

00:00:00	Music	Transition	Gentle, trilling music with a steady drumbeat plays under the dialogue.
00:00:01	Promo	Promo	<b>Speaker:</b> <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of <a href="http://MaximumFun.org">MaximumFun.org</a> and is distributed by NPR.
00:00:12	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. My first guest is Ted Danson. We don’t need to spend a ton of time explaining who that is, because—I mean, because he’s Ted Danson! <i>Cheers, The Good Place, Damages, Curb Your Enthusiasm</i> . He’s one of the most successful TV actors ever. Ted’s newest show is <i>Mr. Mayor</i> . It’s a comedy from the minds of Tina Fey and Robert Carlock, the creators of <i>30 Rock</i> and <i>Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt</i> . Ted plays the title role, Mayor Neil Bremer. Neil is a former billboard tycoon who’s just been elected mayor of Los Angeles. He’s cheerful, goofy, and he’s not great at this kind of thing. He also has a teenaged daughter named Orly who has problems of her own—as in this scene, where Orly is running for class president at her school on a platform to ban plastic straws, only her dad just announced the same initiative at city hall.
00:01:16	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:01:17	Clip	Clip	<b>Orly (Mr. Mayor):</b> <i>[Distraught.]</i> How could you do this?! The straw ban is my thing!  <b>Neil:</b> Because! Because I care about things that you care—! Remember? I cared about <i>Pokémon</i> when you loved <i>Pokémon</i> !  <b>Orly:</b> Dad, how could you do this to me?! I mean, everyone thinks I copied your straw ban idea! You have to take yours back!  <b>Neil:</b> I can’t do that.  <b>Orly:</b> Do you know what Vita said?  <b>Neil:</b> I don’t even—who’s Vita?  <b>Orly:</b> She said that the straw ban was exactly the kind of frivolous thing she would expect from a rich, White man’s daughter!  <b>Neil:</b> <i>[Softly.]</i> Oh, come on.  <b>Orly:</b> I mean, she called us rich!  <b>Neil:</b> No, I’m rich. You’re my plus one. Look, you tell Vita that I was born in a walkup in Crown Heights.  <b>Orly:</b> Ugh!  <b>Neil:</b> I slept in one bed with both my grandfathers. And one of them had something called erotic dementia!  <b>Orly:</b> I <u>hate</u> that story! And I hate that you’re mayor and I hate that we had to move into this gross, old mayor house! UGH!

**Neil:** You think I like this house?!

*[A door slams.]*

00:02:08	Sound Effect	Transition	<b>Neil:</b> I can't figure out the AC! All my cigars are going bad! Music swells and fades.
00:02:09	Jesse	Host	<i>[Chuckles.]</i> Ted Danson, welcome to <i>Bullseye</i> . I'm so happy to have you on the show.
00:02:13	Ted Danson	Guest	Thank you, Jesse. Me too. This is fun.
00:02:16	Jesse	Host	You said something that I thought was really great, in an interview about <i>Mr. Mayor</i> —which was that Holly Hunter, who's one of America's greatest actors but has never been on a sitcom before, asked you whether she should pause for punchlines. And you said that she shouldn't and that you should just feel the wind in your hair.
			<i>[They laugh.]</i>
00:02:42	Ted	Guest	Oh, I hope I did say that. That's kind of cool.
00:02:46	Jesse	Host	I mean, it is a very different kind of show. Maybe this—you know, <i>Mr. Mayor</i> maybe isn't quite as breakneck as <i>30 Rock</i> or <i>Kimmy Schmidt</i> , but Tina Fey and Robert Carlock and their associates put a lot of jokes into one script.
00:03:03	Ted	Guest	Yeah. Yeah, they do. It's not that they're writing something slow or—it's that they hired me to do their fast jokes, which is kind of like—you know, comes out at medium speed.
00:03:18	Jesse	Host	<i>[Laughs.]</i> I mean, I feel like one of your—one of your signature comedic moves, at this point in your career, is gazing. You do a lot of interesting gazing.
			<i>[They laugh.]</i>
00:03:31	Ted	Guest	I also love this! Gazing! I love that. And if I'm not, I'm gonna start. 'Cause that's great!
00:03:42	Jesse	Host	<i>[Chuckles.]</i> You grew up in the southwest. What did your folks do for a living?
00:03:47	Ted	Guest	My father was an archeologist, anthropologist, professor at Tucson University of Arizona, in Tucson. And then in the—I don't know, '58, 1958—he moved up—we moved up to Flagstaff, Arizona and he became the director of the museum and the research center, which was a very small but kind of world-known museum and research center. And my mother was a homemaker, and she was extraordinary. But actually, you know, being the wife of the director of a museum means that she basically entertained—you know—five nights out of the week, we were eating dinner with three or four or five other people around the table that we didn't know. Visiting scientists.
00:04:34	Jesse	Host	What was Flagstaff like in 1960?
00:04:39	Ted	Guest	It was a—you know, it started out, I think, being mostly a cattle and timber town. It definitely still had the very small town, 29,000 people maybe. And we lived, though, about three and a half, four miles out of town. So, I was never a townie. I was always kind of isolated in this great way, outside of town. And my friends were Hopi and Navajo kids. Some of their parents worked at the museum and I had a couple of buddies, friends who were sons and daughters of ranchers, who lived 50 miles outside of town. So, it was a very little, tight, scientific community with my—you know, basically I ran out

the door and played with my Hopi friend, Raymond, and went out to the villages—Hopi mesas and it was—it was an extraordinary life.

00:05:41 Jesse Host Did you aspire to showbusiness?

00:05:43 Ted Guest No. I aspired to the moment, which was mostly about playing with my friends—great make believers. You know, we played—we'd go see *Darby's Rangers* at the local Orpheum Theater and then we'd be—we would be rangers, Darby's rangers, for the next two weeks. Yeah. I just played like mad. Then I went away to school when I was 13, to a school in New England called Kent—Kent School for Boys.

00:06:15 Jesse Host What was it like to go from [*chuckles*]—to go from the mesa to east coast boarding school? I can't imagine you felt like an insider when you got there.

00:06:27 Ted Guest No. I basically faked my way with a great deal of terror through my five years at Kent. I would work my rear end off to be, like, a C+, B-student. I was always slightly over my head. What saved me was basketball. And my basketball coach. And it wasn't that I had a huge amount of talent for the game, but I loved it passionately. And that became kind of my centering at Kent School.

00:07:06 Jesse Host I read somewhere you describing yourself, at that time, as 6 foot and 120.

00:07:13 Ted Guest Oh, that was at 13. It didn't get much better except I got taller. When I first got to Kent School, it was based on the English school system and there was—you know, kind of a pecking order and it was kind of the wild west. Anyone older than you in the—in, you know, an upper form—instead of classmen, they were called forms—could pretty much, you know, not smack you around but everything right up to that. And it was quite terrifying. Yeah. But I didn't get picked on that much, 'cause I was 6'2" and 120 and I think people were afraid to, like, hit me.

[*Jesse chuckles.*]

00:07:52 Jesse Host That I might shatter. And then, you know—they'd be expelled. [*Laughing.*] Thank you! I'm familiar, Ted. That was my—that was my adolescence as well. It wasn't at boarding school. It was in the hood. But it was a very similar situation.

[*They laugh.*]

00:08:06 Ted Guest I was an oddity. You know. And if you're a head taller than a lot of people are—which I was at that early age—you kind of—your gaze is a little bit over their heads anyway. So, you definitely look like a dreamer off, you know, in some world that no one's quite sure where you are. Even though you're just—you know, if you listen to the chatter in my head, it would sound like—you know—Goofy. You know? [*Mimicking Goofy.*] "Duh-doh. Duh-dum. Da-da-dum."

00:08:33 Jesse Host [*Laughs.*] It's funny to me that you described yourself as faking your way through boarding school and then, in the next breath, described how hard you worked to be a passing student. And like, look, I don't mean to be your therapist here, Ted, but, um...

[*They chuckle.*]

00:08:56 Ted Guest That kind of hard work is literally the opposite of faking it. [*Laughs.*] Yeeeah. I had a English teacher, very acerbic. Mr. Albourne—who, when passing out the advanced placement exam results, was

stunned to find that I had done well. Said—his phrase was, “For someone who has the least amount of native intelligence, you did rather well.” *[Laughing.]* You know?  
*[Laughing.]* Oh no!

00:09:21 Jesse Host  
00:09:23 Ted Guest

And here’s what I think it is: I knew that my—some part of me knew my life was not going to be about, you know, an academic—a lawyer, that kind of brain. Some place, I just knew that wasn’t gonna be—so, when you took—when I took tests, it was almost fun. It was like a game or a pattern or a wonder. You know, it had that kind of thing going on when I took tests. And so, I think I—well, I know I tested way above my head, because when I went—this is all gonna sound contradictory, but I got into Stanford, because I was interesting, geographically. I came from a—you know—almost living on the Hopi reservation, almost. Basically, you know. Flagstaff. I went to a prep school, a really good prep school back east. So, “This was an interesting person, let’s take him in.”

But I sat in my first advanced placement English at Stanford class and I remember sitting there the first day and going, “Not only do I not know what the teacher is saying right now, I don’t even understand the question the student next to me asked the teacher. *[Chuckles.]* So, I literally bailed on classes at Stanford. I’d wake up at 11 o’clock in the morning. I’d turn on some good music. We had a tree stump that we had found that we brought into our bedroom as kind of like a coffee table thing. I’d get up on the tree stump and kind of amuse myself and dance like a go-go boy for a while.

*[Jesse chuckles.]*

Then I’d turn my first TV—I grew up without television—my first TV. I was a freshman at Stanford and my first thing that I turned on was a black and white rerun of *The Dick Van Dyke Show*. I’d watch that from 11:00 to 11:30 and then I would mosey off on my bicycle to the center of the campus and see if I had any classes left that I might wanna go. Yeah, it was just—thank god I found acting.

00:11:28 Jesse Host  
00:11:43 Ted Guest

My AP English teacher wrote on one of my papers—and I ended up having a series of very serious meetings at school with my parents about it, “I fear you may never take anything in life seriously.”  
Oooh! Oh, wow! That’s kind of—that’s to the core! That’s a belly punch!

00:11:48 Jesse Host  
00:11:52 Ted Guest

Yeah, well, jokes on him! I’m a comedian now! Ha-ha-ha!  
*[Laughs boisterously.]* I had one of—that’s so funny! ‘Cause I had, at the museum—there was this wise, wonderful man. Parker Hamilton. He was an amazing photographer and he had done things in his life and that—you know, back east as a professor and then came to the museum to work as the photographer. And he was like—truly like Yoda, or something. He was so wise, and he pulled me aside once when I maybe was like 16, 17 and said, “Ted. The world does not need another Bob Hope. You need to get serious.”

*[Laughing.]* And I was like, “Well, shoot!” So, I pretend to be serious every once in a while.

00:12:39 Jesse Host  
00:12:47 Ted Guest

*[Laughs.]* So, you ended up transferring colleges. Did you transfer to become an actor?  
Yes. I mean, it sounds like a cliché story, but I gathered the nerve at Stanford to—my sophomore year, to ask this young lady out who

was working in the cafeteria. And she finally said yes, and we went out a cup of coffee at the student union. And then five minutes in she said, “Oh, shoot. I forgot. I have an audition.”

And I went, “Oh! Can I come with you?”

And she went, “Ugh, I guess so.”

And so, I went with her to the audition for—it was for the play—a Bertolt Brecht play called *Mann ist Mann*. And to stay in the room you had—I had to audition. And I—so I made something up. Like, stood up and just literally made something up. And people laughed. And I thought, [*dejectedly*] “Well, that’s cool.” And I got the smallest part you could get. You know. Like, the fourth rifle carrier from the left. But I was hooked. I started taking classes. I moved—drove my station wagon to the back of the theatre and just lived in—lived in it. Literally. In a mattress. I was—the lightbulb went off. I was just fascinated. And people said if you’re serious, you should go back east. And so, a last-minute audition for Carnegie Mellon University and off I went to Pittsburgh.

00:14:09 Jesse Host  
00:14:11 Ted Guest

Pittsburgh, of course, being the heart of showbusiness. [*Laughing.*] You know—I know. We would often sit there going, “Why didn’t we go to Julliard? Why aren’t we—you know, at the New York University—uh—”

00:14:21 Jesse Host

No shade to Carnegie Mellon, one of America’s greatest universities. I wanna be clear.

00:14:24 Ted Guest

No! No, no, no. It is one of the—and still is one of the best theatre schools in the world. It truly is. And we had some of the most astounding teachers and it was the best thing in the world. But all of us champing at the bit to be in the business thought, “Oh dear, now we have to go to New York and—you know, figure that all out.” But no. I loved Carnegie. I could not get enough of it. It was the only acting I knew, so I threw myself into it wholeheartedly. And I still love acting as much as I did when the lightbulb went off at—you know—at Carnegie.

00:15:02 Jesse Host

There’s this great scene in the first episode of *Mr. Mayor* where your character is talking to his daughter, I think, and the [*chuckling*] question of whether you’re handsome comes up.

[*Ted chuckles.*]

And your character says, “I am handsome!” And [*laughing*] it’s such a—it’s such a sweet, beautiful—I mean, I think it’s a tribute to your gifts as a performer that you’re able to be sweet while saying, “I am handsome.”

But I wonder if—like, I was watching some clips of you very early in your career and just kind of wondering what it would be like to be that handsome and I wonder if you were aware that you were very handsome? I’m not asking you to be indiscreet here, but—or embarrass yourself, but—

00:15:51 Ted Guest

No, I have to tell you. I can tell you the progression, ‘cause no. I was—first off, I—you know, I wasn’t in a normal high school. I went to an all-boys school. I lived three miles out of town—you know—when I hit puberty, I was in the middle of nowhere. I was just—I never dated. I think, you know, if I kissed somebody we were

engaged. I was that person. So, “handsome” was not—and, oh, the other—yeah. The other thing, until I went to Stanford it looked kind of like I had swallowed a hand grenade. My teeth were going in every direction. You know. Chipped. One coming out—you know, just horrible. It was like a girl would look at me—an attractive girl would look at me, I’d look at her. She’d smile. I’d smile. And she’d go, “Ugh.” You know. I was just not in the game and I didn’t go to bars, I didn’t do any of that.

So, no. To answer your question, I was painfully shy and unaware that I had any, you know, even the visage of prowess until *Cheers*. And then I discovered that they had hired a lot of women to stand around the bar as extras and actresses—beautiful actresses—to say, “Oh my god, you’re so sexy, Sam. Sam Malone.” And so, you started to get the mantle of your character. And for the first time in my life, instead of going, “Oh no, I’m not. You have no idea who I am.” I kept my mouth shut. And slowly decided, “Okay... I can—I can do this.” But basically, no. I am the opposite of Sam Malone. I am...

00:17:38 Jesse Host It reminded me—that scene, the famous scene from later on in the run of *Cheers*, where Carla is having a personal confidence crisis and of course she admires Sam so much and you’re—and Sam finally just like pulls off his hairpiece to show her that he’s not perfect.

*[Ted laughs.]*

And the thing that I love about that scene—I mean, it’s a wonderful moment in general for the character and so forth, but the choice that I love the most about that scene is you can see that as he is telling her that he is also imperfect, you are petting the hairpiece *[chuckling]* like it was a—like it was a beloved gerbil or something.

*[They laugh.]*

00:18:24 Ted Guest Oh man. That—when—you know this, but when you’re around comedy writers, as an actor, beware of what you reveal. Because *[laughing]* it is fodder for the comedic writer who’s—you know. Anyway. I had a—yeah, that was a tough period. And I think—I think the year before *Cheers* quit, I finally decided, “Oh well, to hell with it. My bald spot is behind me. When I look in the mirror, I look great. So, to hell with the rest of you.”

00:18:57 Jesse Host *[Chuckles.]* I wanna play a clip from a commercial that you did before *Cheers*. And I feel like all it really needs as setup is that you’re like walking into what looks like a fancy hotel or possibly a fancy apartment building.

00:19:10 Ted Guest The Plaza.

00:19:11 Jesse Host Oh! It’s the Plaza! There you go!

00:19:12 Sound Effect Transition Music swells and fades.

00:19:13 Clip **Music:** Dreamy piano music.

**Louise:** Tom! What are you doing here?

**Tom:** Louise! You are more beautiful than ever.

Louise: You still say the right thing.

*[Music swells for a kiss.]*

**Louise:** And you're still wearing Aramis.

**Tom:** One of the nice things you did for me.

**Louise:** When are you leaving?

**Tom:** Tomorrow. What are you doing here?

**Louise:** I think I'm missing a plane.

**Voice Over:** Aramis. The impact never fades.  
Music swells and fades.

00:19:39 Sound Effect Transition

00:19:40 Ted Guest

*[They laugh.]*

00:19:43 Jesse Host

00:19:46 Ted Guest

00:19:48 Jesse Host

00:19:49 Ted Guest

That's funny.

You're dreamy. You're dreamy, Ted!

Dreamy. You wanna hear a funny Aramis story?

Of course! Yes!

The head of the advertising agency that did that—who was a—you know, one of the great men in advertising. And I'm blanking on his name, but we were in a room getting ready—all of us—makeup and hair and all of that. And—to go shoot that scene. And I picked up an Aramis bottle, splashed some on my hand, and started to put it on my—on my face. And he went, "No, no, no! Not on your skin!"

*[They laugh.]*

00:20:29 Jesse Host

Oooh. *[Pulling himself together.]* I loved that. Ah.

Even more still to come with Ted Danson. We'll talk about what it was like meeting his wife, Mary Steenburgen, his take on spirituality, and how he wants to die. So, you know. Buckle up. It's Bullseye, from [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) and NPR.

00:20:45 Music Transition

00:20:46 Jesse Promo

Relaxed music.

This message comes from NPR sponsor NerdWallet: a personal finance website and app that helps people make smarter money moves. Have new money goals this year? Whether you want to use credit card points to plan a family vacation abroad—once it's safe—or take advantage of low mortgage rates to refinance and save for your child's education, NerdWallet is the best place to shop financial products to help make your 2021 money goals happen. Discover and compare the smartest credit cards, mortgage lenders, and more at [NerdWallet.com](http://NerdWallet.com).

00:21:21 Promo Clip

*[Music fades out.]*

**Music:** Upbeat synth music.

**Maddie Sofia:** If you're into science but you need a break from the corona virus, NPR *Shortwave* has your back, whether we're talking about how scientists measure Mount Everest or spiders that hang out underwater, we promise you'll have fun and learn something! Subscribe to *Shortwave*, the daily science podcast from NPR.

00:21:44	Promo	Clip	<p><i>[Music fades out.]</i>  <b>Music:</b> Light, rhythmic keyboard over drums plays in background.</p> <p><b>Tre'vell Anderson:</b> Hey there, beautiful people! Did you hear that good, good news?</p> <p><b>Jarrett Hill:</b> Something about the baby Jesus?</p> <p><b>Tre'vell:</b> Mm! He's coming back!</p> <p><b>Jarrett:</b> Or—do you mean—</p> <p><i>[Tre'vell laughs.]</i></p> <p><b>Jarrett:</b> —the fact that Apple Podcasts has named <i>FANTI</i> one of <u>the</u> best shows of 2020?</p> <p><b>Tre'vell:</b> I mean, we already knew that we was hot stuff, but a little external validation never hurts. Okay?</p> <p><b>Jarrett:</b> <i>[Through laughter]</i> Hosted by me, writer and journalist Jarrett Hill.</p> <p><b>Tre'vell:</b> And me, the ebony enchantress myself—</p> <p><i>[Jarrett laughs.]</i></p> <p><b>Tre'vell:</b> —Tre'vell Anderson.</p> <p><b>Jarrett:</b> <i>FANTI</i> is your home for complex conversations about the grey areas in our lives; the people, places, and things we're huge fans of but got some anti feelings toward.</p> <p><b>Tre'vell:</b> You name it, we <i>FANTI</i> it. Nobody's off-limits.</p> <p><b>Jarrett:</b> Check us out every Thursday on <a href="http://MaximumFun.org">MaximumFun.org</a> or wherever you get your slay-worthy audio.</p>
00:22:30	Jesse	Host	<p><i>[Music ends.]</i>  Welcome back to <i>Bullseye</i>. I'm Jesse Thorn. I'm talking with Ted Danson. He's the star of <i>Cheers</i>, <i>Damages</i>, <i>Bored to Death</i>, so many great television shows. He has made more episodes of television than all but—I think it's one person? These days, he's playing the title role on NBC's <i>Mr. Mayor</i>. The brand-new show is streaming now. Let's get back into our conversation.</p>
00:23:09	Ted	Guest	<p>There was a giant, like, oral history of <i>Cheers</i> that came out a few years ago and one of the things that I read that I didn't know was that Sam Malone, the character, was originally written to have been a football player. And originally they—yeah.</p>
00:23:10	Jesse	Host	<p>Yeah, tight end.  And they originally had a—you know, a football player in mind to play the role and that you kind of came in late in the process and</p>



00:23:25 Ted Guest they realized that your—that let's say your physical delicacy might  
00:23:27 Jesse Host not—[chuckles] might not read.  
My 6'2", 120. [Laughs.]  
Yeah. [Laughing.] Might not read as a—as a football player. I think  
like one of the Charleses or something said like, "I don't know, he  
had kind of a dancer's body." [Chuckles.] And they just came up  
with the one sport they could think of where someone with a  
dancer's body could succeed.

[Ted agrees.]

00:23:45 Ted Guest Which was—  
But they were smart enough to make him a relief pitcher. So,  
there's a crazy arrogant thing about relief pitchers, 'cause you only  
come in when—you know—when it's a disaster and you're here to  
save the day. And I—that's kind of smart that at least the dancer  
body guy had a—had a great attitude to play. You know.

00:24:09 Jesse Host I read this piece from—it was the *Washington Post* from the—  
maybe the second or third season of *Cheers*. And one of the things  
that I read you say about Sam that I really liked was that initially—  
like, at the beginning of the run—and I don't even know if this is  
actually true, because it's—*Cheers* is so fully-formed from the  
beginning, relative to most sitcoms—but at the beginning of the run,  
you kind of played him as being dumb and then maybe you realized  
that he was choosing to be that in the world. That maybe he valued  
being plain and just didn't want to be fancy. I thought that was such  
a significant distinction for that character.

00:24:57 Ted Guest I... it took me about a year of doing Sam Malone—the first  
season—before I think I began to get it. It doesn't mean that the  
show wasn't great and all of that, but as far—I didn't know how to  
play arrogant. I hadn't done that. I hadn't done boy-girl in my life.  
You know. Arrogant and bar guy and all of that. So, it took me a  
while to kind of—I think living through the first season, having  
people write about it, having people like it or not like it or whatever  
kind of gave me the shell I needed to go, "Oh well, screw it. You  
know. Here I am." But, you know, for better or worse, I'm gonna  
have fun. And that attitude kind of helped me learn how to play it.  
But in the beginning, I was—I don't know that I was correct in that  
assumption, that he—Sam—was actually smarter than he was  
letting on. And I think, as I went—well, you know what? I think he is  
smart, but then he had this massive blind spot called "women".

[Jesse agrees.]

You know. And addiction to women and sex and all of that. So—so,  
yeah, I think he was smart except for that [laughing] one glaring...  
it's much more fun to play the dumb joke. It really is. It's the best  
joke in town. And I think that holds true in drama as well. It's like  
when I did *Damages* there was—I mean, the writing was so good,  
and all the players were great. But it was funny to have somebody  
who was so arrogantly, you know, "I'm a self-made man. I can take  
on the world. I can do anything and get away with anything I want,"  
and just feel so confident in that while the audience in the real world  
is—Glenn Close is about to clean my clock. You know? That's  
funny, to not know how wrong you are in life when everyone else  
does.

00:27:05	Jesse	Host	<p>It's funny because when you say that thing that you learned from playing Sam Malone that you just described—that feeling of, "Take me as I am, for good and for bad." That could be dumb heedlessness. But it also—I mean, you have often played characters whose arrogance involves them having accepted what's wrong with them. Right?</p> <p><i>[Ted agrees.]</i></p> <p><i>[Chuckling.]</i> Like—on <i>The Good Place</i>, you are a demon.</p> <p><i>[Ted laughs.]</i></p> <p>But like I'm thinking of—I think probably my favorite role from your long and amazing career, of your many, many wonderful roles, is probably on <i>Bored to Death</i> where you played this magazine editor who sort of swans through his glorious magazine editor's, you know—last of the great magazine editor's lifestyle. His sort of Graydon Carter lifestyle and just seems to have beautifully accepted what a disaster area he is. <i>[Laughs.]</i> And is just like, "Well, I'm gonna wear this beautiful robe and see how it goes!"</p>
00:28:18	Ted	Guest	<p>Yes. I think what saved him was his—the joy of being around younger people, of, "Don't leave me out." You know. His fear of being left out and wanting to play and still wanting to be part of that youthful energy.</p>
00:28:37	Jesse	Host	<p>I'm gonna play a scene from <i>Bored to Death</i>. So, Jonathan was the protagonist of this show, played by Jason Schwartzman, and he was a magazine writer turned private detective of a sort. And so, in this scene your character, George, has met Jonathan's best friend Ray—who's played by Zach Galifianakis—and they're waiting outside of a motel where Jonathan is doing some investigating and they decide to smoke some pot. And they—you know, start to get to know each other.</p>
00:29:07	Sound Effect	Transition	<p>Music swells and fades.</p>
00:29:08	Clip	Clip	<p><b>George (<i>Bored to Death</i>):</b> I have a daughter.</p> <p><b>Ray:</b> Oh yeah? You guys close?</p> <p><b>George:</b> She lives in Seattle. We love each other, but we're... we don't really know each other. Oh my god. I have completely failed at the most important thing in life. I'm gonna call her right now and tell her I love her.</p> <p><b>Ray:</b> No, no, no, no, no. You don't—you don't wanna high-dial your daughter.</p> <p><b>George:</b> No, I'm not that high, really.</p> <p><b>Ray:</b> <i>[Whispering.]</i> I think you <u>are</u>.</p> <p><i>[The beeps of a phone being dialed.]</i></p> <p><b>George:</b> I'll use the voice changer. That way she won't be able to tell I'm stoned.</p>

**Ray:** Oh no. *[Slurring.]* Just... stop.

*[Jesse giggles over the audio.]*

**George:** *[In a low, electronically distorted voice.]* Hey, uh, honey. I just called to tell you that I love you. This is your father. I'm a robot.

00:30:00	Sound Effect	Transition	<b>Ray:</b> That's stoned thinking, you'll scare the <i>[censored]</i> out of her. Music swells and fades.
00:30:01	Ted	Guest	<i>[They laugh.]</i>
00:30:11	Jesse	Host	There's nothing more fun than to play stoned. <i>[Laughs.]</i> I mean, I think what I love about your character on that show is that—you know, I—look. You have the skills to play a likeable sitcom protagonist forever. Like, you've demonstrated—by being the likable protagonist of the greatest sitcom of all time—you know, at least if you discount being pioneering, you know. Maybe you could make an argument for <i>I Love Lucy</i> or <i>The Honeymooners</i> for inventing sitcoms, but otherwise for me it's <i>Cheers</i> . And you know, you played on—you starred in good sitcoms for ten years after that. You know what I mean? That took advantage of what a great screen presence you are. And I think <i>Bored to Death</i> sort of... like, it would be easy for you to play against type. Right? That's often a move that people who are identified with a television persona do. But what I think <i>Bored to Death</i> does is that it identifies these odd parts of your screen persona that—and explores them. Like, that quality of having your head a foot above everyone else is one of your great gifts as a performer and it's like what makes Sam palatable, even though he's maybe sometimes a little bit of a monster.
			<i>[Ted chuckles.]</i>
00:31:44	Ted	Guest	But it's like all that George does is just—as you said, like, glaze past life in this amazing way, except when he realizes he might get left out of something.
00:31:51	Jesse	Host	Yes. Now that's interesting. I don't know if I wanna add anything. I like that.
00:32:06	Ted	Guest	You've been married a long time. And you met—you met your wife in the—in the early '90s, in like 1993. Where were you at in your life outside of your career when you met her?
			Hot mess. Yeah. I was publicly a hot mess. And I was separated and getting a divorce and—but I was working very hard on myself. I had a good wakeup call and so, I—you know, I was—I would drive to Long Beach two or three times a week to see my mentor-like therapist guy and—who's been a friend for life, now. So, I took it seriously. And I kind of grew up, emotionally. And I—if I hadn't done that, I don't think that life would have put Mary and me together or even in the same room. That's kind of how I look at it. So, when we found each other, we both got cast in the same movie playing husband and wife and throughout the movie or halfway through the movie, you know, fell in love and stayed together forever. But we entered that movie going—separately saying to ourselves, "Well, clearly I'm not capable of having a relationship."

Mary was going through that same feeling. And so, we kind of went, “Well, alright. We can be friends,” kind of thing. Took a canoe ride up Mendocino River and came back down—a four-hour canoe ride—and I think were kind of, without saying anything or very much, were kind of both kind of madly in love with each other.

00:33:49 Jesse Host How do you think being with her changed the other pieces of your life? The parts that were outside of relationships?

00:33:57 Ted Guest Well, I—you know, I think she insists that I am the best version of myself. And she does it through, you know, love and laughter and *[chuckles]* mocking my, you know, insanity sometimes. But you know, I’m always trying to be my best self around her, which—you know—effects every part of my life. Um. I am endlessly fascinated. I feel like if relationships are these wonderful fistfights, I’m punching a little bit above my weight kind of thing. I—you know, she is such an amazing partner that I’m always trying to live up to where I see her playing in life. And I think she does the same with me. On that canoe ride in Mendocino, we kept going upriver and she’d keep wanting to see what was around the next bend. She was always, “Let’s go one more. Let’s—oh, look at that.” And I think that’s been a truism in our life. She’s always wanted to go around the next bend and see what life has in store for us. And I think I might have been more sedentary or, “No, no.” You know. “This is good. This is good. Let’s maintain.”

So, you know, most of the excitement in my life is generated by keeping up with Mary. And I trust that now, to the point where even when I grumble I know that her next plan *[laughing]* is gonna be exciting. I mean, it’s lame. She says, “You know what I think?” in a conversation and I get excited before she starts talking. I go, “Oh! What? I can’t wait to hear!”

00:35:46 Jesse Host She’s such a great actor. Do you think your relationship with her has changed your art making?

00:35:53 Ted Guest Uh, one facet of it does. She is a great actor and I—when she—when she soars as an actor, it’s like on another planet almost. So, much admiration of her—just her as an actor. But one of the things she does in life is she always—that I admire—is she always leaps off tall buildings. She’s always looking for another, you know, exciting, scary—always has to be scary—thing to do. You know. David Mamet’s *Boston Marriage*, which is one of the hardest women’s parts ever. And she took *Zoey’s Extraordinary Playlist*, which she’s doing on NBC for the same reason. She wanted—she’s not a singer. She’s not a dancer. And she’s now singing and dancing. She’s a songwriter, now. For the last 12, 15 years. She’s—I mean, the real deal songwriter. Critic’s Choice Award, last year, for best song in a film.

And that was like, “Wait, what? You’re gonna stop—not stop, but besides being an actor, you’re gonna go off and become a songwriter and we’re gonna have—you know, move to Nashville for a while and we’re gonna have this whole new music side to our life? What are you doing?!” And thank god, because it’s brought such joy to my life. All of our friends in Nashville and the songwriters and creative folks and she really reintroduced music into my life. Uh—yeah.

00:37:24 Jesse Host What’s a time that she took you on a jump-off-a-tall-building that you were scared about?

00:37:31 Ted Guest Well, all of those things I just mentioned. But you mean pushing me off the building?

*[They laugh.]*

00:37:37 Jesse Host I mean, I get the impression, Ted—and you can correct me if I’m wrong, but you don’t seem like a natural building-jumper-offer.

00:37:44 Ted Guest No. I’m not. I think, you know—I had Woody Harrelson once ask me, sitting outside probably—perhaps high, perhaps not. Turned to me—and I don’t have an end to this story, but this just rings in my ears all the time. He said, “Teddy, what are you so afraid of?” And I—you know, I don’t—I don’t even know what we were talking about. But I definitely—I find all of this living stuff slightly fearful.

*[Jesse wheezes with laughter and Ted chuckles.]*

00:38:17 Jesse Host Ted, you’re in your 70s. If you find the living stuff fearful, how do you feel about dying stuff?

00:38:24 Ted Guest Well, I want the whole Monty. I would love to be able to be conscious right up until I’m not. I would love to be—I would love to know every ounce of this human experience. Part of what I’m saying is, you know—I’ll listen back to this podcast and go, “Ted, listen to yourself. That’s what you said.” I’m sure I’ll be fearful. I’m sure I’ll be all these things. But I want it all. I really want to... to experience what it is to be human as much as possible. So, I’m alright with—I mean, I’m alright in this moment about that moment coming. I’ll see how it—I’ll get back to you *[chuckling]* when I’m really going through it.

00:39:09 Jesse Host Do you believe in God?

00:39:11 Ted Guest Uh, yes. I would be hard-pressed to describe to you—you know—in a sentence or two what that means. You know. But belief—you know, faith is this—I don’t know. I remember sitting there watching my mother die. I would take the night shift. My sister would sleep and then she’d be the person around my mother when—during the day. And I remember every—all my studying, all my—you know, therapy or studying different religions or Zen or my whatever—every philosophical thought I’ve had in life went flying out the window. And I realized I don’t know. She may know, in these last moments, but I don’t know. And what happened for me was that it became very simple. It became, “Ted, do the right thing in this moment.” And that’s become my kind of guiding philosophy. I fail miserably, but I keep trying to do that. Try to be a little bit better tomorrow. You know?

Here’s what I hope—there’s got—I’m gonna be really disappointed if there’s not some version of a campfire afterwards, where we can all sit around giggling at ourselves and all of our silliness and, “Can you believe we did that or thought that?” I just would—you gotta have some sort of a playback, family video, something to enjoy our inanities. You know. Our human foibles or something.

00:40:53 Jesse Host Ted, I’m so grateful that you took all this time to be on *Bullseye*. It was—I’ve admired your work for so long and it was so nice to get to talk to you.

00:41:00 Ted Guest Jesse, you too! I really appreciate the conversation.

00:41:05 Jesse Host Maybe next time we’ll get a chance to talk about whether you ever made your peace with Gary’s Olde Towne Tavern.

00:41:12 Ted Guest *[Laughs.]* No.

00:41:15	Jesse	Host	Ted Danson. Can't beat that. <i>Mr. Mayor</i> , his new show, is on NBC. You can catch new episodes of the show Thursday nights at 8/7c and on a handful of streaming platforms including Hulu and Peacock.
00:41:30	Music	Transition	Bright, relaxed music.
00:41:32	Jesse	Host	That's the end of another episode of <i>Bullseye</i> . <i>Bullseye</i> , created from the homes of me and the staff of Maximum Fun, in and around greater Los Angeles, California. Here in northeast LA, where I live, I put together an entire 8-foot trampoline by myself and then realized that the net that goes around it, the safety net, was slightly crooked and that meant that I would have to take the entire thing apart and put it back together again.
			Our 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 to them and to their label, Memphis Industries, for sharing it with us. You can also keep up with the show on Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. We post our interviews on all of those platforms.
			And I think that's about it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature signoff.
00:42:32	Promo	Promo	<b>Speaker:</b> <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of <a href="http://MaximumFun.org">MaximumFun.org</a> and is distributed by NPR.
			<i>[Music fades out.]</i>