

## Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness & Molly Shannon

**JVN** [00:00:00] Welcome to Getting Curious. I'm Jonathan Van Ness and every week I sit down for a gorgeous conversation with a brilliant expert to learn all about something that makes me curious. On today's episode, I'm joined by the one, the only, literal icon who I've literally loved for so long! I can't believe I get to interview her, ohmigod I love her so much! Welcome to the show, Molly Shannon, where I ask her: How did you become such a superstar? Can I tell you, like, everyone, this is, like, such a major. This is, like, our, like, 200th and, like, 60-something episode. This is, like, one of the most major, life-changing, guests, moments, I have literally—

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:00:46] I'm so excited!

**JVN** [00:00:46] Molly, first of all, welcome to the Getting Curious, literally, Molly Shannon. You're here.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:00:51] You're making me laugh! Wait, we have to start the interview by saying. Do you like the way my hair looks?

**JVN** [00:00:56] I love your lob. I love your casual lob.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:00:58] Because guess what I used this morning?

**JVN** [00:01:01] No you didn't! No you didn't!

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:01:03] Yes, I did. Yes, I did! I used the JVN Undamaged Strengthening shampoo and the Ultra Daily Volumizing condition. I love it. It makes my hair so soft. So we need to start that way.

**JVN** [00:01:16] Oh my god, Molly's literally using Undamage and Embody. I'm going to have to—, my queer hands are shaking. OK, so enough about me. Well, actually, but I'm gonna talk more about myself. I've loved you for a really long time. You are—, no seriously, like, you were my first comedian love, so much of the way that I look at the world is *Superstar*.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:01:39] No way!

**JVN** [00:01:39] It is—, girl, like, it's, "Evian. Go drink a bottle of yourself, OK?" I could literally sit here and quote *Superstar* for—

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:01:46] That's sweet!

**JVN** [00:01:48] No, it's, it's, like, it is so major and you are so major. And your first—, because this is your first book that you did, this is, like, your first memoir.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:01:56] Yes!

**JVN** [00:01:58] And also, how clever and cute is the name: Hello, Dolly. Hello, Molly.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:02:02] Oh, thank you so much. It was actually somebody from HarperCollins who thought of that.

**JVN** [00:02:07] Genius! Our books are like sisters. [CROSSTALK] I can't believe that my book gets to be your book's sister.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:02:16] I know we're book sisters. We're, like, book people, like, we should do, like, we're doing a nerdy book exchange, right? We're doing. We're going to be doing— you know what I mean?

**JVN** [00:02:23] Oh yeah.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:02:26] Congratulations on your book, Jonathan.

**JVN** [00:02:29] No congratulations on *your* book, on *your* book. Because and this is major because, like, I wrote my first book *Over The Top* in 2019. When people ask me what it was like to write my first memoir. It's interesting because, well, one: I feel like it turned me into a writer, like, I love to write it. I consider myself an author now. I love writing. But it also the first time felt like putting my soul in, like, a food processor and then, like, having to, like, eat it or something? Like, it was, like, a little painful. And it's hard. And so I'm really proud of you for doing it. You were incredibly courageous and just amazing in your book. It is just so amazing.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:03:07] Thank you, thank you!

**JVN** [00:03:08] Also, I feel like, it is very surreal for me, Molly, because I once washed your hair at Sally Hershberger in, like, 2010, maybe or, like, like, and I think I washed your hair, like, a couple times. But I remember washing your hair thinking, like, "Oh my God, I can't believe it's Molly Shannon." And, and now on this side of, like, becoming a public-facing person, hats off to you, you're the nicest person. You're nice when you're on a podcast, you're nice when you're not on a podcast. You're nice—

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:03:38] Ohmigod!

**JVN** [00:03:39] No, you're good to the people you're around! And that is just so—, it's a lot harder than it sounds because there's a lot of pressure in this industry, there's a lot of pressure out here.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:03:48] So true, yes! Yes!

**JVN** [00:03:49] And I'm guilty of this, too, I can just—, I call her Vanessa. She's my alter ego. Sometimes she just comes out. She gets a little snappy.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:03:55] She does? Okay, yeah, I understand! Vanessa?

**JVN** [00:03:57] But I don't feel like you have a Vanessa! I don't think you have one!

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:03:59] I'm sure I do, I'm sure I do.

**JVN** [00:04:02] I don't think you have one, I just don't!

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:04:03] That's so funny. Well, Vanessa has to stand up for herself, I'm sure.

**JVN** [00:04:09] You sound like my CEO coach slash therapist.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:04:12] Yeah. You don't get to be JVN without having a Vanessa.

**JVN** [00:04:17] Molly Shannon. OK, wait, stop it. I'm refusing to let you come on my podcast and then do the heavy lifting of interviewing me. I swear to God, I'm not doing it.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:04:28] Okay, okay, okay, okay.

**JVN** [00:04:30] So—, and then I talk about myself again, like, I'm a nightmare. So I—, actually, I'm not, and I'm successfully asking you a question. So what's it been like counting down to April 12th because you put a lot of your soul, of your life experience into this work, into *Hello, Molly!* And then the world's about to receive it. What's it been like counting down and talking about it with people?

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:04:47] I have to say, it's pretty exciting. I guess I, Jonathan, I feel like it's different than acting. And I, like you, like the quiet of a book. It's very different than performing, and it was more serious and quiet. And of course, there's very funny parts in the book, but there's sad parts in the book, revealing parts, inspiring parts. It was all different, but so I really enjoyed that process of just being able to write in my house. And, but, it does feel vulnerable. And, you know, when you put your story out there, people might have judgments. So I think I felt like you have to be open to hearing people go, "Well, I think that and I don't know, I kind of felt judgmental about that." And, you know, so I understand and I'm, like, "I hear you," you have to be open to kind of let it go, too, you know what I mean, and let people interpret as they will. But I think I feel brave that I've shared my story. And I felt, I actually felt embarrassed to write a book. I felt like, "Nobody's going to care, nobody's going to read this." So I had to push through my embarrassment. It wasn't like I had people saying, "You've got to—," No! I mean, my husband was really sweet. He was, like, "You should write a book."

He, he's maybe the only—, maybe just him. But it's not like any types of business people were telling me to write a book. No way.

**JVN** [00:06:00] But I think that's a really interesting thing about *Hello, Molly!* and it's certainly something that I didn't see coming because I—, like I was saying earlier, I've been a really big fan of you, and I don't think that I would have expected that. I think a lot of people, like, when they read my book, my first book *Over The Top*, they were, like, "Wow, I didn't understand he's been through all that." And I think that when you, when I picked up *Hello, Molly*, I was, like, "Oh my God, it's going to be hilarious. It's gonna be so funny." And it is, it is funny. And you also talk about really big tragedies, life, life changing experience as you also talk about, like, making it in L.A., which, like, your routes to making it in L.A. are, like, so genius, and, like [CROSSTALK] so, so genius. But how did you decide what to do? Like, how did you decide what you wanted to open up about and what you wanted to include?

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:06:47] I could not *not* talk about our car accident when I was little because it really did affect my life in a major way, losing my mom as a four-year-old, and all of that, and my dad. And my dad also coming out to me before he died as gay. I did struggle with that part only because he wasn't out to his family or anything, and I was like, "I want to honor my father." I loved my father. I admired my father. But that's kind of like his story to tell. So I was, like, "Is this okay," like, that I'm telling this as the daughter of a man who was closeted for almost all of his life? Born in 1926 when it wasn't really an option to come out. And also he was kind of born a generation or two too early. So, but, I did struggle with, like, "Is this OK?" Cause, like, you know, cousins, it's not talked about in my family, nobody, aunts, it was never discussed. So it feels, I just, I wanted to honor him, but it was, like, that was, I'm the child that had to—, I was, like, "Do I still keep that secret? Is that OK that I'm telling this? Would you be mad at me from heaven that I'm telling everyone this?" Does that make sense?

**JVN** [00:08:00] Yeah, a hundred percent.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:08:01] Yeah, but I just, I just feel like, "What's the point?" My dad, was always, like, when I would go on talk shows like *Letterman*, I was, like, "Can I tell that funny story, you know, when—" My dad was a recovering addict. I said, "Can I tell that story when you took too much speed to clean the house? Is that okay if I tell that?" He said, "Yes, tell it on *Letterman*. Maybe it'll help someone else who's struggling." So he was always very letting me tell stories like that about him. So, but yes, I did worry about the part about telling everyone that he was gay or bi, however he would want to label himself. I did worry about that thing deeply.

**JVN** [00:08:34] I love that part, though. I love how when you talk about it in the book about his coming out that you don't want to label it because it is his story, yes, so, like, whether or not he was, like, bi or pan or gay or whatever. You gave him room and you totally stayed in your lane.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:08:54] Okay, good.

**JVN** [00:08:55] So it's amazing. And I think what makes people I know that would've made me funny is, like, the lifetime of traumas that I've been through because it's, like, if you couldn't make a joke about it, you'd just be in a basement, like, crying somewhere, you know, like, eating powdered donuts for the rest of your life. Which, I do love powdered donuts, but that's not the point.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:09:12] Yum!

**JVN** [00:09:13] But I can, I can tell that you—. I also think it's just funny, though, that, like, as humans, like, we don't realize that if someone is really funny, they probably have been through some stuff. And I think also with, like, social media and, like, from when you hit the scene to now, like, that part of the industry is, like, so different. But I just really respect how you were able to stay, like, *Molly*, like, keep this private part private. Like, I had people knowing who I was for, like, three minutes and I was like, "I got to tell you guys, I'm, like, I'm feeling, like, some kind of way," but I think you're using your story to help other people is really what life is about.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:09:50] Good, yes, yes!

**JVN** [00:09:51] And that's what you're doing. You're taking, like, some of your biggest traumas and some of the biggest struggles, and you're using that to, like, help to destigmatize, and help to bring people in and and you use comedy to heal, which I just think is such a brilliant thing. So another thing that you write about in the book, your mom, who you lost at the age of four, which is, like, ah! Heart, like, just my heart hugging your heart. But she was a librarian!

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:10:16] Yes!

**JVN** [00:10:18] And I can't help but notice the significance of, like, your first book is going to be in a library and your mom was a librarian, what do you—, what does that mean to you to know that, like, your career is, like, intersecting with what your mom did?

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:10:33] That's so sweet, Jonathan. Nobody's asked me that, but you, you're the first person to bring that up, and that's very moving, I feel. It's very sweet of you. So, it means so much to me. And when I was researching the book and I looked at all the notes of the kids who were in her class, who knew her as a librarian, wrote, like, "Miss Shannon was, the queen, was the chairman of all books," "Miss Shannon love to read," "Miss Shannon gave me a book about riddles." It was just, like, I love that part of my book because she did encourage reading. I only had her for four years, but she was really into books. And so, yes, I love that. Because I want to honor my mom, too, and her life. You know what I mean? And, and what she did do in the years she was there taking care of us. I really wanted to honor both my parents, you know? Yeah, thank you.

**JVN** [00:11:21] And yeah, it's such a brilliant job of doing that for you.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:11:23] Thank you, thank you! That's such a great question. Thank you. I mean, I really like you saying that. Thank you.

**JVN** [00:11:31] Of course, I think knowing more about you now, having read it, it's, like, it really, you are—, when you said, “I feel brave,” you are so brave. You really are brave, because that's part of why I can't even bear the thought of having kids because, like, I know what I went through. You went through, like, one of the hardest things that you're ever going to go through at such a young age.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:11:52] Yeah.

**JVN** [00:11:54] What does—, this just, like, out of left field, if you don't want to answer, it's like—

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:11:58] Oh, no, that's okay.

**JVN** [00:11:58] What does that, what has that felt like raising kids having, like, lost your mom so early? Like, did that make you feel, like, extra pressure to, like, mom so hard? Or like—

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:12:11] Yes, yes, I think I think so. I think I'm very, like, really want to do a good job and yeah, certainly, I think in terms of wanting to do the best job I can do, and it does make, it's very healing, getting to live all the years that she didn't live and do all the stuff she didn't get to do. It's, like, “Ah!” But yes, when you lose a parent at age four, losing my mom at age four gives me a perspective on life. That's very different. I get like, “Oh, you never know how much time you've been with somebody on Earth.” I just, I don't take it for granted. It's like an urgency that I kind of feel, like, “This is it! You're up to bat!” like, “This is it!” You know, I don't take it or take anything for granted. Does that make sense?

**JVN** [00:12:54] A hundred million percent. So it's very clear in Hello, Molly! that you are very determined, very resourceful, honey, which you have to be to become Molly Shannon. So I need to know who, who was, like, because you do something that I was, like, obsessed with, I didn't. OK, and this is, like, a little bit me being a nightmare, but, like, I didn't know who that Mamet fellow was. But the Mamet Scam was really genius. It reminds me of when I used to impersonate a manager before I had one. Like, I would be, like, “Actually, you know, he needs x, y, z. Like, can't be there until then.” But it was, like, a fake manager until, like, I had one.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:13:30] That's amazing. That would, that would set the boundaries for what you needed to work. And you would call for yourself?

**JVN** [00:13:36] Yeah, well, yeah, Veronica, you know. Yeah. Veronica, Veronica at entertainment dot com.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:13:43] No way!

**JVN** [00:13:44] It was, like, Veronica at, like, entertainment, like, management. It was, like, a really dumb, it was like a really dumb name. But, she, she got the job done. You know what, I needed it. But you kind of did the same thing. So you're minding your own business and you decide because you were born in Ohio?

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:14:03] Yes. Cleveland, Yeah.

**JVN** [00:14:05] But then you're, like, "I got to get out. I'm, like, moving to L.A. We're going to the big city." And it's you and a friend who do this, right?

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:14:12] Yes, me and my friend, Eugene Pack. So we really wanted to be actors. We went to NYU Drama School and had a fabulous time and NYU is so great. And Gene had taken some classes with David Mamet. I took I only took a couple of, I think Gene's with them a little more, but we were having a hard time out in L.A. getting an agent and you really needed an agent to audition for TV shows. So we were like, "How can we," you know, we were doing the whole thing. I would go up and down Sunset Boulevard dropping my headshot off, but it was so rare that anybody would call you. So we decided to do this thing. I called it the Mamet Scam, where we would pretend that we worked for David Mamet and we would call for one another. And so to get appointments with agents and managers.

So we would do it on Friday after four when all the agents were in a good mood. My character's name was Liz Stockwell, his name was Arnold Katz and Liz Stockwell would call for, I would call for Gene, Eugene Pack, and Gene would call for me. And basically, I would say, "This is Liz Stockwell, calling from David Mamet's office." And usually, the agent was very excited, like, "Oh!" And I would ask for a specific agent, "Can you please put her on the phone?" And they'd be, like, "Oh, so exciting, like, David Mamet." And then the agent would be very delighted that David Mamet's office was thinking of them on a Friday afternoon. And then I said, "David speaks so highly of your company, so we have a kid out here in L.A. we'd love for you to meet. We think he's really a special talent." And so, and then Gene would do that for me. And we figured we were doing them a favor because they're meeting, getting to meet talented, you know, people.

**JVN** [00:15:48] Well, you were doing them a favor cause look! But then what happened?

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:15:52] So they would be like, "Oh, sure." And then if there was any type of obstacle, we had an answer, because Eugene Pack and I had worked at Park Avenue Squash and Fitness together, selling health club memberships. So we knew, like, if you couldn't get—, the whole goal was, "Let's get the credit card, get the credit card, get the sale." So if somebody had a problem, I'd be, like, "Oh, Jonathan, well, you know, what kind of workout are you looking for?" We always get answers to get that credit card, get—, make that

sale! So we treated this the same way. So if they said, like, "Oh, why don't you just have Eugene call us when he gets to town and we'll set up the appointment," the rule was you could not hang up the phone until you have the appointment. So by Friday at six, I would have five appointments with agents and Gene would have five. And while we were on the phone we'd pass one another little notes, like, "Say this, say that!" and we would, we would crack up. We would have to leave the room. We did it together and, and I met everyone through that. I met Bernie Brillstein. I met Bernie, cause Bernie was connected to *SNL*, and it was, it was just great. And also, if they would say something like, "Liz, we should have lunch!" I would say, "Oh, we're switching offices, but I'll have my assistant call you when we get our new numbers," like, that kind of thing.

**JVN** [00:17:02] So how long did it take you, for you guys to get your people, to get your representation?

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:17:07] Not that long. No, not long. Because we would have, yeah! And then we—, if we didn't get representation, we would make calls the following Friday again, to agents. Yes, agents. And they were just so delighted. And we were, you know, my character, Liz Stockwell. She was a delight. She was a delightful gal who was just, like, "Oh, David speaks so highly of your company." It was all good. Joyful. Good news. Positive. And that's it.

**JVN** [00:17:36] You go on to become, like, an extremely iconic, legendary character actress. I mean, I—, the amount of times that I've said, "I love it! I love it! I love it!" I also, I mean, once a week, I make a reference to, like, I'm going to do a *Chaine* turn and do a full on Mary Katherine Gallagher side dive into a table, like, no, I literally, I see myself doing, like, a Mary Katherine Gallagher. Cause you know, like, how you would, like, do a full turn into your jump into your, like, into your bent knees, into your jump into the chairs. You know, what I'm talking about?

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:18:21] Oh! Yes, yes, yes.

**JVN** [00:18:13] You're like, that turn that you just think so. So did you learn that at NYU? Did you learn that from that Mamet's class? Like how did, like, where did you be—, like, how did you start to get so into, like, your character development. Because you did, like, that's part of what you talk about: your character development skills are, like, next level.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:18:32] That's so sweet. I honed it for years. Yes, I started working on the character Mary Katherine Gallagher at NYU in a comedy revue show. Adam Sandler, and I got cast in this show called *The Follies*. I was mostly working at a health club the whole time I was at NYU. But finally, like my senior year, I was, like, "I should take advantage of this arts college. Because I'm working full time while going to college, I should do a play or show, you know, this is about to end." So I auditioned for this comedy revue show and the director was brilliant, Madeline Olnek. And she, she had us do an exercise in rehearsal for that comedy show, where she's just, like, "Just come through the door and make up a character. Any



character. Don't overthink it, and I'm going to play a snobby director. And you have to try to impress me." And she was not impressed. You have to keep trying, trying.

So I was just, like, "Hi, I'm Mary Katherine Gallagher." And she's like, "Hmhmh," smoking a cigarette, ignoring you. And that's how the character was developed. They ended up writing the whole sketch show around that character, and at the time, the character wore red pants and, I think, a blue and white striped shirt. And I think cat glasses. But it was a different look then. And then the show was a huge hit on campus. There were lines around the corner, and then people started telling me, I was a very serious dramatic actor at NYU. But then people, after they saw that show were, like, "You should be on Saturday Night Live." So then I was, like, "Whoa, I never thought of myself as a comedian." But then I continued to develop that character in a stage show, and I moved to L.A. Eugene Pack and I moved to L.A. and we thought, "We're gonna do our stage shows." And then I met a guy, Rob, we were in a comedy class and he was like, "Comedy is king, and it's a great way for the break in showbiz." I was, like, "Is that right, comedy?"

**JVN** [00:20:17] And what year is this again?

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:20:18] Let's see. I started SNL in '95, so this was probably, like, 1988? '88? Around then.

**JVN** [00:20:30] Wow. Wow.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:20:31] So he was, like, "This is a good way to break in is through comedy. And I was, like, "OK." So we just, I continued to develop the character Mary Katherine Gallagher and Sally O'Malley in a stage show called *The Rob and Molly Show*. And I continued to develop it in front of an audience and really go, "OK, that works. That works, that works," you know, developing it over years. So by the time I was at SNL, I kind of knew I knew it really well because I've done it on stage for so long. Yeah.

**JVN** [00:20:57] And then what about Sally O'Malley, honey? How did you figure out Sally O'Malley?

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:21:01] Sally O'Malley! The look of the character is based on a woman I grew up with who had jet black hair and red lips. But the limp is my dad. So the character, when she starts out, she's limping. So I'm imitating my dad's leg after the car accident because my dad's legs were badly damaged in our car accident, they were impounded in the engine, and they almost cut off his legs. But thank God that he had an orthopedic surgeon when he was in ICU who saved his legs, but he forever had to walk with a brace on his leg from our bad car accident. So when Sally O'Malley comes out and goes, "Ladies and gentlemen," she's limping, and that's my dad's limp. So she's, like, the whole thing is, like, "Ladies and gentlemen, my name is Sally O'Malley, proud to say I'm 50 years old. I'm not one of those girls who's afraid to tell my real age." She's limping, limping. But then she's like, "Oh,

I like to kick and stretch and kick!" So basically, what I'm doing is, it's a wish for my dad to be able to not have the braces on his legs and kick the braces off and be able to move the way he was pre-accident. That's what that's what that's about.

**JVN** [00:22:06] That is so deep.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:22:08] Yeah, yeah. Yeah. So it's, like, a way, it was, like, a wish, my wish for him. Yeah. And so it's, like, "Don't be fooled by the limp, because I'm a mother fucker. I'll fuck you all up." You know what I mean? It's, like, "You might think that I'm weak and I have this limp and I'm old, but I'm a powerhouse." You know what I mean? Kind of like that.

**JVN** [00:22:29] I love you so much it hurts.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:22:32] Oh, that's so sweet.

**JVN** [00:22:36] So OK. Oh my God. I also, like, all I ever want to do, is, like, fall off the back of a chair as a joyologist, which—, and that one time when you fell off the chair was that there was like, was that an accident?

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:22:49] Accident! Accident, yeah, yeah, yeah.

**JVN** [00:22:51] And there was like a wives' tale in my hometown when I was like, like, did you get a concussion? Or was that like a real story?

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:22:58] No, I never got a concussion, no.

**JVN** [00:22:59] So the day after that episode of *SNL*, everyone in my hometown was, like, "Did you see Molly Shannon fall? I heard she's got a concussion."

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:23:06] Oh my god! Oh my god! That's hysterical.

**JVN** [00:23:08] It was this whole, like, fodder. It was, like, pre-Facebook and everything, we didn't know, honey, so, yeah! I was, like—, people were obsessed, I love the joyologist. Who is your favorite? Who is your favorite character to play?

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:23:22] I love playing the joyologist. So what I want to say to the joyologist again, kit, too. So there's a lot of kicking, you know what I mean? So it has a lot to do again. I'm doing a version of my father, but as a woman. I'm doing Jim Shannon, like, "Oh, it's wonderful!" When my dad was kind of a euphoric state. And then again, she kicks, kicks, kicks because I understand I grew up with my dad, braces on his leg from the accident. I couldn't sit on his lap because I would hurt him. He walked with a limp. He walked slowly. He had to learn how to walk again after the accident. So these characters have a need to kick,

break out, be free, kick the braces off again. It's kick-kicking, physical. So it's very connected to my father. Isn't that weird?

**JVN** [00:24:10] No, it's really. I always think about how I really feel, well, I think about when I was a little kid and I was bullied so much as a little kid and I used to think, like, "Gosh, if I could make this, if I could do something someday to make I help other kids, then this would have been worth it." And so I've always thought that, like, taking your pain or your trauma and transmuting that into healing is—, I really have always thought from a very early age like that is what life is, like, that's what it's about. And that's and I also think that as humans, like, ultimately, we want to heal, like, and not only do we want to heal. We want to, like, understand what's going on. And you had such, you know, early like as my therapist would call "big T Trauma," like, not little t, like, capital T. And so you were probably, like, I mean, comedy, probably in a lot of ways it was there for you to like, channel all of this trauma, and it's just incredible how you've done that.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:25:09] That's so true. Exactly, art, because I wasn't aware of that. I was just doing it. It's not like I was thinking about it. But then when I thought about it, I'm like, "Oh right, they're all connected." And I am doing versions of my father, the leg, the brace, it felt good to be physical, to kick. It just felt good. And it was like a response to all of that. It made me feel good and I still love to do that like I really like to do. I never get sick of kicking up, you know, "Ladies and gentlemen, kick stretch kick." It feels so good to do that. You know you do it, you do it all the time. [CROSSTALK] Every day, every day, every day. Yeah, exactly.

**JVN** [00:25:49] And I'm obsessed with it. Which actually kind of, I didn't mean to go here yet, and I'm going to like and I'm going backwards, but it's OK, because here's the other thing. So I was minding my own business in the pandemic, and I was just, like, "Oh my God, I'm bored and there's nothing to do." And then I was, like, "Oh my God. Molly Shannon has a new show," and I turn on *The Other Two*. And then my husband and I, it's, like, all we watched for, like—, and then cause didn't, like, season two just come out, like, last year?

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:26:13] Yes. On HBO Max, yeah!

**JVN** [00:26:15] Because I think this awful thing happened to me where, like, I finished season one before season two was out, and then I was, like, "Who am I?" But then it was, like, a week later, like a week later, like, I got into it at the perfect time. So I only had like a little teeny tiny bit where I didn't get. But it's you're so genius. Your dancing number!

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:26:30] That was the day Covid st—, that was the day stuff started to shut down. We shot that in New York City the day when it was, like, "Oh my God! SVU just got shut down!" Stuff was just shutting down, shutting down, it was, like—

**JVN** [00:26:42] March 13th, 2020.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:26:44] That was the day. We were shooting that, there was no there were no people around and I was like, "Oh my God," it was, like, ominous. Is that the right word?

**JVN** [00:26:53] Yeah.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:26:54] Like a feeling of, like, "Whoa." And so, yeah, but we're dancing in Central Park. Yes. But Chris Kelly and Sarah Schneider created that show. They're so talented. I did *Other People* with Chris Kelly, Chris Kelly and Sarah were the head writers of *SNL*. They are so talented and they just write all of that, they're so good.

**JVN** [00:27:14] Oh, so you worked with them back from *SNL*?

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:27:16] I actually didn't work with them at *SNL*, so they were there after me. So I didn't. I didn't overlap with them. They're much younger than me. But Chris Kelly came to me with the script *Other People*, and that's how we met. So I was the star of that movie. If you haven't seen it, you will love it. It's so good.

**JVN** [00:27:32] I don't know. I missed a movie that you were in. I'd be like, I would love it.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:27:36] Jonathan, you and your husband should see it! It's fantastic.

**JVN** [00:27:39] But I feel like I probably already have. I'm feeling like I'm—

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:27:41] I play a mother dying of cancer.

**JVN** [00:27:44] Oh, that's why. Because, OK, here's the thing. Now I'm remembering, OK. It was giving me too close to home vibes because, like, my dad had died of cancer right around then and I was, like, "I'm not ready to see, like, I can't, like—," because, like, you're, like, my light. You're, like my, you know, you're my, like, I like—sometimes. It's like. And, like, actually, have you watched *Bridgerton*?

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:28:04] No.

**JVN** [00:28:05] OK, well, it's genius. Really good. But one of my really good friends is on it. And, like, she had such a heartbreaking last scene of season two. Like, I literally was like fully sobbing, bereft in tears. And I, like, had to FaceTime her at, like, 2:00 in the morning, like, United Kingdom time because she's there and she was, like, "Girl, it's acting." And I was, like, "I know but it's so convincing. I feel like, are you guys not going to be friends cause of everything?" Like, she was, like, "Girl, I'll talk to you tomorrow." And I was, like, "I'm just—, you're going to, you're going to get nominated for that scene, girl. I'm so—ah!" So that's, like, a lack of maturity for me, but I am going to watch because I know you're genius in it.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:28:41] Oh, thank you. That's so sweet.

**JVN** [00:28:43] But I do it. But I also like, I hate seeing people who I am obsessed with, like, get hurt or like, die in the movies.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:28:48] I know what you mean. You just don't want to see that. I understand that. I watch a lot of, I watch a lot of reality. I don't even watch that much scripted stuff because, because I'm in show business, I'm like, I don't like watching scripted stuff. I like reality. Isn't that interesting?

**JVN** [00:29:00] Yes. And sidebar, I am not that way. I love reality and I love scripted. But I'm freshly obsessed with *The Gilded Age*, and I need you to get cast on *The Gilded Age*. As an 1885 person, you need to be friends with, like, Cynthia Nixon's character in it, and Christine Baranski's in it. And I need you to be, like, maybe the new, the new in town trollop, maybe you're a new in town rich trollop, honey.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:29:25] Okay, I like that!

**JVN** [00:29:25] Maybe you're a fresh widow and you're going to fuck somebody's husband, honey.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:29:29] Oh my, god that sounds good!

**JVN** [00:29:31] Because you said that you started in drama!

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:29:33] Yeah, I can do it! I can play very serious, yes.

**JVN** [00:29:37] I could see that you could play really serious. In my book, I have this essay about imposter syndrome, and it's about, like, my sense of imposter syndrome as a comedian. Because, like, I keep asking if you've TV—, well, in *Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*, which is, like, another really good show, on Amazon she's talking about in season one, like, how she wants to be a stand up comedian, and then she gets this manager and she's, like, "Well, I practice my jokes at these parties," and then the manager's, like, "You can't practice real standup at a party. You have to like, go get up like you got to go get on the mic." And that was right at a time in my career, I just started, like, going up like I just started doing like five minutes here, 10 minutes there. But I was like, really nervous. I was really scared and it was, like, *right* before *Queer Eye* was coming out and I was, like, "I don't know, like, I'm just—," because I felt like I needed to do it before the show came out. But then once I started doing it, I was like, I have actually kind of been practicing my standup just I was, like, standing behind a chair, like, I was doing it in the salon. So I feel like, so I feel like there is a way that you can get into your stand up and you can flex that muscle, like, not necessarily behind the mic. But, I still feel, like, this sense of like, "Do I deserve to be here?" like I didn't have the same path as everyone, it's, like, just a sense of, like, I know it's, it's I don't love that story for me.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:30:47] But that's the truth. That's so interesting.

**JVN** [00:30:59] Yeah, it's, like, the imposter syndrome. But what does comedy do for people that drama can't? Like, how does comedy speak to people in a way that drama can't?

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:31:09] Well, it's so funny, I went to go see Kate Berlant the other night. She's workshopping, she is so funny, and I'm such a fan of Kate Berlant and John Early who's also—

**JVN** [00:31:21] I love John Early!

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:31:22] Isn't he the greatest, but anyhow went to go see Kate Berlant's show with my friend Lyn Alicia Henderson and Kate's workshopping it since she, she was, like, "I'm workshopping it." I was, like, "Oh great, I love a workshop," but it was such a polished show. But anyhow, I laughed so hard. I was just laughing, laughing, and it just made me feel so good physically. When I, when I left the show, I just felt so happy and it just, it just, there's nothing like that when you can make people forget about their day or what they're stressed out about. It's just such a great gift. So it's a physical, an actual physical release, and it makes you feel joyful. And I mean, I was just, my body felt good after. Does that make sense? Yeah, yeah. Yeah, it's just positive.

**JVN** [00:32:11] In Hello, Molly! you talk about how you were brought up in Cleveland, Ohio, in a Catholic surrounding, which then was giving me, like, Mary Katherine Gallagher vibes a little bit. I was like, "Ahhhh, yes, yes, yes." But then how do you think that growing up in that kind of religious place in Ohio, how do you feel like that informed and shaped the rest of your life and even, like, your outlook on, like, your career?

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:32:35] I still do believe in God. I'm not a practicing Catholic anymore, just because I didn't really identify with that. My dad was also a practicing Catholic his entire life. But I think he also felt that being a homosexual or however you want to describe him, bisexual, that that was "wrong," "against God's will." So I, I, I was like, "I don't, I think that's, I think God would love that, I think I don't agree with that." So my dad and I would definitely talk about that stuff. And I think that— But I want to say that his Catholicism also gave him peace. He liked his spiritual life. But I just felt like I didn't relate to that. I was like, "I don't want to go to some priest and confess my sins." It just didn't make any sense to me. I felt, like, "Why do I have to go this confessional sins to this maybe repressed man?" The whole thing felt weird to me. It was, like, almost, like, it didn't make any sense as a young girl. So I stopped going to church when I was in college. And but I still I have a spiritual life. I believe in God, but I'm not a practicing Catholic. So I guess, I don't know, I mean, there were okay things that came out of it, like, you know, I think that, that having a spiritual life can give you peace and stuff. So, but I don't know. But I don't like how certain aspects of it can make you feel like you're bad. I don't like, I don't like that part, you know?

**JVN** [00:34:07] Knowing more about that now, like, having read the book, it's, like, you really, like, Superstar is just so genius because you have, like, the Jesus character, like, visiting, and also there's that scene and Superstar in the, like, confession. Don't you, like, your character go to a confession in that?

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:34:25] Oh yeah. Yeah. Yes. Yes, that's based on my childhood.

**JVN** [00:34:29] You're, like, you're kind of roasting. And it's you're, like, "Yeah, so here is how you're like." You are taking, like, this, like, these, like, weird, shame-y feelings that like you were like, I'm just going to turn this thought. It's head to make it so funny, and I'm going to make out with this fucking tree and I'm going to like, go to naughty. Actually, Molly, I have to send this DM to you. I was, like, I was promoting an episode of Getting Curious, like, two years ago or, like, a year and a half ago where it, it's about trees and it starts off with me going up to check you. "You stop it. You stop it, you tree. I'm going to kiss you, I'm gonna kiss you just like this." And then I start making out with this tree, and it zooms out, and it's a tree. Like, I literally refer to your work on a multiple times a week basis. I love you so much. I'm so excited about this book. It is so, it's just so good. I really appreciate someone who can go between talking about something that is more difficult, but it can be, but also can go between difficult stuff and levity really nimbly. And you write really nimbly.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:35:29] Well, you do that!

**JVN** [00:35:31] I know. But that's what I'm saying, I feel like I learned some of these things from you and didn't even know it, but it's just so good. I really want people to listen to it. Did you do that? You did your audiobook.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:35:41] I did. I did. It's hard.

**JVN** [00:35:43] I have to listen.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:35:45] Oh, good. I think it should be good to listen to you. It's hard to do that. Don't you think there is?

**JVN** [00:35:49] Yeah, it is. It's, did you have moments when you were doing your audio book? Were you just? I would imagine you were very emotional.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:35:54] Yes, I did. It surprised me, actually, Jonathan, because people would be, like, "Oh, was it cathartic to write your book?" And I was, like, "Well, I've processed that in therapy already. I've been in therapy for a long time," so I was, like, cathartic? Eh! But then, Jonathan, reading the first chapter, sitting and doing the audio recording, it took me by surprise how emotional I got. And then I had to pause because I couldn't. I just have to let myself cry and then take a break and then go back to reading it.

**JVN** [00:36:22] Oh, I hope you keep some of that stuff in the edit.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:36:24] Really?

**JVN** [00:36:25] Yeah, I think it's really powerful.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:36:26] You do?

**JVN** [00:36:27] Oh, I do. I mean, not like I'm going to sit there for, like, 45 minutes if you're having them like that. But like for a little bit, I think it's really beautiful when you leave that vulnerability. And some of that rawness, a little.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:36:39] That's still good. I don't know if they did. I have no idea because they put it all together. I did it with Dennis Kao. But it was so funny because I had just met him, and I'm, like, "We don't know one end of that well, "and he's recording it over and I'm in this little room, we're next to one another, and it felt so intimate. Like, I was, like, "Just give me a second, you know?" So it was very sweet.

**JVN** [00:36:59] OK, so I have, like, we only have three, two minutes left. I'm doing, like, a lightning round for this. Three for you.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:37:04] OK, I'm lightning.

**JVN** [00:37:06] Lightning round! Oh God. Shit. Fuck OK. OK. OK, well, that's your dream world or project.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:37:12] I'd love to work with Meryl, Meryl Streep. That'd be fun!

**JVN** [00:37:15] Her daughter's in *Gilded Age*. Meryl Streep, yes, I'm here for that. What is your favorite unscripted show right now that you're watching?

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:37:24] Oh, favorite unscripted?

**JVN** [00:37:27] Yeah, because you said you like reality, like, what's your favorite?

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:37:29] Well, let me just say two, I'm actually watching a scripted show. I watched it at night. It's called, my friend Mike Showalter did it, and it's called *The Dropout*. And I'm loving it! *The Dropout*. And I also just watched, of course, *Real Housewives of Orange County*. Watch that one. And then I also just watched *Bad Vegan*.

**JVN** [00:37:49] Oh, OK. Yeah, that was good. Have you ever watched the show *Alone*?



**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:37:53] Yes! My husband and I love it.

**JVN** [00:37:56] I'm obsessed with *Alone*. I can't, it's not on brand for me, but I just love it so much.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:38:01] Yes, it's not on brand for me either. Isn't it good?

**JVN** [00:38:05] It's, did you watch season six with Callie, the girl who, like, killed so many rabbits that she made that, like, rabbit outfit then acted like Sasquatch?

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:38:11] No, I didn't see that!

**JVN** [00:38:13] Ohmigod, her season's everything. I think it's, like, season seven. She's so good. What can, what can people watch? What? So, so *The Other Two*. I love that, oh, I Love That For You! *I Love That For You* is happening!

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:38:25] Yes! *I Love That For You*. Vanessa Bayer created that show with Jeremy Beiler. We've got Mike Showalter and Jessi Klein. Just this amazing team of writers, producers and yes, Vanessa Bayer, my colleague from *SNL* that premieres at the end of the month. Excellent. It's about the world of home shopping network.

**JVN** [00:38:41] So because you play a host and I can't wait. Yeah, OK. And then, OK, this is the last thing, I swear to God. OK, I just, I am so proud of myself for getting out of here on time. OK, OK, you know, this is really sweet, and this, I can't think of a better way to end. In Hello, Molly! you say "I could--," when talking about, like, dating in high school and college, "I could play along for a while, but that I knew I'm going to push you away because I think you think I'm normal and I'm not. I. Am. A. Freak." What advice would you give to listeners looking to embrace being different, whether that's through comedy or some other outlet?

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:39:17] Oh, that's so sweet. I did feel like I was a freak, and I was, like, I remember liking a boy in high school and I was like, "Oh no, he thinks I'm one of those normal girls and I'm not. I'm a freak." And I guess I would say if there is someone for everyone and to just be yourself. I like when mistakes happen, and I like awkward moments. And I like when people make mistakes in talking or saying the wrong thing or getting the wrong name, I'm more lately been embracing that just because I felt like it's so exhausting to try to be perfect, to try to be something you're not. I say, "Be yourself, please be yourself, and you will find your path and stick to it, and you're going to find the person who's right for you." Because if somebody doesn't like you for you, they are not the right person, then it's a blessing in disguise, you know what I mean?

**JVN** [00:40:04] It's "celebrate yourself." I love that.

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:40:05] And, what I want to say, too, is whatever you want from someone else, you can give yourself, so you need to walk into a relationship, loving yourself, esteeming yourself, knowing who you are, feeling valued. And that way you don't go in setting yourself up to get all that from them. It doesn't work. So I always think, "I can take myself on a date. I can take myself out for dinner." I give myself that first. Does that make sense?

**JVN** [00:40:32] A hundred percent!

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:41:33] And then you have more abundance and love in your life the more you value yourself. You don't have to be with someone. You can also have a great life being by yourself and having friends. People make too much of romantic things.

**JVN** [00:40:45] I agree with that so much, so much!

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:40:45] Friendships can be just as powerful, so I have a very open attitude about that. I don't think, I think "Whatever, live your best life with someone without it doesn't." That's not the be all and end all, there's all different types of ways to live.

**JVN** [00:41:00] I blacked out when I was in the middle of telling you about my feeling of imposter syndrome in comedy, because then I was like, "Why am I talking to fucking Molly Shannon about, like my comedy?" Like, I'm like, blackout-, this is, like, too much. But the point of what I was going to say was, I definitely found my people, and I found, like, some of my really good friends through standup. But I also noticed that there was, like, so many gatekeepers. There was a lot of, like, straight white guys, which I've made a really good thing of, like, not having to work with. And that's, like, It's also been like, why it's been like why I've had like an unconventional path, because I'm, like, if I'm not working with, like, queer people or, like, queer people of color, like, just not straight white guys, like, I'm not really into it. And but that's actually, like, ended up, like, really helping me. But the point is, is that I didn't realize that comedy was a little cliquey. I thought that I thought when you got there, I was going to be this really open place. And then it is kind of cliquey, and I was, like, relieved to read you or to hear you write about that because I was, like, "Oh, it wasn't only me."

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:41:58] Yeah, that's interesting. Wow. Exactly. Life's too short. I didn't have a mom. I'm, like, "I ain't putting up with that." It makes me feel bad. It's hurtful. It's, you know, you have to set your boundaries and stuff. I got into it because I felt like a freak, like an outsider. So when it starts to become like, too cool for school, no, it's just these cool people. I'm, like, "Yeah, I don't like that." That's not why I got into it. I like the freaks and geeks together as outsiders, together. I don't. I would feel, I don't want to leave someone out. Do you know what I mean? I want to include. So people who do that, it's just, like, not my kind of people. Does that make sense?

**JVN** [00:42:33] Yeah, and I also think it's so cool that I also think it's just so cool that, like, you've been a part of that change, like, with your love, with your love and your comfort and

being who you are in the community of comedians, you have made it a better industry. You made it a better place to be. I think more people are included because of your work, and I just love you so much, and I'm so grateful for your time. And, everyone, read *Hello Molly!* It's out now. Get that audiobook, get the real book. Get it together. Everyone support Molly Shannon. We love Molly Shannon so much. Thanks for your time. Thanks for coming in Getting Curious. We just love you so much. Also, your deltoids in that top, honey, these shoulders are serving shoulder, honey! So pretty, oh my god!

**MOLLY SHANNON** [00:43:15] Serving! Thank you, Jonathan! You're such a good interviewer and this is so fun.

**JVN** [00:43:21] Thank you. Ah! You've been listening to Getting Curious with me, Jonathan Van Ness. Our guest this week was Molly Shannon. You'll find links to her work in the episode description of whatever you're listening to the show on. Our theme music is "Freak" by Quiñ - thanks to her for letting us use it. If you enjoyed our show, introduce a friend - show them how to subscribe. Do you all love the podcast so much you can't even stand it? [APPLAUSE] Oh my gosh, I can't believe there's all these people in this room all of a sudden, that's so amazing! Anyway, make sure if you love the show, you're following us on Instagram & Twitter @CuriousWithJVN. Our socials are run and curated by Middle Seat Digital. Our editor is Andrew Carson. Getting Curious is produced by me, Erica Getto, and Zahra Crim.