

# TFEO Diana's Monster Transcript

Sun, Jun 04, 2023 10:06AM • 31:59

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

audio drama, diana, monster, story, narrating, feel, town, episode, small town, wanted, batman, people, scapegoating, season, harris, mother, write, happened, working, editing

## SPEAKERS

Kevin Brandon, W. Keith Tims, Firefighter, Helen, Martin Cruise, Patricia

### W. Keith Tims 00:11

Hello, and welcome to The First Episode Of, a podcast about audio drama and the creative process. I'm W Keith Tims, audio drama producer and podcaster. In this show, I listen to the first episode of an audio drama, then have a discussion with the creators about their show their methods, struggles and successes. Today, we're discussing the first episode of Diana's Monster.

### Martin Cruise 00:39

[Begin clip from Diana's Monster. Intriguing music.] You're listening to Diana's Monster, the story of Diana Edith Harris and the events that transpired on July 23 1993, in the town of Evanston, Texas. These include the death of at least seven and the disappearance of two as well as my own birth. My name is Martin Cruise, and I'm searching for my biological parents. My connection to Diana Harris is unknown. In fact, it's entirely possible there isn't any. I'll be telling the story as it happens. So if you haven't already, go back and start at the beginning. [End clip.]

### W. Keith Tims 01:05

Written and produced by Kevin Brandon, Diana's Monster is a fictionalized True Crime style podcast. The story follows a young man Martin Cruise, who is voiced by Brandon, searching for his biological parents, uncovering a mystery about a woman named Diana Harris, and the connection they both share to a tiny Texas town. Many people in the town believe that Diana was a literal monster, or perhaps in a fit of revenge, unleashed one, which resulted in seven deaths in a terrible fire. Diana's Monster has three seasons, with the show evolving and changing narrators over time. Brandon is also a producer on the audio drama Batman: Stained Heir. I spoke to Kevin remotely from his home in Texas.

### W. Keith Tims 01:56

Why don't you just tell me a little bit about yourself. As an artist and a creative type.

### Kevin Brandon 02:00

I knew pretty early on, I would say maybe about second grade, that I wanted to do something in the space of storytelling. I would sit under the playground at my elementary school here in San Antonio. And would have like, like a little notebook that I would just kind of like write scary stories on. It wasn't sand, or even like that weird tar stuff. It was like that that powdery gravel. (laughter) Yeah. Like my pants would be covered in like the gravel dust. But I'd be under there writing stories. And I started writing scary stories, a lot of really bad ghost stories. But from there, I knew that I wanted to tell stories. For a while I wanted to be on the evening news, there was just something appealing about that. And then I decided I'd rather be behind the camera. So I definitely have always loved storytelling, kind of an escapism. While my siblings would be playing with their friends or skateboarding, I would be reading a book in the hallway of our tiny apartment because it had the best lighting. So definitely always wanted to get out of where I was. Not like I had a bad childhood. But there's four of us and my mom was a single mother. I feel like I definitely needed the escape sometimes and and telling stories was was definitely how I got that.

**Kevin Brandon** 02:00

You said you wrote scary stories. Was horror your favorite genre?

**Kevin Brandon** 03:13

Yes. I don't care how bad it is, or how cheesy in high school I used to have movie nights at my house. So it was about me and 12 of my friends. I know it feels like that feels like a brag I had 12 friends in high school. And we will just watch like these really bad B movies from blockbuster. And then I ended up working at Blockbuster later in life before it closed down.

**W. Keith Tims** 03:32

That's awesome. What happened next with your desire to be creative in your writing? Did you parlay that into something in college?

**Kevin Brandon** 03:39

I did go to San Antonio College here in San Antonio. We're where I'm at. And I studied Radio Television Broadcasting. So I got to write, edit, shoot a couple of shorts, got to act in some some really bad short films. (laughter) And then from there, I tried to do the whole YouTube thing. Unfortunately, I don't have enough dedication, like there's a lot to balance and to do YouTube full time. You have to you really have to do YouTube full time. And I just as much as I love it as like a hobby. It's not something that's going to be like lucrative for me as a career. Yeah, I just kind of floundered for a bit worked at a grocery store, I worked at Six Flags, like I said, worked at Blockbuster, of course at the grocery store. They hire as young as like 16 in some cases. So I would be in the break room while people would be doing homework. And they would ask me for help because they knew that I like to write. So just kind of a lot of helping students write essays or kind of revise and edit and someone was just like, hey, you're really good at this. You should be a teacher. And this sort of like spark hit. And I was like, oh, yeah, I should be a teacher. And so it took several years later for me to get back into college because I had dropped out. Then I said, you know if I'm going back to school, I'm gonna I'm gonna do it right, get my license to teach and now I teach high school 12th Grade English 11 to 12 and then I actually run the creative writing club. at my high school.

**Kevin Brandon** 03:45

So how do you go from starting as a filmmaker than to English teacher into audio drama?

**Kevin Brandon** 05:06

So the audio drama happened while I was floundering. So back in 2016 or so, I was kind of just burnt out of trying to do YouTube, I had done a couple of short projects, scheduling was the biggest issue with with doing this little YouTube series. And so I was listening to a lot of audio dramas at the time, because I was working overnight listening to like, Alice Isn't Dead lot of audio dramas, and I was like, you know, I bet I could do this. And sort of that that sort of became the challenge to myself. And then I started doing this. And I was like, oh, yeah, maybe I can't do this. But I kept pushing, and actually stopped around like a few episodes. And I had stopped because I was like, I'm done. I kind of got bored with it. I wasn't even using an audio editor. I was, you know, recording on cell phones recording on like a little pocket recorder I had just kind of the audio was all over the place. But then initially, I was uploading to PodOmatic. Right? It was paying for that. And I guess you can request episodes. So I kept getting like emails about so and so is requesting another episode of Dana's Monster. And I was like, Oh, maybe I should finish this thing. So with that, I guess knowledge that somebody was out there listening to this little thing that I was recording in my living room, you know, that's where that last episode of the first season comes in. And that's where I started to build out the world of Diana's Monster.

**W. Keith Tims** 06:23

Diana's Monster ended right? A couple years ago?

**Kevin Brandon** 06:26

Yes, you know, I was like, this third season is going to be the last I'm done. Like, I just don't have anything else to give. I'm becoming a teacher, you know, the pandemic, we were in the middle of the pandemic. And when it ended, I knew like this is going to be the end for a bit like I kind of have had in my head, this sort of loose idea of how he would continue it or how it would continue to build out that world whether it's a spin off. And this isn't really a spoiler for the show, I guess for anyone who hasn't listened to it. But while I was, I guess, studying to become a teacher, I was working as a tutor at a high school. And we went into this lockdown, hard lockdown for what was suspected to be students on campus with weapons, right. And so just that experience of being locked in a classroom for I want to say like four hours with a bunch of scared children really kind of, I mean, it's the weirdest place to get inspiration from, but I kind of have this loose idea of what a season four would look like. And I've actually written about six or seven scripts, which include a time jump before season four of Diana's Monster, I just haven't really decided if that's the avenue that I want to go down because yeah, it's got a new main character. It's got a new location, but it sort of focuses on a lockdown that has happened at a local high school and how that's connected to the world of Diana's Monster, or if it's connected.

**W. Keith Tims** 07:41

You've also continued to work in podcasting a little bit in the audio drama sphere. You're involved with Batman: Stained Heir, is that right?

**Kevin Brandon** 07:49

Yes, I am.

**W. Keith Tims** 07:50

Tell me about that.

**Kevin Brandon** 07:51

So Batman: Stained Heir is the fan fiction love letter to the DC universe. It is written by the Legion of Geeks, Jason Ortega. And he's got this pretty big following. Last year about this time he had posted that he was looking to create an audio series focused on like his version of Batman and Batman's relationship with Jason Todd, who was formerly the Red Hood, and was just kind of like sending out feelers you know, and I follow his posts, because I follow him on Instagram. And I kind of just thought, hey, let me reach out and tell him like you're going down a really tough road. Let me just give you some insights, I really didn't think he would respond, because at that point, he had had hundreds of people DMing him to audition. And that's not what I wanted to do. I don't consider myself a voice actor by any means. Voice acting has mostly been out of necessity, right? So I reached out to him, and then I became sort of the right hand, man, when it comes to all things Batman: Stained Heir, I'm editing it. I'm coordinating performances, I'm putting all the drafts together and sending them to him taking his notes and then doing the Edit and then sending it off. And then he's uploading it and promoting it. So.

**W. Keith Tims** 09:00

yeah, it's really interesting to work within an existing intellectual property world. I guess DC is pretty okay with fan broadcasts of this nature?

**Kevin Brandon** 09:10

There are a lot of fan I guess, produced DC works. So as a as a teacher, I'm very aware of like copyright and plagiarism and things like that. So the only part in Batman stain air that is vocally mine, is at the beginning of the end, where I'm like, Hey, we have nothing to do with DC, this is this is nonprofit, you know, we're not we're not affiliated or associated with any of these people. Please don't sue us. (laughter)

**W. Keith Tims** 09:37

Let's go back and talk about Diana's Monster. What do you think of when you think about this show?

**Kevin Brandon** 09:42

The first thing that comes to mind is my mother. So my mother's name is Diana. Growing up, my siblings and I were either the rug rats or the monsters and so that's kind of where that title came from. Because I am sort of my mother's monster. I originally started it as a National Novel Writing Month story. So NaNoWriMo every November, and so growing up, we would go and visit our hometown because that's where I'm where my biological father is still is mostly. And so there was this sort of, I'm trying to figure out how to how to put it. But whenever my mother's name would come up, it was almost like she didn't exist, you know, small town where she, where she's from and where they're from. It was

always his son and not hers. We were always his children, and not hers, even though he wasn't involved, really in raising us. And I thought that was kind of odd. So it's like, what did she do to these people that they don't want to talk about her. And so that sort of became the story of Diana's Monster, the text. And then when it came time, or when I decided, hey, I could totally do audio drama. I was like, how do you tell this story about this woman now? The character of Marty, who I voice right, the main character was completely made up just for the audio drama because I wanted to have that sort of like Black Tapes sort of investigative feel. And that's where Marty was created.

**W. Keith Tims** 11:02

The story at least season one seems to be a kind of true crime podcast, even though you Kevin Brandon are the author of the story. On the podcast, it says that it's created by Martin Cruz. So you're kind of doing this, this thing where you are presenting this fictional story as if it were real. It's a story about Dianna Harris, who is from this little tiny town who is believed to be a monster or to control a monster.

**Firefighter** 11:31

[Begin Clip.] [Martin is interviewing.] The flames didn't want to be put out. Water made it worse.

**Martin Cruise** 11:35

You're saying the fire had a mind of its own?

**Firefighter** 11:37

No, not at all. That would be ridiculous. I'm just saying it was a long night. And it only got longer.

**Martin Cruise** 11:47

What happened? When the flames finally did die down?

**Firefighter** 11:49

We found... um. I'm sorry.

**Martin Cruise** 11:53

Take all the time you need. [Narrating] John brings his clenched fist to his mouth and froze his brow for a second. His eyes water and then he clears his throat. And he's stolid, a brick wall, impenetrable.

**Firefighter** 12:04

Bodies, several of them laid in a circle with their hands pointed away, flat on their backs.

**Martin Cruise** 12:10

[Narrating] An image comes to mind so inappropriate I can hardly believe myself. I'm thinking of the Power Rangers and the old Saban logo, golden children with their arms extended toward the heavens as they're spread around the circumference of the globe.

**Firefighter** 12:21

She put them there, the Harris girl, all of them, she put them in there. And she set the fire. [End Clip.]

**W. Keith Tims** 12:30

The first episode at least, which by the way, is called "The New Halloween." The first episode doesn't really hint to any supernatural, cause. I mean, people say they talk about a monster. And some people speculate Oh, she's a monster. But it could be just talk, right? You know just how people talk sometimes. Or they say things. Given the fact that you've got sort of this kind of base and reality kind of feeling. And the fact that you're presenting this explicitly not as an audio drama, but rather as kind of a faux True Crime kind of thing, were you're attempting to sort of lead people into this cinema verite kind of thing?

**Kevin Brandon** 13:04

I think in the presentation, at least to that first episode. I knew that I wanted to kind of, hey, you know, there's no monster here. Like there's nothing happening that's supernatural or out of the ordinary. It's just small town gossip, right? I knew that I had to end with this monster being seen and being real at the season finale, like I knew that this monster has to make an appearance that I have to kind of like break the doors open of this thing, but going into it yet. I just wanted I wanted everyone to constantly be in question about like, what is happening, like and is there a monster? Is there not a monster is actually just people's like shared psychosis? That kind of, you know scapegoating became a thing. And I feel like that's what Diana's Monster does a lot is it talks about like the people who are out of the ordinary, and how they are scapegoated for just being different. I was hoping that someone would think, Hey, is Evanston real? I'm very particular about the city boundaries and what how it's unincorporated and how they get power and how they get water and all that stuff. Because that's just kind of the fun of it is there are a lot of really small spaces and towns and cities in Texas that you can come across, that won't be on a map. And that was sort of my, my goal with Evanston was that it could be real, it could exist. If it could exist, then the people there exist, and if they exist, then this thing that happened to them could have existed.

**W. Keith Tims** 14:32

Yeah. So the first episode, we get to meet Martin Cruise, who is the narrator of the story, the investigator and he like you was adopted, and as researching his family history. It turns out to be a complete coincidence, though, that that Diana Harris has nothing to do with him and his family, but she and he both were from the area, and so he stumbles across this legend or a story of Diana Harris, who, in this small town of Evanston, Texas is believed to have set a fire that killed several people, all of whom were related to her in some way. She herself is believed to be dead although some people say they don't believe it, but the town treated her as a scapegoat. In fact, you even have a line in the first episode where "Blame the girl" is the town's unofficial town motto,

**Martin Cruise** 15:17

[Begin clip] [Narrating] Helen is 62 and devout. She pushed her son into sports at an early age.

**Helen** 15:21

He asked me if he could take a dance class. I knew his father would beat him to death if he saw his boy dancing. So I taught him to throw a baseball. I guess that limp wrist was good for something. He was gorgeous, a real lady killer. But he didn't want anything to do with the ladies until he met that woman. The Harris girl. The monster.

**Martin Cruise** 15:44

[interviewing] Garth Alan was still in high school when he and Diana started dating?

**Helen** 15:48

He told me he met her at a salon. She was studying to become a beautician. How funny is that? A monster studying to become a beautician?

**Martin Cruise** 15:55

He was how old?

**Helen** 15:56

Seventeen.

**Martin Cruise** 15:57

And you were okay with this?

**Helen** 16:02

She had a vagina. All I cared is she wasn't a man.

**Martin Cruise** 16:07

So what happened then?

**Helen** 16:09

They dated during the senior year, the summer after, that's when she went missing. Garth Alan was raving, going on about some conspiracy, some cover up.

**Martin Cruise** 16:20

That's why I want to reach out to him. Actually. [End clip.]

**W. Keith Tims** 16:23

There is a lot of small minded homophobic and backwards thinking opinions that come out of the mouths of some of the people in this Evanstone, Texas town. Talk to me about why you wanted to highlight this, this idea of scapegoating and this idea of blame as part of the story.

**Kevin Brandon** 16:39

Like I said, it goes back to visiting my mother's hometown and this, like I said, they won't say her name. And that was sort of when I encountered you know, at the grocery stores. There was oh, this is Kevin. He's, he's so and so's son. And I'm actually like, actually, I'm my mother's son, right? She raised me.

She was very young when she got pregnant. So my mother was 14 when she got pregnant and 15 when she had my oldest brother, so yeah, and that was there in that small town. And even then I would tell my grandmother when she was alive, like you were just okay with that. And she was just like, well, it was what it was and like she could have been with a worse man and then and then for my biological father to go and have my step siblings with a woman who was even younger than my mother. So and just that idea of like, of what you see like in a show like Twin Peaks where it's just the small towns and and everything is in the whispers right? Everyone knows everything but they won't say it aloud. You know, you have the people getting their hair done but at the salon and just all the gossip that happens and the I guess the idea of like finding the truth somewhere in all of that whispering was really intriguing to me.

**W. Keith Tims** 17:48

This blew my mind. There's this there's the the town actually has a holiday. This is the title The New Halloween. The New Halloween refers to this unofficial town holiday when everyone in town picks on the Harris family. Apparently it's an ongoing thing, but they still in the mailbox, they break into the do pranks and there's this one prank in particular on the night before the fire that that really just goes off the rails.

**Martin Cruise** 18:12

[Begin clip.] [Narrating.] Patricia has braces, which she says were due to be removed years ago. Since she lost her job in insurance. She can't afford to have them removed.

**Patricia** 18:20

I was 16 I didn't think nothing of it. It was like a holiday, the Fourth of July or Thanksgiving. July 23. The New Halloween. I don't know why we tortured the Harris's it was just something that we did.

**Martin Cruise** 18:33

[Interviewing] Prejudice is a learned behavior.

**Patricia** 18:35

Right, whatever. Do you mind if I smoke?

**Martin Cruise** 18:37

No, please. [Narrating.] Patricia and her friends were years younger than Diana but like she says torturing her was a way to pass the time.

**Patricia** 18:45

(lights cigarette) People held prayer circles and led vigils, the kids... we'd toilet paper the house. It had to be Charmin.

**Martin Cruise** 18:49

[Interviewing] Charmin toilet tissue? [Narrating.] This is not a paid advertisement. I shit you not.



**Patricia** 18:58

In a town so poor that the shop owners had to bolt rolls of bathroom tissue to the stalls and lack of laundry detergent and razors? The family splurged.

**Martin Cruise** 19:06

[Interviewing.] Your parents encouraged your behavior?

**Patricia** 19:09

Encouraged? It was their idea. [End clip.]

**W. Keith Tims** 19:12

This casual cruelty just really strikes me is that something you think of when you think of small town life?

**Kevin Brandon** 19:19

Oof. A lot of people in small towns are gonna get mad at me, but I do. But I actually grew up until about the time I was seven or eight in Fredericksburg here in Texas, which is a very small German town. Now it's all about tourism. So they've got like wineries and things like that. But there are certain like zoning laws where they can't have like modern like amenities like a Chili's or like a McDonald's, or even a theater like within the actual incorporated town itself because they're so devoted to like the German tourism. And so growing up there, I feel like there was a lot of that like you could be driving in a really nice neighborhood. And then you'd pass over the bridge, right, the river or the lake and then All of a sudden you're in a trailer park. So it was just that weird, like one road is like literally the wrong side of the tracks type of thing. I feel like if you're on the wrong side of the tracks, then then absolutely, you're the target of some criticism, if not cruelty.

**W. Keith Tims** 20:13

Tell me about your actors, because you use this sort of very conversational documentary style of speech in the first episode.

**Kevin Brandon** 20:20

Most of the season one crew are just people that I sort of, I feel like I wrestled them in, you know, I wore them down into doing it, and a lot of co workers from H-E-B. So I think at one point, I think the cast of H-E-B 24, which was the grocery store that I was working at, just because they would be in the break room, like recording on into my phone, had a little Zoom microphone attachment, or they would be sending the files, literally on the bus. And so and then a couple of them are family members. And then at the time, I had a couple of roommates who lived here with us. It's friends, I don't think I actually got any real actors until I started season two, in which case I actually was like, Hey, you're an actor, come do this thing for me. But I just wasn't confident enough to ask my friends who were actors to give me the time, the unpaid time to be featured in season one.

**W. Keith Tims** 21:10

The famous monster starts with this investigation into the fire that killed these people, and also caused Diana to vanish. As the series goes along. It does take on a more supernatural tone. Right? Would you say it's sort of a horror piece? Or how would you describe it?

**Kevin Brandon** 21:26

Ah, oof. I struggle with that a lot. Like how do you talk about this little thing that I did? I want to say there's definitely elements of horror. For me when I sit down to write, I try to bring all those things in because and this is gonna sound super writerly and like cheesy. But like, you know, everyday life is not one genre. So I feel like I tried to write a horror piece, but ended up writing this weird, Frankenstein's creature.

**W. Keith Tims** 21:54

I have to admit the hook is pretty interesting. It does hook you like a true crime podcast might. I'm curious, you had three seasons so far have died sponsor, how did the show evolve over time after the first season?

**Kevin Brandon** 22:05

How do you feel about that first episode, and how it turned out?

**Kevin Brandon** 22:05

I participate in National Novel Writing Month every November. And so after I had finished the first season, I had gotten as close to finished as I could, before I stopped and then came out with that last episode or two, I actually had already written a second story which was completely unrelated to Diana's Monster. And it was set in New Mexico. And it was following this detective who was looking into this organ harvesting ring that was happening, I kind of was sitting with my best friend at the time, because I was like, I don't even know where to go with season two, like, Do I even want to do a season two, like we kind of left it open with a cliffhanger. He said, Well, it's the same story. Like it's the same story. Like you have the same elements of being an outcast, you have the same elements of wanting to get to the bottom of something. And so how do you connect this? And how do you connect them? And so that's where we sat down and started mapping out the connections between the detective calls their own story? And then how do we link that to Marty and what's happening in Evanston? And then that kind of again, set the stage for what became season three. So since we sat down and mapped out Season Two and season three at the same time,

**Kevin Brandon** 22:13

Ah, I cringe every time I listen to it.

**W. Keith Tims** 22:46

Why's that?

**Kevin Brandon** 22:51

The thing I like to tell my students and this sort of become my own mantra is that nothing is ever done. It's just done enough. And I feel like with that first episode, it wasn't even done enough. I genuinely

posted it thinking nobody's ever gonna listen to this thing. It doesn't matter. It was just for me. And then to find out that I had an audience for this, and people were drawing fan art of Marty. Hey, that's me, somebody drew me as Marty. Knowing now that there is an audience for this type of story, I would have put a little bit more affection and care into that first episode.

**W. Keith Tims** 23:48

So what do you struggle with?

**Kevin Brandon** 23:49

Time management, for sure. Now that I am teaching as my full time, you know, career, and even with still, you know, editing for Jason Ortega, and figuring out what I want to do next, right, that's sort of been the, the lack of time management, it's sort of revealed to me that if I don't build out chunks of time, specifically to do these things I want to do, they're not going to get done. So right now I have to have, okay, I'm going to spend a few hours video gaming, then I'm going to spend a few hours writing then I'm gonna spend a few hours cleaning. And now now I'm gonna write for a couple hours. So it's just kind of making sure that I keep myself on track. And I feel like that's the hardest thing to do.

**W. Keith Tims** 24:30

Yeah. When you have responsibilities that demand your attention, like a job or family or cleaning, right, then it's easy to put the stuff that maybe doesn't demand your attention, immediate attention on hold, and then suddenly, it's two weeks later and you haven't picked it up and done anything with it. So.

**Kevin Brandon** 24:47

Story of my life. Yeah.

**W. Keith Tims** 24:48

I get it. I do want to ask you for your perspective on something. I grew up in the South. I was fortunate that most of the people I sort of was sort of surrounded with at the time, were fairly progressive-minded but you could not escape the kind of homophobia that existed in the south in the 1970s and 80s. And so it was there in the schools and all that kind of stuff. So I certainly saw it. But our society has made strides, you know, with gay marriage, and, you know, and, and so forth. But then I look at the headlines today, and we're specifically there's a lot of bad stuff happening for trans folks. I guess I'm curious. A lot of the themes of Diana's Monster is about harassment and bullying. And it's about small town views and narrowmindedness. I'm wondering, what is your perspective? I mean, have things gotten better?

**Kevin Brandon** 25:38

So here's where I would have to acknowledge my own privilege. I guess the fact that I exist in the space that I do, because to see me, I guess, outside or even, you know, walking the halls of my school, or at the grocery store at a theater or the mall, I guess I don't come off as outwardly queer. I mean, you know, I don't know what that means. But like, people would say, like, oh, I would never thought that you were queer. And I'm like, Oh, thank you? (laughter) You know, but I guess I'm just, I guess I don't have the the lisp or that they want me to have or whatever it is to be like stereotypically queer. And that's not on purpose. I just I am who I am. But I also never had to come out. Growing up. My mother was always

just like, you know, you do whatever makes you happy. Whoever you are, I love you no matter what. So there was no real conversation with my mother. Even when I was living with my my now spouse, there was never a conversation or question of who I was. And I never had to, you know, have that conversation where I was like, hey, just so you know, this is what I like, this is who I am. Because I never felt the need, right. Like, my, my siblings never had to sit down with me with my mother and say, hey, you know, I'm straight. I just refused to engage in that. Yeah, I think it goes to, again to scapegoating, right. Like, we don't want to talk about the problems that we should be talking about. So let's create this conversation that's not based on any factual, you know, statistic or anything about the dangers of a trans person, you know, on Saturday, Travis, you know, my husband and I went and saw Hairspray here at the Majestic Theater. And everyone loved it, like, you know, and Edna is played by a man and drag. And I'm like, this is illegal in Tennessee, right now, because we're watching a drag show. And there are children in the audience, and it's a public space. It's just insane to me to think that like, that poses a danger. But at the same time, we have, like my nephew, right? My brother's son who just turned two is wearing you know, T shirts that say like, "Lady's Man," or we have beauty pageants for little girls, where they're all dolled up and wearing the, you know, the skinniest of clothing. And I'm just like, that's what it is to sexualize a child. This is just performing.

**W. Keith Tims** 27:51

So how do you measure success?

**Kevin Brandon** 27:53

I like this question a lot. And I'm gonna, I'm gonna deviate before I come back to my answer. So last year, was my first year of teaching. And a lot of students had made it this far. Again, there were three quarters of the way through, there's 10 weeks left in school after spring break, a lot of them at this point get burnt out, just like the teachers do. And they want to quit. And I said, you know, don't quit, don't drop out of school, you're so close to graduating, I got the question of, well, why is any of this important? Like, I don't want to do anything, I'm not going to go to college. And it's like, well, what do you want to do? And one of my students told me, he wanted to be a homeless person. And I said, Well, if you want to be homeless, be the best homeless person you can be. That's what success looks like for you then do it to the best of your ability. But know that when I'm driving to school in the morning, and I see you there with your little tin can that I'm not going to stop and give you money because you've made this decision on your own. So to me success is it's not having 100,000 followers, it's did I meet and achieve my goal? And if I didn't, did I get close? And I feel like with the three seasons that I have of Diana's monster that's as close to success as I was going to get for that series, whether or not to continue it or completely pivot, right. But that has led to this collaboration with the Legion of Geeks Jason Ortega, and Batman. And now I can say, you know, I started with this little show that I made in my kitchen, on a cell phone. And now I am editing this podcast that has a listener base of 60+ thousand streams. I feel like that's pretty good and pretty close to what success looks like.

**W. Keith Tims** 29:29

Sounds like you are still interested and excited about doing audio drama.

**Kevin Brandon** 29:33

I absolutely am. I would love to get back to my own works. Because while editing Batman: Stained Heir has been a lot of exposure it's what I do with that that's going to be the me piece of it because this is not my Batman piece. I would like to have that same attention and that's, you know, now that I've gotten it I've gotten a taste for it. I joke with my students all the time that Mr. Brandon loves the spotlight. (laughter) You know. So as I've gotten more confident in myself and in my abilities to do these things, it's like, hey, let's use that confidence but for my own piece because I don't want to be the Batman guy, I want to be the guy.

**Martin Cruise** 30:11

[Begin clip.] [Narrating, tense music.] Here's what I do know. Diana Edith Harris is missing or dead. She was last seen on the day. I was born in Evanston, Texas. It is a widely held belief among the people of Evanston that Diana Harris is a monster, or controlled one. And there's also the fire that burned the Atascocita turkey plant to a crisp along with the seven people inside. Or was it two fires? Patricia believes Diana lashed out that she had had enough while Garth Alan believes... well that I don't know. But I'm going to find out next time on Diana's Monster. [End clip.]

**W. Keith Tims** 30:45

Diana's Monster uses the true crime podcast style to great effect, immersing you in the small world and small perspectives of its fictional town where blame covers up the truth. [Begin theme music.] You can listen to Diana's Monster on most major podcast platforms, or see our show notes for more information. The First Episode Of is written and produced by W. Keith Tims. All the opinions expressed in this show belong to the people who expressed them and not necessarily to anyone else. The theme song is "Mockingbird" by David Mumford. This show is a production of Alien Ghost Robot Creative Media. If you want more information, want to sign up for our newsletter or are an audio drama creator and would like to be on the show, visit our website at the first episode of NOC comm. We're happy to be a part of the Audio Drama Lab, a Discord based resource for audio drama, development and networking. Check it out at audiodramalab.com. Keep telling stories. It's the only way we're going to get out of this mess. Until next time.

**W. Keith Tims** 31:55

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