

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. A fast, upbeat, peppy song. Music plays as Jesse speaks, then fades out.
00:00:19	Jesse Thorn	Host	It’s <i>Bullseye</i> . I’m Jesse Thorn. A quick warning about the interview you’re about to hear: there is some talk about sex in it—mostly just body parts talk. So, if you or someone with whom you’re listening might be sensitive to that kind of thing, just a heads up.
			<p>Anyway, my guest is Lisa Hanawalt. She’s a writer and a cartoonist. She’s the creator of <i>Tuca & Bertie</i>, one of my favorite television shows. It’s a show about two women—anthropomorphic bird women. They live in Bird Town. Tuca is a toucan. She’s outgoing and fun but also kind of a mess. She doesn’t really have a solid job. Bertie, her best friend, is a songbird. Little bit of a homebody, shy, deferential. When the show starts, she’s just moved in with her boyfriend. A lot of the problems Tuca and Bertie encounter are human and grounded: relationship stuff, work problems, sexual harassment. But the world they live in is anything but. It is breathtakingly drawn and completely surreal; phones talk, hospital equipment talks, plants walk. If you’ve ever seen Lisa’s work before, she’s written four books and was a producer on <i>BoJack Horseman</i>. It will give you some sense of what all this is like. In fact, Lisa based Tuca and Bertie on characters from her books—characters she’s lived with for a long time and sees almost as extensions of herself.</p> <p>When we talked in 2019, <i>Tuca & Bertie</i> had just debuted on Netflix. It has since moved over to Adult Swim and it’s second season will premiere in June, which gives you just enough time to binge season one—and I do recommend that you do that. Anyway, let’s take a listen to a little bit of the shows nearly perfect first season. As I said, Bertie has just moved in with her boyfriend which means Tuca—her roommate—starts moving out. In this season, Bertie calls Tuca for an update on the moveout process.</p>
00:02:21	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:02:22	Clip	Clip	Bertie (<i>Tuca & Bertie</i>): So, when do you wanna come over to get your things? You’re not officially moved out until you’ve taken out your last box of stuff.
			Tuca: Sure, sure! I’ll come get it later. I’m just picking out décor for my new place.
			Bertie: Tuca, are you getting junk off the street again?!
			Tuca: Nooo. I’m purchasing consumer goods! With my job money!
			Bertie: You don’t have a jooob.
			Tuca: Just because I don’t have a boring office job like you doesn’t mean I’m not swimming in gigs.

[Bright, percussive music fades in.]

Tuca: Mobile notary, fortune teller, unlicensed tour guide, dog walker, cashing checks from my rich Auntie, mobile notary again, and uuuh... freelance junk collector? *[Going briefly shrill.]* Aaaanywho, I'm swinging by our place. I mean, your place. Later today.

00:03:04 Sound Effect Transition

Music swells and fades.

00:03:05 Jesse Host

[They chuckle.]

00:03:09 Lisa Hanawalt Guest

Lisa, welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm happy to see you! Thank you for having me!

00:03:10 Jesse Host

And congratulations on this show. I am just over the moon about how much I love it.

[Lisa thanks him several times.]

00:03:20 Lisa Guest

I just—I think it's so great. Um. Were you scared to make a television show?

[Laughs.] Of course, I was! I'm scared of everything.

00:03:24 Jesse Host

[They laugh.]

But I mean, like I—

00:03:25 Lisa Guest

I was like, "This will be a catastrophe! The biggest failure yet."

[Laughs.]

00:03:28 Jesse Host

Lisa, I am—I am such a fan of your comics and I'm such a fan of your work on *BoJack Horseman*, as well. It's my favorite part of a great show.

[Lisa thanks him.]

And—but that said, your comics are more impressionistic than they are narrative. They're not not narrative.

[Lisa agrees.]

00:03:52 Lisa Host

But they—you know, timelines are loose, lists are incorporated frequently.

It's loose.

00:03:54 Jesse Host

[They laugh.]

And I thought, you know, "Lisa's been working on a TV show for a long time." They're also like wild. They're like wildly—there's just a lot of ideas going different places.

00:04:04 Lisa Guest

Yeah, it's a little untethered to reality. *[Laughs.]*

00:04:05 Jesse Host

And I thought—I thought, "Is—how does this become a sitcom?"

[Lisa affirms.]

00:04:12 Lisa Guest

Like, that was my thought. I was worried.

That was—that was why it took so long to develop the show, is 'cause I was talking with the—about the show ideas with Raphael and we kind of wanted it to resemble my comic books, but it was

sort of hard to make a show that did that. It was gonna be kind of like a one-woman anthology, but then I just kept coming back to these characters of Tuca and Bertie. And honestly, the shows I like to watch are sitcoms, so I was just like, “Maybe I should learn how to make one.”

00:04:33 Jesse Host What kind of sitcoms do you like to watch?

00:04:35 Lisa Guest I mean, I love *Friends*. I’ve watched it so many times. *[Laughing.]* It’s just so comforting.

00:04:42 Jesse Host Is that just because it like relates to your adolescence, when it was on television?

00:04:46 Lisa Guest Perhaps. Yeah, there’s a little bit of nostalgia there. I don’t know, I just think the characters are really well defined and—I don’t know. It’s just comforting.

00:04:53 Jesse Host I hate *Friends*.

00:04:54 Lisa Guest That’s fair. That’s totally fair.

00:04:56 Jesse Host Thank you. I’m not saying it to attack you. I’m just confessing it, now.

00:04:59 Lisa Guest I don’t feel attacked. *[Laughs.]*

00:05:01 Jesse Host I really like Lisa Kudrow. Actually, I think—

00:05:04 Lisa Guest She’s the best one.

00:05:05 Jesse Host All of the cast members of *Friends* do a great job.

00:05:07 Lisa Guest She—Lisa Kudrow’s absolutely the best one. Phoebe’s the best character. She deserves so much better on that show. *[Laughs.]*

00:05:15 Jesse Host Did you imagine, when you were a kid or a teen, that *Friends* was what adulthood might be like?

00:05:23 Lisa Guest I don’t know.

00:05:26 Jesse Host ‘Cause like, I wonder sometimes if I thought like *Seinfeld* or *News Radio* or the shows that I loved when I was an adolescent—or *Cheers!*

00:05:31 Lisa Guest I also—also loved *News Radio*. So much.

00:05:33 Jesse Host Like, I used to watch *Cheers* with my dad and like *Cheers*... actually is a very sad show!

00:05:41 Lisa Guest *Cheers* is too sad for me.

[Jesse laughs.]

News Radio does feel like what adulthood is like.

[They laugh loudly.]

News Radio feels very accurate.

00:05:49 Jesse Host Just once a year, you’re in space for no reason.

00:05:51 Lisa Guest Yes.

[They laugh.]

We all have a Matthew in our lives. Uh, yeah. Very relatable.

00:05:58 Jesse Host *[Chuckles.]* So, when you were developing the show into—you know, when you were creating your own sitcom and you started with the idea that it would be as loose as your comics or at least reflect the spirit of your comics—how do you match that up with the—you know, the kind of tight, strictures of what a sitcom is? Which is, you know, a visit with a family who are your friends.

00:06:24 Lisa Guest It’s really hard. It’s a process of me learning the structure of how to write a script in the sitcom style. You know, here’s act one, act two.

Like... and then kind of doing that and then feeling like that's too tight and then loosening it back up again. So, it was a whole—you know—learning experience. Learning the process of writing a show. Like, I would write the scripts and then we would tell the directors like, "Well, here's a script, but unlike *BoJack*, this doesn't need to be as strictly script based. Like, you take scenes out. You can add scenes. You can break up the format. You can do Claymation or puppetry if you wanna do that for a scene. Like, have fun with it."

You know, we gave them my comic books and were like, "Look how crazy these are. Feel free to incorporate some of this into the episodes." And so, they kind of went nuts adding stuff.

00:07:10 Jesse Host

I mean, one of the things that I was struck by—and it was also one of the things that I was worried about—is I think your comics are so funny.

00:07:18 Lisa Guest

I'm glad you were so concerned.

[They laugh.]

00:07:20 Jesse Host

Like, I hold you in very high regard, Lisa.

[Lisa laughs.]

00:07:25 Lisa Guest

I wanted it to be a success and it totally is.

00:07:27 Jesse Host

Oh, I'm so glad.

And I thought—you know, your comics are so funny, but there are so few jokes in your comics. The things that I find myself laughing at are like audacious ideas that I connect with emotionally in some surprising way.

[Lisa agrees.]

00:07:43 Lisa Guest

More than a gag.

I mean, I can write a joke. I just—I feel like the weird situations and like things that kind of don't seem like they should go together and then they make you laugh and you're not quite sure where the laugh is coming from is, to me, my favorite form of humor. When writing the scripts, it's like the jokes are kind of the last step. You can just kind of layer jokes on top of everything else and that's the easiest part, in a way.

00:08:03 Jesse Host

One of the things that is in your comics that's also in the show—and also was part of your design of the characters and the aesthetics of *BoJack Horseman*—is things being kind of simultaneously uncomfortably sexual and also like anti-sexual?

[They chuckle.]

00:08:21 Lisa Guest

Yeah. I really like that push-pull.

[Jesse laughs.]

Where you're like, "Well, this is making me horny and that makes me upset."

[They laugh.]

"And now I'm mad." *[Laughing.]* I mean, I'm gonna make you like have a crush on a plant. I'm sorry.

00:08:36 Crosstalk Crosstalk *[They giggle.]*
Jesse: I mean, they're—

00:08:38 Jesse Host
00:08:40 Lisa Guest **Lisa:** I'm gonna slap boobs on a building.
00:08:41 Jesse Host That's what I was about to bring up! Like in—
Is that sexy? I don't know. *[Laughs.]*
In the montage at the beginning of the show, in the opening credit sequence, there's a building that has boobs.

[Lisa confirms.]

00:09:00 Lisa Guest The boobs are like doing a dance. And—I mean, speaking as a
00:09:01 Jesse Host heterosexual man, I'm conditioned or biologically predisposed to,
uh, think of boobs sexually.
Yeah. We all are.
But—not—I can't say the same about buildings.

[They chuckle.]

00:09:07 Lisa Guest Um.
Some people—some people are really into buildings.

[Jesse agrees, laughing.]

00:09:27 Jesse Host But uh, yeah, that was a real kind of scene setter. Like, “Hey!
Warning! There's gonna be stuff like this in this show. If you don't
like this, maybe don't *[laughs]* watch it. And also, you know, like this
is for adults and we're gonna recontextualize female body parts in a
weird way.”

00:09:47 Lisa Guest It is very conscious of women's bodies in particular in a way that
your comics are but not a lot of television shows are. Was that
something that you think came from a choice you made or just a
natural predilection that you have?
Well, I grew up—you know—with the same media as everyone
else. And so, I'm used to looking at women's bodies in a certain
context and in music videos and in advertisements and stuff. And
so, I think part of me drawing them a lot is kind of reclaiming that a
little bit. Like, just kind of taking all that in and spitting it back out in
my own way, where it's—you know—coming from the direct
experience of a woman who's grown up in a world where that stuff
is the norm. So, it's still sometimes male gazey, but then it's also
female gazey and it's sort of like, “Well, here's what I like about
looking at the female form.” And yeah, they can be sexy. We do
have like an upskirt shot. You know? While they're dancing.

[Jesse chuckles.]

00:10:26 Jesse Host I'm not opposed to that.
00:10:29 Lisa Guest *[Laughing.]* What could be sexier than that?
[Laughs.] I like sexy stuff, but I think—I think coming from my
perspective, it's maybe a little bit different from other shows that are
created by men. Like, you know, not all of my characters are like big
titty, tiny waist. *[Laughs.]* Can I say titty on this show?
00:10:43 Jesse Host You just did!

[Lisa cackles.]

00:10:50 Lisa Guest We're gonna have to ask a nice man named Mark at NPR. We'll find out later.
00:10:50 Lisa Guest So, I mean, I like—you know—showing different kinds of body types. I think a lot of different kinds of bodies can be sexy. So. I don't know. I'm just making the show I wanna watch.
00:11:00 Jesse Host So, when you were on the show a few years ago, we talked a little bit about your character designs for *BoJack Horseman* and the really strong opinions that some internet communities have shared with you about certain choices in depicting anthropomorphized animals.
00:11:18 Lisa Guest Oh, are you talking about the tails?
00:11:20 Jesse Host Yes.

[They laugh.]

Specifically, I'm talking about whether horsemen have tails.

[Lisa affirms.]

00:11:30 Lisa Guest I believe BoJack does not have a tail—at least, a visible tail that they—
00:11:30 Lisa Guest There's no tails on *BoJack*.
00:11:31 Jesse Host But they felt very strongly—and frankly, rudely—expressed to you that they demanded you to—I believe it was remake the first season with tails?
00:11:41 Lisa Guest Yeah, they thought we should go back and reanimate the whole thing. I think they didn't quite have an understanding of the process or budget or—you know—interest in doing that. But I thought it was a very funny email to get.
00:11:53 Jesse Host I mean, *Game of Thrones* took out that Starbucks cup, so.
00:11:55 Lisa Guest Did they?

[Jesse confirms.]

00:11:57 Jesse Host They fixed it?
00:11:59 Lisa Guest *[Laughing.]* So, you just put in the tails!
00:11:59 Lisa Guest I think leave it in! Show a little of the process. I think there are some tails on *Tuca & Bertie*. I think there's—the deli guy. The monkey man. I think he has a tail.
00:12:07 Jesse Host So, I—what I wonder is, when you are creating anthropomorphized birds—which is the greater part of the characters on the show, 'cause they live in a bird town. In fact, I believe they live in Bird Town.
00:12:21 Lisa Guest It's called Bird Town. It's about seven hours away from Horseville.

[They chuckle.]

00:12:26 Jesse Host Do you—do you make choices about what things you are going to make person-like and what things you are going to make bird-like? Because birds have breasts, for example, but they don't have breasts.
00:12:39 Lisa Guest Yeah. Uh, just kind of a gut feel. Most of the characters don't have tails 'cause they're more humanoid, but then there are some non-anthropomorphic animals. There's a bird that flies around, but it has a tail. But it also has boobs, just 'cause that's funny to me.

[Jesse chuckles.]

There's like trains that are snakes and slugs. There's just giant snakes. *[Laughs.]* There's plant people. I mean, yeah. I don't know. Like, it comes down to each individual object or character. Bertie's phone comes alive and speaks to her because it makes sense to me for it to do so.

00:13:09 Jesse Host Have you gotten feedback about the choices that you've made on the new show?

00:13:14 Lisa Guest Uh, I think some people are just like, "Woah, this is too weird."

00:13:18 Jesse Host *[Laughs.]* It's very weird.

00:13:19 Lisa Guest But most people I think are into it. Like, it—I think there's a logic to the world that makes sense once you get past how strange it is at first. It's like, "Yeah, the fast train is a snake, and the slow train is a slug. Who doesn't understand that?" It's like—it's like Richard Scarry kind of stuff, but for adults. We've all grown up like reading books with surreality and animal people and stuff. So, I don't think it's that odd.

00:13:41 Jesse Host Sometimes TV shows have what's called the bible, which is like a list of rules of the universe.

[Lisa affirms.]

And, you know, that might be—

00:13:49 Lisa Guest We have a bible.

00:13:50 Jesse Host Yeah. How do you make a bible so that your insane, surreality is consistent from episode to episode?

00:14:00 Lisa Guest I mean, our bible is more about how we want it to look and like what the animation should do and like how we like it when Tuca's turned to the side and looks like a hieroglyphic. That's like the iconic Tuca pose, so we're like, "Let's keep her in this, you know, sideways pose as much as possible." As far as the rules of the universe, we just work it out in the writer's room for the most part. Each episode we break, we're like, "Well, would this happen? Does it make sense for this? Like can an ultrasound machine come to life?" And yeah, it made me laugh so hard in the room that absolutely yes. So, yeah, we're kind of just building it as we go along. I don't like to define like the hard sci-fi of a world before I've written the story. I think it's kinda limiting.

00:14:40 Jesse Host Can you give me an example other than the ultrasound machine of something that you had to work out the rules of while you all were sitting there?

00:14:48 Lisa Guest Uh, very early on in the process, I remember I was talking about the universe with Raphael, who's the exec producer and he's the creator of *BoJack* and he helped me develop *Tuca & Bertie* and he said, "Okay, so in this universe like is Bird Town in USA? Like in the United States?"

And I was like, "Yeah, I think so."

He's like, "Is there a China in this world?"

I said, "I don't knooow."

And he said, "Is there Chinese food?"

I said, "Yes!"

[They chuckle.]

00:15:18 Jesse Host So, I guess there has to be a China. *[Laughs.]*
Did the characters come out of an idea you had about things that I would think of as word things? Like, personal qualities or things like that? Or did they come from things that I would think of as picture things?

[Lisa laughs.]

00:15:40 Lisa Guest Like, big beaks and colors.
I mean, Tuca was kind of born out of me watching a nature documentary about toucans and one of them was like stealing eggs out of other birds' nests and gobbling them up. And the other birds were building their nests longer and longer to try to avoid these long toucan beaks stealing their young. And I thought, "Ooh! That's me! 'Cause I'm so greedy with food. That's definitely me. That's my id."
So, then I made up this character who could kind of like be and express like all the things that I don't, because I live in polite society. So, that was just fun for me.

00:16:09 Jesse Host You sort of live in polite society. *[Chuckles.]*

[Lisa affirms.]

00:16:13 Lisa Guest You skirt the edges of polite society, Lisa.
00:16:14 Jesse Host Getting less polite by the day.
I've read your books, Lisa.

[They laugh.]

00:16:18 Lisa Guest I do whatever I can get away with.

[Jesse agrees.]

00:16:49 Jesse Host And then Bertie came out of a comic I made that was a little bit more earnest and less funny about a couple buying a house and she was obsessed with plants and she filled the whole house with plants to kind of push him away emotionally. And it was a very personal story. So, when we were developing this show, I just kind of felt like those were two characters I'd invented that I wanted to see more of. And they kind of felt like they wrote themselves to me. They were kind of like two different aspects of my own personality. But also, reminded me of like friends that I have.

00:16:57 Music Music Even more with Lisa Hanawalt still to come. Stick around. It's *Bullseye*, from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

00:16:58 Jesse Host Thumpy electronic music.

00:16:58 Jesse Host This message comes from NPR sponsor Odoo.

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00:17:35	Promo	Clip	<p><i>[Music fades out.]</i> Music: Melancholy piano music.</p> <p>Speaker: What happens after a police officer shoots someone who's unarmed? For decades in California internal affairs investigations, how the police police themselves were secret until now. Listen to <i>On Our Watch</i>—a podcast from NPR and KQED.</p>
00:17:56	Jesse	Host	<p><i>[Music fades out.]</i> It's <i>Bullseye</i>. I'm Jesse Thorn. My guest, Lisa Hanawalt, is the acclaimed author of the books <i>Hotdog Taste Test</i> and <i>My Dirty Dumb Eyes</i>. She was a producer on the hit animated show <i>BoJack Horseman</i>. And she has her own show, <i>Tuca & Bertie</i>. Its second season debuts this June on Adult Swim.</p> <p>I wanna play a clip from <i>Tuca & Bertie</i>. And my guest is the creator of the show, Lisa Hanawalt. And so, Bertie works at Condé Nest—which is a magazine publishing firm—and she's not a—she doesn't have a glamorous job. She's a data analyst. And she is trying to put herself in line for a promotion. She's kind of being talked over in meetings by a loud, jerky dude and she's pretty shy and she's not even sure that her boss notices that she does good work. And so, she has this plan that she's going to convince him to notice her, then promote her, by making high quality small talk.</p>
00:19:01	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:19:02	Clip	Clip	<p>Bertie: Heeeeeey, Hollaaand!</p> <p>Holland: Oh. Good morning, Bertie!</p> <p>Bertie: That was some nice weather we had over the weekend, eh? Just makes you wanna go to the beach!</p> <p>Holland: Did you go to the beach?</p> <p><i>[A sproing sound effect.]</i></p> <p>Bertie: Ooh, nno. I mean, I thought about it, but it's a long drive and I'm afraid of crabs.</p> <p><i>[A rooster crows.]</i></p> <p>Speaker: You guys talking about the beach? You gonna catch some waves out there, Holland dog?</p> <p>Holland: <i>[Laughs.]</i> You know it, dog!</p> <p>Speaker: Alriiiight!</p> <p><i>[A trumpet sounds.]</i></p>

Bertie: Booyah! Watersports! Ba-bow! Haha! Yeah, sometimes I have nightmare about that part of the ocean where the water gets super dark because it's so deep. *[Chuckles.]*

[Ominous music fades in.]

Bertie: Like what if there's a giant monster crab down there waiting to pinch my butt?

[Squeaky toy noise.]

00:19:42 Sound Effect Transition Music swells and fades.

00:19:44 Jesse Host Cartooning is a very solitary profession.

[Lisa agrees.]

00:19:52 Lisa Guest And television is the opposite of that.

00:19:55 Jesse Host Very, very communal. Yes. *[Laughs.]*

And I wonder, you know, when you started working on *BoJack* and then, you know, started being in charge of the show, what it was like going from sitting at a drafting table or a computer by yourself in your house with a croissant...

[Lisa cackles.]

00:20:17 Lisa Guest To—which is, I presume, what you're up to. Uh.

00:20:18 Jesse Host Always with my trusty croissant.

Look, I've seen *Caroline in the City*. I know a little something about this. It's what adults are like.

To an office-office. Like, it's one weird thing about show business is how sad the offices are.

[They laugh.]

00:20:37 Lisa Guest Like, you're like, "Acoustic tiling? Really? We're making—we're making *American Gladiators*." Or whatever.

Yeah. Even ours, which is really nice but there's no windows. So, it's really—like I get kind of sad in there. It was really hard, especially running the writer's room. 'Cause I only sat in the *BoJack* writer's room a couple of times and it was terrifying. So, to suddenly be in there and be in charge was just—it was so—I just wasn't used to like sitting and looking at other people for seven hours. Like—and just—my neck and shoulders would hurt from just like nodding at people to show them that I was like listening to their ideas?

[Chuckling.] Like, it was like I was learning how to like be a human, 'cause I was used to like sitting alone in my office working at my desk all day. But after a couple weeks, I just got used to it. It's amazing like what you can adapt to.

00:21:19 Jesse Host Did you get used to being the boss and decider?

00:21:22 Lisa Guest Not really. But, you know, I go at it with a very collaborative point of view. I know it's ultimately up to me and I get to decide and if I feel strongly about something, I can—you know—decide that and that feels great. But I can always ask people what they think. I can let the wonderful artists and directors and editors and writers who work on my show have a say, and that feels really good, 'cause they

			improve things. So, yeah. I'm kind of uncomfortable being called a boss.
00:21:47	Jesse	Host	There are three leads of the show and none of them are white and certainly none of them are white dudes. You've got Steven Yeun.
00:21:56	Lisa	Guest	Ali Wong.
00:21:57	Jesse	Host	Ali—the great Ali Wong.
00:21:58	Lisa	Guest	Tiffany Haddish.
00:21:59	Jesse	Host	My bud from San Francisco, Tiffany Haddish—the legendary Tiffany Haddish. Was that a choice that you made or a matter of happenstance?
00:22:08	Lisa	Guest	Kind of both. I wanted to make sure we didn't end up with an all-white cast, because it's happened so often before in both live action and animation. And then, just looking at—you know—auditions and stuff. This was just the best possible cast. There was no way around it. Like, we got Tiffany signed on very early and then it was a matter of finding a Bertie that would sound great with Tiffany. And Ali was the best, absolutely. And they already knew each other. They had great chemistry. And then, yeah, Steven Yeun just had the best audition.
00:22:36	Jesse	Host	Steven Yeun's good.
00:22:37	Lisa	Guest	He's so good. He's very—I can't believe like how quickly he can go from comedy to drama. Like, I don't quite know any other actor who can do it like him.
00:22:47	Jesse	Host	I'm not surprised to hear that Tiffany Haddish was cast first on the show, because she is such a dynamo of a performer. Like, she's just such a force.
00:22:59	Lisa	Guest	Yeah, when I saw <i>Girls Trip</i> , I just said, "That's a Tuca." Like. <i>[Laughs.]</i> It was just undeniable.
00:23:05	Jesse	Host	What were the qualities that you saw in her, as a performer, that made you think, "That's a Tuca"?
00:23:08	Lisa	Guest	Absolutely fearless. Incredibly funny. But also, like, had an earnestness or a vulnerability. Like, you know—like, she—the way she like stood up for her friends in the movie. Like, I don't know. She just kind of hit like every quadrant of what I wanted. And then I was reading an article and I recognized the name of her manager at the time, and I knew him. So, I was like, "Oh my god. We can get a script to her." And we did and she said yes right away, and I cried. <i>[Laughs.]</i> It was a great day.
00:23:35	Jesse	Host	Do you think of that character who is so bold and often fearless—and, I don't know, lives out loud or whatever cliché you wanna use—as aspirational or cautionary?
00:23:51	Lisa	Guest	Um. I think it's aspirational to people like me, who tend to be more on the Bertie side of things. I'm just always trying to like behave myself in reality even though I'm kind of unleashed in my art. Yeah, I don't know. I think—I think she just seems like she's having a good time. But then you listen to like her book, her—I listened to it was a book on tape and you're like, "Oh my god." I can't believe like how much she's gone through in her life. And clearly, she's just someone who can get by in any situation, like she's gonna survive.
00:24:18	Jesse	Host	Do you write things for Tuca that are things that you would like to imagine yourself doing?
00:24:25	Lisa	Guest	Uh, yeah. Wearing short shorts. You know.
			<i>[They laugh.]</i>
00:24:29	Jesse	Host	First and foremost!

00:24:30	Lisa	Guest	She's very comfortable in short shorts. A lot of the things Tuca does reminds me of how I was in my 20s, more. Like, how I lived. And then Bertie's sort of more like I am now, which isn't to call Tuca immature. I don't believe that about her at all. But I think I just changed as a person.
00:24:48	Jesse	Host	What changed?
00:24:49	Lisa	Guest	Uuum. I used to be like more kind of, "Bleh!" Like, I would just kind of put everything out there and I was really tactless, and I lived in a messy apartment and like I—you know, didn't have my stuff together. But in some ways, I was like kind of having more fun. Yeah, I don't know. I'm more careful now.
00:25:05	Jesse	Host	Does writing that kind of character make you think about the consequences of living in that way? Because she doesn't live without consequences.
00:25:14	Lisa	Guest	Yeah. And we see that she's having trouble like forming intimate relationships with anyone other than Bertie. And I think that feels pretty true to life.
00:25:24	Jesse	Host	Do you?
00:25:25	Lisa	Guest	Yeah! Yeah. I think if like you're kind of struggling to get by and like you're a mess and like you're used to being kind of loud and out there, that could maybe be like a defense mechanism. She's also—she's sober, so we kind of see like she gets like socially anxious in situations where in the past she might have like had a drink or five to lubricate the situation. So, she's having trouble like going on dates or, you know, meeting new people.
00:25:52	Jesse	Host	How did you decide to make her sober?
00:25:55	Lisa	Guest	It was just a way to kind of flesh out her character a little more and kind of deepen her. I didn't want her to just be like the wild, crazy, wacky friend who supports Bertie on her emotional arc. You know, she needed her own stuff. And I have a lot of friends—now that we're in our 30s—who are sober and for a lot of them, it wasn't this like dramatic thing where they hit rock bottom and now they relapsed and—you know. It's kind of more just like a quiet decision about how they wanted their lives to be. And I think there's something interesting about showing that and showing what those struggles are. They're a little bit like more subtle.
00:26:28	Jesse	Host	We'll wrap up with Lisa Hanawalt in just a bit. When we come back from the break, it's time for horse talk with Lisa Hanawalt! She got a horse. She named the horse. It's a very cute horse. What's its name? Stay tuned! Folks, in the industry we call that a tease. It's <i>Bullseye</i> , from MaximumFun.org and NPR.
00:26:48	Music	Transition	Relaxed music.
00:26:49	Jesse	Promo	This message comes from NPR sponsor Hello Fresh.
			With over 25 recipes to choose from weekly and no grocery store trips needed, Hello Fresh makes getting dinner on the table easy again, amid your busy schedule. Hello Fresh's fresh, pre-portioned ingredients are sourced directly from growers and delivered from the farm to your front door in under a week, contact free. For 12 free meals, including free shipping on your first box, go to HelloFresh.com/bullseye12 and use promo code "bullseye12".
00:27:27	Promo	Clip	<i>[Music fades out.]</i> Music: Low, unsettling music.

Ross Blocher: *[Using a spooky, deep voice.]* Somewhere between science and superstition, there is a podcast.

[Several crashes and a blood curdling scream.]

Ross: *[Ominously.]* Look, your daughter doesn't say she's a demon. She says she's the devil himself!

Carrie Poppy: *[Dramatically, with a cartoonish southern drawl.]* That thing is not my daughter! And I want you to tell me there's a show where the hosts don't just report on fringe science and spirituality but take part themselves!

[Cheerful music fades in.]

Ross: *[Speaking normally.]* Well, there is! And it's *Oh No, Ross and Carrie!* on Maximum Fun.

Carrie: *[Speaking normally.]* This year we actually became certified exorcists.

Ross: So, yes, Carrie and I can help your daughter!

[Chainsaw revving sounds.]

Carrie: Or we can just talk about it on the show.

[Ominous music returns.]

00:28:13 Jesse Host

Ross: *[Spookily.]* *Oh No, Ross and Carrie!* on MaximumFun.org. Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. If you're just joining us, my guest is Lisa Hanawalt. She's a cartoonist, a writer, and a podcast host. She created the animated comedy show *Tuca & Bertie*. It's a sitcom about two bird women who live in a city called Bird Town and it is sooo great! The show's second season is set to kick off this June on Adult Swim. Lisa and I talked about the show in 2019.

Let's talk about some of the things that come up as themes in your work. And, generally, often they come up in *Tuca & Bertie* too. One of them is food.

[Lisa agrees.]

00:29:04 Lisa Guest

You're—now, Bertie on the show is a chef, a pastry chef. At least, beginning as—she begins as an accomplished amateur pastry chef. And you are not a chef.

00:29:07 Jesse Host

No. I'm a terrible cook.

00:29:09 Lisa Guest

Do you cook—can you—can you cook anything?

Yeah. I'll make something in like the instapot and—instant pot, sorry. And, you know, I—yeah. There's a couple things I make, but I tend to eat the same food over and over again. Like, 90% of the time. So.

00:29:19 Jesse Host

What are the foods that you eat over and over again?

00:29:22 Lisa Guest Oh, I make like chicken chili verde or I'll make like a chicken curry in the instant pot—my favorite. I'll make stuff in the rice cooker. I don't know. Simple egg dishes. *[Laughs.]*

00:29:33 Jesse Host Do you eat like the same thing for breakfast every day?

00:29:35 Lisa Guest Pretty much.

00:29:37 Jesse Host What is it?

00:29:38 Lisa Guest Usually like a slice of gluten free toast with nut butter and a banana. Sometimes eggs, if I'm really feeling it.

00:29:45 Jesse Host How do you come up with all of the foods that are featured in Bird Town?

00:29:50 Lisa Guest I, uh—I mean, I love—I really like thinking about the food industry and like I wrote for *Lucky Peach* for a long time, so I kind of—I've been on the periphery of that for a while. So, I kind of like making up stuff that makes fun of food industry things. Like, I mean the crundt—which is like a cruller/bundt cake combo is kind of making fun of the cronut guy quite a bit. Um. *[Giggles.]* So, we made up a lot of really silly pastries.

00:30:14 Jesse Host Can you tell me a few more of the pastries that you came—was this like a day in the writer's room?

00:30:19 Lisa Guest Uuuh, it was just a continual process in the writer's room of coming up with new things.

[Jesse laughs.]

00:30:25 Jesse Host Well, uh—*[laughs]* the same—
There's like one giant piece of paper on one of the walls. Somebody's like, "Sorry, I know we're working on story right now, but I got a new baked good."

00:30:32 Lisa Guest Here are some new pastries. Well, the same guy in the show who invents a crundt later comes up with the croondt—and that's a croissant/bundt cake. And then, by then—you know, you think he's a genius at the beginning. By then you're like, "Maybe this guy's kind of a hack. I don't know." *[Laughs.]* And then Bertie starts to come up with stuff, so she comes up with choquettis, which are kind of like a spaghetti version of choquettes. And then she comes up with the sweetbeak pastry, which is like a little bird head filled with lemon curd pastry.

00:30:56 Jesse Host There's something kind of like immediately sensual—

[Lisa agrees.]

—about your—like, the way that you draw everything is either slightly sexual or slightly foodie.

[They chuckle.]

00:31:19 Lisa Guest You know what I mean? And it—so, it fits so perfectly into this world that there would be these almost like fetishized, weird joke foods. Yeah. I mean, I like—I like, like, Miyazaki movies where the food is always—looks so delicious. And I know we didn't have like even a fraction of that animation budget or time, but I just wanted to get a little bit of that feeling in there.

00:31:31 Jesse Host But also, like Tuca's really keen on keeping meat in drawers.

00:31:35 Lisa Guest Yeah, that's really disgusting.

[They laugh.]

			She treats food pretty differently from Bertie. Not quite the same respect there.
00:31:44	Jesse	Host	So, let's talk about horses, now.
00:31:46	Lisa	Guest	Oh, gladly.
			<i>[They laugh.]</i>
			Couldn't wait for you to bring it up. <i>[Chuckles.]</i>
00:31:52	Jesse	Host	So, were you a horse girl, as a kid?
00:31:57	Lisa	Guest	Yeah. I started taking riding lessons when I was eight and immediately switched from being a cat girl to a horse girl. Like it was just immediate.
00:32:04	Jesse	Host	Is cat girl a type of girl?
00:32:06	Lisa	Guest	Yeah. I was into cats. Like really into cats. Thought I was a cat. And then I was like, "No. I'm a horse."
00:32:13	Jesse	Host	How old were you when you started taking riding lessons?
00:32:16	Lisa	Guest	Uh, eight.
00:32:17	Jesse	Host	What was it about horses?
00:32:19	Lisa	Guest	Don't know. It's like—I don't know. Just picture like your favorite thing. Or like your favorite food or something. And then try to explain why you like it so much. I don't know, it's like just chemical.
00:32:31	Jesse	Host	You have a horse now, right?
00:32:32	Lisa	Guest	I do. I got her like five months ago.
00:32:34	Jesse	Host	Did—have you been a horse rider throughout your life?
00:32:39	Lisa	Guest	I quit for 17 years.
00:32:41	Jesse	Host	Why's that?
00:32:42	Lisa	Guest	Um, I got scared. Like, I had a couple accidents and then it just became too much to me to try to keep it up during high school and college. And it's—you know, kind of expensive and I was just like, "Yeah, I don't wanna do this. It's too dangerous." And then Adam bought me some riding lessons for my birthday, because I was thinking about it and I didn't wanna commit and then he just did it. And then I just got back into it, and that was about five years ago. And then, with Juniper—my horse—I was <i>[chuckling]</i> —it was like kind of during a lull in production when we were done with the writing process. We were done with most of design, and it was just kind of sitting in edit bays all day and I was feeling like a little depressed and I was like, "I'm not really doing anything creative. What am I doing with my life?" And then I just kind of found this Facebook ad for Juniper and I bought her.
00:33:26	Jesse	Host	Wait—you bought your horse from a Facebook ad?!
00:33:28	Lisa	Guest	Yeah.
			<i>[They chuckle.]</i>
00:33:30	Jesse	Host	Like, the same way you'd buy an outboard motor?
00:33:32	Lisa	Guest	Pretty much. It was the same as buying a car. Like, I—we called up the trainer selling her, and my riding teacher went to test ride her and then I went for two test rides. I just was like, "Okay." And then she was just delivered in a trailer.
00:33:45	Jesse	Host	Brought a coin to check the tires.
00:33:47	Lisa	Guest	Yeah! <i>[Laughs.]</i> I kicked her tires.
			<i>[They chuckle.]</i>
00:33:51	Jesse	Host	What kind of horse is your horse?
00:33:53	Lisa	Guest	She's a fjord, which is a Norwegian horse.

00:33:55 Jesse Host That's a type of geography. *[Quietly.]* Is it also a horse?
00:33:57 Lisa Guest Yeah. It's also a—it's—they are the horses that can live in that part of the world. *[Laughs.]*

00:34:01 Jesse Host I've seen a picture of it. It was a picture of you on the horse in the *New York Times*, which I was thrilled, thrilled to see.

[Lisa affirms.]

How often do you get to see somebody you know on a horse in the *New York Times*?!
[They laugh.]

00:34:13 Lisa Guest That was a life highlight for sure.
00:34:15 Jesse Host But your horse appears to be quite stout.
00:34:18 Lisa Guest Yeah, she's very short with stumpy legs and she's round like a yoga ball. But she's really strong.
00:34:25 Jesse Host Why did you pick that kind of horse? A weird, stout horse, rather than—

[Lisa laughs.]

00:34:32 Lisa Guest It's an adorable horse.
00:34:33 Jesse Host She's very cute.
And I'm not a horse person, but it's an adorable horse. But why did you want a funny, stout, strong horse instead of—

[Lisa laughs.]

00:34:40 Lisa Guest Like, most people—I feel like—
I mean, I'm funny, stout, and strong.

[They chuckle.]

No, I mean, part of it is that I had visited Norway a couple years ago when I went for a comics festival. They flew me out there. And I went for a horse ride 'cause I was like, "Oh, it's Norway. That means I get to meet this kind of horse that I've always thought was so cute." I've liked them ever since I was a little kid. So, I went on a ride on one and she was just so great and strong and calm and tame and then when I saw this Facebook ad, it was for a horse that was like identical to the one I'd ridden. So, that was part of it.

00:35:10 Jesse Host What's her personality like?
00:35:12 Lisa Guest Um, she loves people. She loves attention. She has very strong opinions. Um.

00:35:18 Jesse Host What does a horse have strong opinions about?
00:35:20 Lisa Guest How fast they get to go on the way home.

[They laugh.]

And which direction they wanna go. But she's also very, very affectionate and she wants to be good and do a good job, which is good. So, mostly we're on the same page.

[Lisa affirms multiple times as Jesse continues.]

00:35:35 Jesse Host It's a little strange to me—and tell me if this is strange to you—that here in Los Angeles, you can go to Burbank—which is in most

ways, the most extraordinarily normal suburb of all normal suburbs. And then you're out by the Pickwick Bowl, and then there's just people riding horses around like that was a way that you get from suburban locale to suburban locale.

00:36:03 Lisa Guest You can ride them in the street. You could ride them through the drive through. There was like light switch plates to cross the street and they're up, like, six feet high so that you can press them from horseback. It's amazing. It's like a dream. There's people that have horses in their backyards, there. It's just all zoned for it.

00:36:18 Jesse Host It's so confusing to me.

[Lisa agrees.]

00:36:23 Lisa Guest Lisa!
It's funny, like the whole drive to the barn I'm constantly looking out the window like, "Oh! Horses!" And then I ride my horse and then the whole drive back home, I'm like, "Oh! Look! Horses!"

[They laugh.]

00:36:35 Jesse Host I go to the—there's a vintage textile show at the—at the Pickwick there in Burbank, in the horse district of Burbank.

00:36:41 Lisa Guest It's like right across from the equestrian center. Yeah.

00:36:43 Jesse Host Yeah. And you'll—I'll be driving there and then there's just a horse in the street.

00:36:49 Lisa Guest Yeah. It's really—

00:36:50 Jesse Host Like it belongs there and not on a hill.

00:36:53 Lisa Guest I love how surreal it is. I really enjoy it. *[Chuckles.]*

00:36:56 Jesse Host It's a little bit like your show.

[Lisa agrees with a laugh.]

I mean, like—your show is like these animals that are weirdly in between animal world and people world.

00:37:06 Lisa Guest Yeah. To me, it's—

00:37:07 Jesse Host Like, they're not just straight substitutes for people.

00:37:10 Lisa Guest No. They still have their animal qualities. Yeah. I like that kind of contradiction. Like, I like that I'm like walking my horse down the street literally in front of people's houses and front lawns and then there's someone like walking a Labrador like on the other side of the street. It's just funny.

00:37:25 Jesse Host My wife's childhood best friend—one of her childhood best friends—is an equine therapist.

[Lisa hums in interest.]

And years ago—so, she works with horses every day. And years ago, she was a horse guide of some kind and was thrown.

00:37:41 Lisa Guest Oh no!

00:37:42 Jesse Host And like came close to being killed.

00:37:45 Lisa Guest Oh no.

00:37:46 Jesse Host She's fully recovered and, as I said, she still works with horses today. But I thought to myself, you know, "There's people who are afraid of dogs and dogs can bite and I love dogs."

[Lisa agrees.]

00:38:05 Lisa Guest But the like one or two times that I've been on a horse—and it hasn't been since I was like 13, but I was terrified!
 Yeah, I get scared every time. Like, I'm gonna go riding right after this, actually, and I'm scared! I'm nervous. Like, I don't know what's gonna happen out there. But that's part of why I like it. It makes me feel like very brave and I have to be calm while I'm doing it, or else things will fall apart. Like, I have to kind of keep it together for her. You know? Yeah. I don't know. It's like the most therapeutic thing, in a way.

00:38:29 Jesse Host It's like you—it seems like, from an outsider's perspective—someone who's ridden a horse twice in his life—it seems like you have to invest so much in the emotional relationship with this relatively empathetic animal.

00:38:48 Lisa Guest Yeah. It's this 900-pound—sometimes 1,200-pound animal that you are taking care of. They're like a giant, frightened baby. My horse is afraid of squirrels. She's afraid of the sound of Velcro. I never can guess what she's gonna be afraid of. I always think it's gonna be like, "Oh, look, there's a—you know—a crazy lady hula hooping." Literally something I saw the other day and I thought my horse would be afraid of and she wasn't. But then like a tree branch, you know, crackles and she jumps like, "Augh! I'm gonna be killed by a lion!" You know? It's, um... but in some ways like that's—you know, I relate to that as an anxious person. So, I'm able to like kind of take care of her in those moments.

00:39:26 Jesse Host How often do you ride?
 00:39:28 Lisa Guest Um, I go—I'd say on average—four times a week? I don't always ride her though. Sometimes I just go and like walk her around and hang out with her.

00:39:37 Jesse Host Feed her carrots.
 00:39:38 Lisa Guest Yeah, I do. *[Laughs.]* I feed her Altoids.

00:39:42 Jesse Host *[They laugh.]*
 Wait! Is that a thing?!

00:39:43 Lisa Guest Yeah. I think she likes peppermint.
 00:39:45 Jesse Host Aalright. Yeah, I've heard of that. Yeah. I guess an Altoid is a peppermint.

00:39:52 Lisa Guest *[They chuckle.]*
 A curiously strong one.
 00:39:54 Jesse Host Uh, Lisa, can you give me an update on Martha Stewart's pony?
 00:40:02 Lisa Guest Oh, Ben Church?
 00:40:03 Jesse Host Yeah, sometimes called Ban Church.
 00:40:06 Lisa Guest You know, she hasn't been posting about Ban Church as much. And I just kind of wonder, because she got him for her grandchildren and I'm like, do they actually ride him? Like what's going on with that? How's his training doing? She got him as quite a young horse, and so now he's getting to be a little older. He's probably better behaved now. But yeah, she just doesn't post about him nearly enough. So, I've kind of gotta flesh out my Martha information with more stuff from the rest of her life and her other animals.

00:40:32 Jesse Host I mean, we're on NPR right now, Lisa.

[Lisa affirms.]

And I'm not gonna make presumptions about what radio station Martha Stewart listens to in her home in Connecticut or wherever.

[Lisa chuckles.]

But I'm gonna say maybe she listens to the classic rock station sometimes? Maybe she's on *Stern 101* or whatever it is, on SiriusXM, but I'm gonna guess that we have as close to a direct line to Martha Stewart as you're gonna get.

00:41:00 Lisa Guest

[Laughs.] I just would love to meet her and talk about her pony. And I feel like now that I have my own pony, we've got something in common! Like, she's got a fell pony. I've got a fjord pony. Like, I just feel like we could be in the same—you know, we've got a lot in common, now.

00:41:13 Jesse Host

I think you could—I think you could do it.

[Lisa agrees.]

00:41:18 Lisa Guest
00:41:22 Jesse Host

I think Martha's—Martha—
I wanna ride Ben Church. That's my—that would be like my dream.
Martha.

[Lisa laughs.]

00:41:26 Lisa Guest

Let—let Lisa ride Ben Church.

00:41:33 Jesse Host

I'm not even asking to ride one of the big ones, 'cause she has Friesian horses, which are huge. I just wanna ride the little guy.

00:41:35 Lisa Guest

Let Lisa Church.

[Cackles.] Hashtag, #letlisachurch. She does not have to acknowledge me in any way. She's like—she's got her own thing going on.

00:41:44 Jesse Host

No. She does.

[Lisa laughs.]

Hi, I'm Jesse Thorn from NPR. Martha Stewart, #letlisachurch. Lisa Hanawalt, congratulations on *Tuca & Bertie*.

[Lisa thanks him.]

It's so great and I'm so happy for you and thank you for all of your wonderful work.

[Lisa thanks him again.]

I just love it to death.

Lisa Hanawalt: the long anticipated second season of *Tuca & Bertie* premieres June 13th on Adult Swim. Lisa also hosts the hilarious *Baby Geniuses* podcast, here at Maximum Fun. In it, she and her co-host, Emily Heller, research and learn about topics like McDonalds characters, squirrel bridges, and something called the Great Michigan Pizza Funeral. That's a great show.

00:42:37 Music Transition
00:42:40 Jesse Host

Relaxed, thumpy music.

That's the end of another episode of *Bullseye*. *Bullseye* is created out of the homes of me and the staff of Maximum Fun, in and

around greater Los Angeles, California—where, thanks to a bit of late-night sale spotting, I bought a truly absurdly huge monitor. I mean, it is like... I basically feel like I am working in a scene in a Tom Clancy movie set in CIA headquarters.

The show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our producer is Kevin Ferguson. Jesus Ambrosio and Jordan Kawling are our associate producers. We get help from Casey O'Brien. Production fellows at Maximum Fun are Richard Robey and Valerie Moffat. 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 their label, Memphis Industries, for sharing it.

You can also keep up with the show on Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. We post all our interviews there. I... am on Twitter [@JesseThorn](#). And I think that's about it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature signoff.

00:43:47 Promo Promo

Speaker: *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn* is a production of [MaximumFun.org](#) and is distributed by NPR.

[Music fades out.]