

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.
00:00:13	Jesse Thorn	Host	<i>[Music fades out.]</i> I'm Jesse Thorn. It's <i>Bullseye</i> .
00:00:15	Music	Transition	"Huddle Formation" from the album <i>Thunder, Lightning, Strike</i> by The Go! Team. A fast, upbeat, peppy song. Music plays as Jesse speaks, then fades out.
00:00:24	Jesse	Host	John Bradley was about 22 years old when he got the part that changed his life. He'd just graduated from theatre school in Manchester, England. He'd done some theatre work, but never anything on camera. He got called in for an audition—literally his first audition ever—and he knew it was a big deal. It was a new HBO show called <i>Game of Thrones</i> . And what happened? Well, he got the part. For eight years, he played Samwell Tarly, Jon Snow's best buddy. In the beginning, it's clear that Sam isn't cut out for the world of <i>Game of Thrones</i> . He's not a natural warrior. He's big and kind of soft. He's smart, but not especially cunning. He's nice, but maybe a little goofy.
			And on any other show, you can pretty much guess his character's trajectory. Maybe he stays a bumbling comic sidekick or maybe he gets killed off tragically. Or maybe he transforms and finds the warrior inside him and learns to use an axe or whatever. On <i>Game of Thrones</i> , none of that happens. The things Samwell was bullied for—his kindness, his empathy, his bookishness—they turn out to be assets, not liabilities. Samwell became one of the shows most beloved characters and probably one of the few who made it to the series finale alive. And I mean, I'm sorry that I spoiled that, but the show ended two years ago. Get your act together.
			I talked with John in 2019, right as all of that was happening. What's he been up to since then? Working! He's starring in the brand-new blockbuster disaster flick, <i>Moonfall</i> , alongside Patrick Wilson and Halle Berry. In <i>Moonfall</i> , the moon literally falls towards the earth—which is pretty straightforward premise! Anyway. Let's kick off my conversation with John with a clip from <i>Game of Thrones</i> . This comes from the very end of the show's bloody and harrowing run. All the great houses in the land are meeting to figure out the future of Westeros and finally, at long last, Sam has earned the respect of his peers. Or something close to it, at least.
00:02:33	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:02:34	Clip	Clip	<b>Samwell Tarly (<i>Game of Thrones</i>):</b> We represent all the great houses, but whoever we choose, they won't just rule over lords and ladies. Maybe the decision about what's best for everyone should be left to... well, everyone.

*[The others burst into laughter.]*

**Speaker 1:** Maybe we should give the dogs a vote, as well.

**Speaker 2:** I'll ask my horse!

00:02:59	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:03:00	Jesse	Host	<i>[They laugh.]</i>
00:03:05	John Bradley	Guest	John Bradley, welcome to <i>Bullseye</i> . It's really nice to have you on the show. It's great to be here. Thanks so much!
00:03:07	Jesse	Host	What an extraordinary achievement to be a part of. And congratulations on bringing it home!
00:03:13	John	Guest	Thank you! Yeah! It feels very strange to be one of the kind of very few people who've been in every single season of this show. There's only a handful of us left. And to have been in every single one of the eight seasons, it's a rare and very great privilege.
00:03:30	Jesse	Host	Your ticket is punched for life now, John. I have a friend <i>[chuckling]</i> —I have a friend whose father-in-law was on <i>Star Trek</i> .  <i>[John affirms.]</i>
00:04:04	John	Guest	The original <i>Star Trek</i> . And so, since 1965 or 1968 or whenever it was that <i>Star Trek</i> ran, he and the other main cast members of <i>Star Trek</i> have just had their lives conjoined. It's like those like—your six best high school girlfriends that you—every five years when somebody turns 30, you all go on a vacation together. Um. <i>[Giggles.]</i> Well, the fact that you thought I had six girlfriends in high school <i>[laughing]</i> means that you don't really know me that well at all!  <i>[Jesse laughs and struggles for words.]</i>
00:04:17	Jesse	Host	Over the course of this interview, you're gonna know just what an erroneous assumption that is, on your part. But I know what you mean. Well, I may be describing a hypothetical group of young ladies. I think it would be pretty weird even if you did have six girlfriends in high school, if you went on vacation with them <i>[dissolving into laughter]</i> every time they—
00:04:26	John	Guest	I'd be lucky to even get six hypothetical girlfriends in high school, believe me. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:04:31	Jesse	Host	But there is something remarkable about having been through this crazy crucible of—you know, <i>[chuckles]</i> flying to Iceland and Croatia and flying to Los Angeles to do—with people that, you know, your professional life and probably personal life will be tied to forever. And here you are. You're like 30ish and you—you know, you were in college when this started.
00:04:58	John	Guest	Yeah. And I think that that's why it makes it such a unique experience for people like me and people like Kit and Emilia and Maisie and Sophie and Isaac, because we don't know what it's really like to be professional actors and not be in this show. I think that's one of the reasons why it coming to an end is such a weird experience for us, because if you take people like Charles Dance or Dame Diana Rigg or people like that, they had these amazing careers before <i>Game of Thrones</i> . And then they were in <i>Game of Thrones</i> . And then they'll have an amazing career after it. But with us, it's all we know. And coming out the other side of it, it just feels like such a kind of stark—if you'll pardon the pun—such a kind of

stark difference between being in it for all those years and then suddenly being not in it.

The last time I wasn't in *Game of Thrones*—yeah, as you say, I was in college, and it was my entire 20s. Which is a formative period in anybody's life, but to have your 20s associated with this amazing experience and these amazing people and the friends that you've made that will be your friends for life. But to suddenly be without it, it feels like a real separation's happened. And it almost feels like you're kind of starting again. It feels like you slipped into some kind of wormhole of the show and now you've come out of it, and you have to get used to what life is like without it again. And that's gonna be really weird.

00:06:26 Jesse

Host

Has it already been weird?

00:06:29 John

Guest

Do you know what? It's been weird and it's—and it's been weird in ways that come as a complete surprise. Now, for example, just before we started this—when I was on my way to the studio to record this, I had a look at your Twitter feed, and it said—you know, "If you've got any questions for John, who played Samwell Tarly, on *Game of Thrones*," and moments like that, where you think, "Oh my god, I played him! It's already in the past tense!" That's one of the weird things. For kind of eight years, I've been the man who plays Samwell Tarly. And then since Sunday, the tense is completely changed and I'm suddenly the man who played him. And it's in the past. And you can only look back on it as something that's in the past tense and isn't of this moment; it's consigned to history, now.

And you can think about it in big kind of—big, all consuming, big kind of cosmic ways, if you're like—when you talk about how time is passing and over the course of a lifetime and transitions that happen in your life. But sometimes it's little, tiny things like that and little, tiny quirks of language that you're really just not used to that can really bring it on home. And yeah, I think that we're gonna be having to get used to that for a while. But it's only—it's only kind of three or four days since it's been over. It's been over for us, as a kind of everyday experience, for over a year now. I wrapped in—almost to the day, a year ago in 2018, the middle of May. That was just one stage in a very, very long goodbye.

And I've been trying to defer feeling the emotion of this goodbye, because I thought, "Well, I've wrapped on it, but we've not been on the air, yet. So, I don't really have to think about it being over until we've been on the air." And then even up to last week, when I was thinking, "Well, okay, we've shown five episodes of the final season, but I'm not gonna think about it being over just yet, because we still have one episode to go. It's only when that episode's been on that I really have to confront the idea that this thing is finished." And that was Sunday night/Monday and it's just been a very, very weird few days. But you just hope that in your career and in your life, you just do things that bring you the same level of fulfillment and you forge—you know, the same kind of intense friendships and you—and you become part of other kind of family units that match it, in terms of the affection that you have for each other and the professional respect you have for each other.

But that's all in the future. I don't really have any of that, here. All I'm left with now is memories of a—of a really wonderful and special time. And of course, the friendships that I made with Kit Harington Hannah Murray and Emilia Clarke and all of these people that have become such an important part of a very formative time of my life. I'm gonna have them going forward, but the reason for us all to be friends and the structure that brought us all together, that's kind of gone. And that's gonna take a bit of adjusting to, but I think that the people were always what I was gonna miss the most. And as long as you miss the people, you're kind of happy because you're in charge of how big a part they play in your life going forward. But yeah, the show—that's a piece of not only our history, but a piece of kind of entertainment history and it's only ever gonna be looked back on from now on, which is very odd.

00:09:59 Jesse Host

As I was watching the show's finale and knowing that I was going to be interviewing you in a few days, I imagined you like 20 minutes after the show ended texting maybe Jim Broadbent a text that says like, "What is being an actor?"

00:10:20 John Guest

*[They laugh.]*

Yeah! Completely! That's almost how you feel. You want some kind of guidance from somebody that it's actually gonna be okay. And I ended up watching the final episode in a screening room in London with Emilia Clarke and some of her friends and Jacob Anderson, who plays Grey Worm. I hadn't planned on watching it with anybody. I'd planned on watching it with my girlfriend, but in terms of getting together with people from the show, I didn't think that was gonna happen. And that was organized at the very last minute. And I think it was a really good way to do it, in the end. Not just because we were watching it on a big screen and with other people—which I think is an unbeatable way to watch a piece of entertainment. But also, because there were people there who know how I'm feeling, especially Emilia—because Emilia's been on it ever since season one the same way I have. And she's probably going through a lot of those feelings that I'm feeling about saying goodbye to it.

So, just to have her there—we didn't talk about it. We didn't dissect it afterwards and have a heart-to-heart about it. We just kind of knew implicitly that we were both feeling the same way. And that was a great—that was a great kind of support network to have at that moment in time, because nobody really understands the same unless they—unless they've had something like that—unless they've had a very intensive working relationship with people like that—even though myself and Emilia only worked together technically in the final season—somebody who's gone on that journey with you and knows what it's like to experience that kind of thing, to have them nearby at that very pivotal moment in your life, that was a perfect way of doing it, I think.

But yeah, Jim. Yeah, do you know it turns out that Jim, of course—Jim Broadbent was only in it for one season, but it turns out he wrote the whole thing!

*[Jesse affirms with a chuckle.]*

			He was responsible for writing that whole book! So, people think, “Oh, Jim Broadbent.”
00:12:18	Jesse	Host	Within the context of the fictional narrative.
00:12:20	John	Guest	Oh yeah, within the context of the logic of the show, Jim wrote the whole thing and that’s such an interesting point. People can say all they want, “Oh, Jim Broadbent played a small part in season seven of <i>Game of Thrones</i> .” But you think, no he didn’t. Jim’s actually probably the most important character in it and it’s no less than he deserves. <i>[Chuckles.]</i>
00:12:36	Jesse	Host	Yeah. I mean, I’d be like, “Hey, who wrote this? How about that guy from <i>Topsy Turvy</i> ? That guy’s great.”
00:12:41	John	Guest	Yeah! How about the guy from <i>Topsy Turvy</i> ?
00:12:43	Jesse	Host	“That guy’s a genius!”
00:12:44	John	Guest	Yeah, if there’s anybody you trust to write this whole thing, it’s Jim Broadbent. Even if I did come up with the title, or Sam came up with the title.
00:12:52	Jesse	Host	Do you remember what the character breakdown was when you went to the audition to play Sam?
00:13:01	John	Guest	I remember it being—I remember which scene it was. The scene that I had to audition with was the scene all the way back in season one, in Sam’s first episode, where Sam has to explain to John what he’s doing at Castle Black, and you get some kind of insight into Sam’s childhood and how damaged he is and what an abusive upbringing he had at the hands of his father. And the character breakdown just said, “Sam is overweight, shy, highly intelligent, and nervous.” And so, that breakdown as kind of—as sparse as it is, that character breakdown and those adjectives with this speech and you suddenly start to be able to make connections between the two. You start to think, “Oh, he’s nervous, but that’s only because he’s had this abusive upbringing. And he’s highly intelligent and maybe that was part of it as well. And he’s overweight and maybe that was a—that’s a symptom and a byproduct of this abusive childhood as well.”

And when you just have these two pieces of paper—separate pieces of paper, really—and hold them side-by-side, you start to be able to intermingle this information and start to work out a lot of his motives and a lot of his DNA and a lot of his character makeup and a lot of the reasons for him being as he is. And that’s the thing about great writing, I think. Great writing, as that monologue was all the way back in season one, you don’t need an awful lot of information to be able to figure a character out as an actor. It’s almost like a kind of musical score, even though I don’t read music. All the clues are there if you think about it properly and if you commit enough mental energy to it, you should be able to figure out all of these notes and figure out how to play it and figure out the clues for what’s hiding behind these words and what’s hiding behind these motivations that this character’s displaying.

And so, yeah, that was it. Yeah. Overweight, highly intelligent, shy, and nervous. Combined with that speech, it’s just all you need to know about Samwell Tarly. Especially all you need to know about Samwell Tarly when we first meet him; the journey that he goes on, maybe some of those—well, some of those scars definitely heal and he does develop and he does, you know, draw a veil over some of those quite apparent character traits that he exhibits early

on. But when you first meet him, that speech and that description is kind of all you need to know about where he is, psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually at that point.

00:15:43 Jesse Host More with John Bradley when we come back from a quick break. In just a bit, *Bullseye* fans on Twitter also have questions for him. And I promise, they are nice questions. It's *Bullseye*, from [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) and NPR.

00:15:56 Music Transition Bright, chiming synth.

00:16:01 Jesse Host It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. We are replaying my 2019 conversation with actor John Bradley. John played Samwell Tarly on *Game of Thrones* and he stars in the brand-new disaster movie, *Moonfall*, which is out now.

You talked a little bit on *The Conan Show* about a speech that Conan saw you give at one of the—it was either a wrap party or a premier party for one of the seasons of the show.

*[John affirms several times as Jesse continues.]*

And one of the things that you talked about was the like remarkable feeling that you had that, you know, having spent your whole life as an overweight kid—you know, and an overweight adolescent and young adult into your early 20s—that's a burden that you have to—that you have to deal with, socially. And to have that be the thing that someone wanted from you and how remarkable of a circumstantial change in your life that was.

00:17:05 John Guest Yeah. It's just—it's just that feeling that you can't quite escape, if you're a kind of overweight child or an overweight young person, that this is gonna really hold me back, actually, and this is gonna be something that's gonna be an obstacle and people aren't gonna be interested in me because of it—especially if you wanna be an actor, because, you know, the roles that are kind of available for an overweight young person, they're so few and far between—especially the good roles—that you just think, well I've got no chance.

And to find that while I was thinking all that about myself and while I did used to lie awake in bed sometimes thinking, "God, I just wish that things were different and I wish I could wake up and just not have this weight to deal with," all the time I was thinking that, David and Dan and the producers of the show were in Los Angeles and they were looking for exactly me. They were looking for a person who was not only overweight, but also was—you know, carrying a lot of emotional baggage around as a result of that weight and had low self-esteem issues because of it. And you know, found it hard to engage with the world because of it. And all—this—these ingredients that were such a part of my makeup at the time and such a part of Sam's makeup, they kind of fed into each other at a really kind of magical moment.

And if I'd have known that they were looking for me while I was thinking those things about myself, or if somebody would've told me that they were looking for me, I never would've believed it 'cause I just thought, "Oh, life doesn't really work like that." But they were! They were looking for exactly me and I was available, and I was ready and willing to use all of those things about myself to do a

good job for them. And it's not only that they would put up with my—what I, you know, deemed to be shortcomings and they would accept them, and they would work around them. They saw them as virtues. They saw them as qualities that they were looking for, and I wouldn't have been in the running for this wonderful part with so much potential to it and so much life to it if I wasn't going through these things in my personal life.

And you know, I've said that at *Conan*, and you know, you shouldn't kind of read YouTube comments if you can possibly help it and you shouldn't read Twitter comments. But sometimes it's hard to resist that, really. And you see people who say, "Oh, well, if you were that upset about it, just have a salad and go for a run. And you know, you don't have to be like that. You've had the power to change it if you were that unhappy about it." But that's probably a lot of thin people talking. And a lot of the time, it's not just about greed and it's not just about not wanting to go for a run or, you know, preferring cake to salad. It's not just about that. You can't necessarily make these perfectly rational, informed decisions about that, because overeating and the emotional crutch that comes with overeating is just a symptom of some kind of deep—not necessarily conscious unhappiness, because I thought I was—I thought, at the time and I still do think, that I was quite a happy person, day-to-day, and I had a lovely family and I had great friends around me.

00:20:27 John Guest

But there's something inside you that you consider to be empty, and you consider to be a blank that needs to be filled in and you struggle for a way of filling that and giving yourself little moments of happiness along the way and little, tiny things just to distract you from that feeling, and little, tiny, nice moments in your day that can make you feel better. And food is one way of doing that. And other people do it with drink, but I didn't drink. I still don't, really, and I'd never done drugs, either. So, people find different ways of filling these things, and mine was food. And I wasn't necessarily enjoying myself and I wasn't necessarily enjoying that lifestyle, but when it symbolizes something and you use it as a way of treating something about yourself that you're not happy with, it's not just as simple as, "Why don't you wake up tomorrow and have a salad and go for a run?"

It's just something that's more ingrained in you, like that, and it just takes a while to kind of break that habit. But yeah, all of this—all of this at the time was stuff that Sam was probably going through, as a nervous, overweight child, and I was going through, as well. And you know, sometimes the stars are just aligned your way and sometimes you just get the breaks. And that was—that was the big break and that was the moment that I thought somebody must have been looking down on me and smiling.

00:21:53 Jesse Host

Your character was the nerd hero of what might be the greatest nerd television program of all time.

*[John chuckles.]*

All apologies to like the Whovians in the audience and the—and the Trekkers and so forth, but I like it the best of all of them.

00:22:11 John Guest

Oh, great. That's nice to know.

00:22:13 Jesse Host And I wonder what—as a kid and as an adolescent—you were unduly passionate about? Intemperately passionate about.

00:22:25 John Guest There are two things in my life that I think are ever-present, really. And other things kind of come and go, but there are some things in my life that I know my passion will never really dim for, and one of them—one of those things is comedy. Comedy is my—is my first passion, really, and my first love and the thing that I turn to so often for comfort and escapism. And looking back, I think that I was watching comedy when I was a very, very young person that I shouldn't really have been watching. Like, I remember—I remember being—I think, you know, I was five, six, seven years old and watching—do you know *Blackadder*?

*[Jesse affirms.]*

Yeah, we—I remember watching *Blackadder* when I was five or six years old and that's quite an—that's an adult, you know, grownup comedy program, historically set but with lots of kind of bawdy humor about it and some sexual humor and a lot of cursing in it and bad language that I shouldn't have really been watching when I was five or six years old, but I remember just loving it so much and just loving the way it made me feel. And I think one of the first awakenings I had about being an actor or being a performer is that I used to watch *Blackadder* and I used to watch *Monty Python* and *Fawlty Towers* and some—you know, some American shows, as well. I used to watch—I used to love *Married with Children*. We used to have *Married with Children* on all the time, which really dates this to the kind of mid-'90s. And I used to watch it and think, "I'd love to be able to make other people feel the way they're making me feel."

And the other one is football. Soccer. Soccer is something that I go to and experience live and watch on—watch on television a lot. And you know, I say that I support Manchester United, and people then say, "Oh, who's your favorite player from the 1939-40 season?" Or "Can you name the top scorer in this season?" And I don't really think about it like that. I don't—I don't engage with football, and I don't engage with sport on an intellectual kind of academic basis. It's not an academic subject; I connect with it purely emotionally.

00:24:47 Jesse Host I don't know a lot about premier league soccer or, frankly, soccer or football in general.

*[John affirms.]*

Are Manchester United—I know they're one of the greatest and most famous teams of the premier league. Are they good guys or bad guys? Like, if you were a Yankees fan, I could ask you, "Are the Yankees good guys or bad guys?" And if you were honest with me, you would know that the Yankees are bad guys.

00:25:15 John Guest Oh, alright, okay. Well, in that case, Manchester United are definitely bad guys.

*[Jesse laughs.]*

Yeah. Yeah, yeah. They're really—they're really despised quite aggressively, in England. Or in the UK. Or, do you know, even in



the football community worldwide, because they had such a period of success in the 1990s, where they were just winning everything in sight and we had Sir Alex Ferguson, who's the greatest manager that football's ever seen. And we were just overcoming every single challenge. We were making history. We were winning everything that we really could win, at that time. And that's not gonna make people like you, I'm afraid. That's just—*[laughs]* that's just really not gonna do anything for your kind of public affection being shown towards you.

But just lately, we've had a little bit of a downturn and things aren't going our way and there are other teams who are arising up ahead of us and we're not winning things every season, now. But that doesn't necessarily seem to be assuaging or—you know—changing people's perception of us; people seem to be taking a real delight in our downfall, at the moment. And you know, that's easy to take when you're winning everything in sight, because you can console yourself with trophies and console yourself with success. But when you're not having the success that you once had and people are still vitriolic towards you on a daily basis and the media seem to take great delight in documenting your downfall and holding you up as some kind of morality tale about—you know—this too shall pass and you shouldn't get too smug, because you know, bad times—comparatively bad times are on the way. You think, "God, this and without any trophies—this really is the worst of both worlds."

*[Jesse chuckles.]*

So, yeah. No, definitely bad guys. I mean, we have a devil on our badge and our nickname is the red devils, so I probably didn't need that long an answer to answer that question, to be fair. I could've just said, "No, no, no, we're the red devils. We're definitely bad guys and that's all there is to it." But I like them. I like us. Who's to say? Who's to say who's a good guy and who's a bad guy? There's anti-heroes in everything, brings us back to *Game of Thrones*.

00:27:35 Jesse Host

*[Laughs.]* I imagined you like doing a thing where you like snap both fingers, clap your hands together, and then do an expansive gesture when you said, "That brings us back to *Game of Thrones*."

*[John giggles.]*

00:27:48 John Guest

Like a—gave it a big, magician's finish.  
No, no, no. I just—I—that wasn't the plan at all, that link.

*[Jesse laughs.]*

00:28:03 Jesse Host

I just—I just stumbled across that. I'm very, very pleased with it. But no, no. To say that I constructed that answer with that in mind would just be giving me far too much credit.

I know that you watch the show, because you've described watching the show. And I think it's a pretty good show to watch when it comes to shows that you're on, because even the biggest stars of the show are onscreen 15% of the time.

*[John confirms.]*

00:28:27 John Guest When the song is playing, do you ever make up words to the song inside your head? Or sing along to the song?  
No, it's—it's such a weird kind of Pavlovian reaction that I have to that theme, now. Because I can't listen to that music without associating it with a certain kind of nerves that I'm gonna be in this show and I'm gonna be judged on my performance in this show. And at some point, I'm gonna pop up in this show and do acting in it. And the world's gonna see me doing acting in this show. And that always starts with the music. Like, I think—I just associate the music now with being in screening rooms, like we did our premier in New York this year. We've done them in LA in the past. And you sit in big auditoriums and—auditoria—with thousands of people or hundreds of people who are gonna watch this episode.

And when the music starts, the entire audience erupts into some kind of frenzy of excitement. And every time they do that, every time they scream and shout and they applaud when they hear the start of that music, a certain dread kicks in for me.

*[Jesse laughs.]*

That I think, "Oh god, I wish I was just a fan of this show. Like I wish I could just watch it with everybody else and cheer when it comes on and not have this sense of responsibility or this worry that I'm gonna be judged literally any minute now. So, I think I have a—people in it have a much different reaction to that music. It fills—the vast majority of the world is filled with excitement when they hear that music, but I think for us there's just a sense of, "Oh god, here we go. Here we go. Oh no. What if it goes wrong? What if this is the episode that I'm just terrible in? And what if this is the episode that the world never quite forgives me for?" We can always see that with, you know, slightly more loaded and slightly more—slightly more negatively, I guess, if you're involved in it and you're gonna be held up to the judgement of, let's face it, a really quite judgement fanbase, over the course of the next hour.

00:30:34 Jesse Host *[Chuckles.]* I go, *[to the tune of the theme song]*, "Thrones, thrones, game of thrones, thrones. Throney thrones."

*[John laughs.]*

00:30:46 John Guest Inside my head and occasionally like with my dog, doing a little dance.  
Oh, that's nice! I'm gonna think of that. I nearly said—this is why I'm so not in the mindset of it finishing, yet. I said to myself, "Oh, I'll think of that next time it's on."

*[Jesse laughs.]*

00:31:10 Jesse Host There's not gonna be a next time it's gonna be on! I wish we'd have done this interview eight years ago; then every time I was nervous about it, I could think of you dancing with your dog. But now, that little tune is never gonna come in handy. Cheers for that.  
You, I imagine, get a script—you know, by email or courier or whatever—once every week or two, during the—during the time when things are filming. And also, the story of *Game of Thrones* was prescribed largely by the books for at least the first five or six

00:31:45 John Guest

years of the show. But I wonder, once that was no longer the case, whether you imagined what the path and what the endpoint would be for Sam, for your guy?

Well, I think I was kind of on a similar way of thinking to a lot of the viewers, inasmuch as you—after a while, if you’ve been exposed to enough film and TV, you start to know the form and structure of it and you start to recognize some of the kind of—some of the kind of flags that you see sometimes, which can give you clues as to how things are gonna end. For example, if you get somebody who is softer than most and is—and is likeable and isn’t tough and kind of—and kind of is kind of some sort of emotional centerpiece to the series and has a good heart, you can be forgiven for thinking—if you’ve watched enough film and TV in your lifetime—that, oh, he’s clearly gonna die for emotional manipulation. Because you’ve seen it in so many films. You’ve seen the good guy die, you know, halfway through a film. And then that gives the hero the impetus that he needs to carry on and he kind of fights for the memory of the good guy that’s died.

You’ve seen that so many times and you’ve seen that and—you know, you kind of get used to that cliché, overtime. So, a lot of people could be forgiven for thinking—like I kind of was. I thought, “At some point in the last two seasons, Sam’s gonna die. Jon Snow’s gonna see that, and then that’s just gonna kind of empower and galvanize Jon Snow to go forward and exact his revenge for the death of Sam, or something.” And I think that to give Sam a happy ending and to—and to make Sam be one of the very few people who actually survives over the course of these entire eight seasons, sometimes completely against all odds and sometimes coming back from situations that you just can’t imagine him ever surviving. If you take the battle of Winterfell, where he’s just being besieged by white walkers, and he sometimes has to try and fight them off—somehow has to try and fight them off.

That isn’t—that isn’t a situation that you’d expect Samwell Tarly to survive. And I think in shows that are kind of much more prescribed and much less bold and much less brave and rely more heavily on cliché, you know, Sam would’ve died in those moments. But the fact that he’s defied the odds and David and Dan and the writers that we have, they’ve defied audience expectations by keeping him alive and keeping him alive—not just keeping him alive to the very end but giving him a happy ending where suddenly his opinion and his unique set of skills and the attributes that he brings to the table, suddenly they’re valued, and they’re prized. And he sits around that table with Tyrion and everybody else at the end because he’s got something to offer.

And it’s not that he’s—he subscribes suddenly to some kind of toxic masculinity precedent. It’s not that he’s suddenly stopped being nerdy and bookish and he’s learned how to swing a sword around and he’s become a great fighter. That would be a redemption story in I think a much kind of cheaper narrative landscape, really, that he suddenly becomes a great fighter, and he finds that warrior within himself and he fulfills a lot of those—he kind of fulfills a lot of those patriarchal stereotypes that nobody thought he was capable of. That would’ve been one way to look at it, but what you get with Sam

00:35:15	Jesse	Host	is—at the end of the show, he’s valued because of the qualities that he had in him all along. Suddenly, the world’s caught up with him. More with John Bradley when we come back from a quick break. In just a bit, <i>Bullseye</i> fans on Twitter also have questions for him. And I promise, they are nice questions. It’s <i>Bullseye</i> , from <a href="http://MaximumFun.org">MaximumFun.org</a> and NPR.
00:35:28	Promo	Clip	<i>[A thundering explosion sound, followed by the ongoing roar of an excited crowd.]</i>

**Hal Lublin:** *[In a dramatic, guttural Randy Savage impersonation.]* Prepare yourself for the greatest pro wrestling podcast spectacular known as *[echoing] Tights and Fights!* A backdropping audio showcase that helps you understand the world of pro wrestling, with a lot of love and no toxic masculinityyyyyy! Featuring hosts: Danielle Radford.

**Danielle Radford:** Time to kick butt and chew gum! And I’m all out of butts!

**Hal:** Lindsey Kelk.

**Lindsey Kelk:** I’m a brutal brit and my fists were made to punch and HIT!

**Hal:** And Hal Lublin! *[Switching to his normal voice.]* I was doing the voiceover this whole time!

**Danielle:** Hear us talk about pro wrestling’s great triumphs and failures.

**Lindsey:** And make fun of its weekly absurdities!

*[Electric guitar music fades in.]*

**Hal:** On the perfect wrestling podcast: *[gutturally] Tights and Fights!* Every Saturday, Saturday, SATURDAY, on [Maximum Fun](http://MaximumFun.org).

00:36:16	Music	Transition	<i>[Music fades out.]</i>
00:36:21	Jesse	Host	Relaxed, chiming synth with a steady beat. It’s <i>Bullseye</i> . I’m Jesse Thorn. My guest is John Bradley of <i>Game of Thrones</i> and the new movie <i>Moonfall</i> .

Before we go, there are two questions that came up on Twitter that I feel I should ask you.

*[John affirms.]*

00:36:40	John	Guest	The first is do you even know how hot you are?
00:36:42	Jesse	Host	In terms of attractiveness, do you mean? I—well, it’s not my question, but I think they mean attractiveness, yeah.
00:36:46	John	Guest	Uuh, okay, let’s just take it that they mean attractiveness, right? There’s no answer I can give here that’s gonna make me sound good.

*[Jesse cackles delightedly.]*

Because okay—okay, ask me the question twice. Ask me the question twice. Go on.

00:37:00 Jesse Host Deal. Do you even know how hot you are?

00:37:04 John Guest Yes. I know how hot I am. Okay, go again.

00:37:08 Jesse Host Do you even know how hot you are?

00:37:10 John Guest No, I don't even know how hot I am! I'll tell you what my trouble is; I don't even know how hot I am.

Do you know what I mean?! Neither of those answers are any good! Neither—

*[Jesse groans.]*

Unless I had a caveat, which is, “Do you know how hot you are?” Yes, I do know how hot I am—not very. *[Laughs.]* That's the only way I can try and get out of it. So, I'm gonna say thank you very much for your compliment, whoever you are. But um, no. See, I just don't know how to answer! Just thank you very much for your compliment, I imagine. But I'm gonna—I'm gonna back out of it at this stage.

00:37:42 Jesse Host This one might have a more concrete answer.

*[John affirms.]*

What does Kit Harington smell like? It depends at what point you capture him, really. I mean, I think I've been with Kit at many stages of his own tiredness and his own fatigue and his own—you know, his own sense of progression through a day. If you catch him at the right moment, you've never smelled anything as nice in your life. Catch him at the wrong moment, and believe me, you won't be smelling much else for quite a while after. I think—I think—that's an interesting point, actually, about people think, “Oh, you know, *Game of Thrones*, it must be such a kind of glamorous shoot and you must have such a fun time on it.”

Fact of the matter is, that we're up to our knees in mud a lot of the time, in the rain in Belfast, wearing leather costumes that we've worn for ten years. We just stink. We stink so much. We absorb all sorts of smells into that costume; there's always fires burning. There's always horses who are always dropping their load all over the place. I think I've smelt as bad on *Game of Thrones* as I've ever smelt in my life and hope to smell for the rest of my life. So, what does Kit Harington smell like? The thing is, I don't know if he's got any *[chuckles]*—I should know this. He's such a good friend of mine. I don't know if he's got any kind of aftershave endorsements going at the moment.

*[Jesse laughs.]*

I wish I knew. Because then I could say that—I don't wanna say he smells like a certain aftershave that he's contractually forbidden from wearing, so I'm gonna say—I'm gonna play it safe, nice down the line. I'm gonna say: good, a lot of the time. Really not good, some of the time.

00:39:25	Jesse	Host	Well, John, I am so grateful that you took all this time to be on <i>Bullseye</i> and talk with me. It was—it was really nice to get to talk to you. And again, congratulations on this remarkable achievement.
00:39:36	John	Guest	Oh, thank you so much! No, I've really enjoyed it. Thanks for having me.
00:39:39	Jesse	Host	John Bradley. His new movie, <i>Moonfall</i> , is in theaters now.
00:39:43	Music	Transition	Upbeat, twangy synth.
00:39:46	Jesse	Host	That's the end of another episode of <i>Bullseye</i> . <i>Bullseye</i> is created from the homes me and the staff of Maximum Fun, in and around greater Los Angeles, California. Here at my house, we've just been watching this [ <i>chuckles</i> ] English antiques reality show called <i>Antiques Road Trip</i> all the time. I'm really into it.

Our show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our senior producer is Kevin Ferguson. Our producer is Jesus Ambrosio. Production fellows at Maximum Fun are Richard Robey and Valerie Moffat. We get booking help from Mara Davis. Our interstitial music is by Dan Wally, also known as DJW. Our theme song is called "Huddle Formation". It's by the group The Go! Team. Thanks to them and thanks to Memphis Industries Records for letting us use that.

You can also keep up with our show on Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. We post our interviews in all those places. And I guess that's about it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature signoff.

00:40:43	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.
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*[Music fades out.]*