

00:00:00	Music	Transition	Gentle, trilling music with a steady drumbeat plays under the dialogue.
00:00:01	Promo	Promo	Speaker: <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.
			<i>[Music fades out.]</i>
00:00:12	Jesse Thorn	Host	I'm Jesse Thorn. It's <i>Bullseye</i> .
00:00:14	Music	Transition	"Huddle Formation" from the album <i>Thunder, Lightning, Strike</i> , by The Go! Team. A fast, upbeat, peppy song. Music plays as Jesse speaks, then fades out.
00:00:22	Jesse	Host	Maybe you're looking for a distraction. Might be a TV show—one that can transport you somewhere else. Maybe to a world where iguanas can be mail carriers and lawn hedges are trimmed with shaving cream and hand razors. <i>Three Busy Debras</i> is one such show. It takes you from our current uncertain, scary world and sets you down in the fictional town of Lemoncurd, Connecticut: a pristine, filthy rich suburb where pretty much everyone drives giant SUVs and owns a huge, perfect house.
			<i>[Music fades out.]</i>
			It follows the day-to-day lives of three housewives, all named Debra. Each is a bit deranged. They brunch a lot. They kind of hate each other. They hang out all the time, too. And, sometimes, they commit murder! It's a show full of strange, surreal, off-beat, hilarious, and absolutely unique moments. The show stars Sandy Honig as Debra, and Mitra Jouhari as Debra, and Alyssa Stonoha as Debra.
			Let's hear a little bit from the very beginning of the TV show's first episode. All three Debras have sat down for brunch. They brunch a lot. The first Debra you'll hear from is played by Sandy Honig.
00:01:38	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:01:39	Clip	Clip	<i>[They all laugh.]</i>
			Debra 1: Debra, your hilarious story reminded me that I have a better one! It's so funny and it's sooo long. <i>[Giggles.]</i>
			<i>[Piano music fades in.]</i>
			Debra 1: So, my husband went to the doctor and found out that <u>we</u> have a cholesterol problem; <i>[laughing]</i> as a result, we started eating oatmeal.
			<i>[They chuckle.]</i>
			Debra 2: Debra, that is so funny! You have to stop. I just remembered something that happened on the way here. I forgot, because I was so busy walking inside.
			<i>[The sound of a harp being lowered into Debra 3's arms.]</i>
			Debra 3: So, what happened is that— <i>[strums harp]</i> .

00:02:07	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:02:09	Jesse	Host	Sandy, Mitra, Alyssa, welcome to <i>Bullseye</i> . It's great to have you on the show.
			<i>[They thank him.]</i>
			And congratulations on launching a deeply disturbing—or at least distressing television comedy show during the most upsetting period of time, at least in my life.
			<i>[They laugh.]</i>
00:02:29	Mitra Jouhari	Guest	Thank you. We begged them to release it turning this time.
00:02:32	Sandy Honig	Guest	Yeah, we actually started the coronavirus as, sort of, like a guerilla marketing tactic.
00:02:37	Jesse	Host	<i>[Chuckling.]</i> Oh! Wow! Oof, yeah!
00:02:40	Mitra	Guest	But technically that makes us women in STEM, so it's a win for the community.
			<i>[They laugh.]</i>
00:02:45	Sandy	Guest	Yeah, feminist slay.
00:02:49	Jesse	Host	How did the three of you start working together?
00:02:52	Alyssa Stonoha	Guest	We met doing comedy, in New York, in—like—2015. And, just, people in the community, in the New York Comedy community, were like, “You would love Alyssa! You would love Mitra! You would love Sandy!” So, we all got together and just started, like, doing improv together, is how it started. And the first night we hung out, we improvised a scene about three women all named Debra. And then that was the last idea we've ever had.
			<i>[The others laugh.]</i>
00:03:23	Mitra	Guest	First and the last. And then, from there we were writing sketches and we were trying to write a play, and we just kept coming—we just kept coming back to this idea of three very busy women who were all named Debra and how much fun it was to do that. So, it had several iterations as, first, a ten-minute play, then a twenty-minute play. Then it ran as an hour long play for a few months, at the Annoyance Theatre, in New York. And then that eventually, through a long series of steps, led to it becoming us working with Amy Poehler and her company, Paper Kite, and eventually it becoming an Adult Swim show.
00:03:57	Jesse	Host	Why do you think you were so drawn to the idea of—I mean, it's a—it's a more specific category than busy women, but busy women is a <i>[laughs]</i> —as good a name as any for us to give to it, for right now.
			<i>[They laugh.]</i>
			For the sake of convenience.
00:04:16	Sandy	Guest	Well, the first time that we were all trying to hang out, it was very hard for us to get together, because we all had completely different schedules. And we had this running joke, before we had ever hung out in person, just saying like, “Oh my god, I'm so busy. Sorry I can't make it. Ugh, so busy.” And making up excuses as to why we were so busy. And I think that was why, when we first started

performing together, we ended up just doing the bit that we had already started.

00:04:40 Mitra Guest And it's like a—I think it's a—you know, it's a silly way to access the very real thing, which is that every—like, people want to seem like they have a lot going on, that they're very busy, that they have these rich, fulfilling lives. And I think, you know, it's obvious—we're reaching that in a very silly way, but it's kind of rooted in a real thing.

00:05:00 Sandy Guest Ultimately, the Debras are only busy doing things that they've invented and created.

00:05:07 Jesse Host *[They laugh.]*
How old were the three of you when you started improvising this idea of busy Debras?

00:05:16 Sandy Guest Um, I was 23, I believee?

00:05:20 Mitra Guest And then I was 22.

00:05:22 Alyssa Guest And I think I was 19.

00:05:26 Jesse Host To me, one of the most remarkable things about this story of the three of you getting together to create these characters is that they live in such a profoundly, like, young-middle-aged world. You know?

[They laugh.]

Like, I'm—I'm in my—I'm in my late 30s, now. And happy birthday to me.

00:05:51 Mitra Guest *[They laugh.]*
Is it really your birthday?

00:05:53 Jesse Host It was my birthday a couple days ago, yeah.

00:05:56 Crosstalk Crosstalk *[They excitedly wish him happy birthday.]*
Mitra & Sandy: Wow, bury the lede! *[They both laugh in surprise.]*

00:06:01 Alyssa Guest And we brought you here today to give you a surprise party.

00:06:05 Jesse Host Holy cow!

00:06:06 Mitra Guest What if we burst in through the door of your physical space?

00:06:08 Alyssa Guest Yeah, we kick down the door!

00:06:11 Sandy Guest *[They laugh.]*
Violating your quarantine to wish you happy birthday.

00:06:15 Jesse Host But, like, I'm in a world of people—and especially parents—who live these lives of desperate busy-ness. You know, coming at it from various perspectives, you know, not everybody puts the shine on it that Debras—that the Debras do. But, like, that is—that is my world. That is not the world of, like, a junior in college.

00:06:39 Mitra Guest *[They laugh.]*
I don't know! I think it is! I mean, I think from—you know, at least for me, I was someone who really wanted to go to, like, an ivy league school, or something. And I was doing a million clubs in high school, or whatever. And it was this, sort of, beleaguered sense of how busy and exhausted I always was. And it's a choice. I, like, it—I think the activities change, but that sense of, "Oh, god. Sorry, I'm just sooo wiped," at least for me, I feel like, has always kind of been there.

00:07:12 Alyssa Guest And I think what felt like—like, the bigger picture of the Debras world, I think, was such a reaction for us. A) Leaving, like—leaving

our hometowns and moving to New York. It was such a reaction to the people we grew up around. And B) Like, a lot of people from my hometown going on to just, like, be—not just, but going on to be husbands and wives and, you know, preparing to, like, own a house. I grew up around, like, a lot of really rich people. And they're on track to being homeowners in their mid to late 20s. And it was such a reaction to, like, the people I grew up with and what their lives were becoming. And the—their parents and what their lives were. That I left to go to New York.

00:08:03 Jesse Host Did you feel pressured to be that kind of person, yourself? Or did you pressure yourself to be that kind of person?

00:08:09 Mitra Guest I'm from an area outside of Cincinnati, and everyone's kind of married straight out of college. And I just sort of assumed that would be my life, as well. And really, had no problem with that and was ready to do that. And then just started doing comedy, and it sort of changed everything very quickly. But I think, you know, had I not started doing college improv, I would certainly be a married doctor *[laughs]*, by now.

00:08:36 Sandy Guest *[Laughing.]* I feel like I kind of had an opposite experience, because I have two parents that... kind of got forced into a career that I don't—I mean, not forced, but I asked my dad, you know—my dad's a doctor and his mom always really wanted him to be a doctor. And I was like, you know, "Is that—what would you have been if you weren't a doctor?"

And he was like, "I don't know!"

And I feel like my mom always felt kind of the same and they encouraged me and my brother to, you know, follow more—you know, whatever made us happy and more creative passions. Yeah, I felt—I felt similarly. That I got really into comedy, like—in, like, middle school and high school. And I didn't—you know, I thought I would maybe do other things, but I desperately knew that I—that that's what I wanted to pursue, because I just loved comedy so much. And I didn't know if it was possible or, you know, whatever. But I just knew, like, I feel strongly about this and I hope beyond hope that I can pursue it.

00:09:13 Alyssa Guest

00:09:41 Mitra Guest Wait! Yeah, actually, I knew from a young age, too, that I loved comedy!

00:09:46 Sandy Guest *[They all laugh.]* Actually, the moment I came out of the womb, I said, "Somebody stop me!" And just sort of—everything fell into place after that.

[They laugh.]

But, I don't know, I do definitely feel—I don't know if this is something that, like, our parents' generation felt, but I definitely feel like there's a pressure of us, when we're in middle school, of, you know, "Oh, when you get to high school, you have to figure out—you have to have the perfect GPA and you have to take AP classes so that when you go to college you can have—" You know, etc., etc., etc.—"you can have your college courses done and then when you're done with college—"

It's, like, a very—you know—

00:10:17 Mitra Guest Life is a long list of tasks.
00:10:20 Alyssa Guest And then you die!
00:10:23 Mitra Guest *[Laughs.]* It's beautiful. Get a tat—I hope somebody gets a tattoo of that.
00:10:27 Jesse Host There's another kind of pressure, which is the pressure to, like, live your passion.

[They all agree.]

Did any—*[laughing]* did any—then, that can kind of—that is obviously, often in direct conflict with the pressure to achieve or get into the right college or whatever. Did any of you feel that at your back?

00:10:53 Sandy Guest I remember when I was applying to colleges, I went to school for photography and I worked as a photographer, and I—a friend of mine was asking me, like, “What do you wanna major in, in college?” And I was, “Well, I was thinking photography.”

And he was like, “Why would you waste your brain on that?” And I'll never forget that! Because he was like, “You're smart. You shouldn't do art. Like, why would you—”

[They laugh.]

00:11:22 Jesse Host Art's for dummies. Everyone knows that.
00:11:24 Alyssa Guest Anyone can do art!
00:11:25 Sandy Guest And I was like, “Okay.” *[Laughing.]* Yeah!
00:11:29 Jesse Host That's why nose tackles make the best artists.

[They laugh.]

00:11:34 Sandy Guest Which—I don't know, I also had a situation in college where—this is not really the same thing, but more just, like, the pressure of—when I was, like, a junior in college, I was studying photography and I had a friend of mine—I was like, “You know, I'm thinking I kinda wanna do comedy.”

And he said, “It's too late. You're three years into a photography degree. You're a photographer. It's too late for you to do comedy.”

[They laugh.]

And I, like, freaked out! Because I was like, “Oh *[censored]*. Like, I should have started earlier!” Now, like—you know, everyone that I knew in college was already, like—oh, doing improv and on sketch teams, and I wasn't doing any of that. And it, like, completely got in my head. I was 20? No, I was maybe 19? I don't know. It was insane.

00:12:13 Jesse Host Holy Moley!

[Sandy agrees.]

00:12:14 Mitra Guest Yeah, I didn't really think that you could live your passion. *[Laughs.]* So, sort of the opposite of, like—I don't know. I would watch shows that filmed—like, shows like *The Daily Show* that filmed in New York and be like, “Wow, I wonder, like, whoooo—who works on those shows? It feels so impossible and inaccessible to me.” And there was, sort of, never any sense of, like, “That could be you, one day.” Or “You could—you could—you could one day work in

television.” It just felt like all those people must have known a million people in New York or grew up in New York and, like—just that it was this, sort of—that, like, inaccessible club that people like me, being like, you know, someone from Ohio or whatever, like could not access.

00:13:06	Sandy	Guest	So, it just wasn't even—there was never any sense of, “You're gonna do this, one day.” Whereas I am an East Coast elite!
			<i>[They laugh.]</i>
00:13:19	Jesse	Host	And was told from a young age, <i>[in a snooty, transatlantic accent]</i> , “You can do whatever you want.” JK, JK, JK. But... There's something really... remarkable about the show, which is that these characters are, each in their own way, horrible monsters.
			<i>[They laugh.]</i>
			I mean, the show really opens with—the show opens with them sort of smiling and waving their way through manslaughter, at best.
			<i>[They cackle.]</i>
00:14:05	Alyssa	Guest	But there is a certain sympathy for these characters, as well. Like, it seems like you are having a contest to see, “What is the most horrible thing that they can do that you can give a little bit of reason for why they would do something like that, that actually kind of feels like it makes sense?”
			Well, it's sort of this idea of, like, they're—the protagonists of the show are villains to the world. But they're villains because they're, like, a product of the place and time and structure that they've been raised in. And it's—so, it's sort of like sympathizing with these horrible women, but also getting to, like, laugh at them and laugh with them. I think is the desire.
00:14:34	Mitra	Guest	Yeah I think—you know, a lot of our process of writing the show is starting with some sort of real, emotional thing that is relatable. So, you know, two Debras get into a club and the other one doesn't get in. So, she feels left out. Like, feeling excluded feels very real, so then we can do really heightened, silly stuff. But I think, ultimately, coming from the place of, like, three women being very, very unfulfilled. So, you can kind of relate to that—or at least understand that.
00:15:05	Jesse	Host	What are the key elements of the sort of semi anonymous world in which the Debras live? Like what are the things, like them driving white Cadillac escalades that feel like the specifics that make it familiar?
00:15:23	Sandy	Guest	I would say wasteful, for sure. Like, you know, driving these huge gas-guzzlers alone in their car.
00:15:32	Mitra	Guest	To go next door.
00:15:36	Alyssa	Guest	It's like a Americana suburbia, but trying to—you know—literally trying to divorce it from existing in a time or place that we know, by not—by not really... naming it something that exists, or referencing things, but trying to make it feel like the—it's a unique—suburbia's a uniquely—like, this kind of suburbia is a uniquely, like, American, I think, wastefulness.

00:16:03 Mitra Guest And we wanted it to feel like—you know, you could watch this show and it's whatever the richest neighborhood in your hometown is, or something like that. Like, it's not tied to a specific state or city or anything like that. These are just really extravagant, manicured, pristine—like it's all about projection and the show. Even if things are really horrible inside the house, the house will always look beautiful. And the same with the Debras. You know, it's horrible inside the Debras, but on the outside they're very clean at least.
[Laughs.]

00:16:33 Jesse Host What are some moments in the show that grew out of or were exaggerated from things that you saw people do, in your own lives?

00:16:44 Sandy Guest Oh, if I say it I'll get in troubleeee!

00:16:47 Mitra Guest I knooow.

[They laugh.]

00:16:50 Jesse Host You don't have to use names. And this is public radio, so there's not that many people listening.

[They laugh.]

00:16:58 Mitra Guest I mean, I would say definitely some stuff from that sleepover episode both comes from me as a person, but also people in my life. Just, like, the desperately wanting—like, trying to force warmth and intimacy onto other people and the, like—the obviously the tactics are very heightened, but I think those are very relatable to me, as a person, as well to people in my own life. Where, like, in my real life I'm constantly—before quarantine, was like constantly—you know, “Come over, I'll make you dinner.” Like, this sense of like, “If I curate such a perfect environment, then you're gonna like me back.”

[Laughing.] So, that is something that comes from a very real place within me. And I think, hopefully, like kind of is a relatable thing. But I think that's something that I've seen and felt in my own life.

00:17:45 Alyssa Guest I feel like, in the cartwheel club episode where Mitra and Sandy's Debra's get into the club and I don't, and I'm left out, feels a—and also, the specific detail that, like, I can't do a cartwheel.

[They laugh.]

And I did it once—it, well, I mean I can't do a cartwheel, but also it's this sense of, like, “I can't do the thing that is required of me and I didn't try to learn and now I feel left out” is, like, a very bad cycle that I feel I can—I've gotten in, like, since I was a child, right?

[Laughs.] Like, I don't do the thing. Don't try to do the thing. But then when I see everyone else do it, I'm really jealous and have horrific desires to ruin it for everybody else.

00:18:30 Jesse Host In a moment, we'll wrap up my interview with the cast of *Three Busy Debras*. After a quick break, was there ever an idea they pitched for the show that was too bizarre to make the cut? And, in the world of *Three Busy Debras*, what could that even be? Well, we're about to find out. It's *Bullseye*, from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

00:18:50 Promo Promo **Music:** Suspenseful music.

Ramtin Arablouei: The world is complicated. But knowing the past can help us understand it so much better.

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Ramtin: I'm Ramtin Arablouei, and we're the hosts of *Throughline*, NPR's history podcast.

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[Music fades out.]

00:19:12 Promo Promo

Music: Tense sci-fi music.

[Speaker 1 narrates in voiceover intercut with dialogue from the show.]

Speaker 1: Strange planets, curious technology, and a fantastic vision of the distant future. Featuring Martin Starr.

Martin Starr: So we're going on day 14. Shuttle still hasn't come.

Speaker 1: Aparna Nancherla.

Aparna Nancherla: *[Cheerful and electronic]* The security system provides you with emotional security! You do the rest!

Speaker 1: Echo Kellum.

Echo Kellum: Can you disconnect me, or not?

Speaker 1: Hari Kondabolu.

Hari Kondabolu: I'm staying.

Speaker 1: From Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, Geoffrey McGivern.

Geoffrey McGivern: Could you play Cyndi Lauper's "Girls Just Want to Have Fun"?

Speaker 1: It's The Outer Reach: Stories from Beyond.

Speaker 2: Now available for free at MaximumFun.org, or anywhere you listen.

[Music fades out.]

00:19:55 Jesse Host

It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. I'm talking with Sandy Honig, Mitra Jouhari, and Alyssa Stonoha. They're the creators and stars of the new show, *Three Busy Debras*. It's a truly bizarre, hilarious program that just wrapped its first season, on Adult Swim. It's hard to tell you what the premise is. It revolves around three women who all live in an idyllic suburb. All of them are... sociopathic and busy. And they're all named Debra. Let's get back into our conversation.

You got the attention of Amy Poehler—one of the founders of the Upright Citizen’s Brigade, who is also a producer on the show—when you did a version of the *Three Debras* play at a theater at Carnegie Hall.

00:20:42 Sandy Guest You ever heard of it? No, I’m just kidding.

[They laugh.]

00:20:48 Jesse Host Yeeeah! No, I’m just kidding.
00:20:51 Alyssa Guest How did you get to Carnegie Hall?
Money, money, money!

[They laugh.]

We found out that you can just rent it and that’s how a lot of people end up performing there, is—like any good old institution—capitalism. So, we started a Kickstarter to raise the money to rent it for a night, to perform the show one night only, for free. Like, the tradeoff was, the tickets would be free if you—if you gave to the Kickstarter. So, we did a one night only show.

00:21:26 Mitra Guest And it was all new, which was super fun. And also, the most stressful experience of our lives.

[They laugh.]

00:21:34 Sandy Guest It was also—you know, it’s a lot of money to rent it out, but even more money if you want to actually have lights change or the light—or, you know, sound! Or—so, the reason that we ended up writing this new show is because our original play had so many sound cues and video cues that we were—we realized we just had to write something specifically built for a stage where you couldn’t have anything change except dialogue and someone playing a piano.

00:22:03 Mitra Guest Yeah, we did the bare bones package, which is they turn the lights on and then they turn the lights off.

[Jesse laughs.]

00:22:08 Sandy Guest Yeah, it was the house lights. So, we could see everyone’s face for the entire show. The lighting was horrible.

00:22:17 Alyssa Guest The lighting was horrible, and we worked unnecessarily and tirelessly on the seating chart. So, we also—

00:22:23 Mitra Guest ‘Cause we had audience plants.

00:22:25 Alyssa Guest We had audience plants, so we assigned every single person who got a ticket their seat. And then, during the intermission when the house lights came up again and we were back onstage, we realized that people were in different seats than we had assigned them.

00:22:40 Mitra Guest And we still remember that. So—

[They laugh.]

00:22:43 Jesse Host Yeah, I mean the more you talk about this event, the more it’s starting to sound like you were trying to plan the perfect wedding.

00:22:49 Mitra Guest It really felt like a wedding! I mean, there was a day when we were all at my house and we were putting together the seating chart and it really was like, “Wow, I mean—this could be our wedding. Like, this might be it.” Like, all of our families were there. Our best friends were there. We’re wearing white.

00:23:04 Alyssa Guest We made them all dress up. We made them all—we made them all dress up and we sat all of our parents together. So, it very much was our wedding.

00:23:14 Jesse Host *[They chuckle.]*
I mean, it is ironic that all three of you chose the path of not getting married right out of college and trying to become a pharmacist or whatever, and instead dedicated your lives to comedy and had to have this weird, symbolic wedding instead.

00:23:30 Alyssa Guest And actually, right now—oh.

00:23:31 Sandy Guest Well, one of the—oh, go ahead, Alyssa.

00:23:33 Alyssa Guest No, it was a joke, so it's—it's—the time has passed.

00:23:36 Sandy Guest I wanna hear the joooke!

00:23:37 Alyssa Guest I was saying—and actually, now, we need comedy, not pharmacists, more than ever.

00:23:42 Mitra Guest No!

00:23:43 Sandy Guest *[They laugh.]*
Oh, nooo!

00:23:44 Alyssa Guest But that didn't—but I was saying it ironically and if anybody comes for me, I'll kill them! *[Laughs.]*

00:23:51 Sandy Guest Um, I—when we did the Kickstarter, we had a bunch of Kickstarter prizes, which most of them were kind of slaps in the face, kind of doing a joke on Kickstarters. Where it was like, “If you donate \$100, we will send you a zip file of papers that we wrote in college.” Or, “If you donate \$50, we will mail you a box of stuff that we don't want, from our apartments.” And, you know, it was—it was, like—

00:24:17 Alyssa Guest Someone got pistachio shells.

00:24:24 Sandy Guest *[They laugh.]*
Someone got a box full of discarded pistachio shells. But one of the things that you could do, is if you paid the full amount that we were asking for, which was—I believe—\$75,000, you could marry Alyssa at Carnegie Hall.

00:24:38 Alyssa Guest And no one did it!

00:24:39 Sandy Guest No one took the bait. Oh, and it if you donate—if you donated \$5000, you would get a digital shoutout.

00:24:51 Jesse Host *[They laugh.]*
That was something that...
The show is on Adult Swim, which has been—supported so many brilliant and amazing, bizarre and disturbing comedy projects over the last few decades. It also was the subject, maybe six months ago, of a *Buzzfeed* article that revealed that, of the topline creator level talent of it's shows that it had on the air and in production, 1 in 34 was a woman. Did you know about that reputation before you went into pitch? And was it a worry?

00:25:26 Mitra Guest I mean, I think what we wanted was a place where we could make exactly the show we wanted to make, in our own voices. And the place that felt to us—like, the place where we had the likeliest chance of getting to make our show, was Adult Swim. So, that was the place where we always wanted to make it. So, we went into that pitch just hoping that we would get to do that. So, it was very

exciting to us to... to get that yes, 'cause we... we just wanted to be able to make our thing.

00:25:58 Alyssa Guest And when we were doing our play and we were, like, you know—just sort of talking and dreaming to one another about, like, “What if we get to make this, like, a big thing—like, for TV or, you know, whatever?” It was always like, “Adult Swim feels like the right—the only right place, really.” It’s like the only place that really embraces, like, that—you know, weird, surreal, absurdist—

00:26:23 Mitra Guest Freaks and weirdos!

00:26:25 Alyssa Guest Like, comedy! Like type of comedy. Like, there’s—I don’t know. It just—it was always like a dream sort of place, because the coolest stuff had come out of there.

00:26:34 Sandy Guest Yeah, you know, one of the things that—we did know, going into the pitch, you know, about that. But after, you know, that stuff came out, a ton of people that worked with Adult Swim—people like Brett Gelman, and—they came out and sort of defended women and were saying, you know, “This is something that we should change.” So, it felt like there was a very positive atmosphere towards looking to remedy that, which was exciting.

00:26:59 Jesse Host All three of your characters are named Debra and, as far as we can tell, that is their only name. What do you actually, like, write into the script?

00:27:09 Alyssa Guest We write, “Mitra, Sandy, and Alyssa” in the script. And, sometimes when we’re writing in the dialogue, we will accidentally write one of them referring to Mitra, Sandy, or Alyssa instead of Debra. And the joke we always make is, “Who’s Mitra? Who’s Sandy? Who’s Alyssa?” And it’s really awesome. We all laugh a lot, the whole time.

00:27:29 Sandy Guest It’s funny every time!

00:27:31 Alyssa Guest *[They all laugh.]* Gets me every time! Aha!

00:27:33 Sandy Guest It does, actually.

00:27:36 Jesse Host *[They laugh.]* What is one of the most bizarre plot pitches that made it into this season of *Three Busy Debras* and what is one that was simply too bizarre for television?

00:27:50 Alyssa Guest I’m gonna go out on a limb and say the ATM that grows out of the ground.

00:28:12 Mitra Guest *[They laugh.]*

00:28:15 Alyssa Guest The naturally occurring ATM that grows out of the ground, which was originally a joke beat in an episode that didn’t end up getting made—or, like, didn’t end up getting written. It was a joke beat that we were told to cut, that we then said, “Well, what if it actually—” And we were told to cut it because it was too weird, also. *[Laughs.]* And then we were like, but what if we made that the whole episode? I feel like it could make sense.

00:28:37 Sandy Guest I think that was maybe the weirdest—or, like, the—yeah, the most—the most, like, strange world building thing we had to explain. *[Laughs.]* Definitely, like, the one where you really have to ask the audience to suspend their *[laughs]*, uh, you know... disbelief and really go—

just go with the fact that we're saying, "Okay, listen. In the first 10 seconds of this episode, you just have to understand the ATM grows out of the ground, and now it's erupting. Okay. Continue with the story."

[Jesse laughs.]

00:28:58 Alyssa Guest Don't ask questions yet, 'cause I feel like there'll be a lot more questions you will be asking later.

00:29:04 Jesse Host I like the idea of someone say, "Sorry, gang. This one strains credulity. Let's stick with grounded material, like an iguana delivering the mail."

[They laugh.]

00:29:16 Alyssa Guest But we understand the mail—we understand the concept of the mailman.

[They giggle.]

00:29:23 Jesse Host And we certainly understand the concept of an iguana!

00:29:26 Alyssa Guest Yeah! So, like, we just combined the two!

00:29:29 Jesse Host So, where's the problem here?

00:29:30 Mitra Guest It's grounded! *[Laughs.]*

00:29:31 Alyssa Guest I'm trying to think of something that got cut, that we didn't end up doing 'cause it didn't make any sense.

00:29:37 Sandy Guest But I kind of feel like we were able to get away with... everything.

[Laughs.]

00:29:43 Mitra Guest Yeah. I mean... I think, like... like, gags got cut. But for the most part, you know—for better or for worse, we're kind of allowed to do the stuff that we like. *[Laughs.]* So, I—yeah. I'm not—I'm not sure if, like, anything we really, really loved got cut.

00:30:03 Sandy Guest I don't think—I mean, I think there was one thing where, at the end of the episode—the fourth episode, "Barbara"—we were writing the end of that episode, which I think is the most chaotic 30 seconds of any episode that we've done. And the whole time we were writing it, we were like, "Alright, obviously we're gonna be told we have to change this." And then we didn't get told and we're going into production and we're like, "Well, obviously at some point someone is gonna stop us and someone is gonna tell us we can't do this."

And then it just got to the day we were shooting it and it was like, "Okay! I guess everyone's letting us *[laughs]* do this!"

00:30:35 Mitra Guest That's a—and that's a nice sort of, like, succinct way to describe the whole experience of doing this show. *[Laughs.]* It's like, "Surely someone will interfere!" No? Okay! Wow. Yay!

[They laugh.]

00:30:46 Jesse Host Is that also scary?

00:30:48 Alyssa Guest Well, it—it—it is.

[They laugh.]

Well, episode—that episode aired not this past—I don't know when this is coming out. But at the time of this recording, not this past Sunday but the Sunday before. And I was prepared—I was worried that that episode would—the ending of that episode would be, like—would make people watching it mad at how stupid it was.

[Laughs.]

And people—

[Jesse laughs.]

00:31:44	Mitra	Guest	And the feedback I've seen has been that it's like some of people's favorite jokes and stuff. And that is rewarding, where it's like, "Oh, this was really silly to—this was the silliest moment of writing that season, was writing that scene." And we were, like, doing it through tears laughing, 'cause we were like, "This is so stupid and funny to us." And for people feel similarly is shocking and scary going into it. Yeah, I mean it's very vulnerable to have worked on something for five years and, like, constantly, consistently—throughout those five years—and at the end of that, the show just comes out! And it's like, "Here's that thing I've been talking about since 2015. Oh god, I hope you like it!" And the nice thing is that people have been so kind and it, you know—that it has been well-received. And that is—I mean, it is very scary to just earnestly put something out, into the world. No matter what. So, it's exciting that people like it.
00:32:19	Jesse	Host	I think I would be most afraid of not having limits and thus being entirely responsible for... my work. Like, the fact that no one was checking me, you know?
00:32:35	Mitra	Guest	I mean, we're super lucky that we have, like, great producers and our—like, the folks at Adult Swim are really—everybody's really involved in the making of this show. So, I mean if we're ever going out too far on a limb, someone will be like, "Hey! Like, maybe reign this thing in, but this thing is really working." So, I think we definitely have checks—we are getting—we are, I think—do a good job of, sort of, checking ourselves. But we also work with really wonderful people who ask the right questions and keep us from going too—you know, it's so hard to tell, with this show, like what's too far, or something. But keep us—keep us true to whatever story we say that we're trying to tell. Kinda. <i>[Chuckles.]</i>
00:33:18	Jesse	Host	I mean, I think we've established that as far as you're concerned, too far has yet to occur.
00:33:23	Mitra	Guest	<i>[They laugh.]</i> Well, we just wanna make sure we keep it subtle, nuanced, grounded, bumblecore kind of vibes for— <i>[laughs.]</i>
00:33:30	Sandy	Guest	<i>[Jesse laughs.]</i> And the thing that's been really amazing is, you know, it's like we get to—we just do such subtle performances that, ummm—
00:33:35	Alyssa	Guest	Yeah, we trained reeeally, reeeally looong in Julliard's Ack-Ting School.
			<i>[They laugh.]</i> No, we're all hams.
00:33:48	Jesse	Host	<i>[They laugh.]</i> <i>[Chuckling.]</i> Well, Sandy, Mitra, Alyssa, thank you so much for taking the time to talk to me on <i>Bullseye</i> . It was really great to talk to you and the show is really hilarious. Congratulations.
			<i>[They thank him.]</i>

			<p>Sandy Honig, Mitra Jouhari, and Alyssa Stonoha. <i>Three Busy Debras</i> is—well, it's somethin' else! Give it a watch on AdultSwim.com or the Adult Swim app.</p>
00:34:10	Music	Transition	Upbeat, cheerful music.
00:34:14	Jesse	Host	<p>That's the end of another episode of <i>Bullseye</i>. <i>Bullseye</i> is produced out of the homes of me and the staff of MaximumFun, in and around Los Angeles, California. This week, Jesus—my colleague—shaved half his beard off and kept it that way for a day before shaving the rest of it off. We're all going a little nuts in our homes and apartments.</p> <p>The show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our producer is Kevin Ferguson. Jesus Ambrosio is our half-bearded associate producer. We get help from Casey O'Brien and Jordan Kawling, at MaximumFun. Our interstitial music is by the great DJW, Dan Wally. Our theme song is by the wonderful The Go! Team. Thanks to them and their label, Memphis Industries, for letting us use it. Just heard they're working on a new record. So, look forward to that.</p> <p>We've been making this show for a very, very long time with hundreds of episodes in our archives, at MaximumFun.org. If you like Adult Swim, we did a great interview with Jena Friedman, who created the insane documentary series, <i>Soft Focus</i>, for that network.</p> <p>You can also keep up with us on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Just search for <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i>. And I think that's about it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature sign off.</p>
00:35:27	Promo	Promo	<p>Speaker: <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.</p> <p><i>[Music fades out.]</i></p>