

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.
00:00:14	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.
00:00:21	Jesse Thorn	Host	It’s <i>Bullseye</i> . I’m Jesse Thorn. My first guest this week is Charlotte Nicdao. She stars on <i>Mythic Quest</i> , a comedy on Apple TV+. <i>Mythic Quest</i> is about a video game company. It’s not really about video games. You’ll love it if you waited in line overnight to buy a PS5. But you’ll also love it if you haven’t touched a game controller since the days of ColecoVision. It’s a workplace comedy, but think less <i>The Office</i> , more <i>The Larry Sanders Show</i> . Everyone on the program cares deeply about what they’re working on: a video game. <i>Mythic Quest</i> , a massive, <i>World of Warcraft</i> style, online fantasy experience. Along with caring deeply about that game, everyone on the show also suffers from crippling insecurity.

There’s Ian (Eye-An), spelled I-A-N like Ian (Ee-An), played by Rob McElhenney of *It’s Always Sunny in Philadelphia*. Ian is the founder and creator of *Mythic Quest*. He wears a lot of rings and bracelets and has a very expensive looking haircut. In other words, he looks like a nerd who struck it rich, which is what he is. But he also worries that *Mythic Quest* is the only good idea he’ll ever have. And then, there’s Poppy, played by my guest, Charlotte Nicdao. If Ian is a natural-born leader who fears he can’t lead, Poppy is the opposite: a talented engineer with a million great ideas, who can’t really relate to people and constantly gets in her own way.

Like in this scene from the first season of *Mythic Quest*. Poppy has gotten to take the lead on her first big project. It’s a new feature in *Mythic Quest* called Dinner Party. Now, what is Dinner Party? Well, no one actually knows. But it doesn’t matter, as you’re about to hear. Dinner Party is ready to deploy. And to celebrate, Poppy gives a speech to her team.

00:02:16	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
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00:02:17	Clip	Clip	Poppy (<i>Mythic Quest</i>): A lot of hard work has gone into this, and now all that’s left to do... is hit this button.
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Michelle: Where’s Ian? Doesn’t he usually do the speech?

Poppy: Yes, Michelle. He does. But I’m doing this one. Because after the whole shovel thing, Ian finally agreed to let me have something that’s mine. And that thing is Dinner Party! *[Beat.]* It just seems like a natural clapping—whatever. Just—just don’t interrupt.

Michelle: Ooh, so Ian didn’t help. That’s why the name’s so confusing.

Poppy: It’s not confusing, Michelle. What else would you call a feature that allows players to connect across guilds and plan large-scale events?

Michelle: Have you ever been to a dinner party?

Poppy: Yes. [Beat.] Hundreds. Can you please stop being so negative? And don't interrupt anymore. You know what? I'm just gonna skip to the end. Let's launch! [Chuckles awkwardly.]
Music swells and fades.

00:03:04 Sound Effect Transition

00:03:05 Jesse Host Charlotte, welcome to *Bullseye*. It's nice to have you on the show.
00:03:08 Charlotte Guest Thank you so much for having me!

00:03:09 Jesse Host I have to ask you a couple of quick Australia things that came up a few months ago on the program.

00:03:14 Charlotte Guest Let's go.

00:03:15 Jesse Host That need to be addressed. Um, what I would call a playground slide, what would that be called?

00:03:25 Charlotte Guest A slide! Have you—have you heard the term slippery dip?

[Jesse confirms with a laugh.]

Okay, yeah. Yeah, definitely slippery dip is a big one, but you know, I think of a slippery dip as being like... hm. What—I think there's a difference between a slippery dip and a slide.

00:03:42 Jesse Host Really?

00:03:43 Charlotte Guest Yeah. And I—I should say that there are some things—some Australianisms that I'm certain are cultural, and then I find out after being certain publicly about it that it's actually just me.

[Jesse bursts into laughter.]

We had to do a whole lot of ADR on season one of *Mythic Quest*, because I was like, "Australians say 'aschewm' (assume)." And then I asked a bunch of Australians, and they were like, "No, we say assume and you are saying it wrong."

[They laugh.]

So, I have to be careful. I think a slippery dip is an extra-long slide. I don't think that just your average playground slide counts a slippery dip.

00:04:20 Jesse Host Because Claudia O'Doherty, the brilliant Australian comic and actress, told me that all slides are called slippery dips.

00:04:29 Charlotte Guest I'm sure she's right. You know what? I actually think I trust Claudia O'Doherty more with understanding Australianisms than myself.

00:04:37 Jesse Host I don't trust Claudia O'Doherty at all.

00:04:39 Charlotte Guest As far as I could throw her. And you can—

00:04:41 Jesse Host I really don't find her trustworthy. I think—

00:04:42 Charlotte Guest You can put that on the record.

00:04:44 Jesse Host She would—she would stab me in the back as soon as look at me.

00:04:48 Charlotte Guest I actually don't know Claudia. We have a lot of mutual friends.

00:04:50 Jesse Host She's very funny. She's a cool lady, but a little shifty.

00:04:54 Charlotte Guest And what was the second thing that she said?

00:04:56 Jesse Host What things go on a hamburger in Australia?

00:05:00 Charlotte Guest Oh, beetroot.

[They laugh.]

			That's a big one that you guys hate.
00:05:07	Jesse	Host	Is it like a pickled beet?
00:05:10	Charlotte	Guest	Yes! It's like—well, we called it a tinned beetroot. You guys would call it—
00:05:14	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	Jesse & Charlotte: <i>[In unison.]</i> —canned—
00:05:15	Charlotte	Guest	—beet. And you don't say the root part, do you?
00:05:18	Jesse	Host	No, we just say beet.
00:05:19	Charlotte	Guest	I get told off a lot, between countries. There are definitely a few words that, in Australia, if I say "beets", they're like, "Root. Beetroot. Say it right." And then, if I'm here—it's the same with like here you called a trashcan, and there they call it a bin. So, if I say, "Let's take out the trash," people will get upset with me that I spent too much time in America. But have you ever had pineapple on a burger before?
00:05:42	Jesse	Host	So, that's the other thing that Claudia told me.
00:05:44	Charlotte	Guest	That was the argument?
00:05:46	Jesse	Host	That seems pretty...
00:05:48	Charlotte	Guest	<i>[Laughs.]</i> Wait, so you don't have pineapple on burgers ever?
00:05:51	Jesse	Host	No.
00:05:52	Charlotte	Guest	<i>[Gasps.]</i> Oh, you're missing out. You should.
00:05:53	Jesse	Host	Really?
00:05:54	Charlotte	Guest	Yeah. And I bet you could get it here. And it—I mean it's—think about it. Salty, sweet, like umami, fatty. Like, acidic. You're covering all bases. It fulfills the function of like—I can get into this. If you wanna get into this—
00:06:08	Jesse	Host	Let's take a moment, yeah.
00:06:10	Charlotte	Guest	I can get into it. Tomato is kind of covering that base, on a burger.
00:06:14	Jesse	Host	Now, you say tah-mah-to, I say tuh-may-to.
00:06:17	Charlotte	Guest	Let's call the whole thing off.
00:06:18	Jesse	Host	Okay, fair enough!
			<i>[They laugh.]</i>
00:06:23	Charlotte	Guest	Yeah, tomato—I would say tomato covers that sort of like—not citrus, but like acidic, sweet, juicy function. But you know what is more acidic and sweet and juicy? Pineapple.
00:06:36	Jesse	Host	Is it like an—like a full—
00:06:38	Charlotte	Guest	Yeah, it's like a ring of pineapple. And it's burger-shaped and sized! It's like it was made to go on a burger.
00:06:46	Jesse	Host	The shape and size is convincing to me.
00:06:48	Charlotte	Guest	Yeah! It's perfect! It's like a slice of cheese!
00:06:52	Jesse	Host	When you came out to the United States, were there things that seemed as ridiculous to you as slippery dip?
00:06:59	Charlotte	Guest	I think no, because—and I don't know if Claudia said this, but I really grew up surrounded by American culture. I mean, you do, in Australia and in most western countries and non-western countries around the world. Like, I watched American television and American film, and so if anything, it was more like I really enjoyed getting to experience these things that were completely relegated to television. The first time I actually came to America was not at all for work and not to be an actor, but because I was—the whole first part of my life, I was certain that I was gonna be a very serious musician. And I came over here when I was 15 to do what was essentially band camp. And—yes, the eyebrows. That's the eyebrows that I always get when I say band camp. But—
00:07:50	Jesse	Host	You were an aspiring jazz singer, right?

00:07:52 Charlotte Guest Yes. Yeah. I mean, I was an aspiring a lot of things. I kind of cycled through a few genres and instruments trying to find one that I was good at. And then, when I failed to do that I was like, “Okay, shifting industry.” *[Laughs.]* But yeah, I came out here to do this band camp, and the most exciting part of that experience was getting to walk through a cafeteria with a tray of food to find a table, ‘cause I’d seen it in so many American movies. And that’s just not the way that we do things in Australia.

[They laugh.]

00:08:24 Jesse Host And I was like, “Oh my god! This is so glamorous!”
[Through laughter.] How can you transport more than two food elements?

00:08:27 Charlotte Guest I was like, “I don’t know where I’m gonna sit! Just like in the movies!”

00:08:32 Jesse Host Do all Australians know how to do that thing where you hold multiple plates on your arm like a waiter or waitress?

00:08:35 Charlotte Guest Well, no—no, no, we don’t do cafeterias. We—everyone brings a packed lunch and you’ve got a little bag for it. You seem skeptical.
[Laughs.]

00:08:46 Jesse Host Let’s talk about your show business aspirations. Your father was—is?—an actor.

00:08:52 Charlotte Guest Yeah! He was one of the first Asian actors on Australian screens in the ‘70s. He migrated from the Philippines in ‘75, which was incidentally the year that the White Australia policy ended, which stopped anyone that was not White from migrating into the country. So, his family was one of the first of sort of a big wave of migration from like surrounding Asian countries. And thus, a bit of a change in culture as well.

00:09:21 Jesse Host How old was he at the time?

00:09:22 Charlotte Guest He was a teenager. I think he was 14 or 15. So, he came with his parents and his two siblings. And then, he—when he was in the Philippines—used to do like theatre groups in the park and actually was devastated to be moving away from that, ‘cause he loved it so much. I don’t even know how he managed to get into it, but he—his very first role, he was a background person on a show called *The—[whispering in horror]* oh no, I’ve forgotten what the show was called. I’ll get back to you on that. It was a really, really long-running show in Australia. And he loved it.

And then, since then, he’s sort of—it’s never been his full-time job, but it’s always just been something that he jumps into when he gets opportunities. And so, I watched him every so often when I was a kid just go off and be on TV. And then we’d all sit as a family and watch the episode. And that was not—that was—I mean, it was just kind of a fun quirk of stuff that my dad did. And never at any point did I think, “And I want to do that as well.” In fact, it was almost the opposite. I was like, “Oh, I can see what that looks like.” And I... don’t know! I just never considered that maybe I could do it as a fulltime job.

00:10:41 Jesse Host Did your dad just do screen acting? Or did he—?

00:10:43 Charlotte Guest Yeah. I mean, he—honestly, he has done theatre. He’s sort of—he’s going through a really cool—I mean, again, I could make this whole interview about my dad, ‘cause I feel like he’s got a way more interesting career trajectory than me. He—at the moment—is

having this incredible period of—I think as Australian television and worldwide television is realizing how interesting inclusive casting and inclusive storytelling is, there are so many more opportunities for actors of color. And so, for a really long time, he was relegated to very particular roles and often quite stereotypical roles.

And then, in the last few years, he's been getting cast in these really interesting stories. He's actually I think about to play a Filipino for the very first time in his whole career, which is really exciting. For him and for me, honestly! And for the whole, I think, Australian screen landscape. It's really cool to see—he's essentially a veteran at this point, and he's really getting used, creatively, in ways that I think benefit his talent.

00:11:50 Jesse Host Did you talk to him when you were a kid, or did he talk to you about what it was like—not just to be Filipino in the entertainment industry in Australia in the '70s and '80s. But to be Filipino in Australia, a country that—you know, now has some significant diversity, but as you said had been, as a matter of law, very focused on building a White nation for a very long time.

00:12:19 Charlotte Guest Yeah! It's a country with a very challenging and at times tragic history. And I think his experience as he tells it is—especially in the '80s; he was in his—you know, he was in his young adulthood. And he and the group of friends that he had who were mostly young migrants were having the time of their life! Like, I think that they were—and I think it was a period of time, as well. I think it was—the way that he describes the '80s, it was very like—I think everyone—it sounds like everyone was very wrapped up in their own adventures and there was no exception here for him. And so, I think that he was really aware of the opportunities that he had in Australia, in the inner city of Australia, that he may not have had in the Philippines.

Especially considering that they left during the Marcos—first Marcos regime. And so, I think that there was a freedom that was extremely exciting to be a 20-something year old in the '80s at that time. And then, there were maybe parts of that experience that he didn't really synthesize until later in his life, that he was like, "Oh! And also, maybe I experienced some racism!" But I think that that's true of what most people—like most migrants or people of color experience when they are lucky enough to be welcomed into a community, which he was. You know, you—it's complicated. You kind of experience both.

00:13:56 Jesse Host We've got more to get into with Charlotte Nicdao. When we come back from a quick break, she will talk about what it was like to visit her father's hometown in the Philippines. It's *Bullseye*, from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

00:14:09 Promo Clip **Music:** Fun, wacky synth.

Ellen Weatherford: You probably already have a favorite animal. Maybe it's a powerful apex predator like a tiger, or a cute and cuddly panda. And those are great! But have you considered something a little more unconventional?

Christian Weatherford: Could I perhaps interest you in the Greenland shark, which can live for nearly 400 years? Or maybe the jewel wasp, who performs brain surgery on cockroaches to control their minds.

Ellen: On *Just the Zoo of Us*, we review animals by giving them ratings out of ten in the categories of effectiveness, ingenuity, and aesthetics. Listen with friends and family of all ages to find your new favorite animal with *Just the Zoo of Us*, on [MaximumFun.org](https://www.maximumfun.org) or wherever you get podcasts.

00:14:52 Jesse Host *[Music ends.]*
Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. If you're just joining us, I'm talking with Charlotte Nicdao. She's an actor and singer. She stars alongside Rob McElhenney in the TV comedy *Mythic Quest*. The show's third season is streaming now on Apple TV+. Let's get back into it.

00:15:09 Charlotte Guest Did you spend time in the Philippines when you were a kid?
Not as much as I would've liked. I went for the first time when I was 15, just me and my dad. And it was an incredible experience.

00:15:19 Jesse Host Had your dad been back or was it—
00:15:21 Charlotte Guest Not for a long time. He and my mum went for their honeymoon. But other than that, he hadn't been for—you know, 20 years or something. And it was—I think it was lifechanging for both of us, because for me—we didn't speak Tagalog at home. We didn't even really eat much Filipino food. We were very typical—my mom's White Australian, and I think we were that—he had that real—I think a lot of second gen people experienced this. He had that very, "Let's assimilate." Like, "You're Australian. Eat vegemite and fit in."

And then, I think when I was 15—if anything, my mom was more encouraging of us embracing our Filipino-ness. And then, yeah, when I was 15, he took me to Manila, and I had what felt like an extremely—and it was. It was like this very weighted experience of being 15 years old, being in this place for the first time, and feeling like I had come home. I didn't speak the language. I didn't know my way around. All I knew about Manila was what he had told me. And yet, there was some very innate feeling of like, "Oh, this is where I belong, and this is—this is a place that is always gonna be important to me.

And I think for him, it was a reminder that it was his home as well. And so, then after that, we all as a family would travel there as frequently as possible. Haven't been able to in the last few years, which is difficult and sad, but hopefully soon, 'cause I love it there.

00:17:00 Jesse Host When did you decide to like go on an audition? To be a professional actor?
00:17:06 Charlotte Guest *[Chuckles.]* Um, I didn't really decide. Like, what I will say is I used to do school plays and loved them. And I would play whatever role. And I was always very strategic about which roles I would go in for. Like, our school did a production of *Guys & Dolls*, and I was like, "I'm never getting a female lead. I can't really dance. I'm gonna audition for Big Jule, the gangster, 'cause I will get that, 'cause that's funny. Like, people will think it's funny to see me play a gangster in a wig."

00:17:36 Jesse Host Do you—is that a true thing that happened?
00:17:38 Charlotte Guest Yeah, that's a true thing that happened. Yes! I did. Of course, I did. And I was hilarious. I stole the show.
00:17:44 Jesse Host Do you remember any of your lines?

00:17:46	Charlotte	Guest	<i>[Laughs.]</i> I don't! I do remember that we had to do that song, the "I said everybody sit down." Do you know that musical very well?
00:17:53	Jesse	Host	I've never seen <i>Guys & Dolls</i> , no.
00:17:55	Charlotte	Guest	It's fine. There's a song where I think I had to do—the biggest section of my performance was that I had to do this like little mini speech about like the woes of being a mob boss. And I really milked it. I was like—
00:18:09	Jesse	Host	Did you do a gangster voice?
00:18:12	Charlotte	Guest	Did I do—! That's a great question! I don't know. If I did, it would've been bad.
			<i>[They laugh.]</i>
00:18:22	Jesse	Host	I really was hoping that you would—this whole thing has just been me—
00:18:23	Charlotte	Guest	I'd pull it out? Yeah, yeah, yeah. Just pull out—
00:18:26	Jesse	Host	—trying to get you to—
00:18:27	Charlotte	Guest	—my New York gangster voice? <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:18:29	Jesse	Host	It's like when Mel Blanc is on <i>The Tonight Show</i> and Johnny Carson says, "Is Bugs Bunny here?" Or whatever.
00:18:36	Charlotte	Guest	No, I wish I could remember a line, and I'd totally deliver it. But, uh—
00:18:42	Jesse	Host	So, you were doing school plays.
00:18:43	Charlotte	Guest	I was doing school plays, and I loved them. But I never considered that it could be something that I could do as a job. And potentially, it was because looking at film and television at that time, I didn't see anyone really that looked like me that was doing the kind of work that I would have been interested in doing. So, I just didn't think that there was a pathway. And my dad's agent would occasionally send me in for auditions if she didn't have anyone on her books that fit a brief. And so, one of those times—I must have been <i>[clicks teeth]</i> like 16 or 17. She sent me in to audition for this kid's show—scripted show—and I got it. And it was the lead in a like 26-episode series that filmed—we were living in Melbourne at the time. It filmed in Sydney, Singapore, and Germany. And it filmed during my final year of high school.
			And my parents have always just been extremely supportive of like letting me choose which direction I wanna go in. And they were like—at the time, I was studying at a specialist music school. Like, I was—I was, at the time, getting ready to be an orchestral clarinetist. I thought I was gonna play in a symphony orchestra. And they were like, "Well, if you just wanna go and film this TV show, you can."
			And I was like, "This is so funny. Imagine if instead of going back to school, I go and film a TV show. That'll get a big laugh. I'm gonna do that." Like, I was very precocious. I kind of did it as like a funny call. You know? Like—
00:20:15	Jesse	Host	But do you think that you were taking that tone with yourself because you really felt that way? Or do you think you were taking that tone with yourself as a matter of teenage self-protection.
00:20:26	Charlotte	Guest	You've got me in one. It was definitely the latter. Like, I mean, I know I would've thought that I was doing it sincerely ironically, at the time. But I know now that there was a part of me that was like, "Well, I love doing the school play. And this would just be that all year. And that would be so fun." And it was! And it was an incredible experience, and it was a real bootcamp of figuring out

how to learn a lot of lines and stand on your mark and know what the week's schedule was gonna be. And I loved it. And I got back, and I was still in that sincere irony. And I was like, "Okay! Time to go to uni to keep studying music now!" And I did. I went and studied for a year as a jazz singer at the Victorian College of the Arts.

And then, I got to the end of that year, and I was like I'm kidding myself; I wanna be an actor. *[Laughs.]*

00:21:18 Jesse Host

I'm Jesse Thorn. This is *Bullseye*. My guest is Charlotte Nicdao. She's the star of the Apple TV+ series, *Mythic Quest*.

Were you auditioning for stuff as an American or as an Australian? That is to say, were you doing an American voice and presenting yourself as an American?

00:21:36 Charlotte Guest

I did for a long time. For a long time, I would go into rooms with an American accent, introduce myself in the American accent, pretend—just like not—try not to give any clue away.

00:21:49 Jesse Host

I was really just talking about when you were reading. This is next-level. I love this.

00:21:51 Charlotte Guest

No, no, no! But—and I think—but I think a lot of non-American actors do it, because—well, firstly, I think easier than transitioning in and out of an accent. And then, secondly I think that for a while people thought that it gave them a better shot of getting the job. And then, after a while I realized that what it was actually doing was taking away an opportunity to have a conversation with someone. Because if you walk into a room and you speak with your Australian accent, people usually have questions about that. And then, if you can successfully switch into the American accent, then it's impressive.

[They laugh.]

But then, ironically I guess, when I went in for *Mythic Quest*, they immediately were like, "Oh, we want your natural accent." 'Cause I auditioned for Poppy originally with an American accent. And they were like, "No, no, no, no. Do your Australian accent." And so, I finally booked a job here, and they wanted me to play Australian. And then, I just haven't really had to speak in my American accent since. And now, it's gone! *[Laughs.]*

00:22:51 Jesse Host

Really?

00:22:52 Charlotte Guest

Yeah, I mean, I can do it if I warm up into it. But like, there was a time where I could reeeally like switch it on and off like a party trick. And now, I'm like, "Oh no, I'm Australian all the time. Where is that skill that I used to have?"

00:23:05 Jesse Host

You know, this show is known as the party of NPR.

[Charlotte chuckles and affirms.]

We love—

00:23:10 Charlotte Guest

Love a party trick?

00:23:11 Jesse Host

—to hear people's party tricks.

00:23:14 Charlotte Guest

[Laughs.] Okay, hold on. *[Slowly shifting into an American accent.]*

The problem is, there are a few things that are easy to do in an American accent. Like, if I just remember to pronounce my Rs, it's easy to do. But there are some intonation things that you would

probably notice. I actually find that the more vocal fry I put in, the more convincing it is.

[They laugh.]

00:23:35 Jesse Host That's genuinely impressive! I really enjoyed that. I'm not gonna lie! That's like when Mike Judge does *Beavis and Butt-Head*. You always think, "Are they gonna make him do—"

00:23:46 Charlotte Guest You get it once you're in there.

00:23:47 Jesse Host "Are they gonna make him do *Beavis*—" And then he does it and you're like, "Oh! It's amazing! Look, it's Mike Judge sitting there, but *Beavis and Butt-Head* is coming out of his mouth!"

[Charlotte laughs.]

00:24:11 Charlotte Guest That rules. So, when you got cast on *Mythic Quest*, how much did you know about the sort of very intense cultural milieu in which the show is set? Which is making games.

00:24:36 Jesse Host Yeah! Not a lot. And I'm ashamed to say I think what I did know was a very tiny slice of what is a vast and varied community and creative landscape. Like, I had watched a lot of Anita Sarkeesian videos, and that was my understanding of what the gaming world was.

00:24:46 Charlotte Guest She is a culture critic, especially online culture critic, who made a long series of insightful videos about gaming media—

00:24:47 Jesse Host Gamergate.

00:24:53 Charlotte Guest Yeah, media tropes and their relationship to—you know, cultural theory.

00:25:04 Jesse Host Right. And as informative and honestly smart and funny as those videos were, it being my only understand of what the gaming world was meant that my understanding was limited. And so—

00:25:04 Jesse Host Right.

[They chuckle.]

00:25:17 Charlotte Guest She also was targeted by horrible people in nightmarish ways. And so, you could—it could be understood that you would get a weird sense of the community based on that video.

[Chuckling.] Absolutely! But I do think that almost as soon as I was cast, I firstly did a deep dive. I read a bit. I bought a Nintendo Switch, and I started just playing games. I—we were so lucky to have Ashley Burch as a writer and an actor on the show, because she is a star of the gaming world and knows so much and is so beloved by that community and also loves the community so much. And was able to give all of us a way more—not just nuanced, but honestly exciting insight as to what that world is. And one of the things that I discovered really early on was that the thing that I love about acting is pretty much what gaming is all about. It's about playing a character that is not yourself, that has different skills and attributes to the ones that you have in a world that maybe doesn't exist that you get to explore, that you get to make decisions in and sort of discover what happens next.

00:26:43 Jesse Host And I didn't realize that so much—this is so naïve, and now I understand that that is its function, that at the time I really didn't realize how much gaming was pure storytelling.

00:26:43 Jesse Host There's also—I think that many, many Americans have firsthand experience with that part of gaming. Right? There's a lot of gamers

in the world and in the United States. A significant majority, maybe. But relatively few have direct experience or even indirect knowledge of the culture of making games. I got a couple buddies, one from— one of my best buddies from high school and one of my best buddies from college who work in the game industry. And they're both really brilliant and really deeply passionate about video games. It also seems like a genuinely brutal context in which to work.

00:27:27 Charlotte Guest

Yeah! I mean, we've had a lot of people reach out to us and say, "Wow! It's so accurate. This is just like my workplace."

And we're like, "Nooo! That's not good! It shouldn't be! It's very toxic!"

[They laugh.]

I mean, yeah, I think that it is—what I have heard from people is that the way that the show depicts that very particular relationship between a creative industry and a tech industry, it's got all the elements that you might expect would become intense or overwhelming out of both of those industries all rolled into one office.

00:28:08 Jesse Host

Yeah. One of the things that I find really interesting about your character, who is a coding genius, is the sort of relationship between her world within her doing her thing. Right? Like, within the keyboard, within staring into the—or in this case, sometimes the metaverse goggles or whatever. But—gives the audience something to look at among other things. But between that and like what that means in the context of other human beings—

00:28:44 Charlotte Guest

Yeah! And I really—we really delve into that this season, 'cause we've had—in season one and two—this sort of running joke that Poppy doesn't want people to think of her as a mechanic, but she—what she does is creative and insightful and requires artistic thinking, and that no one really understands what it is that she does or why it would be exciting. And so, this season we're really—there's some really fun stuff that the show does with trying to let the audience in on what Poppy's experience is like when she's coding. And I cannot code. I—*[laughing]* when I got the job, I signed up for like a free online course of like Coding 101. And I got through maybe half an hour of content before I was like, "*[Sucks in a breath.]*" This is not—this is not for me. My brain doesn't work like this, and I can't do it."

But I did speak with a programmer who described it—she said that when she was growing up, she—I think her dad was literally a mechanic, and she used to take cars apart and put them back together and loved that. But it's expensive. And when she got a computer and realized that she could—it was a very similar thing. You have all these tools and elements that you put together in different ways to make something new. And all you need is the computer and time—that that was extremely exciting for her. And that was such a great window into what coding was for me and why someone might be obsessed with playing around with those building blocks.

And also, in Poppy's world, this idea that this is a space that she has complete control over, that always behaves exactly as it's

meant to, that once you know the formula, you put that formula in in all its permutations, and you know what's gonna come out. As opposed to the real world, where humans are erratic and unpredictable and often don't take what she has to say or do in the way that she intends it. And everything is out of control.

00:30:46 Jesse Host I mean, everything is out of control with basically all the people on this show at all times.

00:30:51 Charlotte Guest *[Laughs.]* Yes. Yeah. Which is both Poppy's nightmare and her doing.

00:30:57 Jesse Host It must have been exciting for you, as—you know, the kind of pleasant, adorable person who could get cast as a 13-year-old on a children's show as a 17-year-old—to realize that as the show has gone on, from the first seasons where your character is kind of a peppy underdog—as your character has gained status and power, become more central in the show, that we have gotten to see that actually she's kinda a jerk! Yeah.

00:31:32 Charlotte Guest She's flawed and—yeah! *[Laughs.]* I mean, that was the intention from the beginning. And we spoke about it like right at the beginning of season one. And *[laughs]* in my mind, I see Poppy's like series arc as being like a Walter White arc. Like, you get introduced to her as an underdog, and so you root for her automatically, and the more that you discover about who she is and how she operates and what she wants and what she's willing to sacrifice to get it, the more that you realize that maybe she should've stayed an underdog.

00:32:07 Jesse Host *[Laughs.]* This show was created by some folks who have—who created and worked forever on *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia*, including your costar on the show, Rob McElhenney, who cocreated that show, and David Hornsby—another one of the stars of the show—was a—worked on that show forever. I was gonna say this is a more sincere show than that one, although I think that once I rolled that around in my head for a second, I thought, “Gosh, actually *Always Sunny* is a really sincere show.”

[Charlotte agrees several times.]

It's just a very unusual kind of sincere. *[Chuckles.]* It follows a sort of deep commitment to a sort of evil, I guess would be—it's not quite evil; it's something like that. But anyway, were you surprised at the tone of this show, which is—you know, *Always Sunny* resets itself every episode. It's about a group of friends who have no morals at all other than a sort of short-term emotional satisfaction and maybe friendship? Maybe. Maybe.

00:33:16 Charlotte Guest Yeah! Sort of? In a way.

00:33:21 Jesse Host Yeah. And is like really intense and gross, and it's a wonderful show. Your show is a very sincerely emotional show. Minutes will pass with no jokes. Were you surprised by the tone?

00:33:37 Charlotte Guest I mean, I remember in season one, there was a day that we were shooting a scene where I just yell and cry all day. And I remember getting to lunchtime and thinking, “I really thought that I was signing on for a comedy.”

[They laugh.]

And it is! It is funny. And I think that what the shows have in common that Rob and Megan Ganz, the cocreator who also has

worked on *Sunny* for a few seasons now—I think that what they have brought over is this respect for their audience, really putting things in front of the audience and not telling them how they’re meant to feel about it, but saying, “Well, you decide. Are they good people? Are they bad people? What makes them good or bad? Should these relationships continue or shouldn’t they? We’re not gonna tell you. Like, you figure it out.” And I think a lot of the comedy comes from that.

And then I think in the case of *Mythic Quest*, they’re really taking the opportunity to mine that for drama, as well. And I also—I think that the intention has always been to see the characters grow and change. And it is really cool getting the script at the beginning of each season, and looking at, “Oh! That makes sense, that this person this season is moving into this phase of who they are, because it was set up last season.” And I think you really see that in season three as well as if you haven’t seen season two, it happens there too. But I also—and I don’t know about this. I haven’t actually asked them, but I have to believe that the fact that season one came out, and then one week into shooting season two the pandemic hit, and that—I mean, that was when we shot our quarantine episode. We shot season two in 2020.

I really think that there was a vulnerability that came along with making the show in that time that gave permission to delve into some of those darker aspects of the characters, but also it felt natural to do that. It felt almost disingenuous not to.

00:35:35 Jesse Host

We’ll wrap up with Charlotte Nicdao in just a minute. When we get back from the break: she used to audition a lot with an American accent. These days, she mostly uses her natural Australian one. We’ll ask why she feels empowered to use her real voice. It’s *Bullseye*, from [MaximumFun.org](https://www.maximumfun.org) and NPR.

00:35:53 Promo Clip

Music: Sophisticated harpsichord.

Travis McElroy: *[In a cartoonishly hoity-toity accent.]* Hellooo! I’m a stuffy dowager countess!

Teresa McElroy: Travis?

Travis: I’m judging everybody’s manners!

Teresa: Oh no.

Travis: *[Speaking normally.]* *Shmanners* isn’t judgy. It’s about teaching you to be your best self and be a little more confident when you enter social situations that you don’t understand, and maybe also teach you a little bit about history you didn’t know or give you interesting things to talk about at parties.

Teresa: Yeah, like the secret life of Emily Post.

Travis: Ooor like why wristwatches are the way that they are.

Teresa: We can talk about table manners from the Victorian era.

Travis: Sure! Or what it’s like to attend a regency ball.

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: You can find all that and more if you listen to *Shmanners* on Maximum Fun or wherever your podcasts come from, I guess!

Teresa: Manners-shmanners. Get it?

00:36:35 Jesse Host *[Music ends in a playful chord.]*
I'm Jesse Thorn. This is *Bullseye*. My guest is Charlotte Nicdao. She's the star of the Apple TV+ series, *Mythic Quest*. Let's get back into it.

00:37:13 Charlotte Guest
It must have been weird to feel like you've made it in show business, in the sense that you have been cast in a television program in the United States. It's a real money show. You made a season of it. It was pretty well received. It got picked up for a second season. And then, the world is laid waste for the following two years.
I remember, at the season one premier, we premiered it at the Cinerama Dome, The ArcLight. And then we had this huuuge afterparty. Like, I had never. It was very overwhelming and very glamorous, and I couldn't quite believe it. And at the end of the night, we left and there were cars waiting to pick us up in our—you know, all our finery. And Rob put his hand on my shoulder and was like, "Get used to this."

[They laugh.]

00:38:13 Jesse Host
And then, a week later, I was trapped in my home and couldn't leave. I was like, "Wait, but what about the glamor from earlier?" It's been weird, but it's—I mean, I'm certainly not gonna complain about what my last couple of years have looked like, because I've been extraordinarily lucky to have landed in the circumstance that I landed in. And I know that not everyone did. And so—
You also had the experience of spending time in Australia when Australia was at, essentially, zero covid. So.

00:38:23 Charlotte Guest
That's true, but also—I mean, we spent all of 2020 here, in LA. And then, 2021 went back to Australia. And at first, it was zero covid. And it was very strange, and we were very scared, 'cause we had gone from very high levels of covid to going back to Australia where people weren't even really wearing masks. And we were like, "What is going on?" And then—I live in Melbourne, when I'm there. And we, a few months into us getting back, went into extreme lockdowns there that were very—you know, we didn't—we really couldn't leave the house, and they had rules about you couldn't leave a five-kilometer radius of your house. So, we kind of experienced the most intense versions of what that looked like for us in each city. Which was unfortunate, but also an experience.

00:39:16 Jesse Host
Do you feel strengthened by it?

00:39:19 Charlotte Guest
[Cackles.] Uuuh, yes. I do. And again, I know how privileged I am to be able to come out of the pandemic and say, "I feel strengthened by it". But I'm a really—I'm an extrovert in the truest sense. Like, I draw energy from being around people. And to not have that for months on end, for me I think was weirdly healthy? I don't know. Did you draw strength from it?

00:39:50	Jesse	Host	No. It was horrible.
00:39:51	Charlotte	Guest	Yeah. I'm sorry.
			<i>[They laugh.]</i>
			I mean, this is the thing. Like, we were so—we were so lucky that we kind of were able to just hole up, which is—again, that sounds insufferable, but I guess that was our experience. And you know, I'm—yeah, I'm lucky. I'm really lucky.
00:40:16	Jesse	Host	I mean, I happen to have read that you and your husband at point owned a plant store, and I feel like a couple that owned a plant store together is pretty much the ideal—a childless couple that owned a plant store together?
			<i>[Charlotte agrees.]</i>
00:40:31	Charlotte	Guest	That's a quarantine set up if ever there was one. We spent most of 2021 like gardening and planting vegetables. Which was—I mean, god. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:40:39	Jesse	Host	Literally the most emotionally productive thing you could've done in that period of time. Like—
00:40:44	Charlotte	Guest	And of course, also tantrums and like crying into the soil and—you know, replenishing the nutrients with our tears.
			<i>[They laugh.]</i>
00:40:52	Jesse	Host	Sure, like in some kind of Hawaiian folktale or something. Yeah.
			<i>[Charlotte confirms.]</i>
			Okay. Fair enough.
00:41:11	Charlotte	Guest	When you go out for auditions now, how often are you Australian? How often are you American? Now, I pretty—almost for everything, I'll be like, "Can I be Australian?" And yeah. I think I used to feel like it was such a flex to be able to be like, "Well, I could be American." And I think that this is a reflection of what the film and TV landscape looks like at the moment, where it's like a global locality. It's like you—the shows that hit aren't necessarily hitting because they are set on your street. Often, they're hitting because they're very specific culturally. And there are universal themes to it. So, like I loved <i>Derry Girls</i> even though I needed to watch it with subtitles.
			And so, I think that there's—I think that—yeah, productions are way more open to being like, "Okay. She's an Australian Filipina. What would that do for the character?" And I'm kind of proud of that now, rather than feeling like it's something that I have to hide.
00:42:10	Jesse	Host	I love <i>Derry Girls</i> , 'cause it felt like my stepmother's sisters were calling from Belfast.
			<i>[They laugh.]</i>
00:42:15	Charlotte	Guest	Oh yeah? So, you didn't have to watch it with subtitles, then.
00:42:19	Jesse	Host	No. <i>[Laughs.]</i> What about Filipina? Do you go in there and—
00:42:29	Charlotte	Guest	I think that it depends. Yeah, I've actually had a conversation about this recently with a director, where a character was written as Chinese and I... and he asked, "Well, should we change the

character to Filipina?” And I really think it’s such a case by case. I mean, if some—if the character can be Filipina, yes. Of course, I want her to be Filipina Australian, ‘cause that’s what I am. But I also think that there are times where you don’t have to specify an ethnicity for the story to still be told in the richest form.

What was it? I was listening to or reading something about this idea of like what the—what a blank slate is, like how a White man is—you’re presented with a White male character, and the first thing that you ask is like, “Okay, so what do I need to know about him?” Rather than even if you change it to a White woman, now the story has to be partly about the fact that she’s a woman. And if she’s a Filipina woman, now it has to be kind of about that she’s Filipina and a woman. And so, I am excited by the ways that that is becoming less and less necessary in the film and television landscape now. That you can potentially be—

I mean, I feel like this is Poppy, to be honest. We don’t bring up the fact that she’s Filipina until season two. We don’t really talk about like what it means for her to be Australian until the quarantine episode. Like, there are a few jokes made, but other than that it’s just a passing thing about her. And the character is a genius programmer who works with someone that she needs but hates. You know?

00:44:08	Jesse	Host	And it just so happens that every other week, her mom shows up with a giant vat of lumpia.
00:44:14	Charlotte	Guest	Yes! And her dad shows up with a jar of vegemite.
			<i>[They laugh.]</i>
00:44:20	Jesse	Host	Well, I sure appreciate you taking all this time to talk to me. It was really nice and the show’s really great.
00:44:26	Charlotte	Guest	Thank you so much. This was so fun.
00:44:28	Jesse	Host	Charlotte Nicdao, folks. The third season of <i>Mythic Quest</i> is streaming now, on Apple TV+. A wonderful show. It also features F. Murray Abraham. Always great to see F. Murray Abraham. Go watch it! It’s a delight.
00:44:43	Music	Transition	Resonant, thumpy synth.
00:44:48	Jesse	Host	That’s the end of another episode of <i>Bullseye</i> . <i>Bullseye</i> is created from the homes of me and the staff of Maximum Fun, in and around greater Los Angeles, California. I was in the city of Commerce today, where I visited Business Costco. I love Business Costco. I bought those rubber mats that are in like commercial restaurant kitchens, the ones with the holes in them. I love it.

Our show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our senior producer is Kevin Ferguson. Our producers are Jesus Ambrosio and Richard Robey. Our production fellow at Maximum Fun is Tabatha Myers. We get booking help from Mara Davis. Our interstitial music is by DJW, also known as Dan Wally. Our theme music is “Huddle Formation” by The Go! Team. Thanks to The Go! Team and thanks to Memphis Industries, their label.

You can find *Bullseye* on YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook. Give us a follow in all of those places. We will share our interviews with you, and thence you may share them anon with others. And I think that’s

00:45:53 Promo Promo

about it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature signoff.

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

[Music fades out.]