

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 is *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. D'Arcy Carden has had a very wild ride lately. Not that long ago, she was doing improv a lot, getting little parts on TV shows—*Inside Amy Schumer*, *Veep*, *Broad City*. The last one was created by her friend, Abbi Jacobson. She also worked as a nanny, and her boss for that job was Bill Hader. We will talk about that later on.

In 2016, she got the part that changed her life: Janet, the all-knowing, all-seeing, unfailingly cheerful assistant on *The Good Place*.

Transition: A whooshing sound.

Clip:

Janet (*The Good Place*): Here we are! Just press that button, and it's Goodbye, Janet!

Chidi: (*Groans worriedly.*)

Janet: (*Pleasantly.*) Chidi, I can see that you're worried. And I just wanna assure you, I am not human, and I cannot feel pain.

Chidi: Ah, thank you. That helps.

Janet: However, I should warn you—I am programmed with a failsafe measure. As you approach the kill switch, I will begin to beg for my life. It's just there in case of an accidental shutdown, but it will seem very real.

Eleanor: Cool! So, who's doing this? Me or you?

Transition: A whooshing sound.

Jesse Thorn: *The Good Place* was a hit. Millions of viewers, 14 Emmy nominations—including one for D’Arcy. And while *The Good Place* was going strong, D’Arcy started appearing on another critically acclaimed hit TV show, *Barry*—created by and starring her former boss, Bill Hader. These days, you can catch her on a new show called *Sunny Nights*. She stars on that program opposite another *SNL* legend, Will Forte. In *Sunny Nights*, Carden and Forte play Martin and Vicki—two siblings who head to Australia with dreams of making their fortune from selling spray tan. In Australia. Does it go well? Well, I don't know that it's a spoiler to say not really. And does it go poorly? Well, in fact, yes! It does go poorly. So poorly, that the criminal world gets involved.

When D’Arcy Carden and I talked in 2022, she had just starred in *A League of Their Own*, the TV series based on the movie of the same name. Like the movie, the show tells the story of the Rockford Peaches, an all-women professional baseball team in World War II, that show reunited Carden with her longtime improv collaborator, Abbi Jacobson, who co-created it. To someone who hasn't seen her perform, D’Arcy Carden's rise might sound like serendipity—the right people, the right connections, the right audition, that kind of thing. But all you have to do is see D’Arcy on screen once. She's so funny, compelling, smart. And as you're about to hear, she has range.

This clip comes from *A League of Their Own*. D’Arcy plays Greta on that show. Greta is the first base person of the Peaches. When the show begins, it's clear that Rockford is facing a tough season, long bus rides, tough trades, all the other trappings of being a wartime baseball team. And Greta and her teammate Carson, played by Abbi Jacobson, are talking about the season ahead.

Transition: A whooshing sound.

Clip:

Greta (*A League of Their Own*): Okay. I was thinking about it. Maybe Lupe’s trying to get traded and that’s why she’s getting in with the Comets.

Carson: You really think she would do that? The team’s finally doing so well!

Greta: She just wants to get to the championships. I get that. Everybody’s looking out for number one. (*Beat.*) Except for you.

Carson: I just—I see how good we could be. And I just want us to get there in time. That's it.

Greta: You should tell them what Beth said and let them know what's on the line. It'll help.

Carson: No! I don't want them in their heads. I want them to think about tomorrow's game only. One at bat at a time. Okay?

Greta: Goodness gracious!

Carson: And hopefully Jess's Lady Luck will be on our side.

Greta: I don't believe in luck.

Carson: Why not?

Greta: Well, I don't know if it's God or Lady Luck, but... they gave people like us a pretty raw deal. So, they can kick rocks. You know?

Transition: A whooshing sound.

Jesse Thorn: D'Arcy Carden, welcome to *Bullseye*. It's great to have you on the show.

D'Arcy Carden: (*Laughs.*) Hi!

Jesse Thorn: I'm such a fan of your work. Can I ask you—?

D'Arcy Carden: Anything.

Jesse Thorn: Oh, wow!

(*They laugh.*)

D'Arcy Carden: Hold on, hold on, hold on. Back up. Back up.

Jesse Thorn: (*Laughs.*) I was just gonna ask if I could ask you the cliched question of whether you had to practice baseball to be on a baseball show.

D'Arcy Carden: Okay, that's the question I meant to say. Yes, you can. You can ask that. Did we have to practice?

Jesse Thorn: Yeah.

D'Arcy Carden: We did. Yeah. We practiced a lot.

Jesse Thorn: Were there varieties of levels of—? Because there's plenty of women who play adult baseball, but there's also plenty of women who've played softball through college.

D'Arcy Carden: Right. Right. There was a wide variety of sort of skill level—from like never having picked up a bat before to like— You know, maybe I would say— maybe Abbi Jacobson and Kelly McCormack and I had played the most. You know? Through high school— Through high school. And then sort of beyond that was like—what do they call them? I was about to say pickup games, but it's not really that. It's like when you're on a—when you like work in an office or you're on a show—

Jesse Thorn: A beer league softball? Like, slow pitch?

D'Arcy Carden: Exactly. Yeah. So, I would do those whenever I could. But that—what does that mean? Like, maybe once to ten times a year, depending on the year. Yeah. So, anyway, we practiced a lot. I got cast in this role about four or five months before we started shooting. Abbi, Chanté Adams, we were the first three to be a part of this show for quite a while. So, the three of us practiced a lot. And then Melanie Field joined and Kate Berlant, and slowly people started getting cast. And they would just—we were doing these—was it like seven to nine AM? You wanna know the schedule? I'll tell you. Seven to nine AM, Monday, Wednesday, Friday, we would practice—yeah.

Jesse Thorn: Thank you. I'm writing this down. Thank you.

D'Arcy Carden: Please. Yeah. And this is years ago. (*Chuckles.*) So, go back in time. And we would practice baseball with— We had a coach, Justine Siegal. And she would bring other coaches and other baseball players. And we had like a real— people really got good at baseball. It was kind of— You know, Abbi and I, I think, came in hot. Like, we came in like, you know, cocky like, “Oh, we played baseball.” And then everybody got great. (*Chuckles.*) So, it was fun to watch people learn how to play baseball and all of us get better. And one thing I learned is, when you play a sport as a kid, you basically just do what all the dads tell you to do.

(*Jesse agrees.*)

And they don't really know what the hell they're talking about. So, it was very interesting to have played softball for my lifetime and then finally get coached by people who like are actual, legit coaches. And they were like, "... So, everything you're doing is actually wrong."

But I was like, "The daddies taught me!" You know?

(They laugh.)

So, it was fun to learn technically how to sort of improve my game. It was really cool. It was cool to like gel together as a team before we—you know—read a page together. Like, usually on a show, you meet either like in a table read or onset or—you know, you sort of have to like fake chemistry. Like, you might be meeting somebody that's supposed to be playing your best friend or your wife or whatever the day of shooting. But with this, we really got to— Like, we were a team, and the acting was like an afterthought. When we got on set, we were like, "Oh, right, right, right, right. We're doing a show! We're not actually a baseball team."

But it was really—it was great. It was great. We all got like really into baseball. *(Whispering delightedly.)* We got really into it.

Jesse Thorn: There was a period when there were a lot of baseball movies and most of them starred Kevin Costner and Tom Selleck.

D'Arcy Carden: Yes, 100%. And maybe Charlie Sheen.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. And like both Kevin Costner and Tom Selleck had been like borderline prospect baseball players, like nearly professional baseball players.

D'Arcy Carden: Like, in their real lives? Oh, cool.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. And like, knew how to play baseball. And then everyone else who has ever been in a baseball movie doesn't know like where their arm should go when they throw.

(They laugh and D'Arcy agrees.)

And like the thing about making a television series is— Look, the playing of baseball is not the most significant part of this show. It's about the people.

(D'Arcy agrees.)

But you know there's gonna be some baseball throughout the entire run of the show! It's a lot of chances to be caught on camera throwing in a weird, awkward way.

D'Arcy Carden: Yeah. Yeah. I know. It's funny. You know, growing up watching *League of Their Own* as a kid, I remember thinking like, "They're so good at baseball!" You know, as a little sporty kid that also was a theatre kid, it was sort of like, "Wait! You can do both?! Like, you can be a sporty actor?" Like, this was very eye-opening for me in many ways. And you know, now—having sort of absorbed—absorbed?—observed and absorbed. I truly did mean both. Like, taking in as much information as I can about the shooting of the movie, I've learned that a lot of them had never played baseball before. You know, they did some baseball camps and stuff, but like I believe Geena Davis was cast—you know, replacing this actor or that actor; it was cast really last-minute—and had really never played before.

But growing up, I was like, "Now that's an athlete!"

(Jesse laughs.)

Like, I remember being like, "*(Censored)* damn, she's good at baseball!" So, you know, I'm sure with an adult's baseball eye, you can see all the little mistakes. But as a kid, I was like, "She's a superhero."

Jesse Thorn: You were also working alongside— I mean, for one thing, the cast is completely packed full of amazing people. There's like 20 great television actors on the show.

D'Arcy Carden: Agreed!

Jesse Thorn: But one of the other stars of the show and the co-creator of the show is Abbi Jacobson, who you have worked with forever and a day.

D'Arcy Carden: That's right!

Jesse Thorn: What was it like to be on a team with her? I mean, this is like a pretend team, but still has a lot of the same—

D'Arcy Carden: Totally. What's the difference, in a way?

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. Relative to like improvising with her or writing something, writing a sketch with her or something.

D'Arcy Carden: Yeah. It's funny, like it just felt very correct. It felt very— It's like what we've always done. This is just a sort of bigger version of it, a different—you know—weirder, pretend version of it, but it's exactly— Like, I think one of the things that I love about acting is being on a team. You know? It's like why I got into improv. Like, the magical thing about—you know, being in a play or whatever is like the team aspect of it, the cast. So, Abbi and I—as soon as we met back 15 years ago when we were doing improv together, we were like already on a team together. So, this just was—like, every step of our friendship and relationship and like career together has been on a team, in a way.

Jesse Thorn: We've got more still to come with D'Arcy Carden. Stay with us. We'll be back in a minute. It's *Bullseye* for [MaximumFun.org](https://www.maximumfun.org) and NPR.

Transition: Bright, chiming synth with a syncopated beat.

Jesse Thorn: Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. My guest is D'Arcy Carden. She played Janet on the hit TV sitcom *The Good Place*. On HBO's *Barry*, she played the aspiring actor-turned-assistant-turned-showrunner, Natalie Greer. These days you can catch her on the comedy crime show *Sunny Nights*, in which she and Will Forte play a brother and sister trying to make it rich in Australia selling spray tan. Carden and I talked in 2022. Let's get back into our conversation.

I enjoyed watching you on *A League of Their Own* in part because the two roles for which you had been best known previously—your work on *Barry* and *The Good Place*—in both of those, you are— In one case, you're a literal kind of digital assistant. I guess it's not literal; I just said “literal” imprecisely.

D'Arcy Carden: Well, but I know what you mean.

Jesse Thorn: You are a God/The Universe created equivalent of a digital assistant.

D'Arcy Carden: Hell yeah.

Jesse Thorn: And on *Barry*, you are a brown-nosing acting student, turned personal assistant.

(They laugh.)

D'Arcy Carden: Turned showrunner!

Jesse Thorn: And so, you have risen to prominence on wings of obsequiousness. And this is very—it's very different to be a sassy broad!

D'Arcy Carden: Yeah! Ain't it!? I know. And you know, there was a moment like towards the end of *The Good Place*—one of the last episodes we were filming. And Ted—the king—Danson and I had like a little break. And we went and got coffee and sat down and chatted. And he asked what I was gonna do next. And *League of Their Own* hadn't come my way yet, so I didn't know. And he was like, “The advice I will give you is do something as different from Janet as humanly possible.” Because, you know. I mean, a long—well, four-years-running TV show, one that people watched. There's also something about Janet. Like, I think of her as sort of like a Mickey Mouse type character. Like, I'm wearing the same clothes every episode. I kind of have some like catch phrases. Like it's very... it's a whole thing.

And I think, yeah, the next role I could like lean into that and like, “This is what I do.” Or I could go far away from it. And I really appreciated that advice. And you know, whatever Ted Danson tells me to do, I'll say, “Okay! Good idea!” Sooo, that's what I did with this. And when it came my way, you know, I don't think I would've cast me in the role of Greta, if that makes sense. Like, if I had the whole— If I could've cast me in any role on *League of Their Own*, I wouldn't have thought to cast me as Greta, is what I'm saying. And that's part of why I said yes.

Jesse Thorn: I mean, it's in part due, I'm sure, to the fact that one of the bosses of the show is somebody that's known you 15-20 years.

D'Arcy Carden: And that made it easier for me, too. 'Cause I was like, “Well, she knows what I'm capable of, and I trust her. And maybe she can see better than I can.” You know? It's hard to kind of know what you are. And somebody that knows you so well, you kind of have to just put your faith in them.

Jesse Thorn: One of the things they say about going into auditions is that it's not necessarily that you're making the perfect choices as an actor. It's that you are making choices. Right? Because they will know whether they're the right choices or not. Like, they'll know if you're right or not. You're just trying to show them something. And if you don't show them enough—well, then you're not anything.

(D'Arcy agrees.)

But *(chuckles)* I can only imagine going in to audition for *The Good Place* for this part of Janet, who is in the show kind of the pop-up, artificial intelligence assistant of the universe. That, A) they didn't even—they hadn't really decided what it was. And B) it's not anything.

(Jesse laughs and D'Arcy confirms.)

So, they're like—

D'Arcy Carden: So, they're like, “Sooo, what you got?”

Jesse Thorn: Yeah! So, how—what choice do you—how did you even—? Like, the night before, when you're looking at the sides they gave you or whatever, what did you decide?

D'Arcy Carden: That's such a good question. And it's true. Like, I mean, auditions are insane. And this one felt even more insane. I also knew that they were dummy sides, meaning like this wasn't even really what the show was. Not that I knew anything about the show, because there was nothing about the show out there. It was all such a secret. But I knew that like the sides were— It could've been in a different language. Like, it just— And not to say it didn't make sense, but it had nothing to do with anything. And what— *(Backtracking.)* I guess I should have explained it. Sides are the little bit of a script you would have for an audition. And dummy sides would mean it's like a fake scene. Okay?

So, I do think with this audition, there was something special about it—which was like I knew I wasn't gonna get the role. Like, with 100% certainty, I knew I wasn't gonna get the role. But I was such a Mike Schur fan, and I had never met him before or auditioned him before. So, I thought like, “Why don't you just show him the best version of you? You know, try to make this guy laugh and just remember you enough to like maybe give you a small role in season three or something like that.”

So, I kind of was like— You know, not to say that Janet is D'Arcy or D'Arcy is Janet or whatever, but just sort of like some things you really do have to just show what you have. Like, *(chuckles)* what is inherently special about just you. Because otherwise, what are you trying to do? I don't know what the motivation or, you know, backstory for this character is. So, let me just like—let me just see if I can, you know, be the best version of me.

Jesse Thorn: You were an immediate standout on *The Good Place*, on a show with some—you know, Ted Danson, one of the ten greatest television actors of all time; and Kristen Bell is so brilliant and was already very famous. At least for me, but I think for a lot of people, you were an immediate standout. And I think that *(chuckles)* one of the questions that I wondered as I was watching it is the same as the question I just asked you about auditioning, only for the show. Which is: what choices can you make when part of your character is that it is a, you know, universal blank?

D'Arcy Carden: Well—(*chuckling*) first of all, sir, thank you so much.

Jesse Thorn: I speak on behalf of all of America's dorks who developed instant crutches on you. Yeah.

D'Arcy Carden: (*Cackles.*) I appreciate that so much. Thank you.

Jesse Thorn: Of all genders and sexualities, I want to be clear.

D'Arcy Carden: Yeah, thank you so much.

Jesse Thorn: What held us together was our dorkdom.

D'Arcy Carden: (*Laughs.*) That's it!

I struggled a ton in the first season. And I think the thing got me through it was Mike Schur and some of the writers that I really leaned on—Jen Statsky and Joe Mande and Megan Amram and a few of them that I was like, you know, “I’m doing this wrong!” Or like, “What is this?!” Or “Was that right?” And you know, the thing that I remember from even just like shooting the pilot was Mike Schur sort of saying like, “React less.” You know? Like, “Don’t have—when you say this, and she says that, you don’t have any judgement or opinion on what she says.”

Transition: A whooshing sound.

Clip:

Chidi: Maybe it’s not actually like all that bad. Let’s just get some information first. We’ll ask Janet. Hey, Janet?

(*A pleasant beep like an elevator arriving.*)

Janet: Hi, there!

(*Eleanor groans in surprise.*)

How can I help you?

Eleanor: What the fork!? Who are you?

Janet: I'm Janet. I'm the informational assistant here in *The Good Place*.

Chidi: She's like this walking database. You can ask her about the creation of the universe or history or—

Eleanor: Oh. There was a guy who lived in Avondale, Arizona around 2002. His name was Kevin Peltonic. Is he gay?

Janet: No.

Eleanor: Really? Huh. I guess he just didn't wanna have sex with me.

Janet: (*Pleasantly.*) That's correct.

Eleanor: Well, that's fine. I wasn't that into him anyway.

Janet: Yes, you were.

Chidi: Okay, Janet. I have a question.

Janet: Okay.

Chidi: What is the bad place like?

Janet: Oh, sorry. That is the one topic I'm not allowed to tell you about. I can only play you a brief audio clip of what is happening there right now.

Transition: A whooshing sound.

D'Arcy Carden: And that kind of went against everything I had been taught as an actor. So, that was a struggle and felt confusing. And it was only like— I mean, honestly, after the first season. 'Cause this wasn't a pilot that we, you know, waited a year before we heard if we're gonna do a show. It was like—it was already—a season was greenlit. So, I didn't have like a moment to sort of watch the pilot and figure out if that worked or whatever. It was like, "Let's just go." So, I do feel like Mike and I really created Janet together. And I say that giving the writers like full—they did it. They fricking did it. But they really let me figure it out with them, I guess.

Jesse Thorn: You got cast on *Barry* like almost simultaneously.

(*D'Arcy confirms.*)

I remember seeing you in the first scene of *Barry* and thinking, “How can she—? Why is she allowed to be on both of these?”

D'Arcy Carden: (*Laughing.*) A lot of people thought that. A lot of people thought that.

Jesse Thorn: Like, I was happy to see you. You're great in everything.

(*D'Arcy thanks him.*)

But I was like, “How is—?”

D'Arcy Carden: “That’s not... legal.” Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: These are medium-big parts on two different shows!

(*They laugh.*)

D'Arcy Carden: Yeah. It was really lucky. It was like, I was auditioning for both of them at the same time. So, I think I was being called back for *Good Place* as I was originally auditioning for *Barry*, and that's just the way like a pilot season would go. And let me remind you, I was booking nothing before these. So, this wasn't like—you know, I wasn't supposed to get anything.

Jesse Thorn: You'd been in television commercials and *Broad City*, that your friend put you in.

D'Arcy Carden: Exactly. I wasn't booking. I wasn't bookin', babe.

Jesse Thorn: Plays. Plays in the Bay Area.

D'Arcy Carden: Yeah, exactly. You know. You were there! No, you weren't. What if I find out that you had been in the audience for all those?

Jesse Thorn: You were probably in some production at the Shotgun Players that I went to.

D'Arcy Carden: Probably. (*Whispered.*) God, t’would, that I could.” My parents had season tickets. Anyway.

Jesse Thorn: Pretty edgy.

D'Arcy Carden: Yeah. (*Chuckles.*) I lucked out with Bill Hader and Alec Berg being friendly with Mike Schur and Morgan Sackett—all the big men. They all like got along and were buds. So, they sort of went above everything else. And I think, you know, the HBO and the NBC Universal of it all didn't really get involved. They just—I mean, I'm not saying it was easy. And I'm sure my manager was like pulling his hair out trying to make schedules work, but they made it work, and it was really good of them. Meaning like I'm grateful. Very grateful. 'Cause it could've just been like, "Oh, this isn't gonna work or this is too much of a headache." And instead, they were like—you know, Mike was like, "Yeah. It'll work. Yeah. That's fine."

And it was like the second AD would like print up my schedule on *Good Place* for *Barry* and give it to me. It was really a team effort and very sweet. And I just—you know, made it my mission to like not make a headache for anybody and just like come prepared and be early and don't complain if you're tired, and if you shot late last night, just like fricking do it and shut up. And I did! I did it and I shut up.

Jesse Thorn: I think *Barry* is a wonderful show. I really enjoyed watching it. I also find it deeply kind of stomach churning.

D'Arcy Carden: That sounds right.

Jesse Thorn: And I was thinking about why, and it's not because Hader's character is struggling with questions of life and death and post-traumatic stress and stuff like that. I think the number one thing is just how pathetic and sad the actors—

D'Arcy Carden: Totally.

Jesse Thorn: —the fictional actors on the show are.

D'Arcy Carden: Totally. It's so real.

Jesse Thorn: And because it never goes to *Waiting for Guffman* silliness, it hits pretty hard that they're so sad.

D'Arcy Carden: I'm with you. Yeah, I'm with you. The acting class, but also like Henry's character, Mr. Cousineau. I think this is from season one, where he's like auditioning for a commercial. That scene destroooos me. And whatever you think about Gene Cousineau and his, you know, pompous god complex or whatever, you see him waiting in line for that audition and saying like the one line. And Henry's brilliant. And it just destroys me. Like, could cry. Could cry watching that.

Transition: A whooshing sound.

Clip:

Gene Cousineau (*Barry*): Hey, Sherry?

Sherry: Gene Cousineau. Always good to see you.

Gene: Thank you. It's what I do. I'm gonna give you two options today.
Gene M. Cousineau, reading for Man in Back of Line. Self-managed. (*Beat.*)

(*Irritated.*) We're waiting here! (*Beat.*)

(*In a classic New York accent.*) Hey. We're waiting here. (*Beat.*)

(*Returning to himself.*) Uh, would you like to see anything else?

Sherry: Nope. That was great. I think we got it.

Jean: Oh. Wonderful. Thanks.

Transition: A whooshing sound.

D'Arcy Carden: You know, the acting class—everything was written, but Bill and Alec and the writers really like let us sort of— I don't know. I don't know how to explain it. Because we didn't improvise it. It wasn't like—it wasn't like there was no script. But they let us sort of lean into our thing. So, each of these pathetic characters are not sooo far away from who we are. There's a shade of each of us in our characters. Which is sad. But it's—you know, they wanted to hear our like worst, horrible (*sensor beep*) stories and like lean into the sort of pathetic-ness of being a struggling actor in New York and LA, and in LA specifically.

And you know, there's a lot of feeling pathetic as a struggling actor—as an actor. (*Chuckles.*) Guess what? Being an actor... is pathetic.

Jesse Thorn: Being like 18 months removed from that when you were doing it, it must have felt like a personal indictment.

D'Arcy Carden: (*Laughing.*) Totally, totally, yeah. It was not— I mean, I really—

Jesse Thorn: ‘Cause like, Hader’s writing it. This guy’s been successful for 15 years!

D’Arcy Carden: Yeah. *(Laughs.)* There was a moment—

Jesse Thorn: Megan Mullally found him in a backyard and made him a star.

D’Arcy Carden: She sure did. *(In a nasally Megan Mullally impression.)* Lorne! Lorne, I got someone for you.

(Returning to herself.) Wait, how would she say it? She’d be like, *(in a more accurate Megan Mullally impression)* “Lorne. Lorne. Lorne. Hey. Lorrne. I have someone.”

(Jesse laughs.)

I love Megan Mullally so much. Yeah, every once in a while— You know, I’m just like having fun doing *Barry*. It’s great. I’m hanging out with my friends, hanging out with Bill. It’s so fun, it’s so great. And then every once in a while I go ding! And I’m like, “Wait, is he making fun of us? *(Laughs.)* Are we making fun of ourselves? Is this pathetic?” But you know, like early on in *Barry*—like when we shot the pilot—I was Natalie. I was like getting Henry’s chair for him and like, “What would you like in your coffee?”

And he had to tell me to like chill out. He had to be like, “You don’t need to do this.” You know. We were doing like a rehearsal, and I like went and closed the door and like asked people to sort of quiet down. And he’s like, “That’s actually not your job. Don’t do that.”

And I had to sort of like, “Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay, okay, okay, okay, okay, okay, okay, okay. Okay. Okay.” Like, this is not—I’m not babysitting. I’m not like someone’s personal assistant, which I—

Jesse Thorn: And that has to be coming from you, because one of television’s greatest stars of all time—Henry Winkler—is a small, modest man. *(Laughs.)* Like, he’s a little sweetheart.

(D’Arcy agrees.)

And he is not demanding that of others.

D’Arcy Carden: No, no, exactly. Yes.

Jesse Thorn: Like, explicitly or implicitly.

D'Arcy Carden: Yes. I see. Yeah. He definitely was not like, "Get me a coffee."
No, no, no, no, no.

Jesse Thorn: He was getting— He was probably bringing people coffee.

D'Arcy Carden: Exactly. Yeah. Yeah. I was trying to out-Henry Henry Winkler.

Jesse Thorn: The sweetest man on earth.

D'Arcy Carden: I love him. I love him so much. I love him so much it hurts.

Jesse Thorn: I think *Barry* also is a specific inditement of Los Angeles in a particular way.

(D'Arcy agrees.)

Like, I think when you are taking an acting class, often there is this collective fiction that the reason you are all taking the acting class is because you are all about to dedicate your life to Ibsen. You know?

(D'Arcy agrees with a chuckle.)

Like, everyone is in this thing together of "we're all doing—"

D'Arcy Carden: Bertolt Brecht. Yeah. Exactly. Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. Exactly. And in Los Angeles, there is certainly theatre and there's classical theatre and so forth, but like if you're in an acting class in Los Angeles, you're learning how to do a good job auditioning for a soup commercial. Like, what are the things that they want in a soup mom?

(D'Arcy agrees.)

And that—

D'Arcy Carden: It's so specific to here.

Jesse Thorn: And it's so sad!

(D'Arcy agrees.)

Because it like— On the one hand, the pretense is sad of the other thing, and the practicality is practical of the Los Angeles thing. But also, it's like everyone just wants with all their heart to be an artist. And at the end of the day, it's a class on how to do voiceovers and talk a little faster without changing your intonation.

D'Arcy Carden: Exactly. Totally. Totally. Yeah. And I—you know, like to that point, like Sarah Goldberg doing the scene from *Magnolia* in the pilot and like *True Romance*. You know?

(Jesse murmurs a pained “ub-bub”).

It's like—it's sooo funny. It's sooo funny and so specific to LA. And you know, sort of unapologetically. And I love it. I love it so much. Oh my god, we had so much fun. This just—I just *(censored)* love casts. *(Laughs.)* I love actors! We just fell in love with each other. We were obsessed with each other. We rehearsed it like a play. We had so much time. I mean, the funny thing about the acting class in season one in particular is we're not in it very much, but we spent a lot of time together and a lot of time on set. And they really let us improvise and—you know, a one-minute scene, they let us go for eight minutes. Like, they really—I don't know why and I'm glad they did. And I'm sure it helped in a way and I'm sure the crew was rolling their eyes *(chuckling)*, but it was like some—

I think the best version of a TV show is when it kind of feels like you're—you kind of forget that it's gonna be on TV. And you kind of feel like you're at summer camp. And not to bring it back to *League of Their Own*, but that definitely is what *League of Their Own* felt like. But you know, *Barry*—when we shot it to when it was on—it was so far away. And *League* is like that too. You know, we shot it so long ago. You almost forget that people are ever gonna watch it. And the best feeling is when you just feel like you're—you know—playing with your friends. What a joke; what a silly career. But I feel so lucky! *(Playfully choking up.)* It feels like getting to go to camp with my friends!

Jesse Thorn: It's another part, as well, where part of it was the fact that Hader knew you so well, because you had worked for his family as a nanny. I don't know if you were still—I don't know what the timeline there is.

D'Arcy Carden: Pretty close. *(Chuckles.)* But not—I mean, not—I wasn't—I mean, whatever. I think I got cast in the spring, and in the fall before that—so, not even a year before that, I was still their nanny.

Jesse Thorn: I've known Hader a tiny bit for a long time. He supported this show at the very beginning of podcasting, and I like sent him an email, "Are you the guy who just started on *Saturday Night Live*?" Don't think there's anyone who I've ever had on this show where I look into their eyes and see more brain gears turning.

D'Arcy Carden: Mm-hm. This kid's smart.

Jesse Thorn: He knows more about film and television than anyone I've ever met except maybe Elvis Mitchell. But he also is an extraordinary impressionist, which is a gift that only belongs to very weird people.

(They chuckle.)

You know? It is a combination of the loneliness of the child magician and the like sensitiveness of, you know, a closeted gay boy or something. You know? Like, having to like look at everyone around you really intensely.

D'Arcy Carden: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Quietly. Take them in.

Jesse Thorn: He's terrifying on *Barry*, often.

(D'Arcy agrees.)

And while I've generally found him to be a sweet guy, I'm also terrified of him in real life.

D'Arcy Carden: Because of his just—I get it. I get it. Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. He's just so—such an American original, let's say.

(They laugh.)

D'Arcy Carden: Yeah, he's so extraordinary. Yes. I know. I know what you mean.

Jesse Thorn: It's really something else. That I have a hard time imagining him having a house, much less working in his house. Like, that prospect I find completely overwhelming.

D'Arcy Carden: Yeah, I get that. I think—you know, it's probably lucky that I worked for him for so long, so sort of like intimately—what a weird word, but like in his life. You know?

Jesse Thorn: Intimately. Yeah.

D’Arcy Carden: And I would’ve been—yeah, I could see myself going onto his set being a fan of him, being terrified of him. Luckily, you know, I’m not. (*Laughs.*) At this point, he feels like—you know—a family member. And it’s been—you know, it’s been such an incredible thing to watch this for him, this *Barry* thing. Because you know, knowing him for so long and knowing him for so well, it’s almost like a fluke that he’s funny. Do you know what I mean? It’s almost a fluke that he is a genius impressionist. He was made to be a director and a writer and like a serious actor. And he happens to be a genius comedian.

But he’s such a good director. I love the episodes when he’s directing. He’s incredible at it. And yeah, it’s fun to sort of—I mean, he obviously was so successful before *Barry*, but it’s fun to watch him sort of—I don’t know, meet his destiny or something like that. It all like makes sense to me. And uh, I don’t know. Love the dude. So much.

Jesse Thorn: We’ll wrap up with D’Arcy Carden after a break. When we come back: the moment you waited for will finally arrive. D’Arcy Carden and I will discuss our joint television appearance on the IFC show *Comedy Bang Bang*. Folks, it’s like they reunited the cast of *M*A*S*H!* It’s *Bullseye* from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

Promo:

Music: Bright, upbeat banjo.

Speaker: Saginaw, Michigan; Galveston, Texas; Albany, New York; the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul; and Muncie, Indiana. We’ve just added these cities to the growing list of meetups on April 23rd for MaxFun Meetup Day. Didn’t hear your city or don’t know where your local meetup is. Head to MaximumFun.org/meetup, and we’ve got all the details there.

And if you still don’t see your city listed, host your own. Find somewhere—a park, library, cafe, bar, any public space a small group can hang—then fill out the form at MaximumFun.org/meetup, and we’ll add you to the page so other folks in your area can find you. That’s MaximumFun.org/meetup.

Hope to see you on April 23rd.

Transition: Bright, chiming synth with a syncopated beat.

Jesse Thorn: It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. I'm talking with D'Arcy Carden. She stars alongside Will Forte in the brand-new comedy, *Sunny Nights*.

I have to ask you a little bit about your childhood in the Bay Area.

D'Arcy Carden: Okay.

Jesse Thorn: Your father was an alternative newspaper publisher?

D'Arcy Carden: Hell yeah.

Jesse Thorn: And I found this out when someone tweeted at me that he was the publisher of *BAM*, which was a music listings and articles that would be at a coffee shop.

D'Arcy Carden: Yeah. Or like a record store or whatever. Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. And look, we can talk about that, but I'm much more interested in him being the publisher of something called *Micro Times*.

D'Arcy Carden: Yeah! Are you really? Keep going.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. The first thought I had—*Micro Times* was like where you would buy your computer parts out of. And it had some articles too. And the first thought I had was just at your house, was there ever like dinner table conversation—somebody talking (*sensor beep*) about *Computer Currents*? The rival computer-based...

D'Arcy Carden: Like, yes, there was.

(Jesse laughs.)

'Cause also, my dad's like really competitive. You know what I mean? Yeah. It's so funny. I mean, I almost—not to say I forgot about *Micro Times*, 'cause of course I didn't, but *BAM* is like our legacy. *BAM* is like the thing we are—me and my siblings are so sort of like proud of, and it's fun to talk about, and we—you know, music is our god in our family. And I kind of forget that, you know, *Micro Times*—

Micro Times was a bigger magazine. *Micro Times* was like a huge magazine. (*Whispering.*) *Micro Times*. What a cute little name.

Yeah, and we did have sort of like computer-y things early. And I think I like found out about the internet early. (*Laughs.*) But I mean, it wasn't as interesting to me as music. So, I didn't fully grasp it, of course. But I'm saying this from a privileged place, meaning like my family is good. (*Chuckles.*) I'm not talking about money or anything like that; I'm talking about like not everybody has this lucky thing where like I had a really cool childhood, and I really love my family. (*Laughs.*) And you know, my dad's job being a magazine—I don't know—editor/founder. Like, having a bunch of magazines, it was just like a really cool way to grow up.

And his office was in Oakland. And everybody that worked for him, it was like this big, cool family. And it just was a fricking cool way to grow up. And we got to go to concerts, and we got to like be obsessed with music and it just—I'm very—I am very grateful for it, and I was at the time, too. I was like, "Damn, this is cool."

Jesse Thorn: What did you get to go see?

D'Arcy Carden: Well, just about everything. Is that—? That's where the bragging comes in. It was like—my parents would take us to the shows, which was cool. So, if something was coming through the Bay Area, which as you know, everything did, 'cause we had some really—we have and had some really great venues there. (*Whispers.*) I got to see it all. It was so great. It was so cool.

And it turned me into an adult that is obsessed with seeing music live. It's like my—it really is my obsession, and it's actually unhealthy. Because I get like sick to my stomach if I miss something. Like, I've been in a situation many times where I'm seeing a show and I know this person or band is playing again tomorrow night, and I'm already like sick with "I gotta come back again". Or like, I'm not enjoying it because I know—I'm thinking about how do I get tickets for tomorrow; it's too much. It's the one thing that I like—you know—really go nuts on.

Jesse Thorn: (*Entirely deadpan.*) How did it change your life to work alongside Jesse Thorn on an episode of *Comedy Bang Bang* one time, playing assistant to his egghead writer?

D'Arcy Carden: It absolutely (*using a cartoonishly sophisticated voice*) changed my life.

That is where we met. What would you say that was? Like, eight years ago?

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. I'm trying to think, 'cause it's my last acting credit, so. Yeah.

D'Arcy Carden: That was your last acting credit? No, that was—I mean, that was exciting! It was—you know, things were going really—I mean, okay, I know you asked that as a joke, but things were going really well for me in New York in a way. Again, not with money and not with like—I wasn't on *SNL*. I wasn't on—you know, I wasn't on *The Daily Show* or whatever. But things were going well. I was like moving my way up and things were happening. And then I moved to LA, and it was like it stopped for a minute where I thought it was gonna be like, "I'm here, baby!" And it stopped. And you know, even like the UCBLA wasn't quite working for me or I wasn't working for it or something.

It wasn't like an easy transition. And then—yeah. Like, Scott Aukerman and I think through Neil Campbell gave me and you a day of work on *Comedy Bang! Bang!*. And days like that and days on *Funny or Die* shoots, like that was—*(chuckles)* you know, the pat on the back from God saying like, "You're on the right track even though it doesn't quite feel like it. So, that day, even though I know we're sort of hehehe about it, it was like—it meant a lot to me in my career. Like, okay, this is—I'm on the right track. Something's coming. This is not for nothing. You know. Even though it's like one little day of work, half a day of work over—you know, over many months. It's—what a weird little job.

But that is where I met you! And I've been—you know, I met you that day and you've been doing nothing but good things since. So, it's been fun to watch your career.

Jesse Thorn: You were on that show, and somebody was like, "Oh yeah, that's like a cool UCB lady." And you did it, and you were so immediately good.

(They laugh.)

Just right from the very beginning, I was like, "Ooooh! That's what it is to be good at this!"

D'Arcy Carden: *(Laughing.)* Oh my god, that's so nice. You were great! You were great.

Jesse Thorn: It's very true. That wasn't me looking for a compliment. I did fine. You were amazing.

(D'Arcy thanks him.)

Well, D'Arcy Carden, thank you for taking all this time to be on *Bullseye*. It was great to talk to you.

D'Arcy Carden: Thank you for having me! What an honor and what a thrill, and I've enjoyed every (*fumbles the word "minute"*). Oop! Lemme try that again. But don't cut it out.

(They chuckle.)

What an honor and what a thrill, and I've enjoyed every minute of it! (*With sudden intensity, through gritted teeth.*) Don't cut that out.

Jesse Thorn: D'Arcy Carden, folks. As we said in the interview, you can watch the TV series, *A League of Their Own* on Prime Video. Her new show, *Sunny Nights*, is streaming now on Hulu.

Transition: Upbeat synth with light vocalizations.

Jesse Thorn: That's the end of another episode of *Bullseye*. *Bullseye*, recorded at Maximum Fun World Headquarters in the historic Jewelry District of downtown Los Angeles, California. Our crew, or at least a few of us, went to Silver Lake, Los Angeles this week to record a *Bullseye* interview at an open mic—at the Lyric Hyperion Theater. Thank you to Brenn Campbell who runs that open mic. And thanks to our guest, Guy Branum. That'll show up in some form. Thanks to the members of Maximum Fun, who joined MaxFun and made that happen for us.

Our show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our senior producer is 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 on *Bullseye* from Mara Davis. Our interstitial music comes from our friend Dan Wally, also known as DJW. You can find his music at DJWsounds.bandcamp.com. Our theme music, written and recorded by The Go! Team. The song is called "Huddle Formation". Thanks to The Go! Team. Thanks to their label, Memphis Industries, for letting us use it.

You can follow *Bullseye* on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, where you'll find original video of things like me doing an interview at an open mic. 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 and is distributed by NPR.

(Music fades out.)