

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.
00:00:11	Music	Transition	<i>[Music fades out.]</i> "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.
00:00:18	Linda Holmes	Host	Coming to you from my house, it's <i>Bullseye!</i> I'm Linda Holmes, in for Jesse Thorn. I'm an NPR pop culture correspondent, and the host of <i>Pop Culture Happy Hour</i> . Our guest this week is Elisabeth Moss. You know Elisabeth Moss, right? <i>[Music ends in a chorus of cheers.]</i>
00:00:36	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:00:37	Clip	Clip	Peggy: Hold on a second. You want me to work up an entire corporate image campaign for \$10? Speaker: I can make you do it for nothing. I'm the boss. Peggy: You're right. The work is \$10. The lie is extra. Speaker: Incredible. What do you make a week, sweetheart? Peggy: You don't know, huh? That's hopeful. Speaker: You know, I could fire you. Peggy: Great. There's some portfolios in Joan's office. Maybe you could find somebody, tonight. Speaker: Why are you doing this to me? Peggy: Because you're being very demanding for someone who has no other choice. Dazzle me.
00:01:10	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:01:11	Linda	Host	There's something about the way Moss carries herself, onscreen, right? When she takes a lead role, especially. She has the confidence and poise of a veteran actor who's been doing this for decades. And that's probably because she has been doing this for decades. She's acted professionally since she was eight years old. And, apart from a couple years in her early teens, she hasn't really taken a break. Her newest movie is called <i>Shirley</i> . Elisabeth plays Shirley Jackson, the real-life author of <i>The Lottery</i> and <i>The Haunting of Hill House</i> . Here's the premise: it's the early '60s. Shirley is living in Vermont with her college professor husband, Stanley, played by Michael Stuhlbarg. Their marriage is struggling. Shirley's reclusive. She struggles with depression and anxiety. Stanley, for his part, is a

			serial womanizer who doesn't really take Shirley seriously as an author. Then they take in some guests: a young TA of Stanley, and his wife. Things escalate, get more tense, but in the midst of all the drama, something else happens. Shirley finds inspiration for her new novel. Let's listen.
00:02:15	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:02:16	Clip	Clip	<i>[The sound of crickets.]</i>
			Shirley: I have a title—Hangsaman. It's about that girl. The missing one.
			Stanley: The Weldon girl?
			Shirley: What do you think?
			Stanley: Well, you haven't said much.
			<i>[The clink of dishes.]</i>
			Shirley: Well, it's just an idea. I could try something else if—
			Stanley: Disappearing college girl sounds trite and a little bit trashy, but, uh, you know. Give it a go! I'll read, of course. Before you wade too far in.
			Shirley: It's going to take some time.
			Stanley: Well, give it to me in a couple of days.
			Shirley: It's a novel.
			Stanley: <i>[Beat.]</i> Oh no, dear, that's... you're not— <i>[sighs]</i> . You're just not up to it.
			Shirley: You're wrong.
			Stanley: Darling. You haven't been out of the house in two months... you're barely able to put on a pair of stockings. Ease back. That's all I'm saying.
00:03:14	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:03:15	Linda	Host	Elisabeth Moss, welcome to <i>Bullseye!</i>
00:03:17	Elisabeth	Guest	Thank you very much! Very happy to be here!
00:03:21	Linda	Host	So, the relationship between Stanley and Shirley as you—as you hear it in that clip is really intense, but most of what you learn about it comes from scenes like that, where they're talking about her writing. In general, it's—I think it's really hard to make writers talking about writing interesting.
			<i>[Elisabeth chuckles.]</i>
			How did you—how did you approach that problem? Of making people understand a character based largely on writing that they're not getting to read?

00:03:47	Elisabeth	Guest	Um, you know. You have a—you have a script written by Sarah Gubbins, honestly. Because I do think that what you're saying is absolutely correct. I do think it's actually really difficult to do. And the way that she wrote this script somehow—it just wasn't a problem. You just... it was somewhere between a biopic of Shirley and one of Shirley's stories, itself. You know?
			<i>[Linda agrees.]</i>
00:04:22	Linda	Host	She really—she really balanced that so well. And, you're right, it's an incredibly difficult thing to do. Yeah. The scene in which Stanley finally reads the draft of the book—I don't think it's too much of a spoiler, but it's the very rare scene that felt totally original to me, on an emotional level. Can you tell me a little bit about the approach to what Shirley is thinking, in that it's initially kind of an ambiguous scene—you don't know exactly what's going on. You're looking at Shirley's face. You're looking at her reactions. Is that, kind of, the pivotal scene for Shirley, do you think?
00:04:52	Elisabeth	Guest	Yeah! Definitely. It definitely is this opportunity to kind of show, in one scene, one of the most important things about her. Which is that she cares more about her work than anything else. The only thing she cares more about than her work is what Stanley thinks of her work.
			<i>[Linda agrees.]</i>
			And we had this one scene and this one sort of opportunity to show it. It wasn't written that it was all going to be in that one take and that we were gonna stay on that closeup, we—or shot. We, you know, covered it. But it was just the way that—the way that Josephine ended up cutting it. Which I was obviously very flattered by. But I think it's right, because I think you have to show all of the emotions that someone like Shirley would feel, in that moment. The fear, the—being angry at herself for being nervous. Being angry at Stanley for making her nervous. Really desperately wanting him to like the story. You know, all—and then covering it all up when he walks over. I mean, you kind of had to show all of those bits.
00:05:55	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:05:56	Clip	Clip	<i>[Distant birdsong.]</i>
			Stanley: It's the genre, darling, that's stymieing you. It's... not your arena. And, frankly, it's beneath you. <i>[Beat.]</i>
			Shirley: Keep your theories to yourself.
			Stanley: You don't know her!
			Shirley: Don't tell me that I do not know this girl!
			Stanley: You—look, I might have walked by her a dozen times, on campus. There's nothing fascinating about this girl except that she's gone! What has she done?! You don't know your subject! She's a nothing! Who is she to you?!

Shirley: There are dozens and dozens of girls like this, littering campuses across the country! Lonely girls who cannot make the world see them! Do not tell me I do not know this girl! Don't you dare!

00:06:45 Sound Effect Transition

Music swells and fades.

00:06:46 Linda Host

For people who haven't read the novel that this is based on, which is by Susan Scarf Merrell, how would you explain the relationship between this Shirley Jackson and the actual, biographical Shirley Jackson?

00:06:58 Elisabeth Guest

Well, I think it's huuugely fictionalized. We obviously left her children out, which is a big thing.

[They laugh and Linda agrees several times as Elisabeth continues.]

And she was actually a wonderful mother, even though she was dealing with, you know, mental illness and addiction and—she was a wonderful, wonderful mother, by all accounts. And we, you know, for the purposes of the story, they were—*[laughing]* they weren't in it. So, that's a huuuge departure. I wouldn't look too closely at the timeline of things, in our movie. It's a little bit nonlinear. But I think what we were trying to do, or what Sarah—the writer—was trying to do and what I loved about it was it was just this sort of slice of life.

I feel like you could make five movies about Shirley Jackson and Stanley. Like, their whole lives. What I felt like this was, was just a little bit of a slice of her. It was this—it was her writing process. And her writing process, specifically at that time. Which was: *The Lottery* had just come out. It was hugely successful. She all of the sudden was famous and was also experiencing infamy, because she—you know—a lot of people wrote a lot of hate mail about *The Lottery*. It was veery divisive. And here she was, embarking on this sort of sophomore effort. And it—so, it was about that process, as a writer.

00:08:18 Linda Host

Had you read a lot of Shirley Jackson?

00:08:20 Elisabeth Guest

I'd only read *The Lottery* and *The Haunting of Hill House*.

00:08:23 Linda Host

Mm-hm, mm-hm. I think that's a common duo, for people.

00:08:26 Elisabeth Guest

Exactly. I feel that's like the Shirley Jackson 101. So, then—yeah. Then I had the opportunity to obviously go and read—I believe most of her work. I may have missed a couple short stories at some point. But I believe I've become a little bit of an aficionado.

[Chuckles.]

00:08:42 Linda Host

Yeah. I want to talk a little bit about madness. I think it's hard to look across your career, particularly post-*Mad Men*, and not see this theme of women and madness. It's there, in *Shirley*, and it's talk about pretty explicitly. But it's also there in *Her Smell*. It's there in *Handmaid's Tale* It's there in *Us*. Maybe most explicitly in *The Invisible Man*. Sometimes, women who are kind of driven to madness. Some of whom have their normal responses defined as madness. It's always hard for me to know what to make of those thematic echoes, I guess, in actor's work. What do—what do you make of them, if anything?

00:09:20 Elisabeth Guest

Um, I guess I'm sort of fascinated by the idea of madness. And I'm fascinating by—I haven't answered it. I don't have the answers, but I'm very fascinated by the questions. And I'm fascinated by the idea of when we start categorizing especially a woman as crazy.

[Linda agrees.]

And, obviously, *The Invisible Man* dealt with that a lot. 'Cause it was actually just a straight-up story about gaslighting. But I think there's other things that I've done, like you said, that deal with it in different ways—whether it's *Her Smell* with addiction or with *Shirley* and her incredible imagination. You know, I am fascinated by the question of, "At what point do we start calling this person crazy?" You know? Are they crazy for just being honest? Are they crazy for thinking that this guy is after them and trying to kill them? I don't know. I don't have the answers, I just find the questions really fascinating.

And I think, as well, it's just much more fun for me, as an actor, to play somebody who's losing their mind than it is to play somebody who is happily sitting at home with their two cats, like I am.

[Giggles.]

00:10:23 Linda Host

Yeah. [Laughs.] You're also a—you're a producer, on *Shirley*. As you are on *Handmaid's Tale* and as you have been on some of the other projects that you've done in recent years. What are the big benefits of producing, for you?

00:10:36 Elisabeth Guest

Honestly? The number one benefit is... I have such a better knowledge of the material and the character, as a producer. I think that's the thing that people don't necessarily think about. And often, I have to—kind of maybe—explain at the start of the process: that it's not about me going, "I want control! I want ownership!" Which is probably the second reason that I love it, and certainly nothing to be ashamed of, but I think—especially as a woman in this business—but I think the number one thing, for me, is I actually learn so much more about the project that we're doing, by being a producer on it. I have conversations with the writer that I wouldn't have had. I have a relationship with the production designer. I have a relationship with the director that I wouldn't have had. I know why we have cast this person. I know why we're shooting in this location. I know why this color is chosen for this wall. And, for me, that actually just informs the character that I'm building. And it gives me this deeper, more hands-on knowledge of the material.

I've done projects where I am not a producer, obviously. Many, many, many, many times in my career. And, honestly, I think the ones recently that I've done where I'm usually a producer, I find I know them so much better. And I know that character so much better. So, for me, it's actually informed my acting in a way that I don't think I expected.

00:12:09 Linda Host

Yeah. It's interesting that you talked about the visuals and colors and things like that. 'Cause I think, particularly in *The Handmaid's Tale*, that's been such a big part of the conversation around that project. And, you know, very often as a—as a viewer, when I'm first confronted with some of the visuals in that show, like some of the handmaids in Washington, this last season, who had the rings in their mouths. Those are really jarring visuals. Do they ever freak you out a little bit?

00:12:40 Elisabeth Guest

Hmm. No.

[They laugh.]

No, not in a—not in a bad way. I, you know, quite honestly, I love that [censored]. In fact, it's funny with that. The... I don't know what you would call it, I can't remember what we would call it. That's what—the sort of stapling of the mouth together that we did on the show, one of my notes on that episode, on that cut, was to hold that shot longer.

[Linda agrees.]

So, we could really see it. So, the audience could really—was confronted with that image for a couple of seconds longer. I just thought that I was important. So, I love that stuff. I have—I'm—I don't have a lot of fear of the darker things in life. I relish them, quite truly. In work! Not in my everyday life. [Laughs.]

00:13:30 Linda Host

[Laughs.] Well, there's no question. I mean, those images are meant to be jarring. It means they're effective. But I often think, like, when I watch a scene where, you know, there are all of these people surrounded by women who are dressed in this way or, you know, at the Lincoln Memorial or whatever, that it's just a—it's a lot to take in and I—it always seems like it would be an intense experience to act in, as well.

00:13:53 Elisabeth Guest

Yeah! It's definitely intense. I wouldn't say I, sort of just like, you know—bop around with a smile on my face like a maniac. I—it's definitely intense, and I—and I feel it. But I—but I think that there are things in life that are intense. And I think that, you know, it was so interesting, too. I mean, the memorial stuff was... probably—yeah, probably one of my most enjoyable and also intense days of shooting. Shooting that scene, those scenes, in the Lincoln Memorial—this place that has been built to celebrate human rights and celebrate freedom—and... and what this country is supposed to stand for. And then whatever thing was happening in the news, that day [laughs], I'm sure.

[Linda agrees.]

From the one—the house down the street, you know. It was really affecting. And I think that—I feel—but I feel sort of privileged, I guess? To be in the position to tell that story and to be confronting with an audience in that way.

00:14:56 Linda Host

So, how has the experience of *Handmaid's Tale* been different from the experience of *Mad Men*? They obviously have parallels in that they are both—they've both been really successful. They're both really buzzed about. They're both really, you know, well-regarded. How do you compare those two experiences? I assume that being a producer makes this one very different. Are there—are there other things that are either parallel or not-so-parallel?

00:15:23 Elisabeth Guest

Yeah. I think being a producer is one of—is probably the biggest thing. It's odd to me, now, to think back, actually, on *Mad Men* and how—sometimes I get asked questions about it and I'm like, "I don't know! I wasn't a producer, I don't—I don't know how that went!" You know? I mean, it worked out fine! [Laughs.] I didn't need to be a producer on that one. Everyone did a great job. But...

[They laugh.]

So, you know, it worked out alright. But I think that's the biggest difference, is the involvement. I mean, you know, on *Mad Men*, I would go in for my work and then I would leave. And, you know, I'd work four days and then have three days off. And now, as a producer and especially on *Handmaid's Tale*, I'm there every single day, every single hour. And when I go home, I'm watching dailies or cuts or writing notes. At different periods, we have... you know, six, seven episodes that we're working on at the same time. And I basically, kind of only get like a month off, in the year, when we're really actually not in post or not in prep or not in production.

So, it's—yeah. It's—I think that's the biggest—that's the biggest difference.

00:16:35 Linda Host

Yeah. Did you—did you have a specific kind of post-*Mad Men* career strategy? Or was it mostly kind of one project at a time?

00:16:46 Elisabeth Guest

One project at a time! No strategy whatsoever!

[They laugh.]

I've never really had a strategy. So, I kind of am like, "If it ain't broke." You know? I think the only thing I kind of thought was that I would maybe not do a TV show again so quickly. And look how well that turned out!

[They laugh.]

So, I blew my own strategy out of the water. I guess I just, you know. Yeah, I—no real strategy. I've never had one. I just look for the good material and try to get them to cast me in it.

[They chuckle.]

00:17:20 Linda Host

What makes something pop out, for you, as good material? Are you envisioning yourself—are you envisioning yourself acting in it? Are you... does it—does it just resonate on a pure script and writing level? What pops out, for you, as, "I really wanna go pursue this. I wanna go and do this."?

00:17:37 Elisabeth Guest

I think, for me, especially over the last few years as I've gotten the opportunity to choose what I want to do—you know, in the beginning, you're, you know, you're just—you're doing the jobs that you—that you get! You know, you gotta work and you got to make money. And so, you're just doing the jobs that you—that you get hired for. And then, I guess, over the last, like, five years or so, I've definitely been able to be more choosy. And I think the thing that I look for is purely, 100% the script. It doesn't matter. Any—nothing else matters. It has to be a good script. And I guess what makes it a good script, for me personally—besides just the obvious thing of it's, like, interesting and good to read and well written—is the—how, I guess, I think maybe it might be right for me... is I start to, kind of, do it in my head. I start to think about what it would look like and I start to see the lines in my head, or maybe even out loud. I start to, kind of, play the character a little bit. Not, like, out—not, like, in my apartment like a crazy person. But just in my head.

[They laugh.]

00:18:52 Linda Host And I think that, for me, is the connection that I look for, now, as far as what is—what should I do, personally.
It was interesting, to me, watching you in *The Invisible Man*, 'cause I had never seen you in quite that pure of a—of a thriller. And as we talked about, before, it's really a gaslighting and madness story. But the other thing about it, for me, to be honest was the fact that it has such effective fight scenes.

[Elisabeth agrees several times.]

00:19:35 Elisabeth Guest And the trick is, whenever you have someone fighting an invisible person, it can look incredibly corny. It can look like the cheapest special effect in the world. Which is, "I'm fighting an invisible monster!" But these are incredibly scary and unsettling fight scenes. I've seen a little bit of a featurette about the guy in the green suit fighting with you. Can you talk a little bit about the choreography and execution of those fight scenes?
Yeeeeah! Totally. Yeah, that was—I mean, that's basically what it was. It was this incredible stunt performer in a green suit that I worked a lot with, that I rehearsed a lot with. We did a lot of—I wouldn't call it training. I mean, I'm not, like, you know—just not *Tomb Raider* over here.

[Linda laughs.]

It's just we did a lot of, like, practicing the moves and practicing the—and working it out! Working out what the fight would be, working out what would be scary, working out what I could do—what looked scary. He was fantastic and... then came—there were times when I did have to do it by myself for visual effects, and I'm telling you like, that felt sssso stupid. I can't even.

[Linda laughs.]

00:20:38 Linda Host It's so embarrassing. Like, having to pretend to be fought. It's just the worst. I hope that never happens to anybody. It's the worst. It's so embarrassing. But mainly, it was—it was working with him and—yeah. It's not that hard—it's not that hard, if you're actually, like, working with somebody and pushing—and pushing against someone. You know?

00:20:42 Elisabeth Guest Right. So, the difficult parts are the parts where you're just—it really is just you.

00:20:42 Elisabeth Guest Yes. And thank god that was just for visual effects, for that they can have, like, that pass. 'Cause—I don't know, for some technical reason that they need it. That's the only time I actually had to do it by my—by myself, 'cause it really does feel stupid. I had to do one thing once, where he, like... grabs my neck or something. And that was just me doing it, and I felt like such an idiot.

[They laugh.]

00:21:06 Sound Effect Transition I hated it.
Music swells and fades.

00:21:07 Clip Clip **Music:** Suspenseful music.

Kass: There you are!

[Distorted sounds. Thumping. Kass makes sounds of distress and impact as she fights the invisible man.]

00:21:16	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:21:17	Linda	Host	That invisible guy gave you a pretty good beating. Put you into the fridge. Dragged you around.
00:21:21	Elisabeth	Guest	I know! I know! It was—it was really fun, honestly. It made me wanna do an action movie, and I'm actually gonna try to figure something like that out. It was so fun! It was so fun to be so physical, to use my—any strength I had. It was fun to get stronger, you know? To, like, work out and take care of my body in that way and I really—I had such a great time and it was very difficult, because I am not a stunt performer and I am actually not even an incredibly athletic person. But it was—it was... kind of <i>[censored]</i> great! <i>[Laughs.]</i> I loved it!
00:21:56	Linda	Host	Yeeeeah. You were a dancer for a long time, though, right?
00:21:59	Elisabeth	Guest	Yes! I was. So, I guess I shouldn't—I'm not an athletic person <u>anymore</u> , I should say. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:22:06	Linda	Host	I have to assume, though, that when you're trying to figure out something like that, it's probably an advantage to the people who are coordinating it to be working with somebody who has done choreography before.
00:22:17	Elisabeth	Guest	Actually, yes! You're absolutely right. And you know, the one thing that actually really helped—my ballet training—was we had this special camera that we used that I'm gonna forget the name of, now, because I've been doing press for six hours. But it was a camera that was very, very cool and it operated on counts, specific counts.
			<i>[Lind expresses surprise.]</i>
			So, the choreography—yeah! So, the choreography of the fight, this—it would... the camera would, or whatever was—it was, would count out loud. So, it'd, "Aaand one, aaand two, aaand three." And everything was on the counts. So, I was like, "Oh, this is perfect! I did this forever! Like, I can do this! I can remember, okay, that I'm supposed to raise my arm on, you know, on 18 and a half. Like, I can do that." It was very interesting. I never thought that that skill <i>[laughing]</i> would come in handy in such a way.
00:23:11	Linda	Host	Yeeeeah! It's—because I've never heard of a—I've never heard of a camera that counts out loud.
00:23:17	Elisabeth	Guest	I know! I mean, someone—if anyone's listening to this and wants to text me what that camera is called, it would be very much appreciated.
			<i>[They laugh.]</i>
00:23:27	Linda	Host	Yeeeeah. I do wanna play you—since we're talking about your acting history and your dance history, you started acting very young, right?
00:23:36	Elisabeth	Guest	Yeeeeah. I was about six.
00:23:38	Linda	Host	And, you know, when I looked you up on—when I looked up your IMDb page—which, of course, is a very imprecise and imperfect way to survey someone's career—unlike a lot of people who start acting when they're six, there aren't big gaps of, sort of, stopped acting—you know—disappeared off of the—out of that business for

a long periods of time. You seemed to kind of bridge all of that pretty successfully.

00:24:06 Elisabeth Guest Yeah! I guess so! I mean, there was a period from, like, 12-14 when I didn't act that much because I was given—it's a very formative time for a dancer.

[Linda agrees.]

I mean, you're auditioning for schools and it's crazy that it's that young, but it is. And so, there was a time from 12-14 when I don't think I did as much. But yeah, I guess I pretty much steadily kind of worked. Not in a—not in a lot of stuff that people saw, but I was working. *[Laughs.]*

00:24:37 Linda Host Well, and then—I mean, I think I remember—I think I probably first saw you in *The West Wing*. That's not a bad—that's not a bad place to spend a few years.

00:24:45 Elisabeth Guest No, it was certainly not a bad place to work. It was a really—I mean, I was 17 when I started that show. And it was incredibly formative, in not just my career but in my idea of how you are supposed to be, on set, and how—you know—every single one of those actors was so professional and so kind and funny and took their work seriously, but not themselves seriously. And I think that that really, kind of, taught me how you're supposed to be. And I fell in love with—I fell in love with television.

00:25:20 Linda Host Yeah. Can we listen to a clip from *Suburban Commando*?

00:25:23 Elisabeth Guest Um, I think we have to listen to a clip from *Suburban Commando*, if you have one!

00:25:28 Linda Host *[Excited.]* Absolutely! Yes! I'm so glad.

00:25:29 Elisabeth Guest Oh my god!

00:25:30 Linda Host So, this is one of your—this is one of your first movie roles. This is 1991. *Suburban Commando*, starring Christopher Lloyd and Hulk Hogan. Hulk Hogan plays an alien whose spacecraft breaks down. I love this description. How is this real?

00:25:42 Linda Host The best log line ever.

00:25:44 Linda Host Hulk Hogan plays an alien whose spacecraft breaks down and he gets stranded on Earth, in the Los Angeles suburb of Van Nuys. Rents a garage apartment from Christopher Lloyd and his suburban family. It's a vehicle for Hulk Hogan to lift and throw heavy objects. And, in this scene, a young Elisabeth Moss—who's playing a little girl who keeps losing her cat in a tree—the alien comes along to rescue the cat, but sends her flying through the air, instead. Let's roll the clip.

00:26:13 Sound Effect Transition Music swells and fades.

00:26:14 Clip Clip **Music:** Upbeat, cheerful music.

Little Girl: *[Crying as a cat meows in distress.]*

Shep Ramsey: Again?!

[The cat wails.]

Little Girl: *[Sobbing.]* My caaat!

Shep: Are you sure? Positive?

[The cat cries and the little girl sobs softly. The sound of the tree bending.]

Little Girl: Bad kitty!

[The cat yowls and the little girl screams.]

Shep: Uh oh.

[A distorted scream and a thump.]

Little Girl: Woah. Thanks!

Shep: *[Irritated.]* Get a goldfish.
Music swells and fades.

00:26:46 Sound effect Transition

00:26:47 Linda Host

Alright. What do you—what do you remember about *Suburban Commando*?

00:26:50 Elisabeth Guest

I am so glad we're talking about this. I remember everyone was very nice, including Hulk Hogan. And I remember taking it very seriously. And treating it—you know—not dissimilar to the way that I treat *[chuckling]* *The Handmaid's Tale*.

[Linda agrees with a laugh.]

It was very—you know, obviously. It was—it was my first—I think it was my first movie. My first real movie. My, you know, my first picture. My first studio film. I'd done a TV movie, I think. But I think it was my first feature. And I took it seriously! I mean, it was a—you know—a big deal for me and big stars. Hulk Hogan, very big at the time. Christopher Lloyd, obviously a legend.

[Linda agrees.]

You know? And I took it—I took it just as seriously as I would take anything now, honestly. It—that's my memory. That's my memory of it. My memory of it is I took it seriously.

00:27:45 Linda Host

Of course. Why would you not?

00:27:46 Elisabeth Guest

I think it's—I think it's reflect—I'm pretty sure it's reflected in the work.

[They laugh.]

00:27:51 Linda Host

If you go back and look at it, you're gonna—it's gonna be like watching Claire Danes in *My So-Called Life* where you say, "That's a—she's gonna be big, right there."

[Elisabeth agrees.]

"That girl that lost the cat, she's gonna be big." Did—is it true—'cause I can't remember where I heard this. Is—were you a voice in a *Frosty the Snowman* cartoon?

00:28:07 Elisabeth Guest

Yes, I was! In *Frosty Returns*.

00:28:09 Linda Host

Frosty Returns.

[Elisabeth confirms.]

00:28:13	Elisabeth	Guest	<p>Took that seriously, too? 100% took it seriously! And that was with John Goodman! Yes! And he played Frosty. I mean, how cool is that?</p>
00:28:22	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:28:23	Clip	Clip	<p>Frosty: I couldn't sit in there anymore, Holly! I started getting a cramp, then I got this freezer burn.</p> <p>Holly: You shouldn't be out here!</p> <p>Frosty: Nah, I think I finally found a place where the snow's here to stay! An ice castle!</p> <p><i>[A swell of fantastical music.]</i></p> <p>Holly: Won't be there for long.</p> <p><i>[The music becomes more dissonant.]</i></p> <p>Frosty: What are you talking about?</p> <p>Holly: I just came from my school. All the kids there were screaming, "No more snow! No more snow!" It was terrible!</p> <p>Frosty: What did you say?</p> <p>Holly: Nothing. I was too scared! Whenever I try to talk, my mouth gets all dry and my hands get all clammy. I let you down, didn't I?</p> <p>Frosty: You know, kid, maybe it's time you tried a different approach.</p>
00:28:58	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:28:59	Linda	Host	You weren't playing around with these early roles.
00:29:01	Elisabeth	Guest	<p>I really wasn't! I was, like, let me just pick out, like, all these, like, legendary men. John Goodman. I'm from—my mom, I should say—my mom is from Chicago. I've spent a lot of time in Chicago. I mean, I'm a big Chicago Cubs fan. And so, obviously, working with somebody like John Goodman was very—you know, it was a big deal. It was a big deal, in my family.</p> <p>00:29:20 Linda Host Mm-hm! I think a big deal in every—anybody—everyone's family.</p> <p>00:29:24 Elisabeth Guest Yes. The star of many a beloved film</p> <p><i>[Linda agrees.]</i></p> <p>For my family. So, I—that was—I remember meeting him at the recording studio, on that one.</p> <p>00:29:34 Linda Host We'll have even more with Elisabeth Moss when we come back from a quick break. Stick around. It's Bullseye from MaximumFun.org and NPR.</p> <p>00:29:42 Promo Promo Music: Bright, cheerful music.</p> <p>James Arthur: Hi, I'm James—host of <i>Minority Korner</i>, which is a...</p> <p>Speaker 1: Podcast that's all about intersectionality. It's hosted by James, with a guest host every week.</p>

Speaker 2: Discussing all sorts of wonderful issues, nerdy and political.

Speaker 3: Pop culture.

Speaker 1: Black, queer, feminism.

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Speaker 5: You're gonna learn your history. There's self-empowerment and it's told by what feels like your best friend.

[Music swells.]

Speaker 6: Why should someone listen to *Minority Korner*?

Speaker 1: Why not?

Speaker 2: Oh my god. Free stuff?

James: There's not free stuff.

Speaker 7: The listeners of *Minority Korner* will enjoy some necessary LOLs, but mainly a look at what's happening in our world through a colorful lens.

Speaker 2: People will get the perspective of marginalized communities.

Speaker 3: I feel heard. I feel seen.

Speaker 8: Like you said, you need to understand how to be more proactive in your community, and this is a great way to get started.

James: Join us every Friday, on [MaxFun](#) or wherever you get your podcasts.

Everyone: *Minority Korner!* Because together, we're the majority.

[Music ends.]

Music: Solemn piano music.

Speaker: It feels like nothing in the news these days makes any sense. So, Hasan Minhaj turned to his father and his faith for answers.

Hasan Minhaj: He said, "Don't worry about the number of questions. Just worry about which questions become more clear and solidified."

Speaker: Comedian Hasan Minhaj on how his spirituality is getting him through. Listen and subscribe to *It's Been a Minute*, from NPR.

00:30:33 Promo Promo

00:30:53	Linda	Host	<p>Welcome back to <i>Bullseye</i>. I'm Linda Holmes, in for Jesse Thorn. I'm talking with Elisabeth Moss. She's starred in a bunch of movies and TV shows. <i>Mad Men</i>, <i>The Invisible Man</i>, <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>. Her newest project is a movie called <i>Shirley</i>. In it, she plays Shirley Jackson—the horror writer, the author of <i>The Lottery</i>. The movie comes out this week. Let's get back into our conversation.</p> <p>Another thing I wanna ask you about: you are not just a meme. You are multiple memes. You are <i>Handmaid's Tale</i> memes. You are also <i>Mad Men</i> memes. Did—are you aware? Did you—were you aware, when you were shooting Peggy Olson coming down the hall with the box and the shades and the cigarette—do you shoot that and think, "I'm gonna be looking at this for the rest of my life."</p>
00:31:39	Elisabeth	Guest	<p><i>[As Elisabeth talks, there's a significant amount of bumping and rustling noises from her microphone.]</i></p> <p><i>[Laughing.]</i> No. No. Absolutely not. I mean, I had no idea. We didn't have any idea. I mean, it was so... it was completely unexpected. I knew it was a big moment for the character. And I knew that it was something that I was proud of. I'm sorry, I'm getting a piece of cheese and you're gonna have to hear it.</p>
00:32:00	Linda	Host	That's okay. That's okay.
00:32:02	Elisabeth	Guest	<i>[Chuckles.]</i> I'm starving.
00:32:03	Linda	Host	Get your cheese.
00:32:04	Elisabeth	Guest	<p>Thank you very much. I knew that it was a big moment for the character, but no, I had absolutely no idea that it was gonna be this meme that it became. Like... it's crazy. <i>[Laughs.]</i> I remember, at the time, my main focus was very much holding all of that stuff, trying to make them... trying to get them to make the box as light as possible, because I'm lazy.</p> <p><i>[Linda laughs.]</i></p> <p>And I was like—I just—I just kept making them take things out of the box and they were like, "We want it to be real!"</p> <p>And I was like, "Yeah, I don't! So, take things out of the box." And then I remember, like, trying to keep the cigarette in my mouth. It's actually very difficult to walk and keep a cigarette in your mouth, like that. I don't know how James Dean did it. And then the—<i>[stammering]</i> and it was like a lot of <i>[censored]</i> to do, walking. And that also looked cool. <i>[Laughs.]</i> So, I remember that.</p>
00:32:59	Linda	Host	But you didn't know, when you were shooting it. 'Cause I—I remember watching that episode, live, and thinking—as I was watching that episode live—"This is a—this is a famous shot, from <i>Mad Men</i> , right here."
00:33:10	Elisabeth	Guest	That's so funny. That's so interesting. Yeah. Like, we just—I mean, you know, it wasn't even her last scene. It wasn't her last shot. Like, we just didn't necessarily—nobody did! Nobody thought about that, about it that way.
00:33:24	Linda	Host	You know, I listened to an interview where you talked about <i>Mad Men</i> making it possible to be seen for more roles, but also then having to demonstrate that you could do a lot of other roles. Are you basically, now, out of that period where people associate you with a particular thing?

00:33:45	Elisabeth	Guest	<p>I guess so. I think that, yeah, the first thing I did after, like, getting kind of known for a character was <i>Top of the Lake</i>. Originally, Jane didn't want to see me for it, because she could only see me as Peggy. And the incredible casting director, Kristy McGregor—in Australia, who I will be forever grateful to—basically had a—we had a drink, in LA, and I showed up and I looked so different from Peggy. And she said, “Can I—can I take a picture of you?”</p> <p>And I was like, “Sure.” So, she took a picture of me and sent it to Jane and basically was like, “This person does not—this person is not Peggy.” And it was her support of me that helped to get me that role. And that was the first time I did something that I kind of felt like I had to prove it to myself, that I could do something other than Peggy. I mean, I knew I could. I knew I wanted to. But when you become well known for a character, it is daunting to go outside of that. That—I think that kind of pushed me out of that box, during <i>Mad Men</i>. And so, I didn't necessarily have the same kind of problem that somebody may have coming out of a long running show like that, because I had done this thing in the middle of <i>Mad Men</i>.</p> <p>[Linda affirms.]</p> <p>I almost, though, am not somebody who really cares. I don't really operate from a place of fear, when it comes to the—to the roles that I do. So, I don't—I just don't really worry about it, too much. I—you know, I consider myself a person who is an actor who plays different characters, who doesn't just play one character, and that's it. Like, I didn't really get too bogged down in, “Oh, I can never play a copywriter again. Or I could never play somebody in advertising. Or I could never do a period project again.” Or something like that. I don't care. Whatever's challenging me as an actor is, I guess, what's the most important to me.</p>
00:35:40	Linda	Host	<p>Yeah. Is there—is there anything, right now, that you think, “I've never done a role like 'xyz',” that you're interested in doing? I mean, you talked about, you know, things kind of making you think, “I wanna do more action. I wanna do different things.” Is there a wish list or is that asking for trouble, to have a wish list as an actor?</p>
00:35:58	Elisabeth	Guest	<p>I generally don't have, like, too much of a wish list, just because I do like to be surprised. But I think, as I've gotten to a place in my career where I'm developing more material and I'm producing almost everything I do, I've started to look at that. And, for me, there's a couple things. One, I really wanna—after playing June, who's such a heroine—although a complicated heroine and a flawed one—I really wanna play a villain. I really wanna play—I wanna play the bad guy. I wanna play the anti-hero. That's something I'm really interested in. And I am actually really interested in exploring an action film or something in that space. I think that I love those kinds of movies. I'm huge action movie fan. And so, I—</p>
00:36:43	Linda	Host	<p>Which ones do you love? What are your favorites?</p>
00:36:44	Elisabeth	Guest	<p>Oh my—all of them. I mean, the entire—the <i>Bourne</i> franchise, <i>Mission Impossible</i> franchise. Specifically, the later, Christopher McQuarrie films. I love... all the—you know, <i>Atomic Blonde</i> and <i>Salt</i> and <i>Tomb Raider</i> and, like, you know, all the ones that have women as the—as the heroes. You know. Obviously, those have a special</p>

place in my heart, as a woman. I love them all. *[Chuckles.]* And I've been on a huge action movie kick, too, recently. I think because I'm sort of working on developing something in that space. So, I—yeah, I'm really into that, right now.

00:37:23 Linda Host Lot of—lotta hand fighting in those movies.
 00:37:26 Elisabeth Guest Yeah! A lotta hand fighting. I love the idea of having to, like, train for three months or whatever and, like, I love the idea of having, like—like, crazy back muscles. You know? *[Laughs.]* Like—

00:37:41 Linda Host Yeah? You're living that—you're living that Marvel superhero life.
 00:37:44 Elisabeth Guest Yeeeah! Exactly, I, like, look at, like—at, you know, look at, like, Charlize Theron's back and I'm just like, "I want... that."

[They laugh.]

I wanna go do that! But I know myself and I know I'll never do it for myself. It'll only be for a role.

00:38:04 Linda Host I was watching *Her Smell*, just last night actually.
 00:38:07 Elisabeth Guest Cool.
 00:38:08 Linda Host And for people who aren't familiar with that, you play a rock star who—the film is essentially told in a series of five vignettes. And the middle one, in particular, is really hard—I mean, it's difficult to watch in the sense that it's very, you know, upsetting. 'Cause, as you spoke about earlier, she's dealing with addiction and some other issues, but I did watch that one thinking, "I—that seems physically exhausting." And is that—I'm curious about whether that kind of performance is physically exhausting.

00:38:42 Elisabeth Guest Yeah. It is. I would say *Her Smell*... *Her Smell*, even maybe above *The Invisible Man*, was the most physically challenging role I've ever done. Which is kind of crazy, considering the fights and the stuff in *Invisible Man*, and all that running—which was just out of control. But there's something about the mental and emotional and physical state of Becky, in that movie, that was actually challenging. And I'm not—I'm not one to, you know—I hate when actors say that something was hard, because it's like... *[sighing]* no it's not. And you're get paid and it's elective and you're fine. But I will say that that was a—that was challenging. You know, it was... a lot. That we were shooting a lot in a short amount of time. You know, it's a small movie and I was producing as well. And a looot of dialogue. A lot of craaaazy dialogue that didn't make any sense, but if you said it one word wrong, really didn't make any sense.

So, I would say that, yeah, that—and that act in particular, I think Act III is the one you're talking about, that you—the red—I call it the red act. Like, the one that's—where she's really unhinged.

[Linda agrees.]

00:40:03 Sound Effect Transition Yeah. Yeah! It was... it was physically kind of challenging. *[Laughs.]* Music swells and fades.

00:40:04 Clip Clip **Becky:** Hey, you're actually suing me, right? Or is that somebody else?

Speaker: *[Timidly.]* I'm suing.

Becky: Then I'll see you in court. *[In an exaggerated British accent.]* I caaan't understand! *[Dropping the accent.]* My mother, Mrs. Anya Alunchek, *[inaudible]*. "Mrs. Alunchek, do you swear solemnly that your daughter was born with a rare, neurological condition and is the passage an unforested illusion from the external world?!"

[In a southern accent.] "Judge, please! I just can't seem to get going 'til later at night? You think I wanna be late? Those people deserve a show!"

00:40:41 Sound Effect Transition

Music swells and fades.

00:40:42 Elisabeth Guest

She's just constantly coiled. She's constantly moving. She's either moving or about to move. And that was a bit of—it was also very hot. I don't like the heat and it was very hot.

[They laugh.]

You might have gathered from before we started this podcast—I don't like the heat and it was just hot. It was so hot on that set!

[Laughs.]

00:41:05 Linda Host

Yeah. It—I mean, you know, it's the red—it is the red segment.

00:41:10 Elisabeth Guest

Yes! And the set was built brilliantly to be slightly too small. So, those hallways were built small.

[Linda makes a sound of understanding.]

And the ceiling—yeah, yes. And the ceiling was built low to give you that really claustrophobic feeling. And we have our DP and camera operator—Sean Price Williams, who's like 6-something and not a small man—and he's like literally—and it's all hand-held, and he's literally bouncing off the walls on this set! Like, there's no room! There's no room for, like, the twelve people that we had, in there. I'm gonna bounce back, for one second, to early jobs—just to make sure...

00:41:44 Linda Host

I'm gonna bounce back, for one second, to early jobs—just to make sure...

00:41:48 Elisabeth Guest

[Laughing.] Just to make sure that you've embarrassed me thoroughly.

00:41:51 Linda Host

Not at all! Are you kidding me?! I love that!

00:41:53 Elisabeth Guest

"I'm just gonna go back and make sure that we've completely covered all the things that could possibly embarrass you."

00:42:00 Linda Host

Not at all. Not at all.

00:42:02 Elisabeth Guest

You didn't talk about *Escape to Witch Mountain*. We didn't get there! That's one of my early favorites.

00:42:07 Linda Host

Tell me about *Escape to Witch Mountain*!

00:42:09 Elisabeth Guest

Escape to Witch Mountain is a Disney classic! A Disney classic!

[Laughs.]

00:42:12 Linda Host

I know it is! Tell me about your love of *Escape to Witch Mountain*.

00:42:17 Elisabeth Guest

Again, took it very seriously and I remember there were two boys, you know. A boy played my brother and a boy who was, like, this other guy. And, you know, I was quite young. And there were two boys on set. It was very exciting! That's what I remember. *[Laughs.]* I remember the boys.

[Linda agrees.]

00:42:33 Sound Effect Transition

Music swells and fades.

00:42:35	Clip	Clip	<p><i>[Helicopter noise. The sound of children shouting in the background.]</i></p> <p>Music: Dramatic music.</p> <p>Speaker: Hey, squash it!</p> <p><i>[Children shout.]</i></p> <p>Anna: Stop! You promised no more bullying!</p> <p><i>[The music shifts in tone to something lighter.]</i></p> <p>Speaker: I wasn't bullying. It's a new game. See, he made it up.</p> <p>Anna: You okay?</p>
00:43:05	Sound Effect	Transition	<p>Danny: I'm Danny. Do I know you? Music swells and fades.</p>
00:43:07	Linda	Host	How did you start? How did you start acting, that young?
00:43:10	Elisabeth	Guest	<p>The story goes—legend has it, according to my mother—I was doing a production of <i>The Sound of Music</i> at my first ballet school. And I was playing, I think it's Gretel? Greta? Gretel? I don't know. The little one.</p> <p><i>[Linda agrees.]</i></p> <p>The littlest one. And I don't know why the <i>[censored]</i> we were doing <i>Sound of Music</i> at my ballet school, but we were. And an agent came and saw this little recital at this ballet school in the valley and she said to my mom, "Does she wanna—does she have any interest in acting?"</p> <p>And my mom was like, "Do you have any interest in acting?"</p> <p>And I was like, "Sure." And she kind of just kept checking with me. You know. We'd go on auditions and I'd get something, and I loved it and I had a great time and she kind of just kept going, you know, "Do you still like this? You still wanna do this?" And I did and... and here we are!</p>
00:44:00	Linda	Host	Yeah, well, and like I said—you seem to have navigated the transition out of child actor much more easily than many.
00:44:09	Elisabeth	Guest	<p>Well, I think that part of that is—and I have given that some thought. I think part of it is that I wasn't famous. I wasn't success—you know what I mean? I wasn't particularly successful at a very young age. My... career sort of—I was allowed to grow as a person, into at least a semi-adult before anyone knew who I was. And I think that really was very—I think that was very, very helpful. I think dealing with that kind of fame at a young age, I think, is incredibly daunting. And so, I didn't have that. And then my first job that anybody really cared about—besides, like—I guess I did <i>Girl, Interrupted</i> when I was 15 or 16. But I had makeup on, so you—nobody knew what I looked like. And then my first job in <i>The West Wing</i> was, like, a show grownups! You know? So, I just never really became a child star or anything. And I think that that really—that really helped.</p>

00:45:06	Linda	Host	Yeah. How do you feel about being famous, now?
00:45:10	Elisabeth	Guest	Um. I think that I'm not the kind of famous that I think—I don't know if I would love, you know. The kind where you really, actually can't leave the house or you can't—or you're followed by paparazzi. I'm not followed by paparazzi. Nobody cares. You know, I think that—and I—so, I don't have that kind of fame. I can't say how difficult that might actually be to have that. So, I feel like I'm in a pretty lucky position. People seem to like my work, they recognize me, they like the shows that I do, or the movies and they say nice things. And that's pretty much as far as it goes, for me. And so, I guess I'm still kind of lucky in that—in that respect.
00:45:53	Linda	Host	Yeah. Well, Elisabeth Moss, thank you so much for being here with <i>Bullseye!</i>
00:45:58	Elisabeth	Guest	Hey! It is absolutely my pleasure. Thank you so much for taking the time.
00:46:03	Linda	Host	Elisabeth Moss, everyone. If you wanna see <i>Shirley</i> , it's out June 5 th . It's on Hulu and it's in select drive ins. And if you haven't watched her in <i>Invisible Man</i> , let me tell you, it's creepy and she's great in it.
00:46:17	Music	Transition	Upbeat, cheerful transition music.
00:46:19	Linda	Host	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 various parts of the country. Here in DC, I'm missing everybody. But my indoor herb garden gave me a basil leaf as big as the palm of my hand.
			The show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our producer is Kevin Ferguson. Jesus Ambrosio is our associate producer. We get help from Casey O'Brien and Jordan Kawling. Our interstitial music is by Dan Wally, also known as DJW. Our theme song is by The Go! Team. Thanks to them and their label, Memphis Industries, for letting us use it.
			You can also keep up with the show on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Just search for <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> . And I guess that's about it! Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature sign off. Mine is, "Thanks, Jesse."
00:47:12	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>