

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	From MaximumFun.org and NPR, it's <i>Bullseye</i> .
00:00:15	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.
00:00:23	Jesse	Host	Kristen Bell is our first guest this week. She's the star of a new series, called <i>The Woman in the House Across the Street from the Girl in the Window</i> . That's the real title of the show. In it, Bell plays Anna. Anna lives in an upscale suburb and she's having a rough go of it, lately. Her young daughter has died tragically. Her husband left her. She doesn't work, really. She actually doesn't do much other than drink lots of red wine and stare out her window from a comfy looking West Elm chair. And it's from that chair that she witnesses a horrific crime across the street.

Or does she?

Anna's life is maybe a little too chaotic for her to be a reliable narrator. I should be clear about one thing, at this point: this show is a comedy. It's a pastiche and parody of a very specific type of movie and television show—maybe you've seen them on Lifetime or Netflix. Maybe you've heard a version on a true crime podcast. I guess you could call them domestic thrillers. What makes *The Woman in the House* work is its tone. It's not a gag-a-minute spoof, but a quiet, deadpan, genre work. You laugh when, for example, Anna calmly and coolly fills her wine glass up right to the brim and then, without picking it up, takes a sip from the top.

Interviewing Kristen this week is our pal, Helen Zaltzman. Helen is the host of *The Allusionist*, a podcast about language, linguistics, and why we speak the way we do. She's also one of the hosts of the podcast *Veronica Mars Investigations*, which recapped Kristen Bell's breakthrough show, *Veronica Mars*. There's truly no one else I can think of more qualified to interview Kristen Bell. We're thrilled Helen was willing to do it. Before we get into Kristen and Helen's conversation, let's kick things off with a clip from *The Woman in the House*. This comes from early on in the series. Anna has just ventured outside her home to welcome her new neighbors with a casserole. Only, it doesn't go so great. The sky opens up, rain starts pouring down, and a traumatized Anna collapses in the middle of the street.

			In this scene, her <u>very</u> handsome neighbor rescues Anna and brings her inside.
00:02:40	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:02:41	Clip	Clip	Music: Dramatic, airy music.

Neil (*The Woman in the House Across the Street from the Girl in the Window*): You alright?

Anna: *[Breathlessly.]* Yeah. I'm okay. Oh, god. I'm so sorry.

Neil: Do you want me to call someone?

[The sound of rain beats heavily against the windows.]

Anna: No. No, I'm fine. Uh. *[Sighs.]* I'm just... embarrassed. It's my stupid ombrophobia. Fear of the rain.

Neil: Oh.

Anna: I was trying to bring you a casserole.

Neil: *[Laughs.]* You didn't need to do that. Although, actually I bet Emma would've loved it. Don't think she likes my cooking anywhere near as much as her mum's.

Anna: Yeah. She told me that your wife passed.

Neil: Did she? Yeah.
Music swells and fades.

00:03:26 Sound Effect Transition

00:03:27 Helen Zaltzman Host Kristen Bell, welcome to *Bullseye*!

00:03:29 Kristen Bell Guest Thank you for having me!

00:03:31 Helen Host How are you feeling, today?

00:03:33 Kristen Guest I am very well, thank you! I'm a little chilly. I've got a blanket wrapped around me, 'cause Los Angeles is proving to be cold, today!

00:03:40 Helen Host Off brand.

00:03:41 Kristen Guest Yes, very off brand!

00:03:44 Helen Host You and I were both born in 1980. How is your mid-life crisis era, so far?

00:03:50 Kristen Guest You know what? It's alright. I've let my hair go back to its natural color. That's one of the things that I've changed. I thought, you know what? I'm gonna stop trying to be a bleach blonde.

00:04:02 Helen Host And 'cause it's audio, people can speculate as to what that color is.

[Kristen agrees.]

00:04:08 Kristen Guest Blue. Stripes.
Bright orange. Uh, it's going—it's going okay! I think that I'm feeling the majority of the effects of my age when I get up off the couch. I find that no matter how long I've been sitting—ten seconds or one hour—both my legs are asleep when I get up. I can't figure out a way to work around that. Does that happen to you?

00:04:29 Helen Host What I've noticed is that I have to make a little noise as I get up.

[Kristen affirms.]

00:04:37 Kristen Guest That's what happens. It's your 40th birthday and suddenly the noise is coming out.
Yeah, there's an audio track to—you have all of your—what do they call them in voice over? Efforts! There's an effort track to your life.
[Straining.] Hhhgh!

00:04:46	Helen	Host	When you were a child, what did you think your life would be like at 41?
00:04:51	Kristen	Guest	I had no idea what my life was going to be like. I wouldn't even know how to conceptualize that when I was little. When I was little, I knew that I had a very positive attitude by nature. And I knew that I wanted more culture, which is why I was hellbent on getting to New York as quickly as possible. But I couldn't have begun to theorize what would become of me, at 41.
00:05:22	Helen	Host	When you were little, you didn't like your name. What did you want to be called instead of Kristen?
00:05:29	Kristen	Guest	<i>[Without any hesitation.]</i> Smurfette. That was my first choice.
00:05:31	Helen	Host	Smurfette!
00:05:32	Kristen	Guest	Yes. I had a—when I was about I think four years old, I said, “Listen, Kristen is for the birds. I don't want it anymore. Call me Smurfette or don't call me at all.” And my parents were tempting to humor me, but there were moments on the playground where I wasn't coming, and they weren't gonna scream Smurfette. So, they sat me down. They said, “We can't make this work. Okay? So, we need to talk this through. Smurfette is not gonna do it.”
00:06:01	Helen	Host	And I said, “Fine. Call me Mathew.”
00:06:02	Kristen	Guest	Solid name! Yeah! I thought so! And they said, “Again, we're not—that's not gonna happen. That's—this is too much for us.” So, my mom said, “What about your middle name? What if we called you Annie?”
00:06:29	Helen	Host	And I said, “That'll do.” So, I was called Annie until I was 16. And to this day, if my sisters or my grandparents or my aunts and uncles call, they will ask for Annie Bell. It's like a bunch of different avatars of yourself. I wonder what Smurfette Bell would be doing, now.
00:06:35	Kristen	Guest	Wow! What a killer stage name. Don't you think?
			<i>[Helen laughs.]</i>
00:06:44	Helen	Host	Do you think I would've had <u>more</u> success or less success if I was named Smurfette Bell? Do you think you would've had inclinations towards different industries with a name like Smurfette Bell?
00:06:49	Kristen	Guest	Well played. Good point. Possibly. Would I—I would've been—
00:06:52	Helen	Host	Don't know which.
00:06:53	Kristen	Guest	—open to different things.
00:06:55	Helen	Host	At this stage of your career, what are you looking for in the projects that you take on?
00:07:01	Kristen	Guest	That my day-to-day is happy. Sincerely. Ever since I had kids. I mean, certainly it has to be a project that I read, and I think I would watch—that I like, that tickles me in some way. But as far as what the genre is or what it's about is completely irrelevant. What is relevant to me is my day-to-day experience. I have a very strict no jerks policy. Life is too short. I don't wanna work with people who are miserable or make others miserable. I wanna work with people who are trying hard, who are generally happy, are kind. And I want the experience on set to be fun for everyone.
00:07:45	Helen	Host	Do you have a test to see whether someone's likely to be a jerk?
00:07:50	Kristen	Guest	Yeah, you call around two other people that they've worked with. <i>[Chuckles.]</i>

[Helen makes an intrigued sound.]

And they're not shy on—yeah, people—I mean, people talk. If I'm submitted something and I don't know the writer or the director, I will absolutely call a variety of people who have worked with them, and I usually get a pretty honest answer. And I have passed on projects because I've heard that it's just not gonna be fun.

00:08:16 Helen Host
00:08:18 Kristen Guest
00:08:19 Helen Host
00:08:20 Kristen Guest
00:08:22 Helen Host
00:08:24 Kristen Guest
00:08:25 Helen Host

So, you a *Veronica Mars* style background check.

Have to.

Essential, yeah.

Has to be done. That and I go through their trash.

[Chuckles.] Do you bump their number plates?

Have to.

We'll get on to *Veronica* in a bit, but your new Netflix show is *The Woman in the House Across the Street from the Girl in the Window*. And while I collect myself from saying the title, tell us a little about what the show's about.

00:08:38 Kristen Guest

It is a satirical psychological thriller. It builds in both suspense and absurdity. You know, "The Woman in the" there's been so many. And this genre, particularly the ones that are written by women for women that have a female protagonist, it's very formulaic, but it's also bulletproof. If you have a good mystery and there are some red herrings, people will watch to the end. It's just an absolutely bulletproof genre. So, our writers, Rachel Ramras, Hugh Davidson, and Larry Dorf—who are from the *Groundlings*—they're very experienced comedy writers and performers and I think they're brilliant. They just decided it was time to lovingly poke fun at this genre.

And everything in this show is laughing at itself—from how much wine she's drinking to the—her affliction, ombrophobia, to the obligatory line that everyone has to have, "I know what I saw."

[Helen chuckles.]

00:09:42 Sound Effect Transition
00:09:43 Clip Clip

Music swells and fades.

Music: Ominous, eerie music.

Anna: Someone killed her! I saw the blood!

Officer Spitz: Officer Walters, do those Olympia flight attendants wear scarves?

Officer Walters: I believe they do. Red scarves.

Officer Spitz: Mm. So, maybe, from all the way over here, that red scarf could look like blood, especially if you've had all this wine? Maybe took some of these pills?

Anna: No. I know—I know what this looks like, but um. *[Sniffs.]* I swear, I know what I saw.

00:10:08 Sound Effect Transition
00:10:09 Helen Host

Music swells and fades.

I was wondering how much training you had to do to carry wine glasses that were full right up to meniscus level.

00:10:17	Kristen	Guest	<p>Listen, that was probably the hardest part of the—no. Crawling in the rain was harder. But we had this—a lot of the gags we did in the show were in preproduction. And then when we shot the show, we played it totally straight. But for instance, there are—you know, there are red flags all over her apartment, beginning with—when you watch any of these shows, any of them, they're always a preschool teacher and dressed head to toe in Gucci. How? Where do they get their money? How?! Well, that's funny. Right? So, we're playing up all of that.</p>
			<p>When you see my character for the first time and she's uncorking a wine bottle, the red flag you might notice is that there's a bowl full of 400 wine corks in front of her. Like, she drinks too much wine. The prop department was filling the opaque wine bottles to exact surface tension, so that every time I poured, I knew that I could empty the entire bottle into the glass because it was premeasured so that it just seemed like she was very extra. Everything in the show is very extra.</p>
00:11:20	Helen	Host	<p>To perform parody sounds quite tricky, 'cause you have to play it seriously enough that it's convincing, but not so much that people miss that it's supposed to be funny.</p>
00:11:30	Kristen	Guest	<p>That was the hardest line for me to ride. And the other actors. We felt like we were on a tightrope, because a lot of the interactions—Tom Riley, who plays Neil, and I have discussed this numerous times. Our scenes—which are somewhat romantic. Tom is the handsome neighbor who moves in across the street and, you know, what people might realize throughout the series is that every different flavor of him that you're seeing is through my character's eyes. So, when my character thinks he's handsome and that he's the answer to all her problems, you're seeing this beautiful, loving father. And then when my character becomes suspicious of him, you're seeing this evil guy. When we would have our dialogue lines, they were pretty on the nose. And to the point that, in previous projects, Tom or I would go, "Huh. Is there a different way maybe to say this? I want this to be more natural, or—"</p>
			<p>We both had to completely surrender to some bad dialogue and just let the genre take charge.</p>
00:12:34	Helen	Host	<p>But if you're committing, your character Anna goes through some disturbing experiences, even in a comedic show.</p>
			<p><i>[Kristen agrees.]</i></p>
			<p>Mentally and physically, it looked like you really got knocked around quite a bit in some parts.</p>
00:12:48	Kristen	Guest	<p>Yes. It—look, I was tired at the end of the day, for sure. But I was still giggling. That's the thing. You know, my character has had—she's a bit downtrodden. She's sympathetic and you—we want, in these movies, to create a character—especially the female protagonists that you wanna root for. You wanna be like, "No, put down that wine." And it's also a very interactive genre. This is one of the only genres where someone will scream at the television, "Don't go in the basement. Don't go up those stairs." And so, we wanted people to yearn for her to change. And as soon as they get on her side and she gets her life together, start to doubt whether or not she's crazy.</p>

00:13:34 Helen Host And I think we kind of nailed that.
How many blue CorningWare casserole dishes did you get through during the shoot?

00:13:40 Kristen Guest Oh my god. So many. You know, the casserole dish actually had its own dressing room, 'cause it was like a food safe—it was obviously during COVID, and no one could go in 'cause there was food being prepared. Apparently, and I learned this only when I started posting about the show, those Pyrex or CorningWare, whatever they're called, they're worth quite a bit of money. They're vintage pieces. And initially, some people were disturbed that we were just racking 'em. And I had to explain that these were just white bowls that we had stenciled on; no actual CorningWare was harmed during the making of this show. But yeah, we went through—oh, god, I don't know. 20? 30? 40, maybe?

00:14:25 Helen Host 40!

00:14:26 Kristen Guest Just smashing them.

00:14:28 Helen Host Oh! Was it somewhat therapeutic to smash a lot of ceramic?

00:14:32 Kristen Guest Incredibly. To drop things and throw things, uh, yes, was incredibly therapeutic.

00:14:41 Helen Host You said you found the character through her hair. How does that work?

00:14:46 Kristen Guest I—you know, there's this sense—there's this sort of *Rear Window*, Hitchcockian sense that I wanted people to have while they were watching the show before they knew they were allowed to laugh. I suppose when we stuck with the title, which was—I was absolutely hellbent on the fact that we needed to keep the title. There was a point where we were gonna shorten it and I said, "No, I think people need to know they're allowed to laugh." But I still wanted this Hitchcockian vibe. And because my character looks out the window for [chuckling] 90% of the show, she's looking through these curtains and I kind of wanted this thick, French fringe bang piece to be the curtains of her own face and just have this tiny little face peeking out from her bang curtains, looking out from the window and sort of double up on the joke.

00:15:37 Helen Host Have you ever found yourself in an intriguing window-based snooping situation?

00:15:43 Kristen Guest Not staring out through the window, but there was a little drama on my street—and I'll spare you the details, but I did once go through someone's trash.

00:15:56 Helen Host Did you find anything good?

00:15:57 Kristen Guest No. I wish I had. I was really looking for clues, but nothing was coming up. I mean, there's not that—besides that one instance of our neighborly drama, I'm big into this app called Nextdoor. That's kind of my window into the neighborhood. It's this app where everyone with certain zip codes can communicate and you talk about when your house was burglarized or the other day someone found an iguana on someone else's car. "Is this your iguana?" was the title of the post.

I find it incredibly thrilling to log into Nextdoor. I initially joined because I wanted to help like find lost dogs. If I'd see a—you know, a stray dog, I could say, "Is this your dog?" And help corral it. And then, one day I open it up and I see a picture of two dogs, and it says, "Two dogs joyriding through the neighborhood. One has three legs." They're my dogs. They're my dogs.

00:16:52	Helen	Host	Joyriding.
00:16:53	Kristen	Guest	Found my dogs on Nextdoor. Some sweet neighbor had posted. So, it came full circle. But it's quite an entertaining message board.
00:17:03	Jesse	Host	We've got more with Kristen Bell still to come after a break. Stick with us. It's <i>Bullseye</i> , from MaximumFun.org and NPR.
00:17:11	Music	Transition	Bright, chiming synth with a steady beat.
00:17:16	Jesse	Host	Welcome back to <i>Bullseye</i> . I'm Jesse Thorn. Our guest is Kristen Bell. She's the star of so many television shows and movies, including but not limited to <i>Veronica Mars</i> , <i>Frozen</i> , <i>Gossip Girl</i> , <i>Heroes</i> , and <i>The Good Place</i> . Her newest project is a TV show called <i>The Woman in the House Across the Street from the Girl in the Window</i> . It's a parody of domestic thriller movies, like <i>The Woman in the Window</i> and <i>The Girl on the Train</i> .
			Interviewing her is our correspondent, Helen Zaltzman. She's the host of the podcast <i>The Allusionist</i> . Let's get back into their conversation.
00:17:50	Helen	Host	Investigating crimes was the occupation of one of your iconic characters, Veronica Mars, who we meet as a private detective when she's still in high school investigating her best friend's murder. You won the role in your early 20s, having been turned down for a role on Broadway. What a different life that could've been. That could've been what Smurfette Bell was doing, just having gotten <i>Baby June</i> and then not <i>Veronica Mars</i> .
00:18:19	Kristen	Guest	I think about that more often than I would like to admit, because I wanted to be in that show so bad. I mean, I loved <i>Gypsy</i> . I wanted <u>so</u> badly, and I was so close, and it was a real heartbreak to not get it. And looking back, I'm like, "What a major life lesson to know that one of my biggest failures led to the rest of my life." 'Cause I never would've moved out to LA had I booked that show.
00:18:51	Helen	Host	Veronica goes through a more difficult time than you would hope the average person—because her best friend's been murdered. Her mother is AWOL.
00:19:01	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:19:02	Clip	Clip	Music: Suspenseful and upbeat electronic music.
			Veronica (Veronica Mars): Oh my god. The Lilly Kane murder file. What's Dad been up to? Some of these notes are less than a month old. The confessed killer is already on death row, but Dad still hasn't given up on the case. My surveillance photo from the Camelot? Why is it in the Lilly Kane file? What was Mom doing there and what business did she have with Jake Kane? And the million-dollar question, why did Dad lie to me?
00:19:29	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:19:30	Helen	Host	That's just right at the beginning! I'm not even spoiling any episodes beyond the pilot!
00:19:35	Kristen	Guest	That's a lot. That's a lot. But you know—
00:19:36	Helen	Host	It's a lot.
00:19:37	Kristen	Guest	It doesn't even have to be comparable to a personal situation. The relatability comes in the way you see her handle her problems. And you know, there's always this sort of like character in your head when you're writing, and Rob Thomas's character is a 17-year-old girl. And a feisty one. And one who refuses to be under anyone's thumb. And I think seeing that was a—I don't know. If someone else

00:20:16	Helen	Host	had played Veronica Mars, I feel like I would've watched it and loved it, 'cause I love Rob Thomas's writing that much and I think it's very cool to have an example of a girl out there like that. So, <i>Veronica Mars</i> , there were the three original series on the WB and the CW. There was the Kickstarted movie in 2014. There were the two canonical novels. There was the Hulu season four in 2019. Any thoughts on where you would like to take the character next? <i>Veronica on Ice</i> or graphic novels?
00:20:35	Kristen	Guest	Ooh, graphic novels could be cool!
00:20:37	Helen	Host	Wouldn't that be good?
00:20:38	Kristen	Guest	You know, that's the first time I've ever thought about it. 'Cause to be honest, I—when I talk about Veronica, I talk about her because she takes up this huuge portion of my heart. And I'm everyday grateful that I even got to say the words that Rob wrote. I mean, everything I'm complimenting about the show is because of him and the writing room. Diane and a ton of the people that contributed. I know that there was drama with how we ended the Hulu series. And I—you know, there's—because we chose to kill a character off, a beloved one. But I understood why Rob and Diane wanted to do that. Because if the show were to continue, from a writer's perspective, you have to open up a love line, and there's only so much tension you can put into a relationship, particularly when one of the people has already worked out all their issues therapeutically. There's only so much you can manufacture.
			So, I understood why they did it, but it made a looot of people very upset. So, I don't know if Veronica's gonna need another, you know, big breath of ten years before she comes back, but I will always be there.
00:21:48	Helen	Host	What do you feel about the fan investment in the character of Veronica Mars and the show and the world of it? Is that good because it helped get the film and the reboot into production? Or is it troublesome because they're furious when they don't agree with the plot?
00:22:06	Kristen	Guest	Well, the short answer is both, but I'll amend the former. It's not good because it helped the reboot and the movie and the third season; it is the <u>only</u> thing. It is purely and utterly responsible for the third season. I'll start there. The third season of <i>Veronica Mars</i> was on the bubble, which means the show might not have been picked up. They wanted—the network loved it. Critics loved it. But it didn't have a huge audience. And the fans were so <u>epically</u> creative! There's an episode where I hide a dollar bill in someone's pocket and I say, "Open the locker" or the pocket or something. And I say, "Read it." And I've written on the dollar bill, "Veronica Mars is smarter than me." And he reads it.
00:22:50	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:22:51	Clip	Clip	<i>[Distant chatter in the background.]</i>

Veronica: Process of elimination. I didn't do it.

Speaker 1: What, me?! Are you crazy?!

Veronica: How else do you explain the \$2.50 in your wallet?

Speaker 2: Cough it up.

Speaker 1: Big deal. This money's mine. It doesn't prove anything!

Veronica: Why don't you take a closer look at the one on top?
Read what's written over Grant's head.

Speaker 1: Veronica Mars is... smarter than me.

00:23:14 Sound Effect Transition
00:23:15 Kristen Guest
00:23:21 Helen Host
00:23:23 Kristen Guest

Veronica: *[Playfully.]* Oh, you. Stop it!
Music swells and fades.

They sent dollar bills in to the network that said, "Veronica Mars is smarter than me." They—
Is that still legal tender? If you've written on it?
No. They're all in jail now, because it is—this is the point!

[Helen laughs.]

They're in jail. I put them there. I turned every single one of 'em in.

00:23:30 Helen Host
00:23:31 Kristen Guest

No, they also—
That'd be impressive.
They also hired a plane to fly over the CW to say—I think it was like, "Renew Veronica Mars" or "Mars Investigations" or something. They did sooo many creative campaigns. And I, over—at the beginning of *Veronica Mars*, realized—after my first Comic Con experience—how much I love people that love things. Recognizing passion in someone is the sweetest, most fun, most authentic thing you can be! Like, I love it. And so, the fact that these fans wanted to fight for the show, it makes my heart swell. I can't tell you how grateful I am to be on the other end of it. And that's the other reason why I say I'll always be here to do it, because they deserve it. Since we're talking about fandom, you're also somewhat publicly open about your personal life, in interviews and via podcasts, including your husband, Dax Shepard's, podcast, *Armchair Expert*. Which makes listeners feel like they really know your life.

00:24:20 Helen Host

[They chuckle and Kristen confirms.]

00:24:47 Kristen Guest

But is that sort of like constructing a public role of Kristen Bell?
A little bit, but it feels inauthentic to say that, because most of the time it's just me with like verbal diarrhea in an interview, saying something and then figuring out how I'm gonna have to talk about it for the next four years. No, I mean, when I first was with my husband, we were very territorial about details of our relationship. And that was also at a time when it felt very predator and prey to be on display as an actor, for some reason. Because this target would be on your back and all of the sudden you'd be a character in these magazines that were trying to get sold. It just—the whole thing was weird.

But with social media and the ability for you to speak directly to people, I think we must have gotten—I don't remember the exact moment, but we must have gotten positive reinforcement somewhere after we said, "Well, we're married and we go to therapy," or something. Which we do. And we very much believe in

it. And we must have gotten positive reinforcement, because then we sort of started opening up about everything. And the theory behind that is, you know, we're all just monkeys. And you watch other monkeys by example. You know? You look at the example of those around you. And it goes back to the *Veronica Mars* thing, too. Like, if I can be Veronica Mars and help someone through a tough time, well what if I can—as Kristen Bell—be honest about my battle with anxiety and depression? And be more authentic because I'm giving this display of someone who's always bubbly and happy, but what if I tell people, "Sometimes it's really hard behind the scenes."

And you'll never see me like that, because I don't get out of bed on those days. *[Chuckling.]* But also, because life is hard and that's okay! And I just want human connection. With any story I share personally or any story I do that's fiction, I want human connection and relatability and recognition. But there are some things we do keep private. We keep our kids very private and that's for safety and security concerns and they know that. But yeah, I don't know. I just—it feels more authentic to be honest and not have to construct some sort of image of myself.

00:26:54 Helen Host

But do your kids ever hear about something you—a cute anecdote you've told about them that might be a bit embarrassing and they're like, "Oh, Mom!"

00:27:00 Kristen Guest

Oh, I think that has happened once or twice, yeah. Because my daughter—my youngest daughter was leaving these threatening notes around the house.

[Helen reacts in surprise.]

She was learning to write, and she was writing like, "Don't come in. Delta's starving to death. Only Mom can come in." And it was like completely misspelt.

00:27:14 Helen Host

Drama!

00:27:15 Kristen Guest

So dramatic. By the way, she was like four. And then she would also like put a half of a cookie in a plastic bag and say, "Don't eat this, or else." And I think I posted about that and maybe like one of her teachers said, "Oh, I saw that you had done something at home."

And she came home, and she said, "Stop posting about me!"

And I was like, "You know what? You're right. You're absolutely right. That's your story, and I will stop."

00:27:38 Helen Host

You've talked quite a bit about dealing with depression and anxiety. And when you're in those phases of feeling those conditions, do you think, "Well, I've got enough to handle without having destigmatize them for anyone else, as well."

00:27:51 Kristen Guest

No. I think that's my responsibility. I've been blessed with an incredible life. I've been—I mean, I hit the jackpot. There are so many people who wanna be actors and actresses. And I was in the right place at the right time and had a *[snorts]* decent amount of talent to be passable. And I've been kind to people that I've met, and hopefully created some goodwill. It is my responsibility to, I think, be honest about being a human being. You know, that's the root, I think, of everything—the foundation of like life on Earth is like just connect and be a good example. We're all trying. Life gives

everybody a different hand of cards. Some people have it a lot worse than you are—than you do, and everyone’s doing the best they can with what they’ve got.

And based on the hand that I was dealt, I can buck up and be responsible for helping destigmatize something that I think is important for people to hear.

00:28:48 Helen Host Well, if we’re talking about putting good into the world and trying to be the best version of yourself you can be, let’s talk about *The Good Place*—the sitcom you were on for four seasons about—well, it I guess is about moral philosophy.

[Kristen agrees.]

00:29:09 Kristen Guest Did you know much moral philosophy before you started? No. And when the show was pitched to me, we discovered that Mike Schur, who wrote the show, and I were both equally as obsessed with what it means to be a good person and that he had been thinking about it and actually reading books and I had just been in my head about it. And he said, “I wanna create this show.”

And I said, “This is wild and weird and I’m in.” And he actually read... I mean, I’m throwing out a number, but I think he probably read 25 moral philosophy books? And they are DENSE. Okay? These are not easy reads, right? And he tried to package it all into this digestible sitcom with some comedy so that people would watch it. And I think now, being used—we’ve heard it’s being used in philosophy classes in colleges. It’s being analyzed in high schools. I think packaging something in a joke is the easiest way to get someone to pay attention to it. And even if it’s a really hard issue. And now, he’s written a book that our cast helps narrate and it’s called *How to Be Perfect: The Correct Answer to Every Moral Decision*. [Chuckles.]

00:30:15 Helen Host Wow, every one?

00:30:17 Kristen Guest Every single one! ‘Cause he did it! It’s done. So, no one else needs to do it. And it’s brilliant! And I’ve read it and it’s incredible. And you know, if you really break it down, he goes through everybody. I mean, Kant and David Hume and utilitarianism and Philippa Foot and all these wonderful people. But ultimately, kind of comes to the conclusion that it’s just: are you a better person than you were yesterday? Like, the only person you need to compare yourself to is who you were yesterday. Are you trying? That’s all. Are you trying? You know?

00:30:47 Sound Effect Transition Music swells and fades.

00:30:48 Clip Clip **Music:** Quirky, playful music that fades out as Michael speaks.

Michael (*The Good Place*): For months, you and I have been debating are people good or bad—but as I watched those three people pick themselves up and dust themselves off, I realized we’ve been asking the wrong question. What matters isn’t if people are good or bad. What matters is if they’re trying to be better today than they were yesterday. You asked me where my hope comes from. That’s your answer.

00:31:13 Sound Effect Transition Music swells and fades.

00:31:14 Helen Host What's it like to spend years working with a bunch of people in the cast and crew and then the show wraps and suddenly you're not seeing them every day?

00:31:24 Kristen Guest Oh, it's a big-time bummer. I'll tell you. It—you know, movies have always been, to me, a little bit like summer camp. 'Cause they're over in two or three months and it's more likely that you won't see those people again. But television is, to me, like high school. You really get close to people. And I think it's why I've gravitated towards television. I like seeing the same people every day. I like knowing that there's a comfort zone in the room and that I know these people well. And it's sad, a little bit! But at the same time, you know that everyone you worked with was wonderful. They'll get other jobs and I guess you just look forward to that exciting moment when you see the same dolly grip on another set and you get to, you know, be excited to see each other again.

00:32:31 Helen Host But it is a bit of a bummer. You create a wonderful work environment—at least the sets I've been on—that's very loving and very supportive and just fun. Just fun! You know? The cast and crew of *The Good Place*—I had a real hard time when that show ended. I had a real hard time. I was really, really sad.

00:32:44 Kristen Guest Yeah, 'cause unlike *Veronica Mars*, it seems like that show very firmly shut the door at the end. No further series. Was that deliberate so that you didn't have the fans going, "When are you coming back? When are you coming back?"

00:32:44 Kristen Guest *[Chuckles.]* No, weirdly it was—it's way more beautiful than that. So, Mike Schur—who, you know, he was on *The Office* and created *Parks and Rec* and *Brooklyn 99* and he's a beautiful comedy writer, but also a really good person. And he said when he started out, he goes, "I don't know how long this show's gonna go. Maybe 2 seasons, maybe 15. I really don't know. But it's about the story and it'll never be about anything more than the story and what we're trying to say with these characters." Right?

00:34:14 Jesse Host And he—by god, did he commit to that. That's the only time I've ever hung—almost hung up on him is when he called at the end of the third season and I could sense that he was about to say, "I figured it out. I figured out the ending and this is gonna be the last one. And let me pitch you the ending." And I almost hung up on him. So, I said, "NO! Don't do it! Please! We love this job." But he's really sincere in his writing. As funny as he is and as much as he'll package it in a fart joke, he's really sincere and he found a way to write his major point into it, which is that all that matters is that you're trying. And he felt that it would've exhausted storylines to go much longer. And I don't know of any other show creator that has canceled their own show. Because the network did not want the show to end. The network said keep going, but he has so much integrity. He said, "No, I've found the stopping point. It's more important this way."

00:34:14 Jesse Host But he could've done six more seasons and made a bajillion dollars and called it a day. But that's not who he is. We'll wrap up with Kristen Bell in just a minute. When we come back from the break, Kristen tells us the best and worst part about being Kristen Bell. And she is an expert in that topic. It's *Bullseye*, from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

00:34:31	Promo	Clip	Music: Exciting, distorted techno music.
			Jesse Thorn: Did your neighbor back into your car?!
			John Hodgman: Bring that case to Judge Judy.
			<i>[Gavel bang.]</i>
			Jesse: Think the mailman might be the real father?
			John: Give that one to Judge Mathis.
			<i>[Gavel bang.]</i>
			Jesse: But. <i>[Music cuts out suddenly.]</i> Does your mom want you to flush her ashes down the toilet at Disney World when she passes away?
			John: Now, that's my jurisdiction.
			<i>[Relaxed music fades in.]</i>
			John: Welcome to the court of Judge John Hodgman, where the people are real, the disputes are real, and the stakes are often unusual.
			Speaker 1: If I got arrested for dumping your ashes in The Jungle Cruise, it would be an honor.
			Speaker 2: I don't wanna be part of somebody getting a super yacht.
			Speaker 3: I don't know at what point you wanna go into this, but we've had a worm bin before.
			Jesse: Available free right now at MaximumFun.org .
			John: <i>Judge John Hodgman</i> , the court of last resort when your wife won't stop pretending to be a cat and knocking the clean laundry over.
			<i>[A meow.]</i>
00:35:18	Music	Transition	Upbeat synth with a steady beat.
00:35:23	Jesse	Host	It's <i>Bullseye</i> . I'm Jesse Thorn. Our guest is Kristen Bell. She's the star of <i>The Good Place</i> , <i>Veronica Mars</i> , and the new Netflix series <i>The Woman in the House Across the Street from the Girl in the Window</i> .
00:35:37	Helen	Host	Our correspondent is Helen Zaltzman. In 2020, you decided to stop voicing the character of Molly in the animated series <i>Central Park</i> because the character's biracial. What was going through your mind when you were coming to that decision?
00:35:49	Kristen	Guest	Oh god, so much. So, so much. Well, I mean, ultimately it just felt like—there were a couple reasons. Right? Number one, shouldn't someone who is—should have the opportunity, someone who's

biracial should have this opportunity. Period. But also, if there was a little girl who googled this part, I would want her to see herself. She deserves to see herself. And it didn't like hit me or any of us 'til, I think, too late—since we'd started—but like, you know, the reality of that show was we were a bunch of friends who wanted to do a show together and pitched it before anything was actually written. And half of us are Black and half of us are White, and it just worked out that that was the character I was playing. And I—you know—regret not questioning it in the beginning. But you live and you learn, and when I came to my realization, everyone was obviously very supportive of like, “Yes, absolutely.”

And Emmy Raver-Lampman, who took over, is incredible. I mean, she is incredible. For so many different reasons. Not just for voicing Molly, but she's an incredible actress and she's an incredible singer and she was in *Hamilton* and she's in this new Liam Neeson movie. Like, she's just—and also, has become a friend. It's her role. She deserved that role. There's no other sort of emotional attachment to it. And then, when someone—when a little girl who's biracial googles who plays that part, they'll see the correct person. And then it just feels right.

00:37:24 Helen Host

You're also producing shows. You executive produced *The Woman in the House Across the Street from the Girl in the Window*. What draws you to projects there? What do you want to achieve with that part of your work?

00:37:36 Kristen Guest

I like being involved in projects from the inception, because preproduction is really interesting to me. Putting together the team and really discovering what the tone of a show is, whether it's—you know, I've produced some children's television, this show on Amazon called *Do, Re, Mi*, which is veiled in entertainment but will really give your kid a music education. [Chuckles.] And this show called *The Tiny Chef*, which will be out on Nickelodeon later this year, that I'm doing with Imagine. I like producing because you get to have ideas behind the scenes, and you don't have to be camera ready. You don't have to wear any makeup to be a producer. It's kind of—it's nice. It's a nice change.

But I don't know. I have a lot of ideas, I guess. I don't know. It just feels fun to put together projects. Now that I've been here for a minute and I—and I think I know the right—or the—maybe a right way to do some things. Like, particularly in children's television. And then when I was pitched *The Woman in the House Across the Street from the Girl in the Window*, I had loved the writers and I loved Will and I loved Gloria Sanchez, the company. And I also thought this was a really big swing that I was ready to take. This was probably the most unsafe project I've ever done, because if this show didn't work tonally, it would've been a disaster. But it—I think it did work tonally! Because people are getting it and they're laughing a lot. And the people that aren't getting it are even funnier.

[Helen laughs.]

Like, if you don't get it and you don't realize why it's funny, that—even to me—makes me chuckle. So, I don't know. I—yeah. Producing is intriguing to me.

00:39:18	Helen	Host	I don't want to offer any spoilers, but at the very end, there seems to be a hint towards maybe more <i>Woman in the House Across the Street from the Girl in the Window</i> . Do you think that's a possibility?
00:39:30	Kristen	Guest	I think it's a possibility. But who—but who knows? I mean, here is—well, [shorts] what a great way to encapsulate that genre. "But—or will they?!"
			[Helen laughs.]
			The reality is this genre lives and dies on suspense. And this genre <u>always</u> ends in a cliffhanger. So, we had to end it in a cliffhanger. It wasn't that we're currently writing a season two. I mean maybe. Who knows! Maybe we'll all come back as different characters and do a new murder mystery. Maybe murders will follow Anna around. Who knows? That's not necessarily in discussions now, but the goal was to end this genre with a cliffhanger that it deserved.
00:40:09	Helen	Host	Why is it always women in these titles? I know <i>Rear Window</i> , which is kind of the analogue for people staring through a window and seeing a murder, was a man. But the 21 st century ones, always women.
00:40:20	Kristen	Guest	I don't know! I mean, this—well, this is a really female-owned genre! That's the thing; a lot of these are written by women for women. You know? Like, you have like Gillian Flynn and like people who <u>dominate</u> in this space. <i>Gone Girl</i> , <i>Girl on the Train</i> . And then there's just an—like, an exponential amount in the variety on the newsstands or in a Barnes and Noble. You know? <i>Woman in the Floorboards</i> . Some of the most absurd titles ever. But again, the formula totally works. I don't know why it's dominant. The—I mean, I'm a woman and I like mysteries and whodunits, but I certainly don't think that's for every woman. I have no idea. I just know I like—it's entertaining to me.
00:41:08	Helen	Host	Just quickly, as we wrap up, what is the best and worst thing about being Kristen Bell?
00:41:16	Kristen	Guest	Oh lord, I'm her and I don't even know! Um, the best thing is... uh, it might be the same thing. I wake up with a pretty clean slate every morning. I have a terrible memory. So, when I wake up in the morning, it's like I've never been on Earth before. I don't really hold grudges. I'm excited. Like, I—it just feels fresh. Earth feels fresh. But that also might be the worst thing. [Chuckles.] 'Cause I have an absolutely terrible memory!
00:41:49	Helen	Host	It's just a daily reboot.
00:41:51	Kristen	Guest	It kind of is! I mean, I'm not gonna—I don't have much to complain about. I don't—I don't know. I wanna say something enlightened and funny, but I have a really lucky life and I know it.
00:42:03	Helen	Host	Wow. Kristen Bell, thank you so much for joining us on <i>Bullseye</i> .
			[Music fades in.]
00:42:07	Kristen	Guest	Thanks for having me.
00:42:08	Music	Music	Buzzy electronic music.
00:42:10	Jesse	Host	Kristen Bell. Her new TV show—I'm gonna say this title in full on final time on the program—is <i>The Woman in the House Across the Street from the Girl in the Window</i> . It's streaming right now on Netflix. Pour yourself a completely full glass of red wine, up to the top, then bring your mouth down to it on the table to drink out of it so it doesn't spill. And enjoy the show.

Our thanks to our friend Helen Zaltzman for interviewing Kristen. If you haven't ever listened to her podcast *The Allusionist*—that's A-L-L, Allusionist—you absolutely should. It's an amazing show. Helen is one of the great geniuses of podcasting. Go check out *The Allusionist* wherever you download podcasts.

[Music fades out.]

00:42:58 Music Transition
00:43:00 Jesse Host

Upbeat, cheerful music.

That's the end of another episode of *Bullseye*. *Bullseye*, created from the homes me and the staff of Maximum Fun, in and around greater Los Angeles, California. I recently got the 311 app. And this is the dorkiest public radio-est host thing I've ever done in my life. But now, when I walk my dog, if I see abandoned furniture on the sidewalk, I pull out my app and report it. Anyway. If you live in Los Angeles, you can too! Just download that 311 app or call 311.

The show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our senior producer is Kevin Ferguson. Our producer is Jesus Ambrosio. Production fellows at Maximum Fun are Richard Robey and Valerie Moffat. We get booking help from Mara Davis. Our interstitial music is by Dan Wally, also known as DJW. He has a collection of it, by the way, on Bandcamp, which you can buy from him. It's called the—search for DJW and *Bullseye* on Bandcamp and you'll find it. It's pay what you want! Our theme song is called "Huddle Formation". It's recorded by the group The Go! Team. Thanks to them and to their label, Memphis Industries, for sharing it.

Bullseye is also on YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook. You can follow us in those places. We will share with you all of our interviews. I think that's it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature signoff.

00:44:22 Promo Promo

Speaker: *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn* is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.

[Music fades out.]