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

**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. So, I don't want to make too many assumptions about you, the listener, but if you are anything at all like me, the death of Catherine O'Hara last month probably hit you like a ton of bricks. I mean, was there anyone in public life who was more charming and warm and hilarious? More effervescent and just maybe very, very slightly deranged? In the best way possible? Catherine O'Hara was one of a kind.

In 2015, she starred alongside Eugene Levy and his son, Dan, in *Schitt's Creek*—that's spelled S-C-H-I-T-T, as we are required by legal to clarify. The show was a smash hit, beloved by millions—particularly because of O'Hara. She played Moira Rose, the haute-couture-wearing socialite turned rural motel owner.

**Transition:** A whooshing sound.

**Clip:**

**Music:** Pleasant tuba.

**Moira:** (*Shrieks.*) I've been gutted! John, I've been stripped of every morsel of pleasure I earned in this life!

**Transition:** A whooshing sound.

**Jesse Thorn:** I was lucky enough to get to talk with O'Hara in 2013. Back in those days, I would record the intros for our guests while they sat in front of me. And uh, I am glad that I got to do that for Catherine O'Hara.

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

**Jesse Thorn:** It's *Bullseye*, I'm Jesse Thorn. My guest, Catherine O'Hara, has spent a career perfectly capturing the magic of the slightly cockeyed. From her work on *SCTV* to the improvised faux documentaries of Christopher Guest—

**Catherine O'Hara:** (*Laughing.*) That's not very nice!

**Jesse Thorn:** Not physically! Like, with a cockeyed perspective.

**Catherine O'Hara:** Oh, nice way to start! (*Playfully mean.*) Yeah, and you're fat!

**Jesse Thorn:** Okay, let's go— Wait! Listen—! Okay, here we go!

From her work on *SCTV* to the improvised faux documentaries of Christopher Guest, she's inhabited beautiful, confident characters—

**Catherine O'Hara:** Hm. Better.

**Jesse Thorn:** —who are just slightly, perfectly off. And of course, there's also this:

**Transition:** A whooshing sound.

**Clip:**

**Music:** Ominous, orchestral music.

**Kate McCallister (*Home Alone*):** (*Screaming at the top of her lungs.*) KEVIN!

**Transition:** A whooshing sound.

**Jesse Thorn:** (*They laugh.*) A leading role in *Home Alone*, which remains one of the biggest comedy hits of all time. Here she is with her former *SCTV* castmate, Eugene Levy, in a scene from *Best in Show*. She and Levi are hosting a birthday party for their Norwich Terrier, and they're singing a little Norwich Terrier song.

(*Catherine laughs knowingly.*)

**Transition:** A whooshing sound.

**Clip:**

(*Catherine laughs over the clip.*)

**Gerry & Cookie (*Best in Show*):** (*Singing.*) God loves a terrier. Yes, he does. God loves a terrier! That's because small, sturdy, bright and true! They give their love to you! God didn't miss a stitch. Be a dog or be a (*censored*). When he made the Norwich merrier with its cute little derriere! Yes, God loves a terrier!

(*The crowd cheers.*)

**Transition:** A whooshing sound.

**Jesse Thorn:** Catherine O'Hara, welcome to *Bullseye*. I'm so excited to have you on the show.

**Catherine O'Hara:** Thank you. I'm scared.

**Jesse Thorn:** When did you start acting?

**Catherine O'Hara:** Oh, high school I guess. Yeah.

**Jesse Thorn:** Did you think that was a real job that people could have? Or were you just excited that you had a chance to shine?

**Catherine O'Hara:** (*Chuckling.*) Yeah, to show off? A little attention? I mean, I had aspirations to act, and I thought it seemed like a really fun thing to do, 'cause it was fun. But then my brother dated GildaRadner, god bless her. And she was first in *Godspell*, for which my sister MaryMargaret and I auditioned and got callbacks but didn't get in.

**Jesse Thorn:** How old were you at the time?

**Catherine O'Hara:** I was like 18, I guess. Yeah, I must have been. I got into Second City when I was 19. Oh, so that was before that. And then Gilda got in— I was just following Gilda around. Then Gilda got in Second City Theater, and I didn't know that existed before that. It was the first time Chicago Second City tried it out in Toronto, and it's still going. But that was the first year they tried it. So, I didn't know it existed. Then I saw, oh my dear, you can actually improvise—you know, do bits, use

whatever's in your head and hope to god it's funny or interesting or whatever; and there's a place for it, and you get paid to do it. It just— I didn't know it existed before that, and then I knew it could be a job. And until I got an actual job and I became an understudy, I guess—a while later after waitressing at Second City—until I got a job, my parents rreally didn't think it was anything to aspire to. *(Chuckles.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** Was there any kind of like training program there at the time?

**Catherine O'Hara:** No, thank goodness! You could actually go in off the street! Which I did. Which everyone at the time did.

**Jesse Thorn:** Then you got a job as a waitress.

**Catherine O'Hara:** Yeah. Oh right! I waitressed at the first Second City, and then they closed down. They couldn't get a liquor license. And then I went and auditioned at the next Second City, when they opened it in the firehall where they just moved from a couple years ago. Anyway, sorry. You could go in off the street; you do five characters; you come in the door, one after the other. I guess you've heard of these auditions. Right? You go in one after the other, and you do it in teams of two. And you just treat the other person like they're a receptionist, like they're in a complaint department at a store, anything. And you go in, five characters one after the other. And you could get in!

**Jesse Thorn:** What were your characters then?

**Catherine O'Hara:** Oh, I can't— They were all probably insane, because that was— When in doubt, play insane. Nothing you say has to make sense!

**Jesse Thorn:** Well, the thing that's impressive to me of walking into the Second City, which by this time was already a storied institution—though new in Toronto. And just—and not having— Look, if you go into audition to be in one of the Second City companies today, even the lowest ones, you've already done literally years of preparation for that job. Whether you're already a standup or you've been doing classes—

**Catherine O'Hara:** Classes. You can't get in without the classes.

**Jesse Thorn:** You're developing characters. And you're talking about being an 18/19-year-old and just going in cold. I mean, had you even—had you seen Second City shows at the time?

**Catherine O'Hara:** Yeah, I'd seen Gilda in the shows. It was Gilda and Dan Aykroyd and Valri Bromfield, who was amazing. And um... John Candy? Was he in it yet? Yeah, John Candy had worked in it already. And Joe Flaherty. Yeah, John Candy actually hired my brother Marcus and me for the touring company after we auditioned. Joe Flaherty and—yeah, just I'd watched them—yeah—and dreamed of being with them.

**Jesse Thorn:** You started as Gilda Radner's understudy, right?

**Catherine O'Hara:** Yes. Yes, understudied for her and Rosemary Radcliffe, a Toronto actress.

**Jesse Thorn:** Did you have to learn all of her characters and roles, or was the show different if she wasn't on?

**Catherine O'Hara:** Yeah, you when you would take someone's part, you would join a show—an existing show. And so yeah, you'd have to learn their parts and dare to try to imitate them. I think I would probably just imitate her. I'm sure I didn't have my own idea of how to do these things. And then after every show, you'd improvise. You'd do an improv set. And so, you slowly build that next show. Then the next show, you've helped write Yeah.

**Jesse Thorn:** Where did the television show come from? How did that happen?

**Catherine O'Hara:** I think they had tried in Chicago a few times. And you know, they'd had they'd had it in their heads for years to try to do something on television with Second City. And then I don't know; it just somehow came together. That time that we started it—yeah, with Harold Ramis. Harold Ramis was head writer. And those of us who were in the cast at the time, who's who you see on TV. Yeah, I don't know! Andrew Alexander, our producer at the time, and Bernie Sahlins from Chicago—I think he was behind it at the beginning too and said, “Why don't we try this?”

And then we did the old—I mean, it's been done forever, since *Saturday Night Live* does it all the time too. TV parody, commercial parody. We started with that. And then later we got, when we did the hour-and-a-half shows, we got into kind of stretching it out and doing behind the scenes and calling it a network and having Guy Caballero as the head of it. (*Chuckling.*) You know, then we tried to make some sense of it, but it was still just a bunch of parodies put together.

**Jesse Thorn:** When you were putting together the show as a cast and writing staff, were you thinking about, “Oh man, this has to be different from *Saturday Night Live*?” Because *Saturday Night Live* was a pretty huge cultural force at the time.

**Catherine O’Hara:** Oh yeah. I got in Second City because Gilda went to do that. Actually, she went to *National Lampoon* first, but then on to *Saturday Night Live*. Yeah! Oh yeah, we were heavily aware of it and in awe of it and loved— You know, so many of our friends were in it. So many of them were Second City people.

**Jesse Thorn:** I want to play a clip of you on *SCTV*. This is a sketch that I read you wrote.

**Catherine O’ Hara:** (*Giggling.*) “I read you wrote.”

**Jesse Thorn:** I read that you wrote. It's always difficult to attribute sketches on sketch TV shows, because—

**Catherine O’Hara:** Hi Q? Is it Hi Q?

(*Jesse confirms.*)

Yeah, I did write that. Although it had to be edited by others, but yes.

**Jesse Thorn:** Okay, great. In this scene, you are a contestant on high school quiz bowl type show.

(*Catherine laughs.*)

And the host is played by Eugene Levy.

**Clip:**

**Host (SCTV):** Now let's start the game! The first question, worth 20 points and the subject is authors.

*(A buzzer.)*

**Host:** Margaret Meehan, Parkdale.

*(The audience laughs.)*

**Margaret:** Henry Miller?

**Host:** I'm sorry Margaret. Let me please finish the question first. Alright? What famous—

*(A buzzer. The audience laughs. Scattered applause.)*

**Host:** Margaret Meehan, Parkdale.

**Margaret:** Victor Hugo?

**Host:** I'm sorry Margaret. If you just let me finish the question first, see how it works. Okay! What famous humorist—

*(Two buzzers. The audience laughs.)*

**Host:** Margaret Meehan. Parkdale.

**Margaret:** Jerry Lewis?

**Host:** Margaret, I'll have to ask you to please let me finish the question before answering, because that answer was extremely wrong. The question is: I want the name of the famous humorist and author who wrote *The Adventures of Huckleberry*—

*(A bell. The audience laughs.)*

**Host:** St. Anthony's Leonard Mandel.

**Leonard:** *Finn.*

*(Jesse and Catherine laugh.)*

**Catherine O'Hara:** Oh, we had fun!

**Jesse Thorn:** The bit—*(laughs)* the bit that's missing from the audio of that is you pulling this face that is—

*(They laugh.)*

—like, this combination of enthusiasm, consternation, and idiocy that is just unparalleled. I mean, just untouchable. Just a gorgeous take.

**Catherine O'Hara:** Aw, thanks. Now it makes me think that that she would be somebody who would get that reaction from people all the time. People are always telling her to shut up, wait, stop talking. But she cannot stop herself. Ever.

**Jesse Thorn:** And that's a wonderful thing to watch.

**Catherine O'Hara:** Oh, I don't think you can lose with— And I'm not saying that's totally in that character—*(correcting herself)* I mean in that category, that character; but you can't lose with stupid and cocky. I mean, when you look at *The Jerk*—Steve Martin in *The Jerk*. Or—

**Jesse Thorn:** Will Farrell's entire oeuvre.

**Catherine O'Hara:** Oh, definitely! Or Steve Carell in *The Office* or Ricky Gervais in *The Office*. It's just people who are totally oblivious to the impression they're making on others. Or the original, um—Barney Fife. You know, something to brag about, something to say! (*Chuckling.*) And no idea what other people are thinking! You can rarely go wrong with that.

**Jesse Thorn:** What was it like being on the show, especially at the beginning when you had a male dominated cast? There was two women in the cast of the show. Both really brilliant, but all of these dudes. And did you have to sort of say like, “Hey, we get to do something here too”?

**Catherine O'Hara:** Yeah! All the time. All the time. And for a long time, when I first started writing on the show, I would tell my idea to Dave Thomas and then he would say it out loud. And I'd be mad that he got a laugh. Like, (*laughs*), that's mine! Then I'd say, “That was my idea!” Just sad. You know? And also, they—Andrea and I—I keep saying this, the producer hates this. But it's true! We got paid less, as writers. We all came from Second City Theater where we all wrote the material, but somehow the two women were paid less than the men. For a while. I mean, we finally got—you know—equity, later on. But it was pretty early in—you know—women's liberation, I guess. Women's lib talk. Really women were still fighting for it.

And—you know, it's sad. I mean, they're still at *Vanity Fair* writing—well, not *Vanity Fair*, generally, but they let that poor fella write that article about women not being funny. And I remember, at the time, somebody had written in a Toronto paper a story about how women aren't funny. And one of the guys put it up on the board, and they would point—Andrea and I would get an idea (*laughing*), and they'd point to that article and say, “Oh, you.”

**Jesse Thorn:** Geez Louise!

**Catherine O'Hara:** It was a different time! It really was!

**Jesse Thorn:** Did you have to change the way that you approached working on the show because of that? Did you have to think about what you were doing differently? Like, learn to be the person who says your idea, so no one else can take credit for it?

**Catherine O'Hara:** Yeah, absolutely. I mean, Dave was helping out by repeating the line. I guess he got the material on the air, sometimes. But... yeah. Eventually, I got stronger and stronger and realized, "Wait, this wasn't right. What am I being so wimpy about? And I've got some material here. I've got ideas! Like everyone else!" It's just not—you know. It's so sad to be self-conscious or insecure. It just gets in the way of life.

**Jesse Thorn:** We'll wrap up our replay of our conversation with the late Catherine O'Hara after a quick break. Stay with us. It's *Bullseye* from [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) and NPR.

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**Jesse Thorn:** Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. We're playing back my 2013 interview with Catherine O'Hara. She was the star of *Home Alone*, *Waiting for Guffman*, *Beetlejuice*, *Schitt's Creek*, and so many more. She died January 30th of this year. She was 71. Let's get back into our conversation.

**Jesse Thorn:** You left *SCTV* before it was finished. Why did you decide to leave?

**Catherine O'Hara:** I swear it was to try to meet somebody and maybe get married at the time. (*Laughs.*)

**Jesse Thorn:** Really?!

**Catherine O'Hara:** Yeah! That or maybe I'm just lazy. It was too much work. I don't know! No, I did feel that way at the time. I remember, really. By that time, Andrea was married and had kids, and the guys were—I think most of them were married. And that was my life. I just—that's all I did. And I guess it hit me—or slowly hit me. Slowly smacked me, the fact that, "Okay, and then what? And then what are you doing? This is gonna end at some point. What are you going to do?"

**Jesse Thorn:** I can only imagine how all-consuming it was. I mean, I—you know what I mean?

**Catherine O'Hara:** It was all consuming. But it was great. And at that age? I've often thought since that early 20s is just a perfect age to be doing that kind of material. You're not—for the most part you're not married. You don't have kids. You have all the time in the world to devote to that. I mean, it's perfect as a job. As a boss, to hire people that age too. Right? And you're also young enough that you are... cocky. Really cocky. Um. And you believe you can do the world better. Do everything better (*laughing*) and smarter. And that you have a great take on why things are ridiculous and—you know, it's just a great, cocky, fun time to be able to do that kind of work.

**Jesse Thorn:** Usually, when people leave a job like that, they leave it because they think they're gonna be a star. Right? Am I mistaken in thinking that?

**Catherine O'Hara:** I think they do, probably. Yeah. They think, "This is holding me back." No. "Well, it's lame." But like, the next—after I quit, I went to a party at Marty Short's and he put together, like, a reel for me. And started showing it at the party and all I did was weep. It just made me cry forever, like, that I'd left this and it was my—that was my life and I'd dared to leave it and now they were showing me that I'd made a mistake. (*Laughing.*) I don't—it was such a weird, emotional time for me. Yeah, I really wondered where my life was going, I think.

**Jesse Thorn:** In between when you left uh *SCTV* and *Beetlejuice*—which is like 1998 or something like that? Eh, sounds about right to me.

**Catherine O'Hara:** Yeah, is that right? Wow.

**Jesse Thorn:** In between those two things, you did two movies.

**Catherine O'Hara:** Yeah, I did *After Hours* in there, didn't I?

**Jesse Thorn:** *After Hours*, which is an amazing— If anybody hasn't seen *After Hours*, it's a really wonderful, hilarious, amazing movie.

**Catherine O'Hara:** Uh-huh. Scorsese.

**Jesse Thorn:** It was Martin Scorsese! And you did another movie directed by Mike Nichols.

**Catherine O'Hara:** *Heartburn*, yeah! You know, I should be so lucky.

**Jesse Thorn:** Right?! (*Chuckles.*)

**Catherine O'Hara:** I know!

**Jesse Thorn:** I mean, it's a remarkable thing to think you weren't working a lot, but you did take an opportunity to work with Mike Nichols and Martin Scorsese.

**Catherine O'Hara:** (*Laughing.*) And Martin Scorsese! Yeah. Poor me! (*Playfully reluctant.*) “Okay, I'll leave the house and work with them. Who are they? Alright.”

**Jesse Thorn:** In in a pretty narrow period of time, you were in *Beetlejuice* and *Home Alone*. And *Beetlejuice* was a big hit. *Home Alone* at the time was the biggest hit in comedy history.

**Catherine O'Hara:** That's the biggest thing I've ever been in, yeah.

**Jesse Thorn:** What was it like to be in that? Did you think, “Oh, now I should be a movie star of a giant—” the next *Home Alone*-like thing?

**Catherine O'Hara:** You would think. No, I don't. I can't— I don't know, I can't think that way.

**Jesse Thorn:** Did you pull back from it? Did you think like, “Ohh, I’m— (*Uncertainly.*) Mmm... mmm....”?

**Catherine O’Hara:** I never felt it had that much to do with me. You know, I was in the movie, and I played the mom, and that was great. But it was about Macaulay and it was about the writing and the directing, and it was just about the whole thing. You know? And I was proud to be part of it, definitely. 'Cause not only was it a big moneymaker and still plays, but it's a good movie to work with.

**Jesse Thorn:** Did you ever want to be a movie star-movie star?

**Catherine O’Hara:** Um, I would like good roles, whether—yeah, I would like good roles. But do I need more fame? No, I get just enough, thanks. Really.

**Jesse Thorn:** The reason—the reason I ask is because I think of that time in your life and I can think of few people as—this will sound like some kind of ridiculous flattery.

*(Catherine laughs.)*

But who are as funny as you are and as—and as good looking. And I think—and I think it had to be a choice not to pursue that. Not to want to be front and center, in stuff.

**Catherine O’Hara:** It was either a choice or just ignorance or I was being guided. Um. I’m happy where I’m at now! (*Chuckles.*) And I’m lucky to still work. And so, it worked out! But I definitely, you know, blew off a lot of opportunities. You know. Agents that I would meet—I mean, really big agents who (*laughs*) represent really high-

priority people! And I would look at them and just, “*(Clicks teeth.)* I don’t know if I like that shirt he’s wearing.”

*(Jesse laughs.)*

You know, just—*(sighs)* stupid. Just—

**Jesse Thorn:** To be fair, I mean, really high-powered agents who represent really important, powerful people are often creepy, weird dudes that you wouldn’t wanna talk to.

*(Catherine laughs.)*

That’s one of the things that makes them so successful, right? They’re weird sociopaths.

**Catherine O’Hara:** But they’re good people. They’re—I apologized to one, years later. I did at a party. At a *Vanity Fair* party. I went, “Okay. You wanted to represent me. I just wanna say I’m sorry.”

*(Jesse laughs.)*

“I didn’t understand who you were or what you were doing, okay? I just wanna say now, thank you for caring and trying to represent me.”

**Jesse Thorn:** We’re going to take a break. When we come back, even more with the late, great Catherine O’Hara. It’s *Bullseye* from [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) and NPR.

**Promo:**

**Music:** Bright, jazzy synth.

**Jordan Crucchiola:** I am Jordan Crucchiola, and I host *Feeling Seen*. I'm here with Maximum Fun member of the month, Khalil Goodman. Hi, Khalil!

**Khalil:** Hi, Jordan. Thank you for having me. So great to see you.

**Jordan:** I gotta know what's made you feel seen if you— I figure you've thought about this if you've listened to the show a bunch!

**Khalil:** I read *X-Men* when I was six. When you're a kid who makes art—which I am—and you're a queer kid, like there's this feeling of like “something is different,” but you don't know what it is. You can be different, but it can be a superpower.

**Jordan:** What would you say to others who might be considering supporting the show? What would be your sales pitch to them?

**Khalil:** If you love this thing, if you are getting all of this joy and comfort from this thing, make sure that this thing that you like will continue.

**Jordan:** Yeah. Thank you so much, Khalil, for taking the time to talk to me today! And for listening to the show, oh my god! It means a lot to just know people are really listening and valuing what they're hearing.

**Khalil:** Thank you so much.

**Speaker:** Become a Maximum Fun member now at [MaximumFun.org/join](https://MaximumFun.org/join).

**Jesse Thorn:** I'm Jesse Thorn. You're listening to *Bullseye*. If you're just joining us, we are replaying my conversation with the late Catherine O'Hara. She died last month.

One of the really wonderful things in your career, I think, is that you got to be in this series of Christopher Guest movies along with—among others—Eugene Levy, who you'd worked with for so many bajillions of years.

*(Catherine agrees with a laugh.)*

And all of the other amazing people in those films. When *Waiting for Guffman* came up, how did it come up to you? Did like Chris Guest just call you and say like, “Hey, I somehow got \$2,000,000” or whatever it was “and we're gonna make a movie”?

**Catherine O’Hara:** No, he didn't call. It was all through the agent, and I resisted forever.

**Jesse Thorn:** Did you know him?

**Catherine O’Hara:** Yes, I'd met him! No, I liked him, yeah! I just didn't get it. I'm not that bright, obviously. I didn't get what he was going for. *(Laughs.)* And I guess there was no real script— There was no script at the time. *(Laughing.)* See, I think I'm guided more than it has anything to do with my brains.

**Jesse Thorn:** You got a couple of really wonderful scenes in the movie, which is obviously a big ensemble piece, if folks haven't seen it. I feel bad for you, 'cause it's real funny. But it's a big ensemble piece and one of the scenes—probably your biggest, most crucial scene, I can't play on the radio.

*(Catherine cackles.)*

So, I'm going to play—I'm going to play this other scene, which is also wonderful. The movie is about a small-town amateur theatre production, and this is you and your husband in the film—played by Fred Willard—auditioning for it.

**Transition:** A whooshing sound.

**Clip:**

**Music:** Piano plays.

**Ron** (*Waiting for Guffman*): Ding dong!

**Sheila:** (*In a transatlantic accent.*) Oh! I wonder who knows I'm vacationing here at the Oasis?

**Ron:** Am I late?

**Sheila:** (*Gasps.*) You!

**Ron:** Surprised?

**Sheila:** How did you find me?

**Ron:** I have my ways.

**Sheila:** Would you like to come in for coffee? (*Breaking into song.*) *You don't need to answer! There's no need to speak. I'll be your belly dancer!*

**Transition:** A whooshing sound.

**Jesse Thorn:** One of the things that I love about your character during this movie is— You know, Fred Willard is bloviating in just full force—like gale force winds—while you just sit next to him and make these little faces the whole time.

**Catherine O'Hara:** (*Laughs.*) What choice do you have, next to Fred Willard?

(*Jesse chuckles.*)

He said, “We have to wear those sweatsuits,” that we're wearing in that?

**Jesse Thorn:** Those grotesque warmup suits, yeah. They're like purple and turquoise.

**Catherine O'Hara:** And I said, "Fred! No! Come on! We can wear something—" You know, I'm thinking something attractive! And you know—funny but slightly attractive?!

"No, no," he would say.

Then I would just finally go, "Yeah. You're right. Okay." Like, just don't do what you would normally do. Don't make your own choices. It was really fun to go along with him.

**Jesse Thorn:** I'm gonna now allude to something that is slightly adult in subject matter, a scene in this film. So, if you have kids—uh, you know.

**Catherine O'Hara:** Let them hear this.

*(Jesse laughs.)*

And hopefully they'll go into comedy someday. Look, smart dirty is okay. I'd rather have my kid watch *Trailer Park Boys* than... *Barney*. That scary, scary show with the automaton kids.

**Jesse Thorn:** Your kids are teenagers. So, it makes more sense for them to watch *Trailer Park Boys*.

**Catherine O'Hara:** It's a little scary! *(Laughing.)* I would've said this years ago too.

**Jesse Thorn:** In your— So, there's this sort of climactic scene for your character, which is you've been sort of— Your character is very beaten down by Fred Willard's character. And you sit down to a couple's dinner with Eugene Levy's character and his wife.

**Catherine O'Hara:** Linda Kash.

**Jesse Thorn:** And you get drunk. And start—

**Catherine O'Hara:** Uh-huh. I think I woke up drunk that day!

*(They laugh.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** Yes. And start spewing a combination of anti-Semitism and intimate details about, uh, what we'll call a gentleman's reduction surgery.

**Catherine O'Hara:** Yes.

**Jesse Thorn:** That is just stunning. Which— Now I know those movies have kind of outlines—

**Catherine O'Hara:** Yeah. All the dialogue is improvised.

**Jesse Thorn:** —that Chris Guest and Eugene Levy write together. Was that scene in the—?

**Catherine O'Hara:** No. It wasn't. That was—I think it was... Fred or Eugene's idea, that they should have a double date. I think it was Fred's maybe. And then Eugene

suggested the night before, this Chinese restaurant or something. And they got it. They got the—you know. They rented it or whatever to use for a few hours. And I think I may have asked Chris—‘cause you normally wouldn’t run anything by him, but it was a... pretty obvious thing (*laughs*) to not be able to hide. So, I asked him—I think I asked him if I could play drunk. And he said, “Yeeeah, sure.” ‘Cause he always said yes. For the most part. I can’t tell when he said no to me (*laughing*)—on second. I— (*pulling herself together*) never mind. Oh, I’m so sorry. Never mind. Okay.

Okay! So, yeah. I think I asked the night before if I could be drunk. And otherwise, no, none of it was in the outline. You know.

**Jesse Thorn:** It’s a really wonderful character moment for your character.

**Catherine O’Hara:** It’s really fun.

**Jesse Thorn:** Because as much as she is saying horrible things, it is also her—like, it’s her great moment to be herself.

**Catherine O’Hara:** Yeah, some people have to get loaded to let the truth come out. And it’s not a truth you necessarily want to hear. (*Laughs.*) It wasn’t anti-Semitic though; it was just ignorant. Wasn’t it? Well, I guess—

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, anti-Semitic is probably stretching it.

**Catherine O’Hara:** Yeah.

**Jesse Thorn:** She starts talking about what she calls “Jew stuff.”

*(Catherine laughs.)*

I really like the way that each of those films uh really looks at couple relationships. I think that's sort of at the center of them. And in fact, in *A Mighty Wind*, where you're paired with Eugene Levy, your character barely has any jokes. It's really—that storyline is a relationships storyline.

**Catherine O'Hara:** Yeah! Yeah, I was worried about that at the beginning. Yeah, there's no— It's not a funny character, my Mickey. Yeah.

**Jesse Thorn:** Did you think about this—obviously not romantic, but this sort of long, fruitful relationship you'd had with Eugene Levy?

**Catherine O'Hara:** Oh, you can't—I don't think you can help but draw on it. Whether it's consciously or unconsciously or subconsciously. Yeah. Unconsciously, probably. Um. No, you can't help it. I mean, that's lovely! I mean, you have—and it—I think it even worked more so for anyone in the audience who knew that Eugene and I had known each other that long.

**Transition:** A whooshing noise.

**Clip:**

*(The sounds of a large crowd of people talking and interacting with one another. Muffled sounds of drunken singing.)*

**Mickey (*A Mighty Wind*):** Being onstage again with Mitch was a great thing. Oh boy, I never thought it was possible. And there we were. *(Beat.)* I just wish

he didn't take things so seriously. You know. That damn kiss! My sister—well, they were all at the show. But my sister, Jocelyn, said, “You led him on. You shouldn't have kissed him if you didn't wanna go all the way.”

**Transition:** A whooshing noise.

**Catherine O'Hara:** And one great thing about improvising these kind of movies is you really help create each other. You know? By the way—by the way you treat each other and by what you say about each other. It's like... you know, in my mind, I went, “Oooh, that's who—yeah! Oh, so I'm that person!” (*Laughs.*) “Oh! I did that kind of thing? Okay, that changes who I was thinking of.” Do you know what I mean? You really can affect each other that way. And yeah, when Eugene started shooting, he got real nervous about... how he was playing it. I think he really got into it. So, it made him feel ungrounded, in a way. This idea that he was just beautifully talented but had some demons or angels who were confusing him.

**Transition:**

**Clip:**

*(Muffled birdsong in the background.)*

**Mitch:** I've never been in a better headspace... uh, I'm writing poetry again. I'm going through a very, uh, prolific phase.

**Transition:**

**Jesse Thorn:** A little Brian Wilson-y.

**Catherine O'Hara:** There you go! Yeah! But he got really nervous! And I think that's where I would say our old friendship came up, that I had the ability and nerve to say, “Eugene, no. You're—no, this is beautiful. Don't be afraid. Just stay with this, here. It's

so—and I’m—” And was like I was there as Mickey. “I’m with you. I’m so with you, right now.” You know?

So, I guess that’s where it came in more. Our friendship.

**Jesse Thorn:** Well, Catherine O’Hara, I sure appreciate you making the time to be on *Bullseye*.

**Catherine O’Hara:** Oh, I’m sorry for my looong answers!

**Jesse Thorn:** Oh, not at all. It was it an honor to get to talk to you.

**Catherine O’Hara:** Oh no, for me! Thank you.

**Jesse Thorn:** Catherine O’Hara from 2013. What a gift. An actual genius. It was just— I told some folks this when she passed—but like, to sit in a room with her was one of those rare times in my job when you’re just thinking to yourself the whole time, “Holy cow, this is better than I imagined it would be.” Thanks, Catherine. You ruled.

**Transition:** Bright, upbeat 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 in the historic jewelry district of downtown Los Angeles, California— where my senior producer Kevin Ferguson has been eyeing a hawk that’s been

hanging out on the corner of the building across the street from us. He says it should be called Corner Hawk.

The show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our senior producer, as mentioned, Kevin Ferguson. Our producers, Jesus Ambrosio and Richard Robey. Our production fellow at Maximum Fun, Hannah Moroz. Our video producer, Daniel Speer. We get booking help from Mara Davis. All our interstitial music comes from our friend Dan Wally, also known as DJW. You can find his music at [DJWsounds.bandcamp.com](http://DJWsounds.bandcamp.com). Our theme music was written and recorded by The Go! Team. It is called “Huddle Formation”. Thanks to The Go! Team; thanks to their label, Memphis Industries, for providing it. Our hawk that lives on the corner of the building across the street is Corner Hawk.

You can follow *Bullseye* on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, where you will find video from just about all our interviews—including the ones you've heard this week. And I think that's about it. Just remember. All great radio hosts have a signature sign-off.

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

*(Music fades out.)*