to get the funding we needed to make it. But often, scripts that are smart and specific don't make it into production or they don't get distributed. So, it's not that I don't occasionally read them. It's just they never get made.

[Linda agrees.]

00:04:50 Linda Host Which is too bad.
It's surprising to me to hear you say—I mean, maybe it shouldn't be surprising, but it surprises me to hear you say that you don't necessarily get a lot of opportunities to play leads, 'cause I feel like—as somebody who follows and writes about television—I would say, "Oh, you know, she's one of the sort of most interesting and lauded actresses working in television." I'm surprised that those opportunities aren't plentiful.

00:05:14 Carrie Guest Well, you know what's not plentiful is the scripts. So, there are probably five or six great movies with female leads that get made every year. And now think of the first 12 actresses you can—you know, that you imagine seeing featured in a film. They're not me.

[They laugh.]

So, unless we start making more scripts like that, I don't get the opportunity to play those parts, 'cause I'm sort of at the end of the list *[laughing]* of actors that might—you know, you might ask. Because that's just the reality of the business. They need to get money to make those films and someone's international popularity matters so much. Doesn't matter if you're good casting! *[Laughs.]* It matters if you can get the movie made. So, unfortunately I just don't get that chance very often.

00:05:58 Linda Host Yeah. You know, I was—in preparation for this, I was reading a profile of you, in the *New Yorker*, and it has a subhead that says that you have a certain Midwestern pragmatism.

[Carrie chuckles.]

00:06:22 Carrie Guest I lived in Minnesota for ten years and I'm wondering what you think it means when a *New Yorker* profile says you have a Midwestern pragmatism.
[Laughs.] That's a great question. I think it means—there is something of a... a willingness to be straightforward. My agents always joke that I'm never excited about anything. They—they'll call me with good news, and I'll say, "Yeah, no, I'll get excited when I sign a contract." I'm just very, very practical! And because I understand how this business works and, you know, that way disappointment lies, I think there's a kind of *[laughing]* protective impulse, maybe? Because of course, my people tend to be pretty emotionally reserved. They're very stoic. Our family motto that's a joke is, "We'll handle it." Just sort of whatever is happening we just say, "Ah, we'll handle it." You know, nobody wants to talk about how *[laughing]* or how we got there.

So, I don't know. I'm nice.

[Linda laughs.]

I'm easygoing.

[They laugh.]

00:07:12	Linda	Host	'Cause, I mean, I think in your case it does mean something. As opposed to when—something like “Midwestern” often just means, like, white and polite. Do you know what I mean?
00:07:21	Carrie	Guest	Right, yes. Some sort of cliché. Well, I appreciate that. I'm glad you think there might be some meaning in there for me somewhere.
00:07:26	Linda	Host	<i>[Laughs.]</i> But I mean, I think it means something—not just that in your work it does, but that when they say it, it does. Did you grow up in the Midwest? Are you Midwestern?
00:07:33	Carrie	Guest	I did. I grew up in Ohio. In fact, my entire family is still in my hometown. My parents grew up down the street from each other. I have three grandparents in their nineties and all of my siblings are there, now. In my town. Or outside of it.
00:07:44	Linda	Host	What part of Ohio?
00:07:46	Carrie	Guest	The northeast, outside of Akron in a town called Copley. So, it's—we grew up in a rural area outside of an urban area.
00:07:52	Linda	Host	What kind of a kid were you?
00:07:54	Carrie	Guest	<i>[Laughs.]</i> I have this idea of myself that is apparently not accurate. I imagine this very quiet, observant girl. She's thinking about everything. And my mom would say, “No, no, no. You were so bossy and so loud.” Apparently no one was surprised but me <i>[laughing]</i> that I became an actor. But my sister was adopted from El Salvador and I felt a great responsibility for, you know, her—integrating her into the family and into the world. And so, I was really, I think, very controlling.
00:08:26	Linda	Host	What was the first acting that you did?
00:08:29	Carrie	Guest	There's a beautiful theater in my town—in Akron. The Akron Civic Theatre. It's an atmospheric theater. It's one of those that has the clouds and the stars projected onto the ceiling, in that magical way. And my friend took me to see a play when I was ten. And it was <i>Babes in Toyland</i> . And there were kids my age onstage. And I thought, “What?! How do they—? What!?” So, I came home, and I got our little local paper and I looked up the Weathervane Community Playhouse where, incidentally, my grandfather had done a couple of plays after World War Two. And I asked my mom if I could go on auditions. And she said no <i>[laughing]</i> because there were five kids in my family and my parents worked full time.
			She does not remember this. She says that that is fictional. However, I was interested in it. But I didn't actually act until I got to high school and I played a very small Sister Bertha in the <i>Sound of Music</i> , just way in the background. I'm sure singing all the wrong notes. And then I ended up getting the lead in <i>Our Town</i> my senior year, when I was waiting for soccer practice to start. And I did a—you know, a woeful production of <i>Our Town</i> , at my high school. But I knew it was a good play and I felt my power. I'm a middle child, so I was obviously really hungry for some attention. So, when I had an audience in my thrall, that was it. I was really compelled by that information. But I didn't actually get—go full-on into acting until I went to graduate school, after undergrad. And I got into University of Wisconsin at the very last minute. I was the very last person that they took. Ten actors over three years. And, you know.
00:09:56	Linda	Host	And what's the—what's the path from there to Chicago, right?
00:10:00	Carrie	Guest	Well, my last year of my three-year program, I did <i>'Tis Pity She's a Whore</i> , with a gentleman named David Franks who was running the American Players Theatre out in Spring Green, Wisconsin. Which is an outdoor classical theater and amphitheater. It's about 1,100

seats. And he invited me to join their apprenticeship program that summer. And we also organized a program where we invited casting directors from around the country to come and audition us, to see if we could get more work and agents and things. And I ended up getting an agent in Chicago through that program. And then one of the directors, who I had worked with, gave me my first play in Chicago. So, James Bohnen hired me at Remy Bumpo Theatre and so it just—all the directors I was working with were based out of Chicago.

I'm a Midwesterner. I had just gone to school in Wisconsin. So, it just made sense to transition there since I was getting a foothold. So, I ended up doing—you know, doing a few plays and starting to go out on commercial auditions and eventually got a guest star spot on TV. But then—you know, then *Virginia Woolf* happened, and I didn't stay there very long.

00:11:00	Linda	Host	Talk a little bit about that <i>Virginia Woolf</i> performance, which I know was very huge for you.
00:11:05	Carrie	Guest	It was huge. Well, in Chicago, generally plays are cast about a year in advance. So we all know, as actors, what every theater company is doing. They've all announced their seasons, so you can look at the season and know there are three or four parts that I could get if I'm really lucky. And so, I knew that Honey was one of the only ones in my age range that would be auditioning that season. And I had been into Steppenwolf. Erica Daniels, who was the casting director there at the time, had actually been one of my judges at the URTA auditions. But I really felt connected to Honey and I was really—[sighs] I worked on it in a way I'd never worked on an audition before and [chuckles] I got it! And I really felt very possessive. I felt like it—that—it felt like the right time for me to get that thing. I was ready, you know, I was ready to step up into that space and take ownership of it.
00:11:50	Linda	Host	And that's the show where you met your husband, yes?
00:11:53	Carrie	Guest	Yeees! [Laughs.] Yes, it is. Unexpectedly for both of us, yes.
00:11:56	Linda	Host	Yeees! You are married to the wonderful actor and playwright Tracy Letts. Who—
00:12:00	Carrie	Guest	[Dreamily.] I am. I like him.
00:12:02	Linda	Host	[Laughing.] You know, I think a lot of people like him.

[Carrie laughs.]

If there is anybody out there who is thinking, "I'm not sure if I know who that is," you might know him as Saoirse Ronan's father in *Lady Bird*, a variety of other wonderful things. I have to ask you, 'cause I read about this, did you really get married in a hospital?

00:12:21	Carrie	Guest	We really did. We truly did. We both had a—you know, Tracy went out to LA in his thirties and couldn't get arrested, and so it was interesting. After <i>Virginia Woolf</i> , he actually started to get his first television offers. <i>Homeland</i> was the first job that came his way. So, after <i>Virginia Woolf</i> happened, we were both working a lot. And we were apart a lot. And we had registered to get married and in Illinois I think you have 60 days to get married or else you have to reregister. And we had no time to go back and do all the paperwork again. So, I was filming <i>Gone Girl</i> , and I was coming home on a Friday night and Saturday was our—the expiration date for our
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registration. And he was gonna leave to do *Homeland*, like, the following week or something crazy.

So I said, “We have to go Saturday and get married.” And so, I got in at about 1 a.m. and he opened the door and he just looked terrible and he said, “I do not feel well.” And we go to the emergency room. He’s sweating. He goes into surgery and, on Saturday, he has emergency gallbladder surgery. And our registration is dead! That was the last day! But on Sunday, I thought, “Eh.” I brought our rings to the hospital and I said, “Is the chaplain around?” And I was on the phone with my mom in Tracy’s room and I brought this little sundress that I cast off on a chair. And there’s a knock on the door and this woman pokes her head in. She says, “I’m Robin! I’m a Lutheran!”

We’re like, “Okay!” So, I said, “Mom! I gotta go! I’m getting married.” So, I was in Tracy’s T-shirt and he was high as a kite. You know. He had—he’s sober 27 years, so he hadn’t had *[laughing]* any drugs in his body for a really long time. So, we went through this improvised, very slow *[chuckling]* ceremony in our room. Tracy, off the shoulder, you know, hospital gown. We took some pictures of our grippy socks and our hands, ‘cause the rest of them were really terrible. And then she brought us some grape juice and some challah bread and then Tracy went to sleep. So. Yeah. *[Chuckling.]* It was great.

00:14:08	Linda	Host	Wow! How do you—how do you feel about that being your wedding story?
00:14:11	Carrie	Guest	I feel great. I never—you know, my parents had a modest, Midwestern—you know, modest wedding. My parents are not materialistic, so I never dreamt of some big production and I never had any pressure to have one. And, at that point in my life, I had done a lot of dressing up in some very magnificent clothing. So, I wasn’t hungry for any, you know, day that was my own. I recognize that for some women, it’s—it really is the most important and special day, and they don’t get that kind of pageantry in their lives. But I didn’t need any more pageantry in my life. So, I never planned to have a big wedding. We thought about maybe getting our families together for a small backyard party. But, you know, it just never happened because we—once we got married, we were just back on the road again.
00:14:53	Linda	Host	Yeah. It’s interesting. You have probably the best excuse I’ve ever heard for anyone who says, “Why didn’t I get to come to your wedding?”
00:15:00	Carrie	Guest	Yes! But my dad was like, “Oh, you had to drug him to get him to marry you?” My brothers, too. They’re like, “Ohh, okay. That’s the only way he would do it, huh?”
00:15:09	Linda	Host	So, I think <i>Gone Girl</i> is the first thing I remember hearing a lot about you in, was <i>Gone Girl</i> . Which, of course, was David Fincher. That was sort of a significant pivot from doing more theater to doing this film. Right?
00:15:24	Carrie	Guest	Mm-hm. Yeah, it was really easy. <i>[Beat, laughs.]</i> Just kidding! Well, what had happened is I had—I had—we’d just had the Tony Awards. I had booked <i>The Leftovers</i> pilot and I’d already shot the pilot. And I went out to LA and HBO wasn’t sure they were gonna release me to audition for Fincher to actually even be considered for <i>Gone Girl</i> . And then eventually HBO worked it out. And so, I

immediately—in that August, after shooting the pilot—went out and started shooting almost immediately in Cape Girardeau, in Missouri. And then wrapped that in February and started, immediately, on *The Leftovers*. I think I even overlapped a couple of weeks.

So, I came from the theater and then I went to Fincher film school before I—before I got into doing *The Leftovers*. But they came out in the reverse order. So, *Leftovers* started before *Gone Girl*, you know, opened. So for me, it was weird to see my work backwards, ‘cause I thought I got better.

[They laugh.]

But it was great. I mean, Fincher really—I adore him. We got on really well. And I just—I really relate to—his sense of humor is right up my alley. It’s very dry and very dark. And he taught me—he would say, “Look at the monitor. You see what I’m doing? This is why I need you to glide out on your right foot.” And he just taught me a lot about being on camera. ‘Cause I didn’t even know the vocabulary yet.

00:16:37 Jesse Host

Even more with Carrie Coon still to come. Stay with us. It’s *Bullseye*, from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

00:16:45 Music Transition

Bright, chiming music.

00:16:46 Jesse Promo

This message comes from NPR sponsor Headspace.

Life can be stressful, but 2020 has challenged even the most difficult times of life. You need stress relief that goes beyond quick fixes. That’s Headspace. Headspace is your daily dose of mindfulness in the form of guided meditations in an easy to use app. Need help falling asleep? Headspace has wind down sessions. Go to Headspace.com/Bullseye for a free month trial with access to Headspace’s full library of meditations for every situation.

[Music fades out.]

00:17:20 Promo Clip

Music: Eerie, unsettling music.

Sidney Madden: Since the 1980s, hip-hop and America’s prisons have grown side-by-side.

Rodney Carmichael: And we’re gonna investigate this connection to see how it lifts us up and holds us down.

Speaker: Hip-hop is talking about what we live. Trying to live the American dream, failing at the American dream—

Sidney: I’m Sidney Madden.

Rodney: I’m Rodney Carmichael. Listen now to the *Louder Than a Riot* podcast, from NPR Music.

Sidney: Where we trace the collision of rhyme and punishment in America.

[Music ends with the sound of sirens and a slamming cell door.]

00:17:50 Promo Clip

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](#). 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.

00:18:36	Jesse	Host	<i>[Same sinister echo effect] Switchblade Sisters!</i> It's <i>Bullseye</i> . I'm Jesse Thorn. Our guest, Carrie Coon, starred in <i>The Leftovers</i> , TV's <i>Fargo</i> , and many more. She's starring alongside Jude Law in the new film <i>The Nest</i> , which is available to rent online now. Her interviewer is our pal Linda Holmes, who's the host of NPR's <i>Pop Culture Happy Hour</i> . Let's get back into it.
00:18:55	Linda	Host	For people who haven't seen <i>The Leftovers</i> —HBO show based on a Tom Perrotta novel. If you haven't seen it, it takes place three years after this global event that they called the Sudden Departure. Two percent of the population has vanished and Nora lives in Mapleton, New York. Not the Midwest! She's the only person in town who's kind of lost her entire immediate family. When you started to explore the character of Nora, she was—in the pilot, she's not—she doesn't seem as central as she becomes later. Is that an accurate—is that an accurate sort of sense of the story?

[Carrie confirms.]

00:19:38	Carrie	Guest	Did you have a sense then that she would eventually <u>be</u> that? Or is that something that became clearer as the three seasons of the show went on? That absolutely became clearer as we went on. I think Tom and Damon became invested in the Nora/Kevin relationship and they recognized that there was something about it that felt really central to the show. And so, it just became a bigger part of the piece. And I didn't expect it to continue to grow to the point where I would get to finish it out in that spectacular fashion. So, I was really flattered, of course. Because I didn't work that much those first four episodes! And then episode six came and that was the first time in my life I'd ever been basically in every frame of something for—you know—a whole shoot. I'd really only done a scene here and there up until
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00:20:23 Linda Host that point. And so, there was a lot of pressure *[laughs]* to deliver that episode. And then, yeah. It kept growing from there. Yeah, one of the things I find so fascinating about that show is that, you know, as I said—it starts off in a situation where it kind of, other than this Sudden Departure—which is a pretty vague “other than”—but other than that, it is a pretty grounded show. Like, you can kind of imagine it being a pretty—a pretty real idea of what the world might look like if this very, very kind of fantastical event happened. But as it goes on, it kind of gets more and more surreal and strange and, to me, kind of cool and interesting.

00:21:10 Carrie Guest Does it change the performance at all, as the show gets kind of more bent? Does it call on any different skills or is it all just Nora is now in a different kind of situation? I think it is Nora in a different situation. You know, the first season’s based on the book and Tom Perrotta was exploring, in his very special way, collective grieving. He wrote that book shortly after 9/11. And so, the first season’s grounded in the book in a way that the rest of the seasons just aren’t. There’s a—there is a lot more humor and it kind of loosens up a little bit. I mean, Tom’s books are very funny, but that’s not what our season one was really like. And so, I always say, when you—when you come back to shoot a season, it feels like putting on a wet bathing suit. Like, I know this is my bathing suit, but it’s really uncomfortable. *[Chuckles.]* So. It always felt a little strange to start and we never—the way Damon was working, we sort of never knew what was going to happen. We didn’t know we were going to Texas or Australia ‘til very close to when it was time to leave.

I usually got just a few days with an episode before we were shooting it. And when you contrast that with somebody like Noah Hawley on *Fargo*, I had—you know—six episodes before we even started the season. So, it was just a really—you just had to accept the unknown and the uncertainty of it. And that was a lot of fun. It was really liberating. And I have to say, Nora Durst did feel like a character who was capable of anything. And so, nothing ever felt uncomfortable to do or out of—or something that she wouldn’t attempt or didn’t feel out of line for her. And it was such a joy as an actor, because it did call on so many parts of me and so often women’s roles in particular, I think, are very narrow in their scope of expression. And so, for me to have Nora Durst be at once, you know, dark and sad but also filled with rage but also funny but also very physical—it was—it was such a challenge and it was so much fun to be—to be pushed in that way and to be asked to do those things.

00:23:04 Linda Host And so, it was really just a fun ride. You know. It’s as fun a ride as it is to watch. And of course, you know, unfortunately it’s feeling more grounded and realistic than ever. *[Chuckles.]* ‘Cause a lot of people have been watching it during the pandemic. You’ve talked so much—you talked so much, when you were discussing, you know, being a young kid who was interested in theater and visited the local theater. You seem like you’re a person who really is kind of still of theater communities. I’m wondering how—I’m wondering what you think theaters need from people right now.

00:23:28	Carrie	Guest	<p>Well. The theater is decimated. And my community is really suffering. There's a lot of just economic hardship right now among actors and people who work in all facets of the business and most of the theater companies are not gonna survive, because we live in a country that doesn't support the arts. So, we rely so much on ticket sales and grants and—you know, the Trump administration, every year they were in charge, tried to diminish the funds for the museums, for the—you know—operas and for public broadcasting and, you know, there have been a few republicans who have managed to keep them from entirely eliminating that funding, but that's changing now too.</p> <p>So, I'm really afraid for my theater community. And right now, you know, people keep asking me sort of, "What do you envision is next?" It's like, there's—right now there's no next. There's too much pain. And, in addition to that, we have these institutional conversations happening about what are the ways that, as liberal organizations, we have failed in the Black Lives Matter movement and—you know, just sort of bringing forward the voices we have a responsibility to make space for. There's room for everybody. But we—you know, it shouldn't be—this shouldn't be a—these resources are not finite. You know. Art is not finite. Love is not finite. There's space. But institutions haven't necessarily made that—made those choices very consciously. So, you know, there's a—there's a bigger struggle going on if we even <u>do</u> get to come back.</p> <p>And of course, I also say, the way arts function, they're a necessary component of any society and they are ultimately gonna tell the history of this moment. And that means that new companies will start, and younger and more vital voices will start to emerge and there probably had to be a big shift like this. And so, something amazing will come out of it. I'm just not the person to say what it's gonna look like or what it will be. But right now, it's just a lot of, like, very real pain and very real... just material lack for people who can't work. And a lot of my friends are—you know, they're gonna be forced out of the business.</p> <p>You know, in Europe, every small town has a theater that's subsidized by the government. And they grow up seeing Chekov and Shakespeare and Shaw and you know, they—the actors that work in Europe are on a salary. And that's all they do. And they don't have to do eight shows a week. They work in rep and so they get to be artists. And in America, there's a sort of shame around saying, "I'm an artist." We have to say, "I'm an artist, but I also—I'm also working on this or that or this podcast. Or I have this other thing going." We're not allowed to claim it. There's a real—I don't know. The attitude toward the arts is getting more and more dire. <i>[Chuckles.]</i> Even though we're great consumers of it! But I don't think people understand what would happen if it was gone.</p>
00:26:17	Linda	Host	<p>Yeah. I do wanna talk a little bit about <i>The Nest</i>. Where was that shot?</p>
00:26:23	Carrie	Guest	<p>We shot the American side up in Toronto for about a week. And then we took a little break and then we went over the pond and we went up outside of Oxfordshire and we shot in a manor house up there that had been in the Churchill and Spencer family for, you know, 400 years. So.</p>

00:26:39 Linda Host It's a nice—it's a nice house.
 00:26:41 Carrie Guest It is! And there are a lot of weddings there. We actually made it look shabby. It doesn't look shabby. It's very cool. And, you know, there's medieval architecture in it and you're shooting a scene and one of the owners will pop through a bookcase to grab their reading glasses. So it's a pretty unusual space.

00:26:56 Linda Host Oh, so they were—they were still there! They were living there.
 00:26:58 Carrie Guest They were! Yeah, they were—they have their sort of apartments. You know. They use the rest of the house for events. And they kind of sequestered themselves in the smaller part of the house. But they were lovely, and they were around and there were horses onset. So, everybody was having a great time just out on the grounds and taking a walk and—it was beautiful. Just beautiful.

00:27:14 Linda Host You're acting with Jude Law in this movie. I just saw him in the HBO series *The Third Day*.

00:27:20 Carrie Guest *[Gasps.]* Yes, I can't wait to watch that!
 00:27:22 Linda Host Yeah! And in both, he's kind of this, like, raggedy husband—if I can put it that way.

[Carrie laughs.]

And I'm always interested in how people feel like that transition from, like, your twenties to your thirties to your forties works, because for him—the thing I remember about him, when he was very young, was just that he was so beautiful. Right? Not that he wasn't also a good actor, but that he was so beautiful. And now, he's kind of playing these, like, grimier... like, grimier dudes. These raggedy husbands. And I'm wondering what do you—how do you think that that path is different for women? 'Cause I know it's different for women.

00:28:02 Carrie Guest Yeah. Yeah. Well, the character parts for women start to dry up when we get most interesting. Because ingénue parts—you might be young and beautiful, but they're not gonna last forever. And if you can't transition out of them, then you're gonna have a very short career. And they're not as much fun to play! You know. There's a lot of naiveté and, you know, moony eyes and it's not very interesting. It's the—it is the kind of, you know, nasty, schlubby husbands and villains that are more fun. Their motivations are more interesting and more complicated, generally. At least, the way they're written. So, I'm not surprised to see Jude trafficking in that territory.

Yeah, for women, I just feel like maybe TV is shifting this conversation a little bit. We've certainly seen very interesting parts for women on television. My own parts included. We see, now, movie stars coming to do television, because that's where the more interesting roles are, because—again—there aren't that many scripts made every year that have interesting, powerful female parts and the same two, three, four women are gonna get those parts. It's interesting that you say that about the parts in television, 'cause I do wanna talk a little bit about *Fargo*. I feel like it's one of those shows that comes back almost for the purpose of giving, like, cool parts to people *[chuckling]* if that makes sense.

[Carrie confirms.]

00:29:00 Linda Host

00:29:16 Carrie Guest Like, it's a real—it's a real actor's show. And it—
00:29:18 Linda Host Yeah! Jean Smart! Come on!
00:29:25 Carrie Guest What was the appeal of *Fargo*, for you? Did I—have I just described
the appeal of *Fargo* [laughing] for you?
Largely. Well, one of the appealing parts was that I met with Noah
and then I—they offered me the job, which [laughing] is not
normally how those parts would go for me. *The Leftovers* I had to
audition for. So, that was one of the first times where somebody
said, "Hey! We would like you to play this part!" So, yes. That was
very enticing. But, in addition to that, the way that Noah is entering
our current political atmosphere and socio-economic atmosphere
obliquely with the stories he's telling outside of time, the way he
gives us distance to process things that are happening in our world,
but with, you know, the sort of cushion of entertainment is, I think,
maybe unparalleled. I think what he does is really astonishing. And
he's very willing to take a chance on a lesser-known actor if he
thinks they're right for the part. It's all about whether he thinks
they're right for the part. And every now and then, he does get just
someone in his mind that he thinks—you know, and he almost
builds a character around them or he just pictures—you know, like
Andrew Bird, right, is in this season.

He's just like, "Yeah! I just thought he'd be good at it." He's never
acted before, but Noah just has an instinct. And he tends to
assemble just casts of people who are—who are there to tell a
story. You know. There's not a lot of prima donna behavior on a
Fargo set. And yes, he was leaning into my Midwestern
pragmatism!

[Linda laughs.]

00:30:50 Linda Host And the legacy of *Fargo*—you know, to have the cop, the lady cop.
So, it's fun to be part of that legacy. I mean, Frances McDormand is
part of that legacy! That's the kind of club I wanna be in!
00:31:00 Carrie Guest Yeah, and you know, you talk about Frances McDormand. What is
it like to take on a role that has at least echoes of a performance
that's really iconic and beloved?
You can't think about it or you won't get out of bed.

[They laugh.]

Well, what's wonderful about a well-written script is that everything
you need is on the page. And Noah Hawley's writing is so specific.
It's really specific. And specific writing is much easier to act than
something that is vague and general. So, when you have specific
writing and then you add onto that a dialect, a cop uniform, a 15-
pound belt, a winter coat, a heavy pair of boots, you're practically
doing it [laughing] without—before you even open your mouth. So—
so, a lot of—I have found that the—as I've gotten older, my process
has become a little bit more outside-in. I think I would have
classified myself as sort of an intellectual actor. You know, a nerdy
actor who liked to read a lot of things. And now that I have a kid and
so much less time, [laughs] I focus a lot more on—you know, how
are—how are the ways I'm being remade, externally, and can I be
present in the moment? Which is basically what my job is, even if I
feel underprepared.

But yeah, you can't think about those performances that came before you, because thinking about a performance isn't active. If you're playing a character, they're just a person and they want something. And your job in a scene is to try to get that thing. So, you know, that stuff's in the back of your mind. But it's really all just decided on the internet.

00:32:21 Linda Host *[They laugh.]*
I feel like a couple different times in this conversation I've asked you sort of what draws you to a part and you've been trying to tell me.

[Carrie chuckles.]

To some degree, you take parts that are *[laughing]* available. Do you know what I mean? Not you, specifically, too—but, like, that actors do in general. And I even remember like—I hear—I remember hearing Paul Rudd say the same thing. Saying, like, people sometimes think that you have, like, infinity roles to pick from and you're picking them just based on some very specific algorithm. Do you think people misunderstand how much acting is, in some ways, like other jobs?

00:32:59 Carrie Guest
Yeah! Except we get rejected more. We interview more and we get rejected more. *[Laughing.]* Otherwise, it's just like other jobs. I'm like, "Oh! You had—you had two job interviews this year? I had 27! And I got none of them!"

[They laugh.]

So, yeah. It's a little bit—it's a little bit different. I love—you always hear stories of, like, families saying to their newly graduated actor, "You know, they're shooting a film up in Cleveland. Why don't you do that one?" *[Laughs.]*

I'm like, "Yeah, oh, that'd be great, if I could just call somebody and get a job." But yeah! It is largely—and that's why you also see actors having to make shrewd decisions about the kind of work they do.

You might see this—your favorite indie actor is suddenly in a big—is in a Marvel movie and you thought, "I didn't think that person would ever do a Marvel movie!" But if that person doesn't do a Marvel movie, then that person is not allowed to do the independent film that they love, because that independent film needs money and that person—that actor has to have a strong enough profile to justify carrying that movie for investors. So we have to make really shrewd decisions about the kind of art we make, sometimes. Until we get to a certain place where, you know, we have infinite resources and... you know, we're Meryl Streep. *[Chuckles.]*

00:34:07 Linda Host
Right. I think there are lot of people who don't necessarily know that that is the way that movies get made. You know, the script can exist, but that nothing happens until you attach a famous person. Often.

00:34:18 Carrie Guest
Yes! That's right. There's so many wonderful scripts that are in a—you know, on a shelf collecting dust because they couldn't get

somebody big enough to sign onto them. It's really sad! There are these beautiful stories that don't get told.

00:34:32 Linda Host When you think about the things that you would most want the opportunity to do, what do those things look like?

00:34:39 Carrie Guest It's so funny. I always—I always think, "Well, I don't know yet because I haven't read it!" I want to be challenged. I want to make scripts about women that look like the women I know. You know. That have the same level of complication as the women in my life. I like to do things that are physical, so I would absolutely do something that was just, "We're gonna go out in the jungle and jump from tree to tree." And I would say, "Yes, I'm gonna do that." So, some of it is just what kind of challenge is it.

You know, I get a lot of scripts about dead children and I'm like, "I did that one already!" I'd like to do something else! But a lot of the women's stories are pretty narrow in their scope. Like I said about, you know, the kinds of things we're allowed to do. So, I don't know. I guess it's—that—this is why you see all these actresses starting production companies. Because then they get to curate the kind of scripts that are gonna get made. Elisabeth Moss is doing a marvelous job picking up some kind of obscure, really interesting, really complicated stories and she has the star power, right now, to get that stuff made. You're gonna see—you know, Rachel Brosnahan is doing the same thing. She's picking properties and it's the only way we have any control over what material we can participate in, out in the world, and create opportunities for other people, too—that aren't necessarily being vetted at the top level.

00:35:51 Linda Host Carrie Coon, thank you so much for coming on *Bullseye*.

00:35:54 Carrie Guest Thank you so much for having me. I'm—I feel that this is a little arrow in my quiver.

00:36:00 Jesse Host Carrie Coon. Her film *The Nest* is available to rent online right now. Go check it out. And when Linda Holmes isn't helping us out, she hosts the great NPR podcast, *Pop Culture Happy Hour*, which is super-fun. She's also a book author. Her latest book is a novel, called *Evvie Drake Starts Over*. It came out last year. It's great. I loved it. I was just thinking about it yesterday, how great it was. Go check that out, too.

00:36:26 Music Transition Bright, brassy music with light vocalizations.

00:36:31 Jesse Host That's the end of another episode of *Bullseye*. *Bullseye* is created from the homes of me and the staff of Maximum Fun, in and around greater Los Angeles, California—where it was briefly colder, so I went and got my sweaters from the garage. Then it was 92 degrees outside.

The show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our producer is Kevin Ferguson. Jesus Ambrosio and Jordan Kauwling are our associate producers. We get help from Casey O'Brien and Kristen Bennett. Our interstitial music is by Dan Wally, also known as DJW. Our theme song is by The Go! Team. Thanks very much to them and to their label, Memphis Industries, for sharing it with us.

If you wanna hear the latest about what we're up to, you can keep up with the show on Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. We post all of our interviews there. And I think that's about it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature signoff.

00:37:23 Promo

Promo

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