

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.
00:00:22	Jesse Thorn	Host	It’s <i>Bullseye</i> . I’m Jesse Thorn. Marc Maron does it all. He’s a standup comic, an actor, and he’s the host of one of the biggest podcasts out there: <i>WTF</i> . Marc was a comic for decades before he got into podcasting. He’d work the road, get a TV gig every now and again. But as he got closer to middle age, it just didn’t seem like a sustainable life. So, he took a job doing morning radio. That show got canceled. He got another one. That one got canceled. But his keycard still worked. So, he and his old producer started sneaking into the office at night and making a podcast. That show was <i>WTF</i> . A few months in, Marc moved to LA, started recording in his garage. A few months after that, he was a phenomenon. <i>WTF</i> became one of the most important podcasts the medium has produced.
			But Marc didn’t leave standup behind. Far from it. His new special is called <i>From Bleak to Dark</i> . Marc’s stage work has always been personal. This time around, he had to deal with some particularly heavy stuff: the pandemic, of course, but also the death of his partner, Lynn Shelton. She died of cancer in 2020. The special, though, isn’t sad per se. In fact, Marc seems as comfortable within himself as he’s ever been—able to be frank and vulnerable onstage, but also a little bit silly. Not a lot. But a little. It’s some of his best work. I do wanna mention that we talk about Lynn Shelton’s passing and dealing with grief more generally in this conversation. So, be prepared if that’s a sensitive subject for you right now. I get it.
			Now, usually we would have Marc Maron come to us at our studio. But they were sanding the floors in our office building, so we went out to his place. It’s always great to see an old pal, doubly so when you get to pet his cats. Let’s get into it.
00:02:27	Music	Transition	Gentle piano with a steady beat.
00:02:34	Jesse	Host	Marc Maron, welcome to <i>Bullseye</i> . Welcome back to <i>Bullseye</i> , I should say. It’s nice to talk to you.
00:02:38	Marc Maron	Guest	It’s been a long time there, Jesse.
00:02:41	Jesse	Host	And thank you for having me here in your studio, because the floors at our studio are being powder blasted or something.
00:02:50	Marc	Guest	Not a great sound in the background. Not a good—not good for audio.
00:02:53	Jesse	Host	I understand it’s like recording at LAX, I was told.
			<i>[Marc chuckles and agrees.]</i>
00:03:02	Marc	Guest	And thank you also for bringing a pomelo to the recording. I—you know, I was told, or it was promoted as a pink grapefruit. And it does seem to have the husk of a pomelo, but I believe it is a

pink grapefruit. It tastes like a pink grapefruit. Pomelos taste a little different, don't they?

00:03:18 Jesse Host I'm not—look, I'm not a citrus expert. You want me to talk to you—

00:03:21 Marc Guest Well, you threw out the word pomelo like you knew what you were talking about!

00:03:23 Jesse Host You want me to talk to you about yuzus?!

[Marc confirms.]

You want me to talk to you about satsumas?

[Marc "ooh"s.]

Well, Marc, let's do a radio show. This is such a beautiful house, a beautiful studio.

[Marc thanks him.]

Do you feel like a success?

00:03:38 Marc Guest Yes. I do.

00:03:39 Jesse Host Really?!

[Marc confirms with a laugh.]

I'm so happy to hear that!

00:03:43 Marc Guest *[Laughs.]* Well, you started it all! We're still—

00:03:45 Jesse Host *[Laughs.]* You started it, to be fair. I just happened to be present, but—

00:03:48 Marc Guest You—we're still using the mics that you told me to buy. But yeah, I feel like a success. I think if I didn't, it would be rude.

00:03:57 Jesse Host I mean, that's true, Marc. But so much of your identity was built on not being a success that sometimes it can be hard to turn that corner.

00:04:06 Marc Guest Right. Or at least not acknowledging that I was a success. 'Cause there were some people that insisted I was doing fine all the way through, but I don't know what they think fine is.

00:04:14 Jesse Host I don't know, doing *Conan* 20 times.

00:04:16 Marc Guest Yeah, but I mean—that—what did that get me? It just gets me—you know—fun hanging out with Conan for a few minutes, talking to Frank Smiley or Daniel Ferguson on the phone about the segment. I remember there was a time there when Trump was on with me, and Frank Smiley was in my dressing room, the segment producer. He goes, "You want to meet Trump?"

And I'm like, "I don't, really."

[Jesse laughs.]

"Hey, I really don't." I knew then!

00:04:41 Jesse Host NTY.

00:04:43 Marc Guest I did. I knew then. But yeah, I mean—but I wanted to think of that as success, but ultimately—you know, it didn't get me a following. I couldn't sell tickets. I was only—you know, I'd make whatever the—you know, 500/600—\$500-\$800 for the spot on *Conan*, but it didn't ripple. Like it didn't—you know, I felt like I was a success 'cause I could be on TV, but it wasn't making a living.

00:05:04	Jesse	Host	Really?!
			<i>[Marc confirms.]</i>
00:05:11	Marc	Guest	I mean, obviously going on <i>Conan</i> wasn't making you a living. You were doing it twice a year. But you weren't—
00:05:12	Jesse	Host	Three for four times a year.
00:05:13	Marc	Guest	But you—sorry, Marc.
00:05:15	Jesse	Host	It's okay.
00:05:17	Marc	Guest	But you were making a living doing comedy, weren't you?!
			Barely, dude. <u>Barely</u> . Like, I really—you know, by the—when I started the podcast in 2009, I didn't have an audience. I couldn't sell tickets. I was—yeah, I was a known person in comedy, but I wasn't someone you would—the club would promote, and people would come flocking to. I was just—you know, I was looking down the barrel of a kind of unknown headliner status, in a way. So, I was not making that much money. I would pick up money through deals here and there, this and that. But no. I don't think that before I started the podcast up through a couple years of it—I wouldn't say that I was solvent in a confident way.
00:05:57	Jesse	Host	Right. That makes sense. I see what you're saying. Did you feel as good and comfortable with the work you did on the radio as you felt as a standup? Like did you feel like being on <i>Air America</i> or eventually starting <i>WTF</i> was like something you were doing while you were trying to make your number one thing that made you solvent standup? Or were you like, oh, this is also an art form I'm doing?
00:06:25	Marc	Guest	That took a while in the sense that from <i>Air America</i> , that was where I learned that I had the talent for it. You know, it's not everybody that can make this work, though everybody thinks they can. They assume that, hey, it's just guys talking! You know? I can talk. But who the hell knows what makes someone compelling as a broadcaster in this format? So, I knew I kind of had that. But once I got to starting the podcast, I thought it was a hail Mary pass. I mean, I didn't really know what it would yield, but I did know that I could do this. I knew that I was compelling in this format. But I don't know if I appreciated it as an artform. It took me years to let go of the idea that people were not really knowing me for my standup, that I had spent my life working on my standup and I was a good standup, but I was not known for that.
			And when I started getting known for the podcast, you know, people would be like, "Oh, I guess he's doing this show. We should go support him." I'm like, no, I know how to do that! I'm not looking for <u>support!</u> But eventually it all kind of—like, it's very significant to me, this special that I just put out: <i>From Bleak to Dark</i> . Because over the course of the podcast, I've done a few specials and I've gotten more audience from—you know—people knowing me in a fairly intimate way on the podcast. And then, you know, coming around to my comedy. But I feel like the last two specials and this one in particular is really my sort of moment of like, "Yeah, this is what I do! This is what I set out to do."
00:08:11	Jesse	Host	I have to say this. I've watched you perform many times over the years, and mostly because I live here in LA, or I would see you when my wife was in college in New York. You know, go see you at New York things and—you know—in alt rooms, as they say. You

weren't usually doing your current road act. You know what I mean? You were doing different stuff or whatever.

[Marc confirms.]

I got the impression from the audience that your greatest satisfaction didn't come from doing the stuff that got the absolute most laughs, the stuff that killed the hardest, but rather from coming at something that would be weird and uncomfortable for the audience, either because of its intimacy or the subject matter, whatever, and getting good laughs out of that.

00:09:07 Marc Guest

Sure. Well, I mean, I think that was at that time finding—you know—how to own that space for myself. And I tell people this who get into comedy, you know, when they're starting out what they should do is like do whatever you want! You know, figure out what part of you lives up there and how to own that space and how you wanna occupy it. I mean, that's what you're doing. So, I think during most of my life early on, whether it was through anger or through too much information, you know, I was able to sort of—you know, kind of demark a pretty wide space for myself to operate in. Now, if I wanna get—I think in the special, there's some solid—you know—just laughs. And you know, I really embrace that part. You know?

Over the last few years of doing these specials and realizing—you know—that most people know me as a comic or as a podcaster, now some people just know me as an actor—that, you know, I've got to step up my game in terms of really focusing on the standup in a way that I don't know that I had before. 'Cause if you watch like *Thinky Pain*, you know, that's loose, man. And that was a choice. I'm gonna go up there with some papers. I'm gonna ramble on a bit. I'm gonna leave a lot of room to improvise. It's gonna be an hour and a half. I'm gonna have Lance Bangs direct it. But then, you know, after that I'm like, no. You know, screw this. I'm gonna—I'm putting callbacks in. I'm putting structure in. There's gonna be throughlines. There's not gonna be redundancies, and I'm gonna move through stuff that's challenging and make it as effective as possible.

00:10:35 Jesse Host
00:10:38 Marc Guest

Why is—what's the difference from? Why?

Because I don't want to be perceived as sloppy or an alt comic or any of this other stuff.

00:10:45 Jesse Host
00:10:46 Marc Guest

Why not?

Because I came up in comedy clubs. You know? I mean, my goal when I started was to be a headliner. It was to be a great comic. And if you really sort of assess—you know—whatever "alt" was, there's not a lot of lasting careers out of it. And a lot of them don't even do standup anymore. Whereas if I go to The Comedy Store, those are the people. We're the people doing the comedy.

00:11:09 Jesse Host

What was it like for you, a guy who had the idea that you were just gonna be an individual swashbuckler for the rest of your life, conquering audiences across this nation with your—?

00:11:19 Marc Guest

Sadly, by the time I started the podcast—you know, I was not a swashbuckler. I—you know, I was looking at a future of like an individual, sad, angry person that—you know—could maybe fill half a house in some cities.

00:11:33 Jesse Host

You were just like, "How many shows at Largo can I do to pay my rent? *[Chuckles.]* Like, I know I can—"

00:11:39 Marc Guest I don't think he really—right! That would've been somewhat—
00:11:43 Jesse Host "I can do Luna Lounge. Can I do that once a weeeeek? 'Cause that would make rent!"
00:11:48 Marc Guest Yeah! I lived that life. And I thought about that life, and I wasn't really willing to live that life. But it wasn't a sacrifice. Everything was out of desperation or being compulsive. I'm not—I'm not a long game guy. You know, I don't know what's gonna happen tomorrow. I know I gotta go to New York. And I don't know if it's a mental problem, but it was never a plan other than, you know, how do I continue to stay in the game here? Whatever that is. Even when I wasn't in the game, at least I was—you know—getting up onstage and doing a thing. But you—at a certain age, you start to realize like this is getting away from me. I see how this ends badly. I know what it looks like in other people. I know who's disappeared and who hasn't and like—and what I'm willing or not willing to do. But you don't know how to get out. Right? After a certain point, where are you gonna go?

I don't know, man. I just—there was never a plan and what unfolded was out of sort of desperation and there was some kind of perfect storm around it.
00:12:49 Jesse Host So, what did it take for you to feel some security?
00:12:55 Marc Guest Well, you know, we tried to do what you did at the beginning. Like, just begging for money one way or another, sending people some stickers or a t-shirt if they—
00:13:03 Jesse Host I still do that.
00:13:05 Marc Guest Oh, I'm sorry. Well, how's—
00:13:06 Jesse Host Don't use the past tense. I still do that.

[They laugh.]

This is a public radio program, Marc.
00:13:10 Marc Guest Okay, I'm sorry. I support public radio.
00:13:12 Jesse Host I have an audience-supported podcast network.
00:13:15 Marc Guest Yeah, I support Jesse in all his endeavors. I just got—I got—
00:13:18 Jesse Host Thank you, Marc. I appreciate your vote of confidence. Just \$5 a month, and you get access to a treasure trove of bonus content.
00:13:25 Marc Guest What do you want? You want cash? I got—you want cash?

[Jesse thanks him.]

Can you break a ten?

[Jesse laughs.]

But uh, no, I mean, I got tired of stuffing envelopes. And we didn't really know how to monetize. But well, I think in standup, somehow or another—and it wasn't as long ago as you'd think—I realized in a very real and deep way that, you know, I was not afraid anymore. You know? You spend a lot of time as a performer pretending not to be afraid. I think. Maybe I'm generalizing, but I did! And not sort of, you know, sabotaging yourself in terms of like, "Oh, they don't sound good. What am I—?" And something happened in the last decade or so, because people were coming around and because I could sell tickets and I was playing venues that were specific and it was my show where my comfort level just sort of took over. And I

realized like when I got to a venue, I'd go out on the stage and I knew that like this is my life and this is a part of me that lives out here. And I wasn't afraid of it anymore.

So, once that fear went away, I had comfort there. Whether—you know, I was happy to be making money, but it was more important that—you know—I wasn't freaking out or angry about what I was assuming the audience was gonna think or whether I sold tickets or whether the jokes would work. All that *[censored]*.

00:14:47	Jesse	Host	When you got to that place, did you worry that you were no longer going to be the kind of comic that you aspired to be that could—a club comic that could defeat any audience? Because when you were going out there, you were performing for an audience that already wanted to like you?
00:15:04	Marc	Guest	Yeah, well I can push back on that too. I mean, don't—
00:15:06	Jesse	Host	It was gonna—
00:15:07	Marc	Guest	Don't underestimate my skillset.
00:15:09	Jesse	Host	<i>[Laughs.]</i> Yeah! Turn into like late period Jon Stewart <i>Daily Show</i> where there's so much applause that it's like—it was a good program, but like hard to tell what's good, I'm sure, when you're onstage.
00:15:19	Marc	Guest	No, I think that they make me work for it. You know, I'd gotten that special even. Like, I did two shows on <i>From Bleak to Dark</i> . In the first show, they were very excited. And the second show, they—you know—I had to earn it. And that's the one we used. So, I never got—I know they're there to see me, but that annoys me. So, I have to sort of like find a middle zone, because I can't fully accept all the love. But I worked on it, and I'm able to a little bit more now. But now, I don't think it takes away from the type of comic I am, because I still insist on doing certain things that is gonna challenge even the people that love me. And that's just the nature of who I am.
00:15:59	Jesse	Host	We've got more to get into with Marc Maron. How do you get behind a mic when someone you love just died? I asked Marc.
00:16:13	Music	Transition	That's coming up. It's <i>Bullseye</i> , from MaximumFun.org and NPR.
00:16:18	Jesse	Host	Chiming synth with a steady beat. Welcome back to <i>Bullseye</i> . I'm Jesse Thorn. If you're just joining us, my guest is comedian Marc Maron. When his partner died of cancer, he had to figure out how to move forward with his life and with his work. He had to go back behind the mic. As it turned out, working on his show, <i>WTF</i> , was just what he needed to do. Let's get into the rest of our conversation.
			I thought it was interesting watching your new special that it was reflective of your core value of defying the audience to laugh, even though you're doing something that's gonna make them really uncomfortable. But... you know, for a special that's about—you know, where 1/3 rd of the runtime is about your partner dying, it is not as intimate as some of your other specials. Like, you lean into the darkness, but there's not the kind of defiant like, "Ha, ha, ha, I bet you can't believe I'm saying <u>this</u> intimate thing about my life out loud."
00:17:32	Marc	Guest	Well, I had to balance it. And it's very specific in this special that the first 20 minutes was things I had to address culturally, and it was—it feels like a responsibility to me because of the legacy I claim and the comics that I respect. That, you know, this is something that's

important. You know, it is something that used to be at the forefront of what I did and I felt like I had to discuss that. But it also worked in a couple different ways. It almost—that first 20 minutes is almost its own thing. And then, when I get into aging, that’s relatively intimate. And then, when I talk about my father and his dementia, that’s very intimate but not specifically about me other than how I’m handling it. And then, you know, all the stuff around Lynn passing away quickly and tragically in the middle of covid—you know, it took a long time to process that.

And I don’t know that I’ve ever done anything as vulnerable, because I had no control over the grief for a long time. So, doing that stuff and deciding to—like, even when I did the podcast, you know, that was days after she died and I didn’t have to do that. But I chose to get on the mics—you know, in shock, devastated, and full-on PTSD, and unable to control it. Because I thought it would be important to other people. I thought it would help other people. So, I became—because my grief was so solitary because of covid and, you know, the way I handled it and how people—they did step up. It was weird and awkward, and I think grief is like that anyways. But I think figuring out how to present that experience took a long time. Because, you know, when I was first workshoping it—you know, I would cry. It would be just—there was—the sadness was, you know, unharnessable.

And through my commitment to working through it in hope that comedy would come, you know, that middle section of the special is pretty—you know—finely balanced. Because the sadness is a given. So, ultimately what you start to work with—and it’s not that I was conscious of this—is balancing it in a way that would make it—you know, not only palatable, but somewhat relieving and helpful to people either who have experienced that kind of tragedy or are living in grief or to sort of get set up for it. So, I think the intimacy of me visiting the body of the woman I love is probably more weirdly intimate than anything I’ve ever said. And the risk of it was much higher. You know, to make that work—that particular part of the special—that was, you know—that was not easy. *[Chuckles.]*

00:20:21	Jesse	Host	Did you consider whether you were going to talk about it onstage at all?
00:20:26	Marc	Guest	Yeah! I mean, I—you know, what do you do with that? I mean, it’s like I said in the special. I said, look, you know—I mean, I talk—I literally say that. “I didn’t know if I could do it.”
00:20:34	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:20:36	Clip	Clip	Marc (<i>From Bleak to Dark</i>): But let’s—let me get serious. You know, she did die, and it was—and it was a terrible tragedy. And the truth is like, I’m a guy who talks about his life. So, I wasn’t clear how that was gonna go. How am I gonna talk about that? You know, is that ever gonna happen? Is there a way to bring humor to that? Because you know, I’m not really the kind of guy that’s like, <i>[intensely]</i> “She’s dead! What are the bits?! Let’s get going!” You know?
00:20:58	Sound Effect	Transition	<i>[The audience laughs.]</i> Music swells and fades.

00:20:59	Marc	Guest	And I thought is there other formats? Because you know, I'm a guy—as you know. I talk about my life! So, how do I do that? And it's something that was very public. So, how do I do that? It felt like I had no choice! Because of the nature of the type of performer I am, both on these mics and onstage.
00:21:17	Jesse	Host	I had an experience where when my daughter told me and my wife that she was a girl and I had referred to her as a boy on just telling silly stories about her childhood. And I had to go on one of my shows and say—like, it took me a while. We waited a long time. But like, I had to go on the show and say like, yeah, just so you know, remember all those stories that I told? Those were about my daughter. And people were like, "Well, how could you say that?" You know? Like, "How could you—you know—make that such an intimate thing—?" Like, I don't know! Because it would be completely bonkers if I said a "kids say the darndest things" thing about my <i>[chuckling]</i> son one month and then two months later about my daughter and they'd think I traded one. You know what I mean?
00:22:15	Marc	Guest	Yeah, it's the same person. Yeah, yeah.
00:22:18	Jesse	Host	And like, your partner was a public person. She was a very successful director. And it was news that she had died. It was news that the two of you were partners. Like, it's not like that was a secret.
			<i>[Marc agrees.]</i>
00:22:43	Marc	Guest	And so, to some extent, you have to figure out how to address this publicly, 'cause not addressing it is just as public. Right. And what happens is you start to become a—like people look at you differently. And you know, I didn't want—you know—people's sympathy. You know, I wanted her to have it. I didn't want it. You know, I didn't want people to be uncomfortable about addressing the fact that it happened to me or look at me like, "Oh, I hope he's—" " You know? I wasn't the victim. So, like I felt that it was necessary for myself to own the feelings and explore grief—you know—publicly. You know? Because I think there's nothing more inevitable. And I think on some level everybody is grieving something. And it's culturally the easiest thing to push aside. You know, and it feeds, I think, the nature of our economic system to repress all that pain. To feel better, you wanna buy stuff, eat things.
00:23:42	Jesse	Host	My buddy Laurie Kilmartin is a great standup comic who I'm sure you know.
00:23:45	Marc	Guest	That's—well, she's another one, man! She—you know, all the stuff on the death of her parents at different times, she's like a forerunner of addressing this stuff in an angry space. And it's pretty phenomenal. I mean, it's—you know, it's real courageous work to sort of frame grief in a way that people can manage it. And that was always what I loved about standups is that they could take anything and frame it in a way that makes it more understandable. It makes it—you get relief, 'cause it's funny. And it disarms some of the most terrifying things that we deal with on a day-to-day basis. That was what made me feel better.
00:24:31	Jesse	Host	That's an interesting—so, I've heard you use that description before, and I think it is a really interesting one—that what you're doing as a standup is not lightening or deflating something that's big

or important, which I think is how often things are described. But framing it so that it can be more comfortably seen.

[Marc agrees.]

00:25:01 Marc Guest
00:25:02 Jesse Host

Like, as somebody who has never—I—
Absorbed!

I have never had the skill that they tell you to do in school, which is like break big tasks into small tasks and write them down on a piece of paper so that the paper's holding it and not you.

[Marc agrees.]

00:25:20 Marc Guest
00:25:27 Jesse Host

Right? Like, to me if there's too many—if there's a big task, I can either solve it all at once together or it's gonna weigh on me for the rest of my life. Right?

Yeah. I never knew that. That's such a great idea! I mean, I'm just sort of like it's a constant unfolding. You know? Like, it's sort of a—
Yes! I'm very aware because this is my life. But what you're describing as a standup comic is putting something into a context into which it can be understood and absorbed.

[Marc confirms.]

00:25:47 Marc Guest
00:25:49 Jesse Host
00:25:55 Marc Guest

And simplifying it and that the—that making it funny is not about diminishing it or even making it more important. It's—
Tricky, though.

It's a way of giving you some comfort with engaging with it.

Yeah. But diminishing—it's tricky, because you've gotta be careful with that. When there's other people involved and one of them's dead. You know, or you're making light of something. I mean, you know, diminishment and sort of—you know—punching down or being disrespectful—I mean, all that's in the same world. But diminishment can be mild. But like, I had to—you know—make some real decisions around processing this stuff publicly, because she's got family. She's got—

00:26:22 Jesse Host
00:26:25 Marc Guest

And you didn't have much relationship with her family and stuff.

No, I didn't because—yeah, I didn't know them. We were newly public. You know, we only had the ability to choose to be public after a while. But it wasn't—it was a fairly new relationship. I've known her for years, but certainly not as many—not as much as—well, I guess everybody has, you know, family and people who've known them 20 years/30 years. But like, I was the one that was associated with her publicly. And it becomes a responsibility. And I dealt with this with my father too in the sense of like—and girlfriends. Look, if you're gonna say something, you have to realize that the person you're talking about—you know—doesn't have a platform to respond to it. So, you better think about what you're saying and be respectful if that's what you wanna be.

And in Lynn's case, she very much could not respond, because she's dead. So, it was—you know, to balance the respect and not be dismissive—there's one joke in that special where I'd only done it maybe once. Maybe. It might have just happened that night. That sets up that section, and it's a real almost—it's one of the most

Jewish delivered jokes I've ever heard in my life, that—when I say, “The day that she died was a terrible day for me. I'm sure her too.”

[Jesse chuckles.]

And you know—but it almost felt callous in retrospect. I'm like, “Should we leave that in?” And like, yes! Because that's okay. 'Cause you're gonna follow it with a sincere investigation. You know? That little cute joke that was almost like how could I not do it? It was right there. It would seem callous if that was the only joke I did about it.

00:28:05 Jesse Host We've got more of my conversation with Marc Maron still to come. Stay with us. It's *Bullseye*, from [MaximumFun.org](https://www.maximumfun.org) and NPR.

00:28:14 Music Transition Chiming synth with a steady beat.

00:28:19 Jesse Host This is *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. I'm talking with Marc Maron. He's a standup comic and the host of the podcast *WTF*.

So, I'm 41 years old, and I don't think I had ever managed in my life to ask anyone for emotional support other than once in a while my wife.

00:28:41 Marc Guest Yeah. I'm similar.

00:28:46 Jesse Host When I went through some terrible things a few years ago, during the pandemic, I found myself having to call friends and just like cry-yell at them. Which was something I had never done.

[Marc affirms.]

Considered that to be... I didn't have the like “all men must be stoic” thing, but I believed it was wrong to put my friends through that or something. *[Chuckles.]* You know what I mean? Like, I felt like it was an undo burden to them or something like that. I can't put my finger on what I thought of it, why I didn't do it, but I didn't want to make their lives harder or something.

00:29:31 Marc Guest I didn't trust people with the vulnerability. You know? Like, in general, when you're that vulnerable—and with grief or with, you know, real—when you're up against the wall where you really can't control your feelings, I guess you and I are people that put a lot of energy into controlling that. But when you can't, the sort of desperate vulnerability of that is—it's just terrifying. And you're not sure what you expect out of people or whether they're gonna—you know, actually make you feel better. But you just hope that they won't hurt you more or judge you. I mean, I think it's a defensiveness. You know? I don't—I wasn't really afraid of the burden necessarily.

It was just sort of like—you know, I didn't want to need help in general. I don't love when, you know, I'm too vulnerable, because my experience is I'll be manipulated or hurt. And that might be a very old experience at this point and probably something I don't need to be afraid of. But with grief, it seems—with what you're talking about—you know, you're—you no longer have the resources within yourself to manage it. So, you know. And then, self-harm becomes a problem, the possibility of it. Or actually hurting others because of the pain you're in. So, fortunately, with death—especially one that was public—the community outpouring of support and condolence and check-in was overwhelming. Like, I

could not even believe it. You know? That these people—you know. And even knowing, my community—you know—calling me up, seeking me out to see how I was doing.

You know, guys that—you know, it's the thing you were saying earlier about standups. You know? A bunch of guys who are like, you know—who are socially awkward or don't wanna fit in anywhere—you know, to every one of them, and I'm talking 100 checked in on me. You know, and that's what people do. And it's enough. *[Stammering.]* It doesn't require any emotions for them to just, you know, say, "Hey." People send in food.

00:31:47 Jesse Host

That was—I was driving down Figueroa Boulevard in Highland Park, Los Angeles yesterday. And I thought about when things were very hard in my life, my friend Julia Smith—used to produce this show—sent some ice cream to my house.

00:32:03 Marc Guest

Oh, it's the best.

00:32:05 Jesse Host

And Julia didn't even—I had not talked to—Julia knew something was going on, but she didn't know what it was even. I hadn't talked to her about it. It was the pandemic. I wasn't—you know. I wasn't seeing anyone in real life or anything. And I'm driving down Figueroa Boulevard two and a half years later, and I started crying out of gratitude for Julia sending me some ice cream.

[Marc laughs and affirms.]

And it occurred to me that like—you know, my friend Ben didn't need to fix my pain. It was just really nice of him to be there.

[Chuckles.]

[Marc agrees.]

00:32:49 Marc Guest

To be present for it and just be like, "Well. You know. Let me know." "Let's just sit here."

00:32:50 Jesse Host

"I'll bring some soup or something."

[Marc agrees.]

00:32:52 Marc Guest

You know?

Yeah. Just—let's just sit. And that was the hard thing about the pandemic, too. Like, not a lot of people would come. My brother came out right away. Some people would show up in the yard masked and give me a hug. You know. But yeah. It was really—it was really helpful. You know, just to have people sit for a minute. You know? And hold the space a little bit. You know? And I couldn't control the crying. Like, I went out to New Mexico. I thought like I'll just go up to the mountains. And I saw my buddy, Devon, who I just saw last weekend. You know. I just was—I couldn't—you know, we went out to lunch, and I just could not stop the crying. I mean, it was unbelievable. It would just take over.

00:33:47 Jesse Host

But you know, and I'd feel kind of embarrassed in the moment, but then they'd just—they know what's up! You know? It's what you're supposed to be doing. Right?

[Beat.] It also must be challenging to go through something like that and be a public person and you have some kind of responsibility to

00:34:05 Marc Guest hundreds of thousands of people. And you don't know what that—you're not sure what that is or—
I kind of knew what it was. You know? And I—and I decided to keep showing up for them in the state that I was in. And it was also—you know, my producer, Brendan—you know, we had this commitment, this weird kind of like “two new shows a week no matter what”. But he called me after Lynn died. We were on the phone and he said, “We don't have to ever do another one again. You don't have to do it Monday. You don't have to do it Thursday. We don't have to ever do anything. You know, this is—” You know, I don't remember how he put it. I mean, but you know, it's one of those things that happens in your life where—you know, nothing's ever gonna be that horrible. You know? But he was like, “Yeah. Whatever you want.”

00:35:01 Jesse Host And I'm like, “Well, let's do it. Let's post the episode with Lynn, like we usually do when someone passes. And I will speak.” And I haven't listened to that. It's gotta be horrible, messy, painful. I can't listen to that.

00:35:12 Marc Guest I gotta say, I was... I just finished a tour with my partner, John Hodgman. Non-romantic partner. And—

00:35:14 Jesse Host Though he's a romantic guy.

00:35:14 Jesse Host He is. He is quite a romantic.

[They chuckle.]

00:35:40 Marc Guest Literarily speaking. And in this show, I would sing a song, talk about my dad who died during the pandemic, sing this song. And then, this show, I would—you know, thank the audience for being there, 'cause I was so grateful to be there in front of the audience every time on this tour. Just sooo—just filled with gratitude.

00:35:44 Jesse Host That's what—but that's what I'm telling you about the tour!

00:36:11 Marc Guest And I would just say like when my life was falling apart in a way that I had never even imagined it could that John and my other partner, Jordan, and—you know—Kevin, the producer of this show, all said to me, “You know, you don't have to do the show. We'll figure it out. You don't have to do the show.” And—

00:36:13 Jesse Host People will understand.

00:36:13 Jesse Host People will understand. And they would've! No doubt about it.

[Marc agrees.]

00:36:30 Marc Guest And what I said—I mean, there were times that I literally, physically could not. But generally speaking, I was like—I love this! *[Laughs.]* Like—!

00:36:30 Marc Guest But that's where we feel safe!

[Jesse agrees.]

00:36:41 Jesse Host You know? It's like—you know, calling friends and crying or asking for help, no. But like, we have this audience that is there for us.

00:36:47 Marc Guest Well, Marc, I'm so grateful to get to talk to you always. It's always nice to see you. Thank you for having me over to your house.

00:36:49 Jesse Host Well, thank you for doing your show from this location!

00:36:53 Marc Guest I'm glad to do it. Please, thank the power sanders!

00:36:53 Marc Guest Yes. Thank you, power sanders.

00:36:56	Jesse	Host	<p>Marc Maron. His new special, <i>From Bleak to Dark</i>, is exceptionally funny and profoundly moving. You can watch it now on HBO Max. You can stream <i>WTF with Marc Maron</i> wherever you get your podcasts. A special thanks to Marc for letting us record this conversation at his home. He runs his own board! He made sure I knew that in a text message. And hey, one of the first times I ever talked to Marc was when I was still in college. I'm talking about 20 years ago, doing a fundraising show for the college radio station.</p> <p>Marc was on the phone from Queens, New York. My cohost Jordan and I were at the base of the campus of UC Santa Cruz—the big entrance to the college where all the cars and busses drove past. Marc Maron was fully dressed. We were wearing only our underpants. We just put together a little selection of some of the great moments from very early in this show's history. That's one of them. If you're a Maximum Fun member, you can hear it in your members only bonus feed. Go listen to it. I couldn't bring myself to do so.</p>
00:38:05	Music	Transition	Relaxed music with light vocalizations.
00:38:08	Jesse	Host	<p>That's the end of another episode of <i>Bullseye</i>. <i>Bullseye</i>, created from the homes of me and the staff of Maximum Fun, in and around greater Los Angeles, California. Here at my house, my son just got <i>NBA 2K</i> for our PlayStation, and my wife beat me.</p> <p>Our show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our senior producer is Kevin Ferguson. Our producers are Jesus Ambrosio and Richard Robey. Our production fellows at Maximum Fun are Tabatha Myers and Bryanna Paz. We get booking help from Mara Davis. Our interstitial music comes from DJW, also known as Dan Wally. Our theme music at the top of the show is by the great band The Go! Team. The song is "Huddle Formation". Our thanks to The Go! Team. And thanks to their label, Memphis Industries.</p> <p><i>Bullseye</i> is also on YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook. You can find us in all of those places. Give us a follow. We will share with you all of our interviews. And I think that's about it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature signoff.</p>
00:39:14	Promo	Promo	<p>Speaker: <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.</p> <p><i>[Music fades out.]</i></p>