

TFEO Care and Feeding of Werewolves

Transcript

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hazel, episode, people, audio drama, podcast, freddy, comedy, writing, freddie, voice, julia, werewolves, feeding, sound, dark, idea, folklore, listeners, writer, story

SPEAKERS

Hazel, Julia, Narrator, Brenna Anderson-Dowd, Freddy Elmore, Announcer, W. Keith Tims

W. Keith Tims 00:15

[Preroll Promo]

W. Keith Tims 00:36

Hello, and welcome to The First Episode Of, a podcast about audio drama and the creative process. I'm W Keith Tims, writer and podcaster, creator of The Book of Constellations. In this show, I listen to the first episode of an audio drama and have a discussion with the creators about the show their methods, their struggles and successes. Today we're discussing the first episode of Care and Feeding of Werewolves.

Announcer 01:03

[Begin clip from Care and Feeding of Werewolves.] (wolf howls, joined by many more. Spooky music.) Care and Feeding of Werewolves. Episode one. Gate of Horn. [End clip.]

W. Keith Tims 01:32

Created by Brenna Anderson-Dowd, Care and Feeding of Werewolves is a dark modern fantasy podcast within a podcast addressing current events and issues in the paranormal community, hosted by Hazel Thornton, Witch-for-hire and Doctor. When her grandmother disappears without a trace, Hazel drops out of her medical residency program to look for her and take over the family clinic for supernatural beings only to find more people are going missing. She takes it upon herself to warn and educate the community, search for the lost, and manage a full patient load all while keeping the paranormal world secrets safe from humans. Anderson-Dowd serves as the show's main writer, director and performs the voice of Hazel. Working with her is Freddy Elmore, who does additional writing, produces and sound designs the show as well as performs most of the other voices including Julia the Orc, Hazel's friend. The first episode gate of horn has Hazel warning her listeners about the strange disappearances plaguing the supernatural community and her investigation so far. The second episode,

The Garden, takes a more humorous tone where we get a glimpse into Hazel's life at the clinic and she adopts a baby dragon. I spoke to Brenna and Freddy remotely from their homes.

W. Keith Tims 02:48

I wanted to bring this up, because I realized that this was entirely appropriate is: tonight is a full moon!

Brenna Anderson-Dowd 02:53

(cheering)

Freddy Elmore 02:53

It is! It's a Wolf Moon, in fact.

W. Keith Tims 02:59

So I guess it's fated that we should be talking at this particular time.

Freddy Elmore 03:03

(howling)

Brenna Anderson-Dowd 03:03

(howling)

W. Keith Tims 03:06

Would you introduce yourselves and tell us a little bit about what you do on Care and Feeding of Werewolves?

Brenna Anderson-Dowd 03:12

I guess since I am the mastermind behind this evil plot. My name is Brenna Anderson-Dowd. I am the main writer, the director, the producer, and I play the lead role of Hazel Thornton. So in other words, I do everything. (laughter) And then I give all the crappy editing stuff to Freddie I go, go go play with sound.

W. Keith Tims 03:37

Freddy, who are you?

Freddy Elmore 03:38

I am the other half of Care and Feeding of Werewolves. I am part of the writing team in the sense that I do the quips and stuff like that when Brenna gets stuck. I have a background in comedy, but I do most of the voices from Juliet to Assenborough to the Pixies in the garden. The only one that I don't do is the one that's voiced by Brenna's cockatiel, and Hazel so far.

W. Keith Tims 04:10

Yes. Dobby the cockatiel?

Freddy Elmore 04:12

Yes, Dobby the Cockatiel.

Brenna Anderson-Dowd 04:15

He's just the most photogenic out of my three cocktails. Because there's three of them. We can't always separate out the noise, but took the best picture of the prettiest one and put them on there.

W. Keith Tims 04:24

I do want to say that this is the first audio drama that I've interviewed that had an animal actor that I'm aware of anyway!

Brenna Anderson-Dowd 04:30

What Freddy does is something really cool is he has been splicing it with the sounds that baby alligators or was it crocodiles?

Freddy Elmore 04:38

It was first one was baby crocodiles, and the other one was, his mating call was a bullfrog.

W. Keith Tims 04:45

So let me ask you, how did you guys get together and how did you meet and start working on this project together?

Freddy Elmore 04:50

Well, we met several years ago at a...

Brenna Anderson-Dowd 04:52

Several years? More like 15 years ago. Yeah, we've known each other...

Freddy Elmore 04:58

That's still a kind of several. (laughter)

Brenna Anderson-Dowd 05:01

We... (laughter) As you can see, we can kind of finish each other sentences. We joke that we have two brain cells, and we share them between us. We're good friends. After I discovered podcasts last year, I, I've always been a writer. And I always kind of did the whole Oh, I have a novel in me, I can do this. But I never actually had a proper storyline for a novel until I started spitballing with Freddy about what if we did this, and then I swear to all the gods above, Freddy took voice notes of himself expounding upon the need to expel the anal glands in werewolves. I did not recognize his voice. I just went, Okay, we're doing this. I was like, You're the sound guy. (laughter) Like I just went whole hog and dragged pretty long with me because I don't do anything by halves.

W. Keith Tims 05:56

So when did this process start for the working on the show?

Brenna Anderson-Dowd 06:00

End of April was when we had the grand idea, May is when we started putting it into effect.

Freddy Elmore 06:05

It just seemed like there were a lot of people wishing for this kind of podcast, this kind of media.

Brenna Anderson-Dowd 06:13

I'd had the idea for Hazel and the Garden and her family living in my head was probably like 16 years, but never congealed properly into a novel form. But when people, because we were spitballing on social media with mutual friends about oh, if we did this, and we could have this concept for an episode. And what about this, and it just kind of overnight just blew up into... it was like Athena popping out of my head fully formed.

W. Keith Tims 06:42

Freddy, what was it about this idea that Brenna had that attracted you to want to work with her?

Freddy Elmore 06:46

Just about all of it. It's comedy, but it gets, it can get pretty dark?

W. Keith Tims 06:51

Yeah, you're dealing with some pretty dark themes. Even from the first episode. It's not terribly, terribly dark, but there's a missing grandmother. And there's, you know, there could be violence involved. But then by episode two, you've got some comedy back into the mix. So yeah, I definitely see you guys moving back and forth between the two genres.

Freddy Elmore 07:08

Right, and the richness of the world that we've created, you should see all the stuff that we have to draw on.

W. Keith Tims 07:16

The stuff being Brenna's notes, or...?

Freddy Elmore 07:19

Brenna's notes, and just the background texts and all of that.

Brenna Anderson-Dowd 07:24

And people will send us things like memes or ideas. I have a stage before the writing process that I call the magpie stage, where all collect things like art, memes, or texts that friends have sent me, or a random blurbs that I've pulled from writing prompts, and I will play with them, like their little Legos. And I'll keep them in my shiny little box for later so that we can pull them out and go, we need an idea for this or we need a joke or a random threat. Like how would a healer threaten somebody? Well, these

hands can double as AD paddles. Imagine what they can do to you when I'm not trying to restart your heart. Things like that. And so we have those in a communal file to to draw upon whenever we have that moment of oh, I have a writer's block or whatever.

Freddy Elmore 08:16

And we can get as deep as we want with all of this. Like when I was writing the commercial for Magigone in Sick as a Dragon. We even got down into how Magigone could work inside the body. You know, like how it could fight magical sicknesses with like, oh complement system and like totally nerding out about this. This is my bread and butter. This is what I love!

Brenna Anderson-Dowd 08:43

And then I get a text going I need random side effects. (laughter) Spontaneous levitation. Yeah.

Brenna Anderson-Dowd 08:45

I mean, why not?

W. Keith Tims 08:53

Brenna, you said you have a background in writing.

Brenna Anderson-Dowd 08:55

I do. And actually in healthcare. I was one of those, you know, kids whose mom taught them to read before school and I would turn in eight pages for like a three page creative story in school. And of course, I got stamped, you know, gifted and talented, which means that I turned out into a maladjusted adult millennial who's burnt out on life but (laughter) and I went to university to actually study to teach literature and writing and actually theater and then lo and behold, the burnt out aspect of millennialism reared up and bit me on the butt. I remember remembered that I actually don't like kids that much. (laughter) So I don't want to teach.

W. Keith Tims 09:40

And Freddy?

Freddy Elmore 09:41

I actually I have a background in writing too. I was published for the first time at 15. Won a couple of contests as a teenager and then at around the age of 26. I got writer's block that lasted until last spring. I deal with disabling mental illness, actually, so I battle with that quite a bit. I have rapid cycling bipolar, complex PTSD and dissociative disorder, all of those kind of combined to make it very difficult to do a heck of a lot of stuff out in public. So I tend to be very shy rather reclusive. Getting out into the podcast has been kind of stretching boundaries a lot with me, because I'm way more public than I ever have been with anything I've made.

Hazel 10:32

[Begin Clip.] (Hazel speaking on her podcast.) I suppose I was naive and hoped that all this would be a quick search and rescue. But it's rapidly becoming apparent that this is more of a marathon than a

sprint, and I am woefully unprepared. I have no idea what made me think I could do anything to help. I suppose I wasn't thinking just reacting, which is one of the many reasons why you're not supposed to treat loved ones. But it's too late now. [End clip.]

W. Keith Tims 11:08

Can you guys tell me in your own words, what Care and Feeding of Werewolves is? What does it mean to you?

Brenna Anderson-Dowd 11:15

Honestly, I'm originally from the US and I have recently been called by someone from the US, what was it that I thought was so quaint, that I was a pinko commie. (laughter) And now that I'm living here in Canada, I fit in mostly with Canadian outlooks and politics here. Like Freddie's mentioned, he's disabled. I also have mental illnesses in a different range and I'm able to work, but only because of the supports that I have here that weren't available to me in the US. So that span of having worked in health care, especially because I was working in health care when the Affordable Care Act was being debated. And that's part of the reason why I am so focused on Hazel as a health care worker, because she's going to mess up. I mean, there is a lot of bias in medical education. And she's from a middle class family. And she's white, because I'm white. And we're, I don't do that, that we're not going to go there. We don't do that in the show. Every character is written for whoever is cast, like Freddy got to write his own character, the couple of people up coming here soon have a say in their characters. And I looked at them because I know them from way back. I went okay, you...

Freddy Elmore 12:43

We did have a token straight guy.

Brenna Anderson-Dowd 12:45

(laughter) For cameo.

W. Keith Tims 12:48

Those token straights... I, uh... (laughter)

Brenna Anderson-Dowd 12:52

Completely by accident, actually. Because we just asked because he's also a friend of ours. We're like, hey, we found the token. But, and again, as a showrunner, I'm probably going to screw up too, because, you know, I joke that I'm mostly straight, even though I'm by because I'm married to a guy. And I'm white and middle class. And so especially if you have the power of somebody in the role of a doctor, I mean, Freddie, and I can tell you horror stories about doctors who looked at us and made assumptions based on how we looked, on the money that we had or didn't have. And so I want her to be an example of how things could be, of how care providers could be. But I also am absolutely against making her a white savior or anything of the like. So I want her to be human, as it were, because nobody's infallible. So that's kind of my little soapbox is, I want to make changes in the world. I am going to do it through stories.

W. Keith Tims 13:51

So these are stories about Hazel, who... most of her patients are people that are certainly not humans. These are people that are vastly different from the experiences that we the listeners have. So I think that's a really interesting frame for you to use.

Brenna Anderson-Dowd 14:09

There's been a lot of issues around racial coding, like Julia is a half-Orc. Traditionally, orcs have been coded as Black in nerd communities for various reasons. But if you actually go back through the history, as Freddy has been doing, they're originally from Italian folklore.

Freddy Elmore 14:29

Yep. They were mountain people.

Brenna Anderson-Dowd 14:31

And so we're trying to take that away and separate that coding. And again, take it back to the original part because racism is going to play a major part of this because if you have people that look at people who are different because they're in a wheelchair because they've got a different color of skin, because they wear some cloth on their heads, and people make assumptions and attack them, or even take hostages and shoot them up in the middle of a prayer, how do you think they're going to react to somebody who looks vaguely like a demon from their particular religion? There's no need to go looking for horror when it's right there in our own history.

W. Keith Tims 15:12

Freddy you do the voice of Julia the Orc. So tell me, okay, Julia is traditionally a female name. But Julia the orc uses "he" pronouns. What's going on with that?

Freddy Elmore 15:24

Julia is actually Vincent Giulia, but he goes by Julia because of an interesting thing. And he was denied his grandfather's name when he was born because of how he looked when he came out of the womb. He was the product of a one night stand into a very traditional Italian American family, his mother was disowned for it, especially when the baby came out looking distinctly non human. So he goes by Julia, it's kind of an "Ey, fuck you!" to his grandfather. You know?

W. Keith Tims 15:55

This is another story that happens a lot. It's people being ostracized by their family for things that they have no control over in their own life.

Freddy Elmore 16:03

Right, Julia was actually born female. In this case, it was used to his advantage that he's trans because it actually helped him fit in better with his peers. Most of his struggles come from being half Orc and trying to decide whether or not to undo the cosmetic stuff that his mother had done, and whether or not to embrace his Orcishness.

W. Keith Tims 16:25

Freddy, what does this show mean to you?

Freddy Elmore 16:27

It comes from a long, long lifelong love of folklore and urban legends, and specifically the morality plays of the Middle Ages and Renaissance period and on up and the way they're all interconnected. One grows from another from another. And the way basically, social morality is enforced through these tales. And I find it interesting because it's fun to dissect. And we do a lot of that with Care and Feeding of Werewolves. And we do it from an intersectional perspective, taking apart the layers, the nuances of these legends and applying them to the real world today. And creating these things. That's one of the things that draws me with Care and Feeding of Werewolves is because we get to do a similar thing with it.

W. Keith Tims 17:21

Yeah, you're right, folklore, almost always the stories that come out of that have some sort of moral lesson attached to them. We can debate whether you agree or disagree with the moral being taught, but they're exemplary tales. You know, they're they're designed to teach a lesson or to show a pattern of behavior. And I think it's interesting that you're sort of re appropriating that idea, with the perspective that both of you are trying to bring to cultural relations and race relations and medicine.

Freddy Elmore 17:48

Fiction does a way of giving a distance.

Brenna Anderson-Dowd 17:51

Instead of turning it into a sermon. It coaches it in ways that entertains the listener without making them sound like they're being lectured.

W. Keith Tims 18:00

And it certainly is entertaining. So Care and Feeding of Werewolves is a podcast within a podcast, right? It's a fictional podcast hosted by Hazel, who is speaking to her audience about the disappearances. And in episode one, you really kind of lay out here the specifics here the investigation that I've done so far. And then in episode two, you really I think, do a nice pivot into comedy, where you've got a transdimensional David Attenborough clone, coming and describing the life around Hazel's house and garden,

Narrator 18:32

[Begin clip.] (in the style of a nature documentary) Witches are omnivores, with a varied diet. This one is making a meal of tea and toast, which appears to be a staple for her as you can see the remnants of previous kills. On average, Witches range from 1.5 to 1.8 meters in height. This one is on the lower end of that scale, and weighs...

Hazel 19:11

Hey hey hey! No.

Narrator 19:14

Ah. [End clip.]

W. Keith Tims 19:17

That also is the episode where you introduce the little dragon Autoclave or Auto. And so there's a lot of humor packed into Episode Two. Talk to me about the way you guys are approaching drama versus comedy and the way you're telling your story in this episodic nature.

Brenna Anderson-Dowd 19:32

What generally happens like we already have Season Two roughly plotted out so it's like, Okay, this one is going to be really dark and emotional. You can't really pivot from that to comedy. So we go from that to a slightly more dramatic one or slightly more serious one, but without needing that same dark tone. I mean, granted since we're coming up to somewhere new maybe wouldn't have gone from the comedy of five to the darkness of six the way that we did, we learned a little bit better for the next season. And so we can go with the standalone ones that are a little bit more humor or maybe more folklore, or maybe an actual interview with someone who's a real world health care worker playing a role.

Julia 20:19

[Begin clip.] Hazel... I'm here.

Narrator 20:21

A half-Orc intruder encroaches upon the witch's territory.

Hazel 20:27

Be down in a minute.

Narrator 20:28

This one has reached an adult height to 1.8 meters. Note the missing canines. This puts him at a disadvantage when it comes to defending himself and his territory. Despite his larger size, the male defers to the smaller females dominance, perhaps because of his youth. The lack of ink and other ornamentations which are used to communicate prowess and virility, mark this one as a new lamb mature male.

Julia 21:10

I thought you got rid of this guy.

Hazel 21:13

I don't know what he is. So it's a little hard to block out an unknown entity that can go incorporeal at will, and appears to travel between dimensions. If you've got an idea, I'm all ears.

Julia 21:32

He's all eyes. He's got so many it feels like he's always watching you.

Hazel 21:37

I know, right? [End clip.]

W. Keith Tims 21:39

When you look back on your first episode, how do you feel about how it went?

Freddy Elmore 21:43

I feel good about it. I wasn't sure, I was really, really, really, really, really intimidated by the software that I was using to audio edit because I'd never done audio editing before. (laughter)

Brenna Anderson-Dowd 21:55

And that was a lot in that for a new sound editor, there was a lot of sound cues in there to try and blend.

Freddy Elmore 22:02

And I have anxiety about, you know, learning new technology. And so you know, it took took a bit, it took a bit.

Brenna Anderson-Dowd 22:10

I am so proud of Freddy. Like, I dropped this in his lap. And in six months, learned how to do all this. But for the writing most out of everything I am most proud of my writing in my part of this. With my mental illnesses, I tend to obsess I tend to look back and obsess things and tear it apart until I drive myself a little bonkers. And then Freddie has talked me off the ledge going "knock it off." And I do the same thing with him like with the, "Oh, we're not going to make the deadline. Okay, fine, we'll come up with an excuse. Auto ate the recording equipment, it's fine." Looking back, it's really nothing different in the writing that I would change. In the acting. I'm still doing that. I'm still obsessing over my acting. Just earlier today, Freddie was metaphorically slapping me upside the head going stop it, stop it. Because I'm like, Oh, this sounds too wooden. I don't have enough vocal range. I need to, I sound too stilted here. And some of the earlier stuff. I'm like, I hadn't relaxed into my chair, maybe...

Freddy Elmore 23:16

She made me cry twice while I was audio editing. So you know,

W. Keith Tims 23:21

She made you cry?

Brenna Anderson-Dowd 23:22

With my acting. With my acting! (laughter)

W. Keith Tims 23:27

I'm curious as to what you struggle with creatively, as you work on the show.

Brenna Anderson-Dowd 23:33

In terms of the show, it's also working with the writing processes, because we're still figuring out some of the pacing. Like for a little while there. It was like, yeah, there's a little bit of mystery. There's a lot of comedy, because we've kind of wanted to get people addicted to the show and kind of you know, have fun with the characters. And then out of nowhere comes episode six, where it's literally a dark, dark, dark, dark topic, you know, how do you set expectations for the listeners. And we're playing with different formats, because we don't want to marry ourselves to one specific format and dedicate ourselves to it because there's a lot of podcasts within a podcast formats. But we don't want to do just that. Nor do we want to only do you know traditional audio drama, we want to do what feels right for the episode that we want to write instead of we have to do it this way. So playing with those within the overall audio drama format, is a bit of a balance.

W. Keith Tims 24:33

Freddy, what do you struggle with creatively?

Freddy Elmore 24:35

Generally, untreated ADHD. Mostly it's keeping my mind on what I'm doing, and not wandering off into another project. I'm working on, you know, one part of the podcast for an hour and then another part of the podcast for an hour and then, you know, that sort of thing.

W. Keith Tims 24:56

Yeah, it's useful to have different things to hop between.

Freddy Elmore 24:58

Yeah, yeah, but most of the time when I'm in the percolating stage of getting an idea when I'm just like accumulating all the media and ambient ideas and stuff like that, it can be difficult to move from that into the actual creative, put it down on paper, or in through the microphone or what have you.

W. Keith Tims 25:21

Yeah. Because you both brought up your mental health issues is that part of your thinking, in terms of what you want to accomplish thematically in this show,

Brenna Anderson-Dowd 25:29

This probably won't come as any surprise to anybody, at least topically familiar with mental health issues is that it can inform so much of your life, the way you perceive the world, how you perceive yourself, I can't write a character who feels like she has to take care of the community and save her grandmother, and help her friend who's effectively still a teenager without bringing in to it some of my anxiety. And so many people with mental health issues have had them often exacerbated by the modern healthcare system, some people can't get what they need. And so they often end up coming

away from it worse off sometimes, or sometimes maybe more traumatized because of that. And I want to address some of those issues within the show. So it's more of an experiment of what that might look like.

W. Keith Tims 26:26

Freddie, what are your thoughts about the intersection of mental health and your show?

Freddy Elmore 26:31

For me, it's important to talk about mental health on the show because it's something that's so so so stigmatized, for one and for another, people have to learn about ways to help themselves, because a lot of times, even in the healthcare system, there's not a way to find help. A lot of ways it's priced out of range, I'm extremely low income, I've gotten to the point where to get treated for anything beyond, you know, a mental health crisis, I have to pay out of pocket for an online mental health service. I have Medicare because I'm disabled because of my mental illness. But Medicare does not cover treatment for mental illness. It also allows us a way to vent and to talk about it. Talk about our own experiences, even if it's, you know, a little removed, even if it's fictionalized, we can still talk about it.

W. Keith Tims 27:23

Yeah, absolutely. Some of the audio dramas that I've interviewed have had mental health as part of their central ideas, but it's still not, it's really still not a big topic that pops up in mainstream media, at least not in any way that it's not framed. In terms of sensationalism.

Freddy Elmore 27:40

I still have a hard time finding any media, we're somebody with dissociative identity disorder, which is something that I deal with isn't portrayed as some serial killer of some kind or another. And it's like I'm nonviolent, all of my personas are nonviolent, it's just, we're more likely to hide in a closet and cry. It's rough, because people hear that diagnosis. And I've been broken up with because of it. I've had friendships and after they found out about that diagnosis, after years of friendship. The stigma is strong.

W. Keith Tims 28:18

How do you measure success?

Freddy Elmore 28:20

Yeah, generally, if I feel like I learned something while making the episode, it's a success. Also, what people say about each episode, the feedback, the fan feedback, and I think I know we'll hit the big time, when we get the fan fiction.

Brenna Anderson-Dowd 28:38

Fan work, be it fan art, be it fanfics, that feeling that other people are getting inspired by what we're passionate about. On Twitter today, I was asking about q&a episodes and kind of getting some ideas for people would be interested in that and somebody that I don't think I'd ever interacted with before on Twitter--no offense to them, my memory also sucks--popped up and went "I would totally throw on some questions because I'm a big fan." And I'm like, Oh, we really do exist out there to random people.

Sort of sense of validation that, that that overwhelming sense of I have to live up to this weird expectation that in my head, this person might have to give anxiety.

Hazel 29:27

[Begin clip.] (Hazel on her podcast.) Rosemary Thornton is five foot three and 140 pounds with gray eyes. She looks middle aged. As of three weeks ago, her hair was dyed blue and purple. She has a floral half sleeve tattoo on her left upper arm: daisies for her mother, rose for my mother and hazel for me. I have a similar one done as a bracelet with rosemary instead of witchhazel. I suppose that might help identify my body if I happen to vanish and turn up dead in a ditch. If you have any knowledge about Rosemary Thornton, Owen Grimsbane, or any of the other missing, please let me know. Updates will follow when we have them. And until then, please stay safe. [End clip.]

W. Keith Tims 30:25

Lovers of modern fantasy will sink their teeth into Care and Feeding the Werewolves as it explores the lives of fantastic creatures who must live at the fringes of human society. The show also isn't afraid to experiment with tone and format to tell the story it wants to. But deep at its core, it's about challenging assumptions, and questioning how society treats those who need care, compassion, and healing. You can listen to Care and Feeding of Werewolves on most major podcast platforms, or see our show notes for more information. (End theme music begins.) The First Episode Of is written and produced by W Keith Tims. All 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. The show's web page is thefirstepisodeof.com. If you're an audio drama creator, and would like to be on the show, send an email to thefirstepisodeof@gmail.com If you like down to earth sci fi audio drama, check out my show The Book of Constellations wherever you get your podcasts. Keep telling stories. It's the only way we're gonna get out of this mess. Until next time.

W. Keith Tims 31:54

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