

[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](http://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. It's an old premise. You take a married couple. One of them kills the other. Only, it turns out that the surviving spouse was the victim of domestic violence and abuse. And now the victim, free of their abuser, has to convince friends, family, and the authorities of their innocence. It's the basis of thousands of movies and TV shows.

*Bad Sisters*, created by and starring my guest Sharon Horgan, uses that same premise. The show is a sort of black comedy set in Ireland. And for much of the first season, Horgan and her sisters plot various ways to end the life of John Paul. He is one of the sisters' abusive husbands.

This being a black comedy, some of the attempts are pretty funny. But *Bad Sisters* also asks a bigger—and frankly, more interesting—question. Once the abuser's gone, once the authorities close the book, then what? What is your life then? What does justice actually mean in that case?

It's a great show. Its second season is airing now on Apple TV+.

Sharon is a brilliant writer and performer, one of my absolute favorites. I'm so thrilled to get to talk with her again.

But before we get into our conversation, let's hear a little bit of *Bad Sisters*. This clip is the sister Grace, played by Anne-Marie Duff. In the first season, she was the one married to the abusive spouse. And in this most recent season, she has remarried. Shortly after her wedding night, she tells her new husband how her first husband died and about her involvement in his death.

That—needless to say—sort of freaks him out. And soon thereafter, he disappears. Grace has been acting odd. And in this scene, Eva, the eldest sister—played by Sharon Horgan, my guest—confronts Grace. You'll also hear from the other sisters.

**Transition:** A whooshing sound.

**Clip:**

**Bibi (Bad Sisters):** We're just worried.

**Grace:** Why? I'm fine!

**Eva:** Well, (sighs) you're not acting fine.

**Grace:** Huh?

**Ursula:** Where's Ian, Gracie? Is that Ian's phone that Becka found?

Why doesn't he have it with him? Why was it hidden? Is there something you haven't told us?

**Grace:** What are you saying?!

**Becka:** We're not saying anything—

**Bibi:** (Interrupting.) Well, we are.

**Becka:** No, we just need to know what's going on. We're nervous.

**Eva:** We're worried is all.

**Bibi:** Why did you say that Ian was golfing to the guards?

**Becka:** Grace, there's blood on some clothes in the washing machine, and there's a cut on your hand.

**Grace:** (Stammering.) I smashed a cup!

**Bibi:** Did something happen with Ian?

**Becka:** All this stuff is still here.

**Grace:** I think you should go now.

**Ursula:** No, we just need you to listen. Okay?

**Eva:** We won't judge you, Gracie. We love you. But if something happened with Ian—

**Grace:** (Louder.) I think you should leave.

**Bibi:** Please just tell us!

(Talking over one another.)

**Grace:** Now. Please.

**Eva:** Look, will you just listen—?

**Grace:** JUST GET AWAY FROM ME!

**Transition:** A whooshing sound.

**Jesse Thorn:** Sharon Horgan, welcome back to *Bullseye*. (Chuckles.)

**Sharon Horgan:** Hi! How's it going?

**Jesse Thorn:** It's also a very funny show.

**Sharon Horgan:** (Laughing.) It is! It's both! But that was intense. That got me.

**Jesse Thorn:** I'm so glad to have you back on the show. How did you end up working on this particular project? It's a remake of a European show. So, how did you land on it?

**Sharon Horgan:** Well, in actual fact, it was brought to me. I was lucky enough to have that happen. Jay Hunt—who was sort of my boss at Channel 4 when Rob and I were making *Catastrophe*—she moved over to Apple, and then... And in actual fact, post-*Catastrophe*, I was trying to figure out what it was I wanted to do.

And so, she said, “Let's meet.” And she was like, “Well, I think you should do this.”

And so, she sent me all the episodes. And I genuinely had no interest in doing a remake of something. And I had no—I'd never written an hour-long. I didn't know anything about writing thrillers, and—but I watched one episode. And I was kind of in from that one episode.

And you know, then you go through all the usual rigmarole of having to write a pilot script, and then—you know—another script, and then trying to get casting, and then finally it got commissioned. And yeah, I'm so grateful that it happened like that. Because I would never have done it, you know. I figured I was just... you know, I'd sort of cut my groove of half-hour—and you know, relationship-based half-hour.

[00:05:00]

But no, it's great. It's great to be taken out of your comfort zone! It's really creatively a good idea.

**Jesse Thorn:** What was the tone like in the original?

**Sharon Horgan:** God. It's really interesting. I'd love you to see it actually. Because in a lot of ways it was... great. You know, the sisterhood was there. You know, they had their own (censor beep).

(Jesse chuckles through his nose.)

And their hate for him and his odiousness, and you know, their attempts at killing him. But it was kind of wild. It was sort of, uh... you know, there was a lot more murder attempts in the original, and it was kind of—there was Chinese mafia involved, and there was, you know, hitmen. And dead people ended up in dog food canning factories.

And so, it was kind of—it was way more heightened. But really, they still did that thing where, you know, the comic moments sat right beside really kind of difficult moments, and they just told the story in a very different way, and probably perfect for a Belgian audience. You know.

I think what I was drawn to was the—you know, the premise, because I thought it was an inherently kind of funny, interesting premise. And the idea of, you know, five kind of fairly ordinary women having to do this extraordinary thing and being very bad at it. You know, just being very bad at murder I thought was very funny. (Laughs.) And you know, sort of like... kind of cartoony in some ways.

But what I was really drawn to was the sister's relationship, and how everything they did to try and save their sister ended up sort of—they kind of lost a piece of themselves in doing it. You know, like the collateral damage of trying to get rid of this awful human. All of that to me was way more interesting than the—you know, the caper of sort of trying and failing to kill someone.

**Jesse Thorn:** I mean, it seems like— The reason I ask is it would be so easy to have this premise—which is like, you know, sisters band together to do a cavalcade of murder attempts. And it would be very easy for that to be like, you know, a *Pink Panther* movie. (Chuckles.)

(Sharon agrees.)

Or it would be very very easy for it to be like sophisticated camp.

**Sharon Horgan:** Yes. I agree. It was a bit *Pink Panther*, you know. The original. But I mean—but you know, the tone is—you know, it's really movable at the start of any project, and then you kind of have to pick a lane. And you know, I did feel very comfortable—you know, even in my sort of sitcom work—with tragedy sitting beside, very closely to the comedy.

So, I knew that I could sort of do that, you know. I knew I could do something ridiculous and follow it up with something really terrible and brutal and, you know, hard-to-look-at kind of

thing. And it's just—you just have to get an audience to trust you, I suppose. And for there to be a kind of balance in performance, you know. And you know, you can't suddenly have this wild, crazy, like that's a character from something else.

I mean, you can do that in some things, but you know. Usually the tone has to be consistent, in terms of performance. And then you can kind of go a bit wild.

**Jesse Thorn:** Even more still to come with Sharon Horgan. Stick with us. It's *Bullseye* from [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) and NPR.

**Transition:** Thumpy synth with a syncopated beat.

**Jesse Thorn:** Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. I'm talking with Sharon Horgan. She's the creator of the TV shows *Divorce*, *Pulling*, and *Catastrophe*. Her latest project, *Bad Sisters*, is about murder, family, and betrayal. It is great. She's also one of the stars of the show. You can stream it now on Apple TV+. Let's get back into our conversation.

Do you have siblings yourself?

**Sharon Horgan:** Yeah, I've got two brothers, two sisters. So, same size family as the Garveys, just different sexes—different makeup.

[00:10:00]

**Jesse Thorn:** Have you ever murdered anyone with them?

**Sharon Horgan:** No, we've definitely thought about it. Talked about it. We would definitely—I mean, in a hypothetical “would you do that for each other?”, I've definitely been in situations where I've asked my brothers to... help me out a little.

(They chuckle.)

**Jesse Thorn:** Really?

**Sharon Horgan:** Yeah! Yeah, of course. (Laughs.) Mm-hm.

**Jesse Thorn:** I'm feeling embarrassed that I've never helped anyone out in that—(cutting himself off with resignation) I guess I'm not who you would ask.

**Sharon Horgan:** (Laughs.) Well, I think we're incredibly tight and our own best friends. So, I felt like there's something about that large family dynamic that I felt like I was able to translate, hopefully, onto screen. And so, the sort of—the “would you kill for your brother and sister?” I mean, no, I probably wouldn't kill for them. But if it was a—you know, if it really had to be done, and I had to, you know, step in there, and it was a no-choice situation...

I don't know. It's very hypothetical. But like I know how it feels to feel passionately about family and want to protect them, and I also know how it feels to party hard with them.

**Jesse Thorn:** What are the things about siblings talking to each other, other than literally planning murders, that you wanted to capture in the show?

**Sharon Horgan:** Well, I think there's a really interesting dynamic that happens with a large family, because you have sort of, you know, separate. You have your dynamic as a five—in our case, as the Horgan family, not the Garvey family. And then you have sort of like other allegiances within that five, you know. Like, my eldest sister is the kind of matriarch of us, you know. And she's, in fact, godmother to my littlest brother. There's, you know, 13 years between them, I think.

**Jesse Thorn:** Is that allowed?!

**Sharon Horgan:** (Laughs.) It is in Ireland! The eldest kid always sort of looked after the youngest. Well, that was my experience and the experience of my friends' families. Everyone came from big families where I was from. And so, my younger brother and my middle brother, you know, have their sort of thing, their own kind of special relationship and dynamic. And then the girls have—the sisters have their own separate one.

And there's a kind of—you know, it can—there can be jealousies, you know. There can be feelings of being left out a bit at times, and arguing, and extreme camaraderie, and protectiveness. And then like, you know, when we're all together, the thing that I feel or hope I captured was that thing of like nothing else kind of matters. You know?

And that's why, you know, the JP character in *Bad Sisters* is—I mean, he's terrible and awful in so many ways, but he's also been—he's an outsider, you know. He's been sidelined. He's like tried to find a way into this family, and he just couldn't get in. And so, he's gonna remove Grace from it and isolate her.

And so, I experienced that or a version of that with my brothers and sisters, that when we come together, we'd much rather just talk to each other than anyone else. You know, there's so much shared history and stories and jokes. And you know, shorthand, that—you know, it's very—it's addictive. And yeah, so that was some of the dynamic that I kind of wanted to bring to the screen.

**Jesse Thorn:** I mean, in *Bad Sisters*, like John Paul has committed all of these sins against the family of various kinds. I mean, there's a million reasons that he's a jerk.

[00:15:00]

But really, the inciting incident of the whole thing is not—you know, is not the like—what I would think of as the worst things, like the crimes that he's committed. It's that he has kept his wife Grace and daughter from participating in a family ritual, which is Christmas Day jumping in the ocean.

**Sharon Horgan:** Yes. (Censor beep) him.

(Jesse laughs.)

No, like the thing is like, it's how you sort of tell the story and how much you give away at the start and what you build towards. Because you have to keep an audience on side—not just hating this man, but being behind these sisters. So, it had to build, you know. The crimes had to sort of get worse, but.

And then you realize, you know, as you get closer to the end of the show, everything that had happened to these sisters, you know, fueled that initial kind of decision, you know. And yes, it seems like a sort of relatively minor thing, but when he stops her from going, we've already—the sisters have already said out loud, you know, that she's—"We're losing her." You know, she's getting smaller and smaller.

And it's a scary thing when you think—because sometimes there's no way back. You know, you sort of condition someone to such an extent that they kind of—they do sort of lose who they are, who they were. And it's sort of stopping it from getting to that point, and you know. (Chuckles.) It's—yeah, it's like a wish fulfillment thing.

In real life, you never really get to experience that, but it's nice to get to do it through some characters on the telly.

**Jesse Thorn:** Were there any incidence of violence amongst your siblings?

**Sharon Horgan:** I—I—huh. I used to torture my younger brothers. And I only remembered it like—actually, it was probably about ten years ago. My little brother Mark reminded me. We had this driveway that led up to the house, and it was covered in those, you know, little sort of jagged stones all the way down to the front gate. Our house was on that sort of manmade hill.

And so, I used to run along the grass—hold his hand and run along the grass while he (chuckling) ran along the stones all the way down to the gate. He would just be shouting and screaming (laughs). But I think he liked it! I mean, my memory is, you know—it was kind of like—you know when you tickle someone so hard it's painful? I mean, you know that kind of thing. It's like—

Maybe he did hate it. Maybe I'm just reasoning around it.

(Jesse laughs.)

But yeah. That's the only violence I can remember. My dad used to teach boxing in the local Village Hall to local kids, and he would bring home, you know, the gloves and the headgear and all of that stuff. And so, we would put it all on and stage fights, but that was really just for my dad's amusement. That wasn't really—there was no beef; it was just like a fun thing.

**Jesse Thorn:** (Laughs.) I won't suggest that your dad was a Roman emperor...

(They laugh.)

**Sharon Horgan:** He kind of was, yeah. Yeah, yeah. Yep.

**Jesse Thorn:** Did you throw punches in those?

**Sharon Horgan:** Oh yeah! Yeah. Yeah. I loved it.

**Jesse Thorn:** Did your father teach you punches? I mean, can you—do you know a cross from a hook?

**Sharon Horgan:** Yeah. Well, you know. Yes, I do. But like, he had all the equipment. Like, you know, the punching bag and the skipping rope. Like, I learned like boxer's skip, and it was a whole... a whole thing. We watched a lot of boxing when we were kids as well. Like, you know, when you— A big memory is sort of staying up late for those big sort of prize fights, and like the one time you're allowed to stay up until two in the morning or whatever, when it would be eventually televised on Irish TV. But yeah, it's funny.

**Jesse Thorn:** Had he fought, himself?

**Sharon Horgan:** Yeah, like amateurly. And my little brother, Mark, kind of got into it at university, you know. Yeah.

**Jesse Thorn:** At university?!

**Sharon Horgan:** Yeah. You can do like InterVarsity like—

[00:20:00]

**Jesse Thorn:** Boxing?!

**Sharon Horgan:** Boxing championships. Not that he studied it there, but you know, it's like a kind of—like Americans in football, I guess.

**Jesse Thorn:** Okay, so he did it like—he did it in a like—he was on like the boxing team or something. It wasn't like... it wasn't like an intramural sport, like I played softball, like slow-pitch softball in college—with my friends, against other groups of people.

**Sharon Horgan:** I don't know if I'm as fully informed on the whole InterVarsity boxing championship as I should be, but I guess I wasn't expecting it to come up.

**Jesse Thorn:** Uh-huh.



(They chuckle.)

**Sharon Horgan:** I know he's very good.

**Jesse Thorn:** (Laughing.) Sorry, I just—I was like— Yeah, I don't know. I did sketch comedy in college. I can't—I hosted a college radio show. I can't tell you.

**Sharon Horgan:** Yeah! I know.

**Jesse Thorn:** I never hit anybody in my life, Sharon.

**Sharon Horgan:** I think it could be good for you.

**Jesse Thorn:** Do you?!

**Sharon Horgan:** Yeah!

**Jesse Thorn:** Why is that?

**Sharon Horgan:** I mean, you know, maybe with a punching bag, not an actual person. But yeah, it's good. You know, you kind of relieve stress, and you know, get a lot out of you.

**Jesse Thorn:** We're going to take a break. On the other side, we'll wrap up with Sharon Horgan. It's *Bullseye* from [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) and NPR.

**Promo:**

**Music:** Relaxed, playful guitar.

**John Hodgman:** Et ego sum John Hodgman.

**Janet Varney:** Et ego sum Janet Varney!

**John:** And we're the hosts of *E Pluribus Motto*, a podcast dedicated to exploring the mottos of every state in the Union.

**Janet:** Every episode, we will spotlight one state and discuss its official symbols—the motto, flowers, birds, beverages, songs, and even official state muffins.

**John:** Plus, we'll hear from guests whose lives have been inspired by the state's iconography and from residents who call that state home.

**Janet:** Bring some snacks, a map, and your travel journal. Because this podcast is a virtual journey like no other!

**John:** Audi nostrum *E Pluribus Motto*, quaeliba talia lunae du Maximum Fun!

**Janet:** Aaand for the Latin challenged among you and us, listen to *E Pluribus Motto* every other Monday on Maximum Fun.

(Music fades out.)

**Transition:** Bright, chiming synth.

**Jesse Thorn:** It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. I'm talking with comedian and television writer Sharon Horgan.

One of the things that I have a hard time watching in television is—I mean, like I'm not talking about in like a Jackie Chan movie or something. But in a show that involves badassery, if it's relatively grounded, and somebody gets killed... that killing, if it's made righteous by the narrative of the show, is purely redemptive in the world of the show, right? Like, you killed the bad guy.

So, we solved the bad problem, and that is the end of that narrative. We have ended it with success, right? And it seems to me like one of the things you were interested in interrogating was the fact that killing the source of trauma is not a purely redemptive act. It is an additional trauma.

(Sharon confirms.)

Like, it may or may not be better than the alternative, but it is not—it doesn't fix everything.

**Sharon Horgan:** Oh, exactly. Exactly. And in sort of, you know, researching it and doing—like, reading and watching and listening, you know, women who kill their partners, who end up in prison because of it, don't even necessarily stop loving them! Let alone, you know, are rid of the trauma or in a better place or any of those things.

And so, yeah. I mean, that was exactly it. And also, you know, the sense of getting away with it. Like, what the hell does that mean? You know, when you've taken the life of your child's father, getting away with it is—you know, doesn't even come into it, really. You know?

I mean, it does in that she wants to keep her daughter safe and protected and to have a life. But you know, she's riddled with it. You know, it's—the second scene of the show is, you know, her dreaming and the reenactment of what happened with her new partner. And like, the trauma is all there.

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And you know, for the most part, people who've been through something awful like that don't always get the support that they need, if ever. You know, they're not necessarily seen as victims. They're seen as, you know, the criminal. And they're interrogated, and they are put in a situation where they kind of wish they'd never said anything, you know.

And I know this is a slightly different case scenario, but when the cops start looking into it, you can see that they are homing in on catching the baddie—i.e. Grace—but you know, what about the situation that surrounds it? And then—

So, I was like really interested in that. But then also, I'm deeply interested in looking at the sort of—the flaws within the institution that is the police, and you know, how often those people that are there to protect us are the ones we need to be protected from. Because the bad eggs, you know, they don't get—

I'm trying to have so many mixed metaphors here, (chuckles) but they don't get blacked out? You know, they stick around, because it's so hard to remove them. And so, it's so hard to sort of change the old guard. And when, you know, new blood comes in, and you think a change is possible, it's like—you know, it's this massive behemoth that is really hard to, you know, change the direction of.

And so, yeah. I can tell by how much I'm sweating that I'm still like—(laughs) it still really makes me angry. And that was kind of some of the stuff that was going on in the first season that was upsetting me that I kind of thought... you know, could be good to talk about through these characters in the show.

**Jesse Thorn:** I agree entirely. I'm also concerned, from your passion, that you may be planning to murder a person or some people in particular.

**Sharon Horgan:** (Laughs.) I'm so weirdly—do you know what? I'm so weirdly less angry than I used to be. It's so—I mean, yeah, I'm chilled. I just love—I get excited about talking about the story. And I do think it's an amazing thing to get to talk about difficult subjects through, you know, entertainment. You know, it's different. It's different to watching the news or to watching a hard-hitting documentary or something like that.

You get to—people relate to these characters, because they're like their family or their friend. And so, I think they sort of receive messages in a different way, you know. So, yeah, that sort of... I'm not gonna kill anybody.

**Jesse Thorn:** Okay. Thank you, Sharon. Do you find it harder or easier to be funny when you're writing about something you're upset about?

**Sharon Horgan:** Oh god. It depends on the character, you know? Like, each character has a different response to something bad happening, you know? And so, within that scene, you can do it all. You can have, you know... you can have Bibi say something that's wrong but

pedantic. You know, you can have Ursula freak out. You can have Eva just try and do the right thing. You can have Becca say something ridiculous. You know.

So, I find it sort of... you know, an anger's great, but at a certain point— You don't ever wanna feel like you're soapboxing, you know? And it's kind of great to have that many characters to sort of tell the story through, because you can be all the things. Funny and mad and sad and bad. (Chuckles.)

**Jesse Thorn:** Glad?

**Sharon Horgan:** Glad! (Laughs.) Wish I'd said glad! Yeah.

**Jesse Thorn:** You've made some shows about really big things, right? Like, your biggest successes in most recent shows— I mean, you made *Pulling*, that was about dating and finding love. You made *Catastrophe*, that was about all of the sort of underbelly of having a child—very charmingly and hilariously, but reasonably darkly as well. You know, you made a show about divorce.

And this is a show about—and the show about divorce was very much about divorce. It was about the most painful parts of divorce.

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And this is a show about trauma and violence against women. What's it like to put that out into the world? Like, it's one thing to put *Pulling* out into the world and have people come up to you and be like, “I tried to find a nice boyfriend when I was 32, and I also had these mishaps occur.” And they relate to it because of the real feelings in the show. It's very different to put something into the world about abuse.

And so, what was it like to have done that? Or made *Divorce* about divorce and received the... received the world's feelings about it?

**Sharon Horgan:** Mm. It's interesting, you know. Because like, *Pulling* was also in its own way about, you know, just this incredible dissatisfaction that can happen in your 30s when you haven't got what you want, when you haven't met the right person, when you have an awful job, when you're living in low-level shared accommodation. And you know, it's about drinking too much; it's about making mistakes, and it's—you know, a lot of which I'd sort of gone through.

So, in a way... and even with *Catastrophe*, you know, it's about having kids, but it's also about how hard it is to sort of stay in love when you do have kids—and all the dark, hard stuff that comes from just like regular life. You know, death, alcoholism. But they were things I'd lived. And I think with *Bad Sisters*, and *Divorce*—well, certainly I'm divorced now, but at the time I wasn't.

And so, I was trying to represent a story I hadn't yet lived. And while there was, you know—the idea was that I guess if you've been married, you know what it's like to want a divorce.

(Chuckles.) But you know, the sort of—all the darkness that goes with it. I could be so forensic now, by the way. I mean, I could absolutely give a whole new shade to that. But...

**Jesse Thorn:** I mean, Sharon, there's this question—Ira Glass and the people at *This American Life* made this comic book called *How to Make Radio*, I think it's called. And there's a question that I'm going to say Alex Chadwick, one of the NPR legends—I think it was Alex Chadwick—suggests in that comic book as always an appropriate question no matter what the interview is.

And the question is, “What did you think it was going to be like? How did it turn out to be? And how do those compare?”

And like, (laughs) you made a show about divorce, and then became divorced.

**Sharon Horgan:** I know! How do those compare? (Laughs.) Well.

**Jesse Thorn:** What did you think it was going to be like? What did it turn out to be like, and how did they compare?

**Sharon Horgan:** Well, I can—wow. (Beat.) A lot less funny as it turns out.

(Jesse laughs.)

Yeah, a lot less-fun characters, a lot less reasonableness. (Chuckles.) But you know. It's all—

**Jesse Thorn:** I mean, Sharon, Sarah Jessica Parker is a very appealing on-screen presence.

(Sharon agrees.)

But so are you! So are you.

**Sharon Horgan:** Aww, thank you so much. But listen, *Bad Sisters* wise, it was scarier. Because you know, I haven't been in that situation, and I felt like an enormous responsibility. And I was really anxious that—you know, like we were talking about earlier, just tonally, we were doing something that was at the one hand, height and caper, and on the other hand, trying to represent something that—you know—you wouldn't wish on anyone.

And I just—you know, I just had to do my best with the story and hope that I was representing it well. And also, I guess, because it was a kind of abuse that hadn't really been—I couldn't think of any sort of TV show that had dug into like coercive control or financial control or that kind of thing. That sort of isolating of a person within a relationship.

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And so, it was scary. But the thing is—is like those stories are—it's really important to put them out there, and it's important to be really—just be as truthful and honest as you can. And then, you know, put the work in, and—yeah, not be too scared of it, I think.

And then people responded. I mean, the messages I got were really, really heartbreaking, awful. But there is something, like you were saying—there is something about seeing your story on screen and finally going, “That's what I was in. That's—I didn't know what it was. That's exactly what it was.”

**Jesse Thorn:** Was this always going to be an Irish show?

**Sharon Horgan:** No, actually! It was—Apple sort of left it up to me and to everyone involved in making it. They were like, “You know, set it in the UK, set it in Ireland.”

And so, I figured out pretty quickly that it should be an Irish show though. And it was slightly inspired by the original, you know. It felt like a very sort of close-knit place. And I like the idea of it being everyone knowing everyone's business or—you know, the idea of John Paul being an outsider, not just in the family but on the island.

It's hard to break through in Ireland. My dad was a New Zealander, and we sort of moved there quite late. And we were always considered blow-ins, you know. And lots of other things, like I wanted to use places I went to as a child that were memories to sort of help, you know, create this world.

And then the big thing was like doing like reconnaissance of the, you know, where we wanted to film, and find—and the 40-foot. And I'd never been there. I'd never swam there, but I'd seen—you know, I've seen footage of it and everyone going there on Christmas day, and like big hangovers from the night before, and plunging into that cold water.

And I saw these sort of older women—a lot of older people go and swim there. And just saw these older women just swimming in this Baltic water, just chatting. Like, just shooting the breeze, and I just thought that could be a great place to plot a murder! And uh...

(Jesse bursts into laughter.)

You know, the sound of the sea against the rocks and the water and the wildness. And then it just felt like it sort of had to be—you know, there were so many things that felt right.

And I got excited about putting Ireland on screen. Or you know, my version of Ireland. You know, modern Ireland. And I'd never got a chance to do that before. Even in *Catastrophe*, we—you know, we had my Irish family, my character's Irish family, but we never shot there. Like, I don't know if it was in Essex or somewhere. Somewhere pretending to be Ireland. (Chuckles.)

And so... yeah, I just love the thought of finally getting to work there.

**Jesse Thorn:** Sharon, I'm really grateful for your time. It's always really nice to get to talk to you.

**Sharon Horgan:** Yeah, it's great talking to you too.

**Jesse Thorn:** I just—I admire your show and you and your work so much.

**Sharon Horgan:** Thank you very much. Thanks for having me.

**Jesse Thorn:** Sharon Horgan, the absolute best. Both seasons of *Bad Sisters* are streaming right now on Apple TV+. If you haven't watched, by the way, *Catastrophe*—the show that she created with the great Rob Delaney—it is one of the funniest and warmest, most sympathetic portrayals of parenthood that I have ever seen, that also acknowledges what a mess parenthood is. One of my favorite shows. Ah, Sharon's just the best!

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

**Jesse Thorn:** That's the end of another episode of *Bullseye*, *Bullseye* created from the homes of me and the staff of Maximum Fun—as well as at Maximum Fun HQ, overlooking beautiful MacArthur Park in Los Angeles, California.

Obviously, as we record this, Los Angeles is still struggling with out-of-control fires. It has been very tough for all of our fellow Angelenos. We are all safe and doing okay considering, but we are hoping that if you hear this, you will take some time to do something nice for someone in Southern California. Whether that's a mutual aid project or just making a donation.

[00:40:00]

One great way to help the folks who are suffering is a donation to the California Community Foundation's Wildlife Recovery Fund. They fund both the sort of immediate disaster efforts and also recovery projects, both statewide and locally here in California. A very trustworthy organization.

I'll also mention for those of you listening on the podcast that one of our former colleagues, Ibarionex Pirello—who was a production fellow for a year at Maximum Fun, and is also just a wonderful friend—lost his home in the Eaton Canyon fire, along with everything else. They had to evacuate on just the absolute shortest of notices and really truly lost everything except for their health and their pets. So, we're going to put in the show notes for this episode a link to the GoFundMe for Ibarionex and his wife, Cynthia's, future. Because they could really use some help. And it really, really couldn't go to better people. So, if you want to help somebody directly, we'll put that link in there.

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 producer is Daniel Speer. We get booking help from Mara Davis. Our interstitial music comes from our pal Dan Wally, also known as DJW. You can

find his music at [DJWsounds.bandcamp.com](https://DJWsounds.bandcamp.com). Our theme music was written and recorded by The Go! Team. It's called "Huddle Formation". Thanks to The Go! Team, and thanks to their label, Memphis Industries, for providing it.

You can follow *Bullseye* on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, where you will find video from just about all our interviews, including the ones you heard this week. 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](https://MaximumFun.org) and is distributed by NPR.

(Music fades out.)