

[00:00:00]

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

Promo: *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn* is a production of 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 next guest, James Adomian, is a comedian with a foot in two worlds. The first world is just regular, traditional standup comedy. He's been doing it for two decades. I mean, just jokes about his personal life, regular stuff. He's really good at it. The other world is impressions. He is really good at that too. Al Pacino and Paul Giamatti and Bernie Sanders. He loves to do Bernie Sanders.

Transition: A whooshing sound.

Clip:

Speaker: I noticed that the minute I walked on the stage, the scent of the camphor, but also the tea tree oil.

James Adomian: (*In a Bernie Sanders impression.*) Camphor, tea tree oil. I've also got Vicks VapoRub, but it's a generic version from Canada that I have imported.

Transition: A whooshing sound.

Jesse Thorn: And I know what you're maybe thinking. Standup and impressions? Well, there's impressions in standup all the time. They're not really different things. It's all just being funny, right? But think about what each of those things take. To be good at standup, it's years on stage, workshopping joke after joke after joke after joke until you have something the audience responds to. And most of all, you have to figure out who you are to put that over to the audience. To get good at an impression, it's sort of like the opposite thing. You know, you're studying how Bernie Sanders talks, how he moves, you're practicing it in the mirror. Then you go on stage, and you're showing people something they recognize. Bam, big laugh.

Like, I said, James Adomian's comedy is a mix of both of those things. That's what makes him so special. Maybe it's also why he isn't super famous, but he deserves to be. James Adomian's new special is called *Path of Most Resistance*. You can watch it for free on YouTube now. Here's a little bit—James's take on that classic standup comedy subject: air travel.

Transition: A whooshing sound.

Clip:

James Adomian (*Path of Most Resistance*): So, these days, for me, it's Delta.

(*A single cheer.*)

Mostly it's because when I fly there, they call me a sky priority. And I like the sound of that. At first, it's too much. You're like, "Sky priority? (*Modestly.*) Please, I'm a regular citizen like everyone else. One man, one vote. I never asked for anything more!

(*Laughter.*)

"Please, my father was a sky priority."

(*Laughter.*)

But then, they keep repeating it. They massage your ego with it. Little perks. "Oh, right this way, sky priority!" A slightly shorter line! And then you find yourself agreeing with it. Like, why yes, of course, there's a certain ring to it after all! (*Snootily.*) Sky priority! Nothing wrong with that. My mother always said we were destined for greatness!

Transition: A whooshing sound.

Jesse Thorn: James Adomian, welcome to *Bullseye*. I'm so happy to have you here, and I enjoyed your special so much.

James Adomian: Hi Jesse! Great to be here. It's been a minute since I got to share a mic with the illustrious Jesse Thorn.

Jesse Thorn: Well, it's a joy to have you here, sir. So, you are an extraordinary impressionist. In fact, I would say you're the best impressionist I've ever seen in my life.

James Adomian: Wow. You never want that title.

Jesse Thorn: To what—? Yeah. So, that's what I want to get at.

James Adomian: Then there's just a bunch of people with really crazy voices aiming for you.

(*Jesse laughs.*)

"He's not the best; I'm the best!"

(*They laugh.*)

You have to fend off all of these mini Rich Littles.

(In a Rich Little impression.) “The best?! He says he's the best?! Not when I heard!”

Jesse Thorn: How do you feel about being an impressionist? Because it is both an extraordinary skill and not the most prestigious corner of show business.

James Adomian: *(Laughing.)* That’s funny that you—it's funny that you put it that way, yeah. You know, I've always done it for fun. And when I was a little kid, I used to imitate the TV. I would make fun of the news broadcaster voice. Little kid in like a diaper and the, you know, learning to talk and walk. I was just making fun of things. And so, you know, the news voice I remember being like very funny to me as a little kid, ‘cause no one sounds like that. You know, *(in a somber newscaster tone)* “The news at 11.”

And this was—you know, they were a little more serious even back then in the early '80s when I was a little kid, but. And you know, I made people laugh by making fun of teachers and other grownups in school. And then—and you know, *(laughs)* thank you to all the teachers in America and in the world who are—

Jesse Thorn: Who are disappointed in you? *(Chuckles.)*

[00:05:00]

James Adomian: Well, no, they help young comedians *(laughs)* learn their craft just by being made fun of, and they didn't sign up for that part. But it's crucial. It's crucial to the balance of nature.

And I mean, so I've never not done it. It's fun. I can't stop. If I'm watching something, I'll start—it gets in my head, and I start repeating it back. You know, some figure being interviewed on TV or whatever. And I do most of my TV watching in hotel rooms and planes, so I actually kind of look forward to those times. Because I'll watch dumber things than I normally would, alright? Like, it's not prestige television. I'm just catching up with, you know, the basic TV of America.

But yeah, it's interesting you say that, because there's a few problems with it. A) You can disappear into it and be known as “that guy”.

Jesse Thorn: Well, especially when the premise often for that kind of performer is just take a pretty straight impression of someone, just put it in an unlikely context.

James Adomian: Yes. And you know, there's no way around that. I do that some too. But *(stammering)* there's not—like, in the special I have out now, there's not—I think there's not a huge—it's not like as many impressions as you would see if I was a Vegas act doing that. I'm like telling jokes and telling stories, and then they enter the stage when it's appropriate to illustrate some story.

Jesse Thorn: As an audience member watching, it's as though you cannot control them appearing.

James Adomian: (*Cackles with delight.*) I like that!

Jesse Thorn: Like, most of the content is you as James Adomian doing what would be a James Adomian comedy act if you did not do impressions. But you can't help yourself from dropping the impression in when it comes up.

James Adomian: One of the games that I think is perhaps the funniest in comedy is the past life that can't be avoided. So, that's very funny to me, where the guy's like, "I'm not doing the characters anymore! I'm doing straight standup!"

(*In an old-timey voice.*) "What do you mean you're doing straight standup? Get off the stage, I said!"

Jesse Thorn: (*Laughs.*) So, when you decide not to do Al Pacino, how do you decide that—?

James Adomian: I mean, I'm allowed to. I saw the *Gucci* movie, and I couldn't stop. I walked out of the—you know, I didn't walk out before it was over, but I left the theater after the *Gucci* movie just—every scene he's in, it's just, "Gucci! Gucci, goo! Gucci Gaga!"

(*Jesse giggles.*)

And so, yes, it's well-trod territory, but there I went.

Jesse Thorn: I mean, you could just be like, "Look, I'm just going to be an impressionist." And you go on *America's Got Talent* doing just impressiony impressions.

James Adomian: They wanted me to do that. One of the producers, when I was on *Last Comic Standing*, really wanted me to do that. And in hindsight, there was a command that I thought was—I interpreted it as a friendly suggestion. And then in hindsight, I realized, "Oh, he was ordering me to do that." And I didn't do it. (*Laughs.*) Because he came around one time, and he was like, "You're really good at this, but you choose to do these obscure impressions and stuff."

And his idea of obscure was like Paul Giamatti. Like, that—who would—how would you be so outrageously obscure to do a Paul Giamatti impression on television? You know, (*transitioning into a nasal Giamatti impression.*) Well, here it is. I guess you can—I don't—here we are on NPR! How do I freak out on NPR?! NATIONAL Public Radio! JESSE THORN! Okay?!

(*Returning to his usual voice.*) And he came back around a few weeks later after another episode or two had taped, and he was like, "You really stick to your guns, don't you? With the obscure impressions thing?"

And that was—I was off the show very shortly after that. And I realized (*chuckles*) he wasn't wrong. He was trying to put me down a path that was proven of an impressionist that does, you know, the guys. The Jack Nicholson. And there's another thing too I don't like about that is that some of it is lifted from other performers, and it's kind of tolerated and expected where kind of everybody's Jack Nicholson starts to be the same thing. And Christopher Walken. And I don't mind it. It makes me laugh. It's just not what I want to spend my time doing is something that someone else has done, basically. So, I am—I do kind of look for things where it's like nobody's going to find this. And I come up with things like. Paul Giamatti or Slavoj Žižek?

(*Jesse chuckles.*)

Sooner or later, someone's gonna take it from me. But for now, it's like I'm doing Slavoj Žižek.

Jesse Thorn: Right now, you—

[00:10:00]

James Adomian: (*Stammering into an accented Slavoj Žižek impression.*) Let's be honest—my god, the crisis. This Maximum Fun is the concept they have here with Jesse Thorn. And this—it's a thorny issue itself, but let's unpack this concept of “Maximum” Fun.

Jesse Thorn: (*Laughs.*) I mean, sincerely, the highest profile work you are doing at this time is performing as the MyPillow guy on late night television.

James Adomian: Yep. Yeah, now that hits, because he was a TV personality up until very recently.

Jesse Thorn: I mean, it speaks to your passion for the detritus of television culture. I mean, there's a big *Bar Rescue* chunk on this special.

James Adomian: Yep. Yep. What's his name, Taffer? Yeah, those two—they're very similar guys. (*Broadening into a Mike Lindell impression.*) You know, it's like, it's the—you've got MyPillow. Call in now for a discount on a cotton and a down pillow! I can stuff anything into it! There's a desperation there.

(*Transitioning into a wide-vowelled Taffer impression.*) And then there's the *Bar Rescue* guy who's always, “I'm loud! I'm loud! I'm loud, but I'm not vulnerable! You're the one that needs to pick up the pace. CLOSE IT!”

(*Jesse laughs.*)

Yeah, that's interesting you bring up, because I made a conscious effort with this special to—and I like that, “The detritus of television.” There's things that I don't like that I make fun of.

And sometimes there's things I do like that I make fun of too. And I can see how it might be hard for an audience to distinguish like does he hate this guy or like this guy? But—

Jesse Thorn: Well, there's a certain kind of empathy that you have to have for someone in order to find what their deal is, I would imagine.

James Adomian: (*Hesitantly.*) Yyy-yes. Yes, I listen very closely to people, and I watch people very closely. When people see me as a performer on stage or on a microphone, it's the extroverted side of me. But there is a very quiet—there's a very quiet, sensitive octopus up here also, who lives in this bone castle.

(*Jesse laughs.*)

And there's this octopus that I—there's the octopus in my brain that's like, it's like, “Oh, how would I change my colors to look like that rock?” And there's a lot of deep listening is what I would say. There's a lot of deep listening and careful observation. But I also don't do too much of it. I don't like to over rehearse. I don't like to—I don't do the big homework. I hear people going like, “You know, to learn it, I bought the costume, and I put the makeup on, and I sleep in it. And I watch the interview with Carson over and over and over!” And I'm like, I don't do—nope, I don't do any of that. It's not fun; it's not interesting. I would rather be funny—I would rather be funny than accurate. And I would rather have a good time myself than obsess about something.

Unless I was hired to do something specifically. And I have done the crash course research to get something down, like an impression that I was hired to do. But when I'm doing my own act and coming up with things at my own pace, it's much slower.

Jesse Thorn: More with James Adomian still to come. Stay with us. It's *Bullseye* from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

Transition: Thumpy synth with a syncopated beat.

Jesse Thorn: Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. My guest is James Adomian. He's a standup comedian and an impressionist who has performed on *The Late Late Show*, *Conan*, *Jimmy Kimmel*, and many other programs. He has a brand-new standup comedy special out now called *James Adomian: Path of Most Resistance*. It is free to stream on YouTube. Let's get back into our conversation.

You know, one of the things that you talk about on this new special is being Armenian. And I know that being Armenian American is really important to you, a really central part of your identity—as it is for— Like, I didn't know any Armenian Americans in Northern California until I went to college at a University of California University. And—

James Adomian: Which one?

Jesse Thorn: Santa Cruz. And you know, the huge Armenian community in Southern California was half of the—you know, half of the UC was Southern California, right?

James Adomian: Oh yeah, of course.

Jesse Thorn: So, it like hit me like a wave rolling in from Southern California, Armenian American identity. And it's such a particular and, in the United States, local thing. It's like being Hmong in Minneapolis, you know what I mean?

[00:15:00]

James Adomian: That's a very funny way to put it. Yeah, it's—(*stammering*) Armenians are a known minority group in Southern California and Boston and like maybe nowhere else. Or like a little bit in Chicago. In the big cities more and more, but mostly in Southern California.

Jesse Thorn: So, one of the things that you talk about is not, quote/unquote, “seeming” Armenian or looking Armenian.

James Adomian: I'm only a quarter. I'm a quarter Armenian. But I have the name, so I can't—(*chuckling*) I toyed with the idea of changing my name when I was young, and I just never got around to it. And so, I have an Armenian last name. It's very obvious. And actually that—Don Rickles of all people told me to change my name when I met him. (*Laughs.*)

Jesse Thorn: Really?

James Adomian: Yes. Okay, I—the first time I did television, I was 25, and I walked off the set. And you know, a lot of adrenaline, and Don Rickles was there. It was like a character from heaven. Not a character, James! It's called an angel.

(*Jesse chuckles.*)

Anyways, it's was like, I'm still alive! Don Rickles was there, and he was like, (*Mimicking his accent.*) “You were hilarious! I was rolling. I was laughing so hard! That was hilarious! Who are you? Who the hell are you?!”

And I was like, “I'm James.”

“James what?”

And I was like, “James Adomian.”

And he goes, “You'll change it, kid.”

(*They laugh.*)

But I like being Armenian. I like my family name. I just never did it. So.

Jesse Thorn: It's also—I mean, it's something where it is an identity that you have to assert and like take ownership of on stage.

James Adomian: Oh, this is real fun. Yeah. I'm gay, and I don't seem gay. I'm Armenian, and I don't seem Armenian. I'm like—there's nothing real about this that's apparent to a passerby.

Jesse Thorn: Right, but I mean, that's like—that's so central to what— You know, this comes up on the show sometimes, but there's a reason that there is the cliché of the comedian walking on stage and saying, “I know what you're thinking, such-and-such and such-and-such had a baby,” or whatever. And like, the reason for that is that when you're a standup comic, you have to establish who you are and where you're coming from immediately so as to not lose the audience. And so, when you have like essential qualities of self that have to be established like that in order to—you know, you can't do jokes about being Armenian American without establishing that. It can be tricky, you know?

James Adomian: Yes! And this is something I have to keep track of. Especially on the road, where—you know, if I'm doing a local set around town, you know, you're coming up with new things and then landing on whatever the most recent closer is. But then you go on the road, and you have—I think of them as like larger jokes that are—I still got to pull this out, because it works on the road. And I've done it enough that I would never do it in LA, but I still got to do it on the road.

And then, you have specific things you've got to do in certain cities. You have to make fun of where they are and what the building looks like and all this stuff. And then I have to keep track of like, okay, I gotta make—uh, I can't make a gay joke until I've told them that I'm gay. And if I do occasionally, I have to immediately be like, “Oh, by the way, I am gay. I'll get to that later, buddy.”

(They laugh.)

You know, because otherwise—and I'll say this sometimes, it's like, “I know it appears that there's just some homophobic guy up here talking about gay people (*inaudible*). Hold that thought. I'll get to that later.”

But it's very tough. The same thing—it's probably even harder to talk about anything Armenian. Because I follow the news—the tragic news, and the good news—but no one else does. And sometimes I can do it in California; sometimes there's Armenian people in the crowd in California. Sometimes there's not, but everybody knows—everybody gets it.

Jesse Thorn: And the Armenian American community and the Armenian diaspora in general, like one of the biggest things that they share is the kind of generational trauma of having been through a genocide early in the 20th century.

James Adomian: Yeah, and I think that some groups of people have that in their recent memory and recent family evolution. And I do think—I've talked to Guy Branum about this actually, you know. Guy Branum is Jewish and—

Jesse Thorn: Occasional guest host of this show and genius comedian.

James Adomian: Oh, he is? Hilarious. Good friend of mine. And we were talking about how there's a—with the Holocaust or the Armenian genocide—that there's like an evolutionary choke point that is put on a group of people.

[00:20:00]

Where those who survive, they're—not all, but there's an immediate genetic favoritism towards those who were lucky, wealthy, or paranoid. Or some combination of those things. And some people were, you know, were lucky. Some people were wealthy. And some people were like, “Hey, something's going to go down here. I knew it. I knew it.”

And so, the trauma gets passed down when there's a sudden, you know, attempt to make a group of people extinct. It's very sad, and it's tough to talk about. There are happier Armenian things to talk about, and I get some of that out in the specials. Some very, very limited stuff about how Armenians are loud and like playing chess. You know, I say—I'm telling people that they should empathize with Armenians. Like, you know, what do I say? I say, “I get it. Americans don't care about Armenian stuff, but Americans really do love *Star Wars*. So, you know, try to think of us as like some of the good guys from *Star Wars*. The Wookies, Chewbacca.”

(Jesse laughs.)

And that's tough to live through too, because there's been—there's an ongoing effort to immiserate and be cruel to the Armenian people, especially in the ancestral homeland, in—the Armenian highlands is the region; the eastern part of Asia Minor, south of the Caucasus. And it's ongoing. The same people that did the Armenian genocide over 100 years ago are still trying to do the same thing and take the last land and get rid of the last Armenians who've clung to a part of it.

And it's very, very hard to make any of that funny. It's almost impossible, but I have tried occasionally to do it in a way that doesn't—because simultaneously, I have to introduce the topic to some people. And I have to voice frustrations that the Armenian community has, and then also I have to like be funny about it. I have to say something fun. And in the special, it kind of—the direction it goes is sort of making fun of the way the news covers Armenian news in America and the BBC.

Jesse Thorn: We'll finish up my interview with comedian James Adomian in just a moment. He once, early in his career, opened for Joan Rivers at a casino in Florida. Would you be so shocked to learn that he didn't do that great? *(Chuckles.)* Maybe not, but James will tell me the totally mind-blowing story of how Joan Rivers tried to save him when we come back from the break. It's *Bullseye* from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

Transition: Chiming synth with a syncopated beat.

Jesse Thorn: It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. My guest is comedian James Adomian. He has a new special out. It's called *Path of Most Resistance*. You can watch it free on YouTube. One of the things that you share with the occasional guest host of *Bullseye* and mutual friend of ours, Guy Branum, is that both of you were high school football linemen.

(James confirms.)

I presume—were you out in high school?

James Adomian: No.

Jesse Thorn: Okay, so there's like a really intense esprit de corps on a sports team—football team especially, because it's a—

James Adomian: *(Amused.)* Violent?

Jesse Thorn: It is both violent and like really intensely coordinated. You know what I mean? Like, everybody has to be on the same page all the time in engaging in their violence.

James Adomian: Yep, we do this, or we—yes, it's cooperative violence.

Jesse Thorn: Right. And so, like everybody really has to be on intensely on the same team. What was it like to both be 100% in that—I mean, if you played center, your hand was on the football every offensive down—but also have this weird point of difference? And also, be in like a weird—like, truly the most intensely adolescent environment on earth. Like, I can't imagine—like, with all apologies to high school musicals, of which I was in a few, like a football team is the most intensely like sweating, teenage pimples, and sexuality event that exists. *(Chuckles.)*

[00:25:00]

James Adomian: Yeah, it's—*(laughs)* it—I don't know how to say it. What was it like for me, is what you're asking?

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, the question is what was that experience like?

James Adomian: I mean, like with any sport at all, you know, I had crushes on people that I worked with, that I played with. And I cared about the game. So, you know, I look back on it as—I look back on it like anyone would look back on something that they had fun doing at a younger age. And I aged out of it. I was not good enough for college football, for sure. And I realized my time would be used better for the arts and specifically comedy.

But it was, uh... I guess, yeah, I had a—yeah, you weren't allowed to be out of the closet. I mean—technically—legally, you could back in the '90s, but it was very rare. And I mean, let's be honest, a lot of major sports have a problem—even now today at the top levels. Tim Walz, for example, is a very rare figure to have been on the Gay Straight Alliance sponsor

and also the high school football coach. Very, very rare. I don't know. Maybe that's a Minnesota thing. (*Laughs.*) But.

Jesse Thorn: That's the legacy of Eugene Debs.

James Adomian: Yeah! (*Cackles.*)

Jesse Thorn: Is football coaches who sponsor the Gay Straight Alliance.

James Adomian: I love that. Is he from Minnesota, Eugene?

Jesse Thorn: Maybe he's from Wisconsin.

James Adomian: LaFollette, also, was Wisconsin, maybe? The early 20th century progressives get it!

Jesse Thorn: Sorry, okay, let's change that reference to Hubert H. Humphrey. That's the legacy of Hubert H. Humphrey.

James Adomian: You swapped out a Debs for a Humphrey. A classic, underhanded NPR move.

So... yeah, I mean, I don't know what to say. Tough breaks. Yeah, you wouldn't let me come out, so I was in the closet. I mean. (*Chuckles.*) Also, to this day, you have more and more gay-friendly stuff in public schools, but basically all the private schools are still homophobic. I mean, sure, there's exceptions. But you know, all the Catholic schools? You know, they've got a political line that they have to keep, or they are no longer a Catholic school. And at the college level, I'm not following it very closely, but I know at the professional level, there's people that were good enough to play that were— It's not a meritocracy.

If you don't say the right—and we saw this with Colin Kaepernick too. It was like, “Oh, you're not going to play the game that's off the field? Well, you don't get to play the game that's on the field.”

It's like that for a lot of things. It's not just football, and it's not just sports. There's things where the best person is sometimes sidelined, because they are saying something or being something that other people don't want to see or hear.

Jesse Thorn: I want to ask you one thing, which is... impressions are like an old-timey showbusiness thing. And you had this experience that I'm just going to have you tell me about, which was opening for one of the greatest old-timey showbusiness performers of all time, Joan Rivers.

James Adomian: Yeah, she had seen a tape of mine and liked it, or seen some clip of mine and liked it enough to ask me to open for her.

Jesse Thorn: And by all accounts, like while very exploitative (*chuckles*) of those around her in certain ways, she was very with it.

James Adomian: I've heard that.

Jesse Thorn: She was super with it, and—

James Adomian: She followed younger comedians, and she paid attention. And if she liked somebody, she would often— I found out after she passed away that I was not the only person who had trouble connecting with her audience. That it was kind of a notoriously difficult gig to open for Joan Rivers. (*Laughs.*) But I love that old school, hard joke comedy. Joan Rivers was fast.

Jesse Thorn: Okay, so what is the—you're performing, opening for Joan Rivers in a casino in Florida.

James Adomian: Yes, you've heard the bit.

Jesse Thorn: Which is like—I can't even imagine who shows up to the Joan Rivers show in a casino.

[00:30:00]

Because look, if you were opening for Joan Rivers at the—you know, at a theater, at the Peter Fonda Theatre in Beverly Hills or something, you'd be performing for a bunch of super with it, 65-year-old gay guys; like a certain number of, you know, 30-year-old comedy nerds; and then just a few miscellaneous rich people. Right?

(James agrees.)

But like at a casino in Florida, do they—? What—?

James Adomian: Everyone has just lost a bunch of money, and their consolation prize is to come see you.

(Jesse affirms with a laugh.)

But actually their consolation prize was to see Joan Rivers, and then you show up. And you're getting in the way of the only thing that's gonna redeem their three-day trip. And yeah, it was at a casino near the Miami area. And I bombed hard. And she was very nice, very cool. She was very funny. You know, like I do it in the bit, the story. It's on YouTube now. I found a good clip of it; I put it on YouTube. And it's also on my album from twelve years ago, *Low Hanging Fruit*. It's the secret track at the end of that album.

But she (*giggles*)—you know, she did a sound check for the microphone, and she was like, “Is this thing on?! Turn this thing off! You know what? You're fired! You know what? I'm

fired! I should never have hired you!” She fired herself, and then she was like, “Everybody be back here in 30 minutes!” You know? She fired and rehired herself as a way to test the microphone, which is like a great, manufactured fake drama. And then—but like, it was clearly all a joke.

And then, you know, showtime happened; the audience poured in; they were very old. They were there to see Joan. And then I came out, and we—she did this thing where she like kicked me through the curtain, like an old vaudeville thing where it was like, you know, make fun of the opener. You know, slap around the sidekick kind of thing. So, she kicked me through the curtain into the spotlight as like a “look at this idiot!” You know?

And she goes, “He's the best in his price range. James, get out there!” And that's funny!

Jesse Thorn: That's really funny.

James Adomian: But then they took it at face value, and they were like, “Ah, that must mean he's not good, huh?” So I didn't—

Jesse Thorn: They had to decide whether to be on your team or Joan Rivers' team.

James Adomian: Right. And I didn't—I was like 30, and I was like—I seemed very young at the time. And they weren't having anything. They didn't like the way I looked. I got to the microphone, and I didn't even get to talk. There were immediately people like, “Whaaat? Who is this?!” They just didn't want—I say this in the bit, where it was like if you've ever been a waiter, and you brought out something that the old guy at the table doesn't want, he's like, “Send it back! That's not what I ordered!” They were like, “I ordered a Joan Rivers! Medium well!”

Jesse Thorn: You brought me (inaudible).

James Adomian: Exactly. So, it was this combat with the audience, verbal combat with the audience, going back and forth. And they were being very rude to me. These sort of, you know, old tough guys. Like, you know, “Yank 'im out!” And their insults were hilariously dated. When I could pick one out and hear it, it was all like, *(in a range of New York accents)* “Hey kid, you're all washed up!” “Yeah, he's yesterday's news.” “Yank him out of here like we did with MacArthur!”

And then, so I did—I said—this is what set off the whole disaster. In response, I finally decided like, “Well, I'm not going to tell the jokes.” *(Laughs.)* And I go, “Come on folks, don't let the last moments of your lives be spent booing someone.”

(Jesse laughs.)

And that caused a room of 3,000 old people—a full-to-capacity showroom of 3,000 old people—to vocally turn against me. On their feet, throwing things, screaming. *(Furiously.)* “I'll meet you on the casino floor! I'll give you what for!” And then it got—you know, it

managed to get worse, and then— The whole story is fun, but it's long. And then Joan Rivers came out to rescue me.

And as it was happening, I was thinking, “This is going to be—I am in a great story.” I was like, “This will be an anecdote that I will recount for the rest of my life.” That's very rare, to know as it's happening like, oh, this is gonna—this is a great story! This is a misfortune of great luck to have happen to you.

Jesse Thorn: Well, James Adomian, I'm so grateful for your time. It's really nice to get to talk to you. And congratulations on your special. It's really funny.

[00:35:00]

James Adomian: Thank you. I appreciate that, Jesse. It's called *Path of Most Resistance*, and it's available. It's on YouTube and several other platforms.

Jesse Thorn: Don't even gotta pay for it.

James Adomian: You can though! If you go to 800PoundGorillaMedia.com, you can pay what you want there.

Transition: Playful, upbeat synth.

Jesse Thorn: James Adomian! As he mentioned, his new special is called *Path of Most Resistance*. It's so, so funny. James, one of the funniest guys out there. Go watch it.

Transition: Relaxed synth.

Jesse Thorn: That's the end of another episode of *Bullseye*. *Bullseye* is created in the homes of me and the staff of Maximum Fun, as well as at Maximum Fun headquarters—overlooking beautiful MacArthur Park in Los Angeles, California. You know, we just had Judy Greer in the office for an upcoming episode. She was very upset that she's never seen the fish truck that shoots fish into the lake. And it occurred to us, we haven't seen it in a long time too! Fish truck, write in. We want to know when you're coming back. California Department of Fish and Wildlife, hit us up! Parks and Recreation Department of the City of Los Angeles, drop us a line. Fish, write us a letter!

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 video editor is Daniel Speer. We get booking help from Mara Davis. Our interstitial music comes from our friend, Dan Wally, also known as DJW. You can download it pay-what-you-want at DJWSounds.bandcamp.com. Our theme music was written and recorded by the wonderful band, The Go! Team. The song is called “Huddle Formation”. Thanks to The Go! Team. Thanks to their label, Memphis Industries, for letting us use that.

You can follow *Bullseye* on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. And in fact, I insist that you do so! You'll find video from just about all of our interviews, including full video of the interviews that you heard this week on YouTube. Great way to share this show with others. And great way to see how enormous DeMar DeRozan is. It turns out NBA players are very tall. 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.)