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**Transition:** Gentle, trilling music with a steady drumbeat plays under the dialogue.

**Promo:** *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn* is a production of [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) and is distributed by NPR.

**Music:** “Huddle Formation” from the album *Thunder, Lightning, Strike* by The Go! Team—a fast, upbeat, peppy song. Music plays as Jesse speaks, then fades out.

**Jesse Thorn:** It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. A quick warning before we get into this next segment. In it, we talk about violence our guest experienced at the hands of law enforcement. So, if you or someone you're with is sensitive to that kind of thing, we wanted to give you a heads up.

My guest is Kali Reis. She's one of the greatest boxers in the world. 19-7-1 overall. She has two championships in two weight classes. She's also an up-and-coming actor. She was nominated for an Independent Spirit Award for her part in *Catch the Fair One*. That was her acting debut. She grew up in Providence, Rhode Island. African American on her father's side and Native American on her mother's, she's a member of the Seaconke Wampanoag tribe. She's been fighting since she was a teenager. She went pro in her 20s. She wasn't a big money fighter, especially at first. To make the rent, she worked at group homes and as a bouncer at clubs.

Now, it's been a couple of years since the last time she was in the ring, because she's been focused on acting. First, there was *Catch the Fair One*, which she also helped write and produce, and now, *True Detective: Night Country* on HBO. *Night Country* is set in the mining town of Ennis, Alaska. A group of research scientists have turned up dead in the snow, naked, with no explanation for why they vanished. The chief of police is played by Jodie Foster. Reis is her former partner. Things between the two of them ended badly. In this scene, they're at the hockey rink. The bodies are, too—frozen in a giant block of ice. It looks like this case might have something to do with an old case that the two cops worked together, so Reis's character suggests they reunite.

**Transition:** Music swells then fades.

**Clip:**

**Liz (*True Detective: Night Country*):** What do you want?

**Evangeline:** This tattoo was on Annie's body.

**Liz:** So?

**Evangeline:** It was on the forehead of one of your guys.

**Liz:** Maybe. So what?

**Evangeline:** So what?! It's the same case. We can work together and figure out Annie.

**Liz:** (*Laughs humorlessly.*) No. I'm not working with you again, ever.

**Evangeline:** You think I want to work with you?

**Liz:** I do, actually. Yeah.

**Evangeline:** Take a look in the mirror, Liz. No one can stand you. Except for that poor kid, Pryor. But you'll be breaking his heart real soon.

**Liz:** Get out of my scene. Go on. (*Censor beep*) off.

**Evangeline:** You know where to find me.

**Transition:** Music swells then fades.

**Jesse Thorn:** Kali Reis, welcome to *Bullseye*. I'm so happy to have you on the show.

**Kali Reis:** Thanks for having me. This is exciting!

**Jesse Thorn:** When you're working on something this intense, is it an intense scene when the cameras turn off or the opposite?

**Kali Reis:** Completely opposite. I mean, there was such a contrast with the story that we were telling. And when the cameras were off, we had such a family oriented, jokey, laughy, light kind of mood. You know, we had discussions about some things going on in the scene, but something like that—it was actually, a lot easier to get even meaner or even darker in those times, because we had the contrast. So, there was no tension between me and Jodi. Or anyone. (*Laughs.*)

**Jesse Thorn:** I mean, you're a relatively new actor. Were you comfortable jumping back into the kind of choices you had to make when things started back up? You know what I mean? Like, were you comfortable switching back and forth?

**Kali Reis:** You mean in scenes, or just back and forth between two characters? Yeah, absolutely.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah. I mean, back and forth between being on camera and not, you know what I mean?

**Kali Reis:** Yeah, I mean I get this question a lot, as far as are there any parallels or similarities to boxing, or have I brought anything from being a boxer into acting. And one of the biggest things that I didn't even mean to do is just something embedded in me is, you know, when the quote/unquote "bell" rings, you know, I'm in there. I'm hyperfocused on the goal, and I have a job to do, and I'm all the way in—checked in. And then when the bell rings and I'm home and I'm out the ring, I'm out the ring. So, it's—you know, that click when that bell rings—it's kind of an in and out thing that I've been doing for almost over 20 years now.

So, when the camera's on, when it's rolling, I'm embedded. When I'm going to work that day, especially for this character as Navarro, it gives me the ability to check all the way in and then check all the way out.

**Jesse Thorn:** Is that true even when you have a fight? Like, when you have a real fight and you're done and you go home, that day are you able to feel like a normal person?

**Kali Reis:** It takes a while for it. You kind of have like the post-fight—you know, the adrenaline dump and then, you know, there's the hype of the fight, depending on what kind of fight. Especially being an elite athlete in my position now, where I'm a—

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—you know, world champion fighting at an elite level. It takes a day or two for me to come down, and then it's like this post-fight depression. Like, I just defeated this thing. It's celebratory. And then it's like, okay, now what do I do? Because, you know, you work out two/three times a day, six days a week, it consumes your entire life for the—you know, for three months. And then it's like now what? What do normal people do? So, it's a weird detachment. And I found even with, you know, my very new career with acting, that there is a detachment type of—I guess, mourning, almost? Where it's like, you know, you have to separate yourself from the task. With boxing and with acting, it's almost like a ceremonial thing that I—actually, my best friend helped me with my first film to kind of like detach myself from the story and the character. So, it's very, very similar. Yeah.

**Jesse Thorn:** What's the ceremonial part? Like, are there things that you do every time?

**Kali Reis:** (*Sighs.*) This one was a little different, because this is—it was such an entity of a giant story that we told over 120 days. There was a lot more that was invested—time and energy and love and just everything. I put my heart and soul into it. So, the first film I had, *Catch the Fair One*, that—you know, we put our heart and soul into that one too. But it was kind of a thing that we just wrote down things about the character. Like, we just kind of made this up kind of a thing. (*Chuckles.*) But—and then we kind of like burned a little paper and said goodbye to the character kind of a—it was just something that I'm like—it was just a representative thing. That represented, okay, now this character can rest. You know, I appreciate it, thank you, and kind of rest. And it wasn't anything that anybody told me to do.

I was just explaining to her what it felt like, especially telling such a dark story. It was a very cathartic process, but it was a very triggering process to tell the story of *Catch the Fair One* based around missing and murdered indigenous woman, because it's so close to a lot of people that are close to me in my community. So, I needed to do something to kind of

separate me from it, because it was an important story to tell, but it was such a hard story to tell.

**Jesse Thorn:** I've had a lot of actors on the show. I have not had a lot of fighters on the show. So, I want to ask you some questions about boxing.

**Kali Reis:** Absolutely.

**Jesse Thorn:** When did you start fighting?

**Kali Reis:** Oh man, (*sighs*) August 24th, 1986. No. (*Laughs.*) I started fighting—it wasn't my first (*inaudible*). I started fighting when I was about—say 12 or 13, I got into boxing. But I didn't start officially fighting until maybe 13/14, where we had not sanctioned amateur fights. We called them smokers, where we had—you know, all the gyms would get together on a Friday night and have these matched up fights. And my very first fight, I was 14, and I got my (*sensor beep*) handed to me by this older lady that didn't look like she—she looked like a librarian. And that was my turning point, whether I decided whether, “Hmm, that's not for me,” or the way I took—“Well, how do I make that not happen again?”

And then from there, I didn't have much amateur experience. Because, you know, we didn't have women's division in the Olympics for boxing up until 2012. So, there really wasn't any higher level that I could shoot for, especially my weight class, the area I was in. It wasn't too much—I had to travel. I didn't have financial means to travel, so—and I don't have amateur style, so I decided to go pro in 2008. And that's when my professional career started. But you know, I used to fight in the street a little bit as a kid. (*Chuckles.*) You know, being one of five kids, having older brothers, you know, they're always like, “Hey, let's try some wrestling moves on Kay,” type of thing. So, I've always been a little tough kid.

**Jesse Thorn:** Had you, sparring, to that point taken full strength blows?

**Kali Reis:** Yeah, I had. And it was—I started, like I said, a friend of my mom's; he's a Wampum jewelry maker from the Narragansett tribe. And I got wind that he used to fight, so I used to bother him at his booth, you know, during powwows. Like, “Hey, can you teach me some things?” And he would like kind of ignore me until he finally gave in, came by, put a bag up, showed me some things. From there, I fell in love with it. Then I went to a gym, took some classes. The teacher took a liking to me, and I started training, started sparring. And I—you know, I thought I knew some things until I ran across this little librarian-looking lady that kickboxed. But we had a boxing match, and I'm like—I just like—I forgot everything I learned up until that point, and that's when I realized that this is so much more than just being a tough person and being able to fight, street fight. This, you got to relax. This is actually an art. Like, this takes a lot more than I thought.

**Jesse Thorn:** Why did you want to learn to fight? Why were you bothering this guy?

**Kali Reis:** I just—I was very sporty as a kid. I played basketball, played softball. But it was just the solo aspect of fighting. Like, one of my favorite movies growing up was *Karate Kid*

and *Rocky* one. And I just didn't ever see any karate master or boxer around where I grew up, but I just thought that was really like—he has nobody around him.

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Which I felt like I didn't have anybody that really completely understood me. I had, you know, a house full of siblings and my mom. But I just didn't really feel like anybody understood me. So, like the solo aspect, you gotta fight. And then—I don't know. And it wasn't because I was an angry kid and I just wanted to beat people up. Because I was always the one sticking up for the kids getting bullied. Like, I didn't like when kids got bullied. I was always the one like to beat the bully up. That was my job. I wasn't a bully, but I didn't like confrontation, but I just like the art of fighting. And that's just what really attracted me to boxing.

**Jesse Thorn:** We have so much more to get into. Stay with us. It's *Bullseye* from [MaximumFun.org](https://www.maximumfun.org) and NPR.

**Transition:** Bouncy synth with light vocalizations.

**Jesse Thorn:** Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. My guest is Kali Reis. She's a two-time champion boxer and actor. You might have seen her recently in *True Detective: Night Country*. *Bullseye*. She plays Evangeline Navarro on the show, opposite Jodi Foster. You can stream the whole season now on Max. Let's get back into my interview with Kali Reis.

It was also a point in your life where you were going through a lot of different stuff. I mean, like between the—you know, when you were a young adolescent, like you really went through it.

**Kali Reis:** Yeah, I mean I come from a single parent household. I'm the only child between my father and my mother. And my father had four kids and my mom had two of us. So, it's just a mixed, jumbled family, but it's us. We don't do half-brother, half-sister things. So, my mom and my dad got divorced when I was really young, confused about it. I'm the first-generation female on my mom's line getting raised in Native American tradition, ways, cultures, et cetera. You know, my grandmother, great grandmother, couldn't even say who they were as Seaconke Wampanoag women, because it would bring a lot of bad energy to the family that they worked for as the help after King Philip's War and all that.

So, being different than my other siblings, getting raised like that, going to powwows, going to different ceremonies, but also getting raised in like an urban area where there was just a bunch of different looking kids. Anyway, I just was like the token Native kid. But then if I go outside of my territory, I look like just a Black girl trying to be Native. So, I didn't really—I didn't understand where I fit in. And I was always just trying to be part of the crowd or be part of this. And I'm also Cape Verdean, but I didn't really grow up in a Cape Verdean traditional household. So, “Well, you don't know how to speak it, or you don't know how to do this.” And I'm like, alright, not enough of that. Not enough of this. And you know, not really knowing my sexuality, like as far as me being attracted to girls or just kind of being attracted to people. It doesn't really matter. And I really didn't understand that. And also

growing up in a Christian household, where my mother was Native American and religion and—it was just all confusing. I did not know where I fit in.

So, there was just so much confusion as far as where I belonged. When I walked into a boxing gym, it was the first time that I was only thinking about, “Alright, I have three minutes to jump rope, okay.” It wasn't, “Three minutes to jump rope. This happened to me. Oh my god,” and this list of other things that used to go through my head. It was just that one thing.

**Jesse Thorn:** It's such an all-consuming thing, too. Like, you can't—even just that training, even things like jumping rope but certainly being in the ring, like you can't have other stuff going on. It's too much to do the thing that's on your plate.

**Kali Reis:** Absolutely, it's a very solo, goal-oriented, very present type of art where you can't be focused on, “I hope I'm gonna win, I hope I'm gonna win.” You're gonna have—you have to be focused on this person right in front of you right now.

**Jesse Thorn:** I went to art high school, but I had a classmate who was an amateur boxer named Paul. And one time I said to Paul, I'm like, “How do you do that?”

And he said, “Well, (*sighs*) the first time you get punched, it hurts really bad, but then the ones after that don't hurt that bad.”

(*They laugh.*)

**Kali Reis:** It's like a soul shock, I guess. Yeah, that makes a lot of sense.

**Jesse Thorn:** Does that match your experience?

**Kali Reis:** Yeah, it was like—again, like I got hit, and it hurt, and I forgot everything that I was gonna do.

**Jesse Thorn:** I mean, I got hit one time. I'll tell you what I did. I cried and ran away.

(*They laugh.*)

**Kali Reis:** Well, at least you know fighting's not for you. It's fine.

**Jesse Thorn:** I've seen video of you entering the boxing arena. Can you describe your walk-on to me?

**Kali Reis:** So, you know, boxing is an entertainment business. You know, we're on this ring. It's up; it's like a stage. We have the personalities; people become their own characters and fighters when the bell rings. But the spectacle of the colors you choose, the nickname you have, the song you come out to, it gives you an insight of who that person is without ever having to sit down and talk to them. You know, you can tell kind of if they're cocky fighter

or the confident, quiet, cool. But I've always just been really proud of who I am and where I come from, because it's very unique.

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But I'm just proud of it. I'm just really proud of it. So, you know, the line I come from, the tribe I come from, the warrior people that we are—Seaconke Wampanoag—people, being so proud of being a warrior is just in my blood. And I have a chance to put this type of representation, this medicine out to the world. No matter what it is. We have what we call your medicine. Your medicine is you're undefeated as a fighter. And you have a beautiful voice on a podcast. You know, that's your medicine. You put good energy out into the world, and nobody can tell you what your individual medicine is. Mine just happens to be, I'm really good at boxing. And I get recognized for it. So, I just started incorporating coming out to songs that I grew up listening to at powwows. All the tapes that my mom had playing in the car or in the house.

**Transition:** Music swells then fades.

**Clip:**

**Announcer:** And Kaliiii Reeis!

*(Indigenous Seaconke Wampanoag music played live by other tribe members.)*

**Transition:** Music swells then fades.

**Kali Reis:** So, I just use that in the same way that I grew up in powwow. I love it. I absolutely love it. And when I'm not in my territory, I extend the invitation for the people of wherever I am to do that with me. Like, thank you for having me on your territory. Whatever song or whatever your tradition, your ceremony is—dance. I invite you to bring a rattle, bring a drum, bring your voices, bring a good energy and dance your style of your territory—of your ancestors—and honor your land, your ancestors while I'm here. So, thank you for having me.

And that's just something we always got taught. And I just kind of tweaked it modernly into my own space in my own, quote/unquote, “squared circle”. And that's what it is. It's me putting those prayers out and that good energy for my people with my people.

**Jesse Thorn:** You were a bouncer for a while, and you're not that big. I mean, you're a medium sized woman. But you're not huge. And obviously, you're capable of defending yourself or using physical violence. You're a professional boxer. But you know, I think a big part of being a bouncer is convincing people not to be violent, right? And often that's done by being enormous. What was it like to be a bouncer and have to like metaphorically throw your weight around when you are pretty small?

**Kali Reis:** I started bouncing when I was 18, and there weren't female bouncers in—I mean, in Rhode Island. I mean, I'm sure there were, like everywhere else, but I never saw any

female bouncers. So, it wasn't like I went to a club one day and I seen a female bouncer and was like, "I want to do that job!" It was easy money. You know, you get cash at the end of the night. My cousin Matthew Godfrey is also a fighter. He works my corners now, and he's actually enormous now, too. He started bouncing, and he's like, "Dude, you'd be great at it." And I'm like okay. I mean, I get to spend a night in the nightclub at 18 years old and get to potentially fight people. (*Laughs.*) This sounds fun.

So, it was more or less like a—I guess I wouldn't have—well, after playing one, female cops, you have to have this aura. You have to have this attitude to command respect, and I've always understood that I've had that type of energy. It was just knowing—having the attitude of "I know I can (*censor beep*) up if I need to, but I'm not going to walk around like I can." And that's a type of weird energy that people like to mess with.

They're like, "I know she's hot. She's really quiet, and she's not saying much. She's not the center of attention. So, let me go mess with her." That's kind of how I dealt with that. And I knew I could physically handle myself. So, I just kind of had that attitude. Like, I know what I can do, and I'm just going to kind of be over here minding my business. It was a fun job for a while though. (*Chuckles.*) I will say that.

**Jesse Thorn:** You were assaulted by a police officer at one point.

**Kali Reis:** I was, while I was bouncing. This was—I had been bouncing for maybe eight or nine years already, and I was at one of the toughest clubs in Rhode Island. And this was a few months after a really bad motorcycle accident I had, and I kind of got into a dark depression. Couldn't work, couldn't do anything. And then my first night back, I had my knee brace on, kinda like on very light duty, sitting on a stool, pointing to the bathroom, pointing to the exit. That's what I did. I wasn't in the mix of things, but I just needed to work. And at the end of the night, one of my—actually my best friend at the time and another female bouncer, she had gotten assaulted by a guy and got knocked out cold. Once they cleared out the club, I went to go see if she was okay, and I heard, "Give us some effin' air!" And I'm like what?

Now mind you, we know the cops. We have security on our shirts. We have to get certified, all that good stuff. And I hear the same thing. He repeated himself, and I see the other female bouncer get shoved out of the way. So, I picked up my hands and Mr. Officer Daniels from the Providence Police Department proceeded to swing at me—

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—grab me. I tried to throw a few, defensive like, "Oh my god, what's happening?" I had a knee brace on. He's 6'3", over 300 pounds. Started hitting me, pepper sprayed me, got me to the ground, was calling me all kinds of names and then handcuffed me, pepper sprayed me again. Picked me up by the cuffs, threw me in the car. Long story short, he told my manager that I had to apologize so I could leave. And I was very confused as to apologize for what. Needless to say, I apologized, and I got let go. But he didn't realize that we have cameras in the club, and he just did that under the worst—meaning the most clear—camera we had. And he also proceeded to write a bogus statement saying I went after him, not knowing there was cameras there. And yeah, that was a "fun" day at work, quote/unquote.



I thought it was my fault. I was confused. I had the FBI call me, and I was just really like, “What's going on?” But needless to say, he has been assaulting patrons forever. So, I was the first one that actually went through—followed through, had this whole lawsuit, and got him off the police force.

**Jesse Thorn:** How do you think about how long you want to fight?

**Kali Reis:** So, when I first started, I didn't want it to—you know, I was looking at—I don't know, who's hot right now, how did other people's careers go, other women's careers go. I wanted to give myself, you know—I didn't want to overstay my welcome. It's really sad when you see a fighter who's just been in like ten too many fights too long. And you know, their just motor skills and speech—it's just really sad. I don't like—I didn't want to be that person. And I had other things I wanted to do, so I didn't want to be in boxing past—I was looking about 36/37. Like, that seems like around when people retire. Women usually a little later, like 40/42 maybe.

**Jesse Thorn:** That's about the age you are right now.

**Kali Reis:** Ah, that's the age I am right now! It is.

**Jesse Thorn:** And as I understand it, you're not retired at this time. Is that so?

**Kali Reis:** I'm not. I'm not officially retired yet, no. I won't do it. I won't do it yet. I'm not satisfied. But I—you know, health wise and everything else, all these boxes have to be checked, so. You know, I couldn't have imagined that I'd be where I'm at now. So, things have, things have happened a little differently. So, we'll see if things make sense. I'm not gonna force anything, 'cause I've accomplished a lot with boxing. I'm very thankful for boxing, but I'm not done yet. I'm not done yet. (*Chuckles.*)

**Jesse Thorn:** I mean, I don't have to tell you, but like there's both a cumulative effect of taking those blows, and there's also always the potential of something catastrophic happening.

**Kali Reis:** I know. And that's where it's a weird balance right now as far as—you know, I'm in a position where I don't hear, “Oh, Kali needs to hang it up, hopefully she retires.” It's, “Yo, when are you coming back? Man, when are you coming back? When are you gonna fight again?” So, it's a nice position to be in where I don't have to fight anymore. Like, I don't have to. Financially, I don't have to fight to make money. And I've accomplished way more—like, six world titles in two weight classes. It's just insane to me. And I've done a lot with boxing. And it's just how I even got found with acting. So, I could—you know, it's a good, it's a good end point. But my last fight, my last two fights health-wise, I was training on E most of it.

And what bothers me about my last fight is just that I know I could have done so much better, but I just—I did the best I could with the body and health condition that I had at the time. So, that's partly part of it. The other part of it is like, there's a few fighters—there's a few fights that I want, but I don't need them. If that makes sense.

**Jesse Thorn:** We'll wrap up with Kali Reis after a break. Stay with us. It's *Bullseye* from [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) and NPR.

**Promo:**

**Music:** Bright, brassy music.

**Alex Schmidt:** Most of the plants humans eat are technically grass.

**Katie Goldin:** Most of the asphalt we drive on is almost a liquid.

**Alex:** The formula of WD-40 is San Diego's greatest secret.

**Katie:** Zippers were invented by a Swedish immigrant love story.

**Alex:** On the podcast *Secretly Incredibly Fascinating*, we explore this type of amazing stuff.

**Katie:** Stuff about ordinary topics like cabbage and batteries and socks!

**Alex:** Topics you'd never expect to be the title of the podcast: secretly, incredibly fascinating.

**Katie:** Find us by searching for the word (*whispers*) “secretly” in your podcast app.

**Alex:** And at [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org).

(*Music fades out.*)

**Transition:** Thumpy synth with light vocalizations.

**Jesse Thorn:** You're listening to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. My guest is Kali Reis. She's a champion boxer and the star of *True Detective: Night Country*.

How do you feel about the part of acting in an acting career where you are making this kind of art where you have so little agency—like, somebody has to give you a job for you to work. And you know, unless you're Meryl Streep, you probably get turned down for a lot of work, for every job that you get.

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**Kali Reis:** Yeah, I have a different experience with this, because I come even from the world of I've never had a live, in-person audition. I mean, I come from the new world of all these audition tapes, self-tapes. And I hear the horror stories about people who are just doing self-tapes now, versus having the option to be seen in person. And I'm like, well, I can't even say, “Oh, I know what you mean.” Because this is all new to me. So, I'm just like, “Wow, this is great! If I—” You know, I before I got *True Detective*, it was like, “Send me whatever audition that you guys get, just to get me in front of the camera, just to get me working, just to—” Because I'm thinking just like boxing, just like anything else, I have to work. I have to put in the work. I have to put in the work.

No one's just going to give me a role to do. I have to put in my work. I don't know this craft. I don't know this art like this. I have a niche for it. Okay. Let's perfect it. That's where my mind was. So, it's an interesting career and field to get into, and it's nerve wracking. Because you don't want to slack off on perfecting your craft just because you don't have anything in front of you. But there's nothing paying the bills, so you have to have other jobs that might take time away from your craft. I've done that with boxing too. I've had years where just no fights, but I still gotta go to the gym. Still gotta make sure. I gotta stay ready, so I never have to get ready.

**Jesse Thorn:** A weird thing about acting is that it is, frankly, fundamentally embarrassing. And it also is something where you can't be good at it without a certain kind of shamelessness. Like, you can't be embarrassed about the choices that you're making and still do a good job of acting. Is that a challenge for you? To like let go of the feeling that you might do a bad job, or you might feel silly or ridiculous?

**Kali Reis:** At this point in my life, I know that you can't please anybody. And if you're worried about what everybody else is gonna think, then it just takes your focus completely off the goal and the enjoyment of what you're actually doing. And (*chuckles*) I learned that no matter how much you do everything that everybody wants you to do, there's always gonna be somebody that's gonna be pissed off, or say you did bad, or say you didn't do a good job, or you did this wrong, or whatever. Once you notice that you're not gonna please everybody, that goes out the window.

My goal is to just be as authentic as possible and not worry about what anybody else interprets in what I'm doing. As long as I know that I'm telling the story authentically and that everybody in the story is on the same page—the director is happy, the storyteller's happy, we feel authentic in these characters in this story. But the good intention? I mean, the rest is kind of like a byproduct. If great people like it, great. I hope so. I hope they get it. The ones that don't? You know, it is what it is. I don't think you should get caught up in what everybody else's perspective's gonna be or what everybody's gonna think.

**Jesse Thorn:** You, as an adolescent and as a young woman, pursued a lot of kind of destructive and dissociative ways of being in the world trying to get away from the trauma that you experienced. Now that you're your 30s creeping towards 40, are you able to hold the kid that you were back then? Like, are you able to live comfortably—or as comfortably as possible—with that person you were and those experiences that you went through?

**Kali Reis:** Absolutely. If you would have asked me maybe a couple years ago, not completely. But yeah, it was one of those things where—you know, the cliché. You can try to drown out your issues, problems, thoughts. But when you sober up—no matter if it's like figuratively speaking or literally speaking, you just—they're going to be there waiting for you. So, the same type of attitude I'd have of getting through the hard thing in front of me physical is the same thing I kind of apply to the mental issues or the mental things that I was trying to block out. And really just understanding what they were and honoring and protecting that small Kali and being able to tell her, "It's okay. It's not your fault. Or it's okay this is what happened." And really holding her close and being proud of everything—good, bad. I'm human. I've made some dumb (*ensor beep*) decisions. I've said some dumb things. I've done some dumb things, but I've learned from them, and I'm not ashamed of them anymore. I'm not walking around feeling guilty and so hard on myself either.

I actually could say that I'm proud of myself, and it's been a lot of work, a lot of sitting in those drunk holes or those just really down holes. You know, I used to self-harm. I used to drink. I used to smoke. I used to try to do anything to just get to quiet my brain. And the best way I could do that was to get blacked out drunk and then get up the next morning and go to basketball practice.

[00:30:00]

But nobody knew, because Kay was just the little angry one wandering around, you know. But I'm really—I'm happy that I am able to hold that little girl and make better decisions and be proud of everything. 'Cause honestly, I wouldn't have changed a thing.

**Jesse Thorn:** Kali, you're married. So, am I. But we all kind of have a crush on Jodie Foster, right? That's normal?

**Kali Reis:** That's my homie, yo. No, it's normal. I can understand. Yes. Yep.

*(They giggle.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** Just wanted to check in on that front.

**Kali Reis:** It's a valid crush, bro. It's a valid crush.

**Jesse Thorn:** Well, Kali Reis, I sure am appreciative of all this time you've shared with us. It was really nice to get to talk to you.

**Kali Reis:** Thank you very much. Such a cool conversation, man. I'll come back anytime.

**Jesse Thorn:** Kali Reis. You can watch her in *True Detective: Night Country*. It is streaming now on Max. She's great in it.

**Transition:** Bright, chiming synth.

**Jesse Thorn:** That's the end of another episode of *Bullseye*. *Bullseye* is created from the homes of me and the staff of Maximum Fun, in and around greater Los Angeles, California. Here in Los Angeles, it was raining crazy hard, and then it stopped raining. And then it rained again, and then it stopped raining, and it looked like it wasn't going to rain anymore. But guess what? It's raining right now. Don't let them tell you it never rains in Southern California.

Our show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our senior producer is Kevin Ferguson. Our producers are Jesus Ambrosio and Richard Robey. Our production fellow at Maximum Fun is Daniel Huecias. We get booking help from Mara Davis. Special thanks this week to Lucy Little for recording our interview with Bill Bradley, and to Rene and Cody at Milk Boy Studios in Philadelphia for recording Kali Reis. Our interstitial music is by the great Dan

Wally, DJW. Our theme song is “Huddle Formation” by The Go! Team. Thanks to The Go! Team. Thanks to their label, Memphis Industries.

*Bullseye* is on Instagram where we share interview highlights, behind the scenes looks, and more. [@BullseyeWithJesseThorn](#) is where you can find that. We're also on Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook. I think that's about it. Just remember, all great radio hosts have a signature signoff.

**Promo:** *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn* is a production of [MaximumFun.org](#) and is distributed by NPR.

*(Music fades out.)*