

[00:00:00]

**Jesse Thorn:** Hey, *Bullseye* listeners, it's Jesse. It's MaxFunDrive time. *Bullseye* is produced by Maximum Fun, a worker-owned cooperative here in Los Angeles. And Maximum Fun is supported by membership. So, I hope that if you like *Bullseye*, you think it's worth paying for. And you can go to [MaximumFun.org/join](https://MaximumFun.org/join) to become a member and do that. That's [MaximumFun.org/join](https://MaximumFun.org/join).

**Transition:** Gentle, trilling music with a steady drumbeat plays under the dialogue.

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

**Music:** “Huddle Formation” from the album *Thunder, Lightning, Strike* by The Go! Team—a fast, upbeat, peppy song. Music plays as Jesse speaks, then fades out.

**Jesse Thorn:** It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. My first guest this week is Jenny Slate. You know, Jenny Slate, Mona-Lisa Saperstein from *Parks and Recreation*.

**Transition:** Whooshing sound.

**Clip:**

**Mona-Lisa (*Parks and Recreation*):** *(In a giggly baby voice)* Money, please!

**Ben:** Oh no. No, there's no money.

**Mona-Lisa:** *(Whining.)* MONEY, please! Money, please. Gimme money pleaseee.

**Dr. Saperstein:** Ben, give her some money. It's easier.

**Transition:** Whooshing sound.

**Jesse Thorn:** Jenny Slate, indie film star from *Landline* and *Obvious Child*.

**Transition:** Whooshing sound.

**Clip:**

**Ryan (*Obvious Child*):** Wow, you are a serious regular.

**Donna:** It's like the one place where I can go and wear my diaper and feel that I fit in.

**Ryan:** *(Chuckling.)* Got it.

**Donna:** (*Laughs.*) I also don't normally order for the person that I'm with at a restaurant, but the chicken piccata is the best that this place has to offer. It's the gems, the crown jewels. It's—you gotta have it.

**Transition:** Whooshing sound.

**Jesse Thorn:** Jenny Slate, the woman behind the adorable stop motion phenomenon, *Marcel the Shell with Shoes On*.

**Transition:** Whooshing sound.

**Clip:**

**Marcel** (*Marcel the Shell*): Guess what my bed is?

**Speaker:** What?

**Marcel:** A piece of bread. Guess what I—this one time I went to a hotel, and guess what the bed was made out of?

**Speaker:** What?

**Marcel:** A muffin.

**Transition:** Whooshing sound.

**Jesse Thorn:** And also, Jenny Slate, the standup comedian! She just released her second special. It's called *Seasoned Professional*. It's streaming now on Prime.

**Transition:** Whooshing sound.

**Clip:**

**Jenny Slate** (*Seasoned Professional*): I was pregnant for a long time, and I understood that I was. But like, even on the way to the hospital, when my body was like really hurting and stuff was starting to leak out, I was just like, “Kind of feels like someone's gonna sub in here though.”

(*Laughter.*)

Like, it's just such an extreme experience that I just was like—I don't know, it just doesn't feel like something I would do, you know.

(*Laughter.*)

Like, would I knock on someone's door after four dates at 2AM and be like, "I just need to tell you I'm in love with you!" Like, yeah, Extreme stuff, I've done it. But like, this?! I was like, huuuh, I don't know. It just doesn't seem like what she would do. And like anytime something's been hard, or I haven't wanted to do it, like I've always been able to quit or be fired.

*(Laughter.)*

**Transition:** Whooshing sound.

**Jesse Thorn:** Jenny Slate, welcome back to *Bullseye*, it's nice to see you.

**Jenny Slate:** Thank you for having me back.

**Jesse Thorn:** Childbirth! You know, they call it the miracle of childbirth.

**Jenny Slate:** They do? *(Laughs.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, that's what they call it! And having witnessed it three times as an adult—once as a child as well—it still has an air of unreality to me that it's so awe inspiring. Not just in an overwhelmed sense, but it's unbelievable.

*(Jenny agrees.)*

And I feel like that is a wonderful subject for standup comedy.

**Jenny Slate:** Yeah. Yeah, yeah! After I gave birth, I got like really interested in like the surrealist art movement and in Leonora Carrington as like a writer and painter. Because I was like—birth, like the way that it looks is like—like, you could just take a photo and it would be a surrealist image at certain points, you know. Just like a little person inside of a big person in a weird way. *(Laughs.)* With lots of like blood and energy. That seems very surreal to me.

**Jesse Thorn:** How did giving birth compare to your expectation of giving birth?

**Jenny Slate:** To be honest, it was a lot more positive than I thought. It's so complicated to talk about the birth experience, because there are so many ways that it can go. And people who have been through it in one way or another, are deeply tied to the specificity of their experience and like sensitive. And then there's other people, of course, that like have children that arrive at—you know, and they didn't come out of one of the partner's bodies or whatever. And like I—after going through it, I feel especially sensitive about it. So, it's not like a brag.

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But it was really positive, which also doesn't mean that it didn't hurt and that there wasn't danger. It didn't go perfectly, but you know, we made it through. And everything that I said in

the special is true. Like, I did not see myself as the type of person that would do an extreme thing like give birth, and so I didn't identify with that skill set. And then I was really surprised that the skill set that I already have as like a caretaker or a person who—you need to have—there's skill involved in receiving care. And like, you know, as someone who has to be courageous, what I am like in crisis, how deeply do I identify with my own like bodily processes or whatever? Like, it was just me!

You know like I guess I just like thought you definitely have to become a different version of yourself to do that, but you go in as you. And so, it was good for me, and I felt really cared for. And it was sort of like romantic between me and my husband in a weird way. We're not into like intense stuff. (*Laughs.*) It's not like a fetish, you know.

**Jesse Thorn:** Thanks for settling that last thing. I'm sure a lot of NPR listeners were like, “I can guess what she's talking about!”

(*Jenny laughs.*)

You say you didn't identify yourself as somebody who could do something extreme or would do something extreme, like giving birth. Did you think of yourself as somebody who would do something like become a parent?

**Jenny Slate:** No, I didn't. I didn't think that I was going to have children. I hadn't ever met like a partner that I wanted to do that with. And I was genuinely just like really freaked out about what I took to be like the loss of freedom or my own time. And then when I met my husband, and he was talking about how he wanted to become a parent and what he meant by that—I just was at this place in my life where I was like, “I don't know. I'm kind of tired of like all this me.” Like, (*chuckles*) I'm tired of like taking care of myself in this way that I'm kind of going to the same moves over and over again. And not that they're worn out, but I'm ready for a different type of—an experiment in love and loving. And I think also just because my husband is who he is, I just thought, “I'm gonna go for it.”

And it didn't feel like, woah, wild, like this is crazy! You know, very outrageous and ill advised. It was just kind of like it felt almost sad to me that I had never even given myself a chance to consider being a mother. And then I realized like, “Oh, I guess I have been wanting to try to do that.” And because I had no expectations, it allowed me to like do it in whatever way I thought! Which is a way that I've actually done a lot of things in my career, too. So, it felt like a good fit. Like, being a standup comedian—like, I didn't grow up watching standup. I just like did it however I thought.

**Jesse Thorn:** Did you previously identify, like as a young adult, as somebody that was brave in the sense of participating in recklessness or foolishness?

**Jenny Slate:** I mean, I think I can be like a silly fool. You know, like someone whose dress is tucked into her tights by mistake, or toilet paper on the foot, or you know (*chuckles*) farting, eating something I'm allergic to, because I think it's not going to be that big of a deal. Like, things like—

**Jesse Thorn:** You're saying you're capable of being the first act of a romantic comedy?  
(*Chuckles.*)

**Jenny Slate:** Yeah, oh yeah, like that is what I'm like.

**Jesse Thorn:** Things that make Sandra Bullock relatable.

**Jenny Slate:** Totally, I'm that. I'm that. Yeah, I wish. I wish, I wish. I don't try to be reckless or foolish. And in fact, I like think of myself as like a good student who likes to follow the rules, even though, you know, I definitely like smoked a ton of weed in college and after for a long time. But like I (*laughs*)—but I think of myself as like a good girl, you know? And that like the way—like, a good—like, a nice lady. But like the way that I participate in revelry is—it's just never bad. Like, I never like break a window, fall down the stairs, or take my shirt off by mistake. Something like that.

But I do think of myself as an extreme person. And I've been embarrassed by that and caught sort of on my back foot by that instinct to just sort of blast out or make really big commitments and be kind of like wild and dedicated to the pursuit of romance. Things like that. You know, like and be on stage and just—and improvise, like I like to feel in the moment connection.

**Jesse Thorn:** We're going to take a quick break. When we return, more with Jenny Slate. Stay with us. It's *Bullseye* from [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) and NPR.

**Transition:** Thumpy synth.

**Jesse Thorn:** Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. My guest is Jenny Slate. She's an actor who's starred in movies, including *Marcel the Shell with Shoes On* and *Obvious Child*. She's also a standup comic. She just released her second special.

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It's called *Jenny Slate: Seasoned Professional*, and it's streaming now on Prime.

At what point did you feel like you were your adult self? At what point in your life?

**Jenny Slate:** Just recently. I think like around this summer. I mean, that's a surprising answer—surprising specificity, and also I'm about to be 42, so maybe a bummer. But I've never really felt like I'm the age that I am. And then this summer, there was this moment where my husband was away, doing like research on a new writing project, and he was away for 10 days. And I went to visit my parents with my daughter, so that I could have like some help with childcare. But I didn't have any plan for myself. Like, I had a book to basically like write and finish. And that, you know, had been on my mind for quite a while, but I wasn't like, "You know, I'm gonna try to get some work done!" I was like, "I'm not gonna do anything except for, you know, be with Ida and care for her. And that's what this is. This 10 days is that. I'm actually just not gonna try to do anything. 'Cause it's just—it's not gonna work for me."

And there was something in this time where I was like—maybe being around my own mother, where I was like, “Oh, I’m an adult. I really feel it.” It was like a really peaceful feeling, a singular feeling. I don’t know what it was. Would love to check it out astrologically speaking, but I will always remember that time at the end of this past June, in 2023. I was also on strike, so like I couldn’t do anything anyway. And I just was like I’m here now. Like, I’m really capable of being kind of like the farmer on this land.

**Jesse Thorn:** I want to play a clip from *Marcel the Shell. Marcel the Shell With Shoes On*, specifically. This is a character that you created quite a long time ago and became, I think, first a sort of viral internet video, and then a children’s book, and more recently a feature film—which I really loved.

*(Jenny thanks him.)*

He is a shell, like a little seashell with a googly eye and little shoes. And in the movie, a documentary filmmaker—who is your ex-husband and partner in making *Marcel the Shell* in real life, who plays himself in the movie—is interviewing him. And in this scene, Marcel made a live stream asking for help finding his family. It gets a lot of views, but he doesn’t—it’s not helping so far. And in this scene, he’s reading the comments.

**Transition:** Whooshing sound.

**Clip:**

**Marcel (*Marcel the Shell with Shoes On*):** So cute. Peace. Yeah. Obviously peace. Like, what a weird thing to try to test to see if someone else is into. Like, of course I’m into peace. No, sorry. I am a real war person. No, war. Actually, I sign all my personal letters, “War. Let the battle begin! Marcel.”

**Transition:** Whooshing sound.

**Jesse Thorn:** I was thinking about what I like about Marcel the Shell. I think it’s maybe something about his combination of sort of meekness/fear and self-possession. So, where—how did you find that?

**Jenny Slate:** Brief look within.

*(They chuckle.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, which half of it were you faking or not?

**Jenny Slate:** It’s sort of hard at this point to talk about Marcel, because—I don’t know how to describe it. But I’m—that’s just like I’m just doing my work and that’s what comes out. I don’t like plan anything. And then the character, his profile sort of builds. You know, his personality builds, just the way that when you meet someone, you know more about them because of how they behave. And I know that it’s also coming from me. Marcel and I don’t

have the same personality exactly really, because I am more worried about the consequences of my outbursts. Marcel, like he's not afraid to kind of do whatever it is that he wants to do in that moment. So, he's kind of like—he's a little pissy in that moment.

And that moment also was, it was lifted from a car ride that Dean Fleischer Camp, the director and cocreator of *Marcel*, he and I were recording in the car. And we saw like a peace sticker on a car. And I would be in character for the whole time. And I just kind of went on like a weird rant about like, “Oh, you're the one, you know. Like, you love peace? Oh god, I'm so glad we finally found one person.” You know? (*Chuckles.*) And like I think that is—that's me. That's is my own opinion. You know, like it's also just my own irritation with uptight hippies. That's like, “Oh, you're the first person that thought of this? Like, really?” And I don't know why, but I find it so condescending. And anyway, Dean loved it and lifted it in, and put it in that moment, which I think really works.

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But I think like Marcel, he's not embarrassed about being pissy in the way that I—I'm like a female person living in patriarchy. If I'm pissy, everyone's furious at me. You know, like they're just like, “Ugh.” You know, so like it's harder to be in a bad mood. I mean, I'm allowed to. I know. But it doesn't mean that—especially if you're like me, and you're a child of the '80s—like, that also means there's a lot of like the '50s that existed there. Like, my parents are from the '50s, and we can all work on like divesting ourselves of like the misogyny placed on us. But it's a long thing! And the fears that I have really revolve around being perceived, by a certain like sort of big, giant, misogynist eye. And I don't know; it's nice to be Marcel. Also, he's a boy, which is also weird. But he is, I guess.

**Jesse Thorn:** *Marcel the Shell* is also like—it's about like sadness and loneliness and longing in a way that is surprising and lovely for such a silly children's film. (*Laughs.*)

**Jenny Slate:** You could say the same of my comedy, my specials. I mean, yeah, I guess *Marcel's* for—it's like a family movie, but I think we're all working with like a signature mix. A signature mixture. If you're able to isolate what it is for you, and you're a creative person—or maybe just like just for anyone, it can just be really helpful to kind of understand, you know, what are the main components of like your experience? What are like the big notes? And my dad says that my comedy is about being happy. And I think that's right. But I think that it's really hard to talk about what you're happy about. If you also haven't encountered what has made you feel heartbroken or disappointed or frightened. At least, that's how it is for me.

There isn't like a lot of separation there, and I like that. Because I also see that in the world—that things are entwined and that there is entanglement and that it's supposed to be that way. And I find in myself that the parts that cry out, act out, whatever, are always the ones that are being like sort of inside of myself, like in my interiority, those things that I'm like shunning.

**Transition:** Thumpy rock music.

**Jesse Thorn:** Hey *Bullseye* listeners, it's Jesse, and I'm here with Maximum Fun's production fellow, Daniel Huecias. Hey, bud. How's it going?

**Daniel Huecias:** Hey, Jesse. How are you doing?

**Jesse Thorn:** I feel like people probably are guessing what a production fellow is.

**Daniel Huecias:** I think that they may think I'm just a production gentleman, I'm assuming.

*(Jesse agrees with a laugh.)*

I drink tea and—

**Jesse Thorn:** You're a production feller.

*(Daniel agrees with a laugh.)*

We used to have an internship program at Maximum Fun—many, many, many, many years ago, when it was like me in my apartment. A few people like wrote to me and said, “Can I come sit at the kitchen table with you?”

*(They laugh.)*

And I wanted to create a paid program that would give people who were in the position that I was in when I graduated from school a sort of ingress into this industry. ‘Cause like, there's no majoring in podcast production. Maybe actually there is now at a couple of colleges, but in general, no majoring in podcast production. And also like, I don't know—I'll tell you. My experience when I graduated from college was I applied for 10,000 jobs, including driving a number of prize vans, and got this many interviews.

*(Daniel chuckles.)*

And I'm holding up a big fat zero. And I don't know if it's because I went to—you know, I went to UC Santa Cruz. I didn't go to Emerson or Brown or whatever. But what do you do as a production fellow?

**Daniel Huecias:** Well, you and I have that in common. I've submitted dozens upon dozens of applications and headshots and got nowhere. And then, the production fellowship came across my computer screen. And I think—I want to talk about the YouTube video that you produced. When you became a worker-owned cooperative last summer, on my birthday—June 30th.

**Jesse Thorn:** Happy Birthday.

**Daniel Huecias:** Thank you so much. Happy birthday to you.

**Jesse Thorn:** Thank you.



**Daniel Huecias:** I remember seeing the video, and how every single person here at Maximum Fun expressed how important it was for them to become a worker-owned cooperative. And I remember at the end of the video, I left with the sentiment, left with the feeling that y'all were good people who made great work and cared about the work that they were doing. So, I applied! And luckily, you gave me my first interview after dozens upon dozens of applications!

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And then I think what I was expecting coming into the production fellowship was just really everything that I dreamed of when it came to getting my dainty little foot into the door of podcast production. I've written scripts; I've pulled clips for y'all; I have walked down the stairs to greet John Malkovich, which was wonderful.

**Jesse Thorn:** But yeah, I mean, I think like—I think because for years I made this show almost by myself, and then I made this show with our original producers, Nick and Julia, again like by ourselves—I always imagine this production fellowship to be a “just go do it” situation. Because we're—you know, even with the staff that we are able to have on *Bullseye*, we still probably have the smallest staff of any national public radio program, lowercase letters.

*(Daniel chuckles.)*

And so, we all just have to go do it. And that actually is a part of why I wanted to make sure this was a full-time paid job with benefits, because we're asking people to do real stuff. And you're getting support from Kevin and Richard and Jesus. We are asking you to just go take care of business.

**Daniel Huecias:** Yeah. I mean, y'all keep me fed. Every time I order Thai food, I think of you.

**Jesse Thorn:** *(Laughing.)* Thank you, Daniel. Thank you.

**Daniel Huecias:** But also fed in experience. Like, I've learned so much just in a short amount of time being here. And that really is—it's been a dream.

**Jesse Thorn:** Thank you. I'm really glad. And that money, largely, is coming from members of Maximum Fun. Folks who go and sign up at five bucks a month and say, “I listened to this show.” And that money goes directly to the shows that they listen to, too. Like if people listen to this show and *My Brother, My Brother and Me*, or *Black People Love Paramore*, or any of the other Maximum Fun shows—when you go and sign up, it asks you what shows you listen to, and that money goes to those shows.

There are now something like two dozen—coming up on two dozen MaxFun employees. And MaxFun is a worker-owned cooperative, as you alluded to. Because Maximum Fun is a worker owned cooperative, it means that the success of *Bullseye* is success for all the folks who work here. And because there are members who support *Bullseye*, it means that we can

do things like have this production fellowship, have Richard and Kevin and Jesus. Have Mara, our talent booker—who has completely upped our game! Because we're the little guy, we have to fight. We have to scrap extra hard. Like, this isn't coming from the mothership in Washington, DC. This is coming from our little studios in Los Angeles. We're really proud of that. And it's your support that allows us to do that. Folks who go to [MaximumFun.org/join](https://MaximumFun.org/join). I want to emphasize though, going to [MaximumFun.org/join](https://MaximumFun.org/join) is all about supporting what you consume and what you love in a direct way. It is also an opportunity to get stuff.

I cannot undersell the getting stuff part of this. Let's talk about the getting stuff.

**Daniel Huecias:** There is stuff. I know that at \$10 a month, you can take home a beautiful pin that you could throw on any lapel. It's our Speaking Into Microphones pin. Very nice. Enamel, which is nice.

**Jesse Thorn:** You can only get it by becoming a member of Maximum Fun. At every monthly level, starting at five bucks a month, you get access to years and years and years of bonus content, including our extended interview with Boots Riley, our new special show—which you probably heard at the *Bullseye* Feed this week—which is called *Hey, What's Your Job?*. This is a show where we reached out to listeners and said, “Who's got an interesting job?” We found a guy who lives deep under the earth, works deep under the earth, investigating dark matter.

**Daniel Huecias:** (*Chuckles.*) Lives, breathes, works.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, exactly. We found a woman who makes vestments for Buddhist monks. We found a guy who puts labels on records—like, he's a printer whose job is printing records. Not the record, but the stuff on the record. A whole like panoply of people with amazing jobs. You can only get that. There's a big, exhaustive interview about *Bullseye* and the history of *Bullseye* that our pal Linda Holmes from *Pop Culture Happy Hour* did with me.

**Daniel Huecias:** Yes. Love Linda.

**Jesse Thorn:** Who doesn't? Linda Holmes is the absolute greatest.

Well, all kinds of stuff. And look. If you have the means to support the production of this show at a higher level, \$20 a month, \$35 a month, \$50, \$100 a month, there are lots of great thank you gifts at those levels, too. And we're grateful for any level at which you can support us. I mean, this is the honest truth. Given the number of people that listen to *Bullseye*—

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—which I will admit, less than some other public radio shows.

(*Daniel chuckles.*)

But not insignificant. If we want to pay for the production of this show, it's not really about how many people give us \$20 a month instead of \$10 a month. What it's about is people who listen to this show and appreciate it thinking, "Yeah, I could pay for that. I should pay for that. Like, I like that. I should pay for it." Folks who give us five bucks a month, who just sign up to say, you know, this show's worth 50 cents an episode to me, and go to [MaximumFun.org/join](http://MaximumFun.org/join)—that is the thing. That is like the magic lightning bolt.

Daniel, thank you so much. Thank you so much for taking the time, and thanks so much to everybody who's listened to this. If you're out there, and you like the work that we do, we can really only do it with your support. So, go to [MaximumFun.org/join](http://MaximumFun.org/join) and become a member. We really, really appreciate it. Thank you.

**Transition:** Thumpy rock music.

**Jesse Thorn:** I'm Jesse Thorn. You're listening to *Bullseye*. My guest is actor and standup comic Jenny Slate.

What was the experience like for you of working on this character and film, *Marcel the Shell*, on both sides of being divorced from your collaborator in the character and film?

**Jenny Slate:** For me, I felt that it was—(*chuckles*) it was like the—like, imagine like a town that had a fire and like everything is kind of—everything's kind of burned down, but then there's like weirdly one house that didn't get touched. And that becomes the new center and the new home. That's what it felt like to me. Because like, it's one thing when like a romantic partnership doesn't work out. That's something that we hear about all the time. And we kind of know what the lyrics of that song are, kind of. So to speak. But if you lose a creative partner or you lose faith in a creative—someone you look up to creatively, or all of that, that is a very terrible loss. And I was lucky that I didn't have to feel that way. And when I would be Marcel and Dean would be interviewing me, and we had a plan, of course, you know, for the day and what we're doing. And you know, we recorded in a house, but you know, we had like other people around us. And it was a very, very non-repressed, I guess.

Like, I don't know how to say it. Like, it wasn't like we were repressing ourselves and just like, "Everyone be on good behavior, you know, even though we're getting divorced." Like, it was actually just real. It was like, "This is actually still totally here." And I don't really like want to live in a reality where I can't like celebrate Dean or talk about how brilliant he is, because like he is. And he also is the person who opened me up to so much of myself as a performer and also to like kind of to film in general, because he just was like such a cinephile—like, a typical one—you know, when I met him, and we were really young.

So, actually, I think it was like a very, very stable zone. But, for me, outside of that stable zone, it was like BWAAAH! You know? (*Laughs.*) Like, so much change in myself and—you know, as my beloved therapist Pamela will say, like sometimes you just have one doorway. Gotta go through that weird dark doorway. But the recording, I just remember really positive.

**Jesse Thorn:** I'm terrified of divorce.

**Jenny Slate:** Yeah, it sucks.

**Jesse Thorn:** My parents hated each other. My father's gone now, but my parents truly hated each other in a way that I have never had the experience of, I think, hating anyone in my life. 'Cause I've got—just out of luck. So, to me, when a friend of mine is getting divorced or someone in my life, it's almost impossible for me not to process it as, “This is the end of the world.”

**Jenny Slate:** Well, it can feel that way. And I think I've said this before, but like it's just the end of a lot. It's the end of a certain relationship culture. It's the end of a belief system that the two of you had together. It's the end of your physical home often, the end of schedules that you relied upon, it's the end of external reliance and of a certain identity.

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And it's really, really, really deeply disorienting and unsettling. And there's not an answer. And I... I think Dean and I are really lucky that we're just who we are, and that we didn't try to like annihilate each other, even though our relationship ended. I mean, we also didn't have any children. And both of us want to be working actors, directors, like we want to be the artists that we are—that we each are. And I just think we actually are not reckless. There's absolutely no way that we would have blocked each other from this experience. And so, that meant that we had to support each other. And it wasn't like, “Ugh, I guess I'm gonna have to be with her in the boat!” You know? Like, it wasn't like it was like, “Bleh, I have to be with him, like ‘cause this is the only lifeboat we have.” It was like there's this weird chance at sweetness and goodness and growth. And like, don't think too much about it. Just like, let's go.

**Jesse Thorn:** So much more still to come with Jenny Slate. After the break, an NPR exclusive: Jenny Slate, grown adult, does not have her own cell phone plan. From whom is she mooching? The answer is right around the corner. It's *Bullseye*, from [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) and NPR.

**Transition:** Thumpy synth with light vocalizations.

**Jesse Thorn:** This is *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. My guest is actor and comedian Jenny Slate.

I want to play another clip from your special, *Seasoned Professional*. It's about you receiving a casting notice to play Pennywise in *It*.

**Transition:** Whooshing sound.

**Clip:**

**Jenny Slate:** I opened my email, it's like, “An appointment has been made on your behalf to audition for the role of Pennywise!” I was like... HUH!? Like, I just—I truly was like, “Wait, what? Like, no. Like, that couldn't be... like... like, the murdering, kidnapping... balding male clown, right?”

*(Laughter.)*

Like, and then I'm like such an optimist that I was like, "Well, maybe it's like something else. Like, maybe this is actually like, best case scenario, like a very antisemitic rom com about a whimsical woman who like can't get it together named like Penny Wise!" And like *(blows a raspberry.)*

**Transition:** Whooshing sound.

**Jenny Slate:** Why'd I throw in a fart noise there?

**Jesse Thorn:** You make a lot of noises onstage.

**Jenny Slate:** Oh, I do. I do. In life too. Yeah, for sure.

**Jesse Thorn:** Somebody on Twitter said I should ask you how you do so much squeak-related comedy.

*(They laugh.)*

**Jenny Slate:** How do I not, honestly? I don't even know that I'm doing it on purpose now. I just love—I love like noises of tension. I love noises of embarrassment. I love noises of like PRESSUUURE! Pressure, pressure! You know, I just like—I love that.

**Jesse Thorn:** I want the Pennywise people to know that I'm available to do Pennywise, but offer only. I'm not gonna audition. I think what you're describing there is the feeling of agency that you lose as an actor. You—it is so weird to have your art in part controlled by not just others, but also like other people's idea of you.

**Jenny Slate:** Yeah! And what you hope for—what you hope for is that the people that you work with, whether they're like the director on your set or like the script supervisor, for example. Which is like a—the script supervisor on any job that I'm on, I always just like feel so bad for them. Because like I'm not great with continuity and like they have to come in and be like, "Jenny, so you were like actually holding your purse in your left hand for like all of those scenes and like you have to keep holding it there." You know, it's like they have to be like my mommy/babysitter/daddy. It's annoying.

But you hope that like anyone will kind of just like understand what you are, where you're at, how it works for you. And like the agent/actor relationship is confusing—can be confusing if it's not working in the best way. Because the agent can feel like an oracle, like your mommy and like the gatekeeper. I don't think they want to feel that way. I think they just want to be your agent and find you work and help you make money and help your career, you know, continue. But man, it can be so humiliating and not even—I don't think it's like people looking to humiliate you. I think like that kind of humiliation that happens when someone is just too general or careless in that way is—it's bad.

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You know, it feels really bad. But I also learned something—like, I have not even thought about this joke, honestly. The joke about getting the casting appointment to audition for Pennywise. Like, I did the joke. I just think it's funny, 'cause it's so silly. You know like I'm a petite, very femme woman. And I've never done scary stuff. It's just such a big leap. And it's tough. It's like—it's just a tough one. But I also just think it's so silly and funny and blah, blah, blah, blah. And then I've been doing some interviews about this special, and everyone asks about it. And I'm like, oh, I guess it is fascinating! Like, for me, it's just so outrageous that it's almost like seeing a star in the sky. And you're just like, "Woah!" And then it's gone. And then you tell a few people, "I saw a shooting star last night," or something.

But in fact, people are fixated on it in this weird way. And I've been thinking about like what it means to me. And I was like let me look at what that was. Because, again, everything happened to me. Like, everything in the special happened to me in my life. And sometimes you see like where my imagination went, because of something real. But nothing is like a lie, you know? And I went back in my emails. And I was just saying this to someone else yesterday, like I wanted to see what my reaction was. Because I know how I feel now, years and years and years later. But that what I noticed, to my dismay, was that you could not detect a whiff of discomfort on my part. Certainly not despair.

And like, I also—like a lot of time has gone by. I don't even have those same representatives anymore. And not like because of that, you know like there are a lot of great things that those people did too. But I was like oh. It's weird that they sent me this. But I'm still here, and I'm still me, and what I need to work on is that it's weird that I didn't say anything. And I'm not sure that there was a way for me to do that, but I'm still an actor. I still have agents who I really love and encourage me in the right way and treat me very specifically. But like, I'm like, oh, what it is for me now—and one thing that I think is a sign of me being whatever my version of an adult person is—is that when something makes me uncomfortable and feels wrong for like very clear reasons, it's something that I'm gonna—I need to say it.

Because looking back in those emails, I was kind of like—first, I'm like, "Wait, this clown is a girl now?" That's kind of like all I write.

They're like, "Yeah, they're open to many ideas."

Then I'm like, "Um, alright, let me take a look. Like, can I go Friday?" But I hadn't read it yet, you know? And like, I know privately that I'm spinning out. And I'm like, there's nothing out there for me. Like, I've done all this work, and nobody sees any of it. Nobody knows what to do with me as an actor. I don't look right. I don't have this. I'm not that. I didn't—they're not ever going to be able to see me outside the confines of, you know, this hyper-hyper comedic role. It's just not going to happen. I'm not special enough. They're not going to care about me. Whatever. And then the next email I send is like after the weekend. I'm like, "Hey, guys." Like, I'm just eating (*cursor beep*), you know. And I'm like, "No, I can't do this. Like, I really want to be in a scary movie, but like I don't think I can play this clown. And like, I'm not gonna go on the audition. Like, XOXO, thank you."

And it's just like, no, Jenny! Not “XOXO, thank you”! Like, there could have been a respectful response. And I don't know. Hopefully, I won't have to do that again.

**Jesse Thorn:** It seems to me like a very different thing to be a person who made a movie, like soup to nuts—with a partner, but like really made a movie soup to nuts—is doing standup, has a child, and mostly lives in Massachusetts. (*Chuckles.*)

Like, that's a lot of autonomies. You know what I mean?

**Jenny Slate:** Um, yes. Yes, it is. I don't know what else to say. It seems like what I'm like. (*Laughs.*) Like, I'm not weirded out by it. It's actually a relief to be like, “Oh, I guess I just like do many things, but my identity is constant.”

**Jesse Thorn:** And those things are things that are your things. They're not—things require—you know, nobody has to—I mean, people have to give you permission to get standup gigs.

**Jenny Slate:** They do. And they have to give you money to make a movie.

**Jesse Thorn:** But nobody—but there are things that you are doing.

**Jenny Slate:** Yeah, and you know, I think like one of the most real joys of my current life as a creative person is that I've really started to lock into like, what is—I don't know how else to say it. Like what my thing is. And also, like writing books is a way that that's become like clearer and clearer. And it's not so that I'm like—

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“Finally, I can create like my one single thing!” But it's that I've started to learn like the language of my own creative satisfaction. And like one thing that I noticed this summer when I was writing a new book, I was like, “Oh. All of these things that are pieces that don't work for this, I can put them in a little folder.” And what I am interested in now is seeing—and I don't know—but like seeing if I want to write some very, very short fiction. Like, I really love the work of Tove Jansson, who's like—her most famous book is *The Summer Book*. But she wrote a lot of short stories. And I mentioned at the start, you know, like I love the work of Leonora Carrington. And I was like I wonder where I fall. Those are my kind of—those are my like little gods that I look to.

And I just like have—I have a palette now, and I'll always need to ask someone to give me money to make the thing. That is one of the weirdest things is that money equals like permission to completely actualize it. But there is a lot of the work that you can do before someone finally gives you that cash flow. And I enjoy like on a daily basis just dipping into like different ideas that are in process. And I am usually working on like a bunch of things at once. And I've never just worked on one thing. Ever. I don't even know if I—that feels good. Like, sometimes it's really stressful, but usually there's like one main thing with like three others on the side.

**Jesse Thorn:** I thank you so much for your time and congratulate you on six months of being an adult. (*Chuckles.*)

**Jenny Slate:** Thank you. It's going well. My Subaru lease is up.

**Jesse Thorn:** Oh, wow. So, you have a big decision ahead of you.

**Jenny Slate:** Yeah. (*Laughs.*) And I think... you know, I'm gonna get another one. I don't know. It depends on if—do they make it like fully electric? We'll see. I have a real ID. You know what I mean?

**Jesse Thorn:** Oh, so You can fly anywhere.

**Jenny Slate:** Yeah, that's cool. I've been to the DMV. But you know what is really bad about me in my first six months as an adult? And honestly, this is my dad's fault—which isn't an adult thing to say, but he like won't let me off the family plan.

**Jesse Thorn:** Wait, the cell phone family plan?

**Jenny Slate:** Yeah, and it's like not a good plan.

(*Jesse laughs.*)

And like, towards the end of every month, it's like, “You've used up all your data,” and I'm like, “DAD!” And it's like let me off! But then like—I don't know, then he always has a reason for why like I shouldn't. You know, one thing about being an adult—I mean, that I've learned in the first six months—is that if your dad says you have to do it like, ugh, you just have to do what your dad says.

**Transition:** Upbeat music with light vocalizations.

**Jesse Thorn:** Jenny Slate. Her new special is called *Jenny Slate: Seasoned Professional*. You can stream it now on Amazon Prime Video. It's super funny.

**Transition:** Bright, playful piano.

**Jesse Thorn:** That's the end of another episode of *Bullseye*. *Bullseye* is created from the homes of me and the staff of Maximum Fun, in and around greater Los Angeles, California. Although, we have had the pleasure of being in the office a lot more lately, where—I was just there yesterday, and the question was could we get our colleague Danny into a particularly large promotional tote bag? The answer was yes!

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 Daniel Huecias. Our interstitial music is by DJW, also known as Dan Wally. Our



theme song is “Huddle Formation” by The Go! Team. Thanks to The Go! Team. Thanks to their label, Memphis Industries.

*Bullseye* is on Instagram, [@BullseyeWithJesseThorn](#). You can also find us on Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook, and I think that's about it. Just remember, all great radio hosts have a signature signoff.

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

*(Music fades out.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** I hope you enjoyed that conversation with Jenny Slate. I know I did. It's always great to see Jenny. And I also hope that if you love *Bullseye*, you'll go to [MaximumFun.org/join](#) and become a member. The MaxFun drive is the only time we ask you to do this all year long. But it is actually how we make this show. It is the means by which we make this show. So, [MaximumFun.org/join](#). If you made it all the way through this episode, including me and Daniel plugging the MaxFunDrive in the middle of it, probably you really like it. So, go to [MaximumFun.org/join](#). Five bucks a month makes a huge, huge difference. Thanks.