

Transcription  
The Horror Show with Brian Keene  
Kaitlyn Booth and Nick Hanover  
Episode 271

[Intro]

Brian: And welcome back to the most demonetized podcast on YouTube ...[laughter].

Mary: I'm sorry, that's not funny.

Brian: ...The Horror Show Brian Keene. The person who found humor in that [laughter] is Professor Mary Sanguilani [sp?].

Mary: Hi there.

Brian: Also here, Dave Thomas and Matt Wilson [both say hello]. And.. yeah. If you thought, gee! I wonder if they'll be talking about allegations of sexual misconduct in the industry for the ... the... we've been on the air what, Dave, six and a half years? [yep] So how many months does that make? [considering sounds, Mary says: seventy something] Seventy something months [discussion: Eighty something] Anyway, you're right. If you thought we were gonna talk about those things again this week, you're right. Coming up in the second half of the show, we will be joined by Kaitlyn Booth. She is of course the editor in chief of Bleeding Cool, and freelance pop culture journalist Nick Hanover. The two of them are gonna talk with me about the challenges of reporting on sexual misconduct in the industry over and over and over and over again. We have a pretty good discussion, I think, about the mental, physical, and emotional toll that it takes on journalists. You folks may have noticed at the start of the show that our theme song is back to our original theme song, back in the day. That is because musician and author Matt Hayward had recorded the new theme song that we've been using, and Matt is our first news item of today, unfortunately. When the news is done, then you'll understand why we will no longer be using his theme song.

Book reviewer Cassie of Let's Get Galactic alleged that Matt Hayward sent her a series of inappropriate sexual communications over a period of time that eventually made her uncomfortable, and that eventually she had to tell him to stop or she would tell his wife. Three other women alleged privately that Matt Hayward did the same thing to them. Kelly Owen, formerly of this show, then proceeded to publically question Cassie, via Twitter, in a manner that many, including Mary and myself, thought was inappropriate and appeared, in fact, to be harassment -- further harassment of this young women who stepped forward. As a direct result of Kelly's public behavior, two more women then stepped forward to support Cassie, and alleged that Matt Hayward did the same to them, going back to 2018, bringing the total to six women making these allegations. Mary and I then issued a statement and we revealed that there was a seventh woman who this happened to and that woman was, in fact, Mary.

I don't want to speak for you, Mary, but this happened going several years back, it happened over

a period of time. Mary asked me to please not get involved, please not act, she would handle it herself. She did, much in the same manner that Cassie did. She eventually just had to tell Matt -- what was it?

Mary: I said that it -- I knew he loved his wife, he knew that I loved Brian, that I felt that this was crossing a line and I was uncomfortable.

Brian: At the time that this was happening, I had -- we had both made Kelly aware of it. So Cassie's allegations should not have come as much of a surprise to her, as she seemed to indicate that they were. She certainly knew that there was a precedent to this type of behavior. Anyway, we had made our peace with it, we forgave Matt, because here's the thing, folks: nuance fucking matters, okay? Now I'm talking about the allegations up to this point, okay? Up to this point, is what Matt Hayward did inappropriate? Yes. Is it wrong? Yes. Is it disrespectful to his wife? Abso fucking lutely. Is it disrespectful to the other women involved? Sure. Okay. But it's not Harvey Weinstein level.

Mary: It's not criminal.

Brian: Yeah. It's not Eddie Berganza, okay. It's something that I personally believed Matt could come back from. We're not hypocrites on the show. Mary, you and I have both said, on the air, we've done stuff in the past, when we were younger writers, that we are ashamed of.

Mary: Sure, sure.

Brian: Okay. And there's a host of others, there's a lot of authors our age right now nodding, actors, and other people listening to this show nodding and saying, yeah! I did, okay. But you change, and you grow, and you acknowledge, and you reflect. Okay. Mary and I both believed that Matt would be able to do those things. That's why we never said anything publically. Matt knew I was pissed at him. Despite that, I continued to publish with him because, you know, Coop wanted Shades back out there in paperback and Matt was a big fan of Coop's and I thought, you know what, do them both a favor. Bev and I put Dissonant Harmonies with him because we wanted a paperback out fast, because at the time, [unclear, may have gotten the following wrong] the pandemic wasn't where we wanted it in time for NeCon and that was the only publisher that would be able to accommodate that. [clear] So, Mary and I, after all these other women came to light, we issued a statement that it had happened to Mary as well. We officially announced we were cutting ties with Matt. We said in that statement that we believed he was capable of change. We also, Dave and Matt -- other Matt, [laughter] -- I feel like, for a new listener--

Mary: Matt W.

Brian: For Nick and Kaitlyn's fan base, hello! We're glad you're here. We also have Matt Willison on this show. Matt Willison didn't do any of these things, for clarification. We should call him Dandelion for the remainder of this episode, just so people don't get confused.

Matt W: If it has to be, it has to be. [more laughter]

Brian: So, all day, while Kelly was -- and you know, Kelly can disagree with me, she can say, well it wasn't my intent to harass Cassie -- it is my opinion, not my allegation, not my fact, it is my opinion Kelly, that your behavior toward Cassie on Twitter came across as harassment, whether that was your stated intent or not. And I know that many share that opinion. Okay. We tried many times to get a hold of Kelly. We called, we left voicemail, we sent texts, she chose for whatever reason not to get back in touch with us. Dave, Matt, Mary, myself, we had a conference call, we agreed unanimously that her behavior was uncalled for, that it reflected poorly on the show. So we chose to remove her from this show.

Mary: But it should be stated that we were not mad at Kelly personally, that we still considered her a friend. We still love Kelly. But, it was a business decision.

Brian: It was. And as I said, we tried to get in touch. Kelly did not return our calls or text messages, respond to voice mail. Now. I have been told, it's been alleged to me, that some listeners are angry about this. Zero is the amount of fucks I give for your anger. You haven't sat here, in this chair, for six years, reporting on this shit week after goddamn week. I didn't get into this business to be a fucking investigative goddamn journalist. I got into this business to be a writer. And I've been pretty fucking successful at it. And in the last six years, I've watched that suffer. Week after week after week. Why? Because I had to deal with this bullshit. Am I complaining about it? Yeah. You know what? I'm finally fucking complaining about it. I am sick of this. How many times -- how many shows, Dave, did we do about C.A. Sulemon?

Dave: Several.

Brian: Now he's back in the news, he's being celebrated, awww -- he was discriminated against. Fuck you and fuck that. So I don't care if you're mad for a decision I made for this show. It's a decision I made, the rest of the staff agreed with me, if you don't like it, go listen to something else. Go listen to Kevin Strange's podcast. [crosstalk, laughter] No, no, because that's another thing I want to say. I would like to think, on this show, that we have done a lot of good over the last six years.

Mary: I like to think so.

Brian: But we also need to examine our culpability in elevating people who turned out to be bad actors. And I don't mean a bad actor ... who's an actor friend of ours that I can pick on that won't get mad -- John Anderson [laughter] -- John Anderson, up there on the wall--

Mary: We love you, John!

Brian: -- John Anderson of Stranger Things and Marvel Cinematic Universe fame. I don't mean a bad actor like John. [crosstalk, laughter] John, you know I love you, brother. You know what, I'll pick Ken [unclear] because I haven't picked on Ken in over a year [crosstalk, laughter]. A bad actor like you, Ken. [crosstalk]... I mentioned Kevin Strange but the fact is we gave a platform at one point in the show to Kevin Strange. We had him on the show as a guest.

Mary: It was one of the first interviews I think I was involved in.

Brian: We've had Matt on this show several times as a guest. And as I said, Matt recorded the new theme song that we will no longer be using. And there are others, I don't need to sit here and name them all, that we have had on this show over the six years that we elevated.

Mary: In good faith.

Brian: That we shined a spotlight on, in this industry, who have later turned out to do damage to this industry and to the people in this industry. And we're still not through the first story, folks, there's two big news stories this week, and they have me questioning....Here's a thing that Mary will probably tell you about me. I don't trust anyone. I have trust issues. I want to believe in the best for everyone. When it comes to art and fellow artists, I get so excited, any time I can talk about it, about the creative process, or just about this genre that we love with somebody. And maybe I'm doing that with blinders on.

Mary: No, I think you don't, I think you don't want to be a hypocrite. I think that you recognize that if you have flaws, other people have flaws, and you want to give them the benefit of the doubt that those flaws aren't dangerous to other people. Until they are. In which case, you have always been one to say, hey, you know what, as much as this hurts, this cannot be tolerated. It's one of the things I admire about you.

Brian: I'll be honest. It hurt to kick Kelly from the show. But in my opinion, and I'm not speaking for Matt or Mary or Dave, I'm speaking for myself, Kelly really didn't give me a choice. After her dismissal, Kelly released a statement. I'm not gonna read the whole thing. It's on her Patreon, it's not behind a paywall, you can go read it publically, maybe consider supporting her while you're there. Kelly said in part, "In today's climate of society media justice and the whirlwind it can create, words are sometimes misused, allegations are sometimes mislabeled, and lives are ruined for shock value and the high of relevance. I've seen innocents accused first hand, I've also seen predators up close, too close. The span between them is vast and filled with shadowy hiding places. My friend--" she's referring to Matt Hayward -- "was accused of inappropriate behavior via texts. I've always and will continue to call out my own friends for bad behavior. That said, I believe victims and this case was no different. But I needed to know if I should be expressing rage and disgust at said friend or if I was cutting him from my life and so I asked a question. I believe in due diligence and giving a grievous accusation the amount of serious attention it warrants. I do not condone abusive or predatory behavior, I do not approve of drunken missteps or apologetic boundary crossing, and I do not believe a knee jerk reaction or inflammatory response to a serious matter gives either the victim or circumstance the respect it deserves." She goes on to say, "If my wanting to take a moment to understand the facts offended people, who misunderstood it as victim blaming, I am truly sorry. I meant no malfeasance, my intentions held no malice, simply wanted to avoid virtue signaling by blindly lighting a torch. As a victim and survivor of sexual abuse, I needed to know just how angry I should be with my friend."

I'm gonna let the record show that Mary and I have continued to try to reach out to Kelly, in the

days since this happened, up to and including the point yesterday, finally frustrated that we weren't hearing from her, we actually drove out to her home, not in a confrontational manner -- Kelly refused to speak with us, so we talked with her partner, author Robert Ford, for a little bit, and it was made clear to us that Kelly's angry with us. And that's fine, that's her right, I respect that. And I think, it's my understanding, Mary, correct me if I'm wrong, that she wishes to have no contact with us. At least for now.

Mary: At least for now. I got that impression, that at least for now.

Brian: So that's all we're gonna say on the Kelly issue. That's all we're gonna say. It's unfortunate that it happened, it is what it is. As I said, if you as a listener think we made the wrong call, okay. And if it enrages you, I don't want to hear about it. Just go listen to another show. Because I really just don't fucking care anymore. I really don't. Matt Hayward also issued an apology....I would quote it here, but he has since deleted his social media presence and he did so before I could screen [shot?] it.

Mary: Okay, I thought that was the case, because his tweets weren't coming up yesterday.

Brian: Several days -- you know what, fuck it, I'll say this on the air. After Matt issued his apology, I told him he needed to walk away from all this. He needed to walk away from the internet, he needed to focus on his wife, Anna, who to the full extent of my knowledge was not involved in this, was not aware of any of this, and should not be castigated for any of this. And for the record, I will come after anyone who does castigate her for this. But I told Matt, in no uncertain terms, he needed to walk away from all this, he needed to not let it live in his head but he also needed to let these women not have him in their head. He needed to go focus on his wife and repair that. So several days after that apology -- and I'm not the only veteran author who told Matt that. I'm not the only author who Matt looks up to who told him that. I'm not gonna say who on the air, but far greater and more reasonable minds than mine told him the same thing. So. A few days after that apology, Matt sent me, via text message, some purported screen shots, that he said he had obtained from Twitter. [background growl] And here's where you hear Dandelion in the background getting angry... It makes it less threatening when you say it's a dandelion getting--

Mary: I don't know, dandelion means lion teeth.

Brian: Oh is that what it means? I didn't know. See, there you go! Lion teeth. I'm gonna start calling you lion teeth. Arrrrr. [laughter]

Mary: I wish you could all see Matt Willison's face right now, because [laughter] If he had lion teeth, I think he'd bite Brian in his Hawaiin shirt [crosstalk, laughter, unclear]

Brian: Thank you, I needed that laugh.

Matt W: You're very welcome. That's what I'm here for.

Mary: I would like to hear a debate between the Lion from the Wizard of Oz and Alex Jones, I think that would be fantastic.

Brian: You can't make him do dual impressions, he gets all messed up with ... [crosstalk, laughter]

Matt W: Maybe for a different day, Mary.

Mary: Okay. When we're dealing with less serious topics. For the record, folks, I hate to interrupt one more time, but if we're laughing or joking, it's not cause we're not taking the topic seriously. This is actually starting to affect our health, and we need a laugh.

Brian: And here's a thing, if you don't like us laughing, I don't give a fuck anymore. Go listen to something else.

Mary: What Brian means is that we need to be able to process this the same as everyone else and this is how we do it.

Brian: Now look. I love you, and I'm not trying to mansplain. But that's not what I mean. What I mean is, if you don't like it, go fuck yourself.

Mary: [laughter] aaaaand all the diplomacy flies out the window...

Brian: No, fuck diplomacy, I'm done. I have stood up for the fucking people in this industry again and again and again, against bad actors. And you know what happens, eventually: oh well, it's all Brian's fault. Well fuck you. Well, how dare he laugh? Well, fuck you. So...

Mary: We laugh because we're trying very hard not to cry, is what we're doing.

Brian: Well, fuck that too. I'm trying very hard not to break things. I'm angry. And I've had it. Anyway. Matt texted me some purported screenshots that he said he had obtained from Twitter. Now folks, you'll notice normally that when we do a story like this on this show, we report facts as facts, allegations as allegations, opinion as opinion. You'll notice I'm not differentiating here. Because we were all intimately involved in this story. So, I look at my phone, Mary and I are sitting trying to watch Watchmen, I'm trying very hard not to have a stroke and a simultaneous heart attack. And I glance at the texts, and I didn't read them, but I noticed it was a conversation between Cassie and what I assumed was Matt Hayward, in which she seemingly engages in flirtatious behavior. And I said, okay, what about all the other women that have stepped forward, Matt? And he says that he was not suggesting that this forgives him or changes his situation, he was just "letting me know". Around the same time that Matt sent me this text, three anonymous Twitter accounts were created within the space of twelve hours. The first anonymous account, which we will call Anon 1, tweeted -- okay, this person claimed to be an industry veteran. Okay, that's a word I use a lot. And this person bragged about their large fan base, which I guess it's fair to say I would have. And this person used the term "kids". Which as John Boden will angrily point out, is something I tend to call the next generation of horror writers. Even though John is

my age. One of the kids pointed out to me that the person did a very bad job of trying to sound like me using a pseudonym. Now that was not something that occurred to me until one of the kids pointed it out, then I was like, oh, yeah, I see that. So this was Anon 1, and this account posted the same screen shots that Matt had texted me. Screenshots he said he had gotten from Twitter. And then [Anon 1?] tagged a bunch of people, including Mary, Cassie, and myself. So two of the women directly tagged in this. A second account, that we're gonna call Anon 2, then retweeted those screen shots and engaged with Cassie and others, okay, engaged with one of the women reporting these allegations. I think it's fair to say that Cassie was the loudest in this. And I don't mean loudest in the sense--

Mary: She was the most vocal.

Brian: I mean she was the most vocal. Yes. Thank you. Thank you. Didn't mean to mansplain there either.

Mary: No, I was just trying to help you out. Not trying to womansplain. [laughter]

Brian: I'm trying to make you laugh and I'm failing... The third account, we're gonna call this Anon 3, responded to me and Mary's public statement about Matt by making allegations about another author of Matt's generation, someone closely tied to us, someone who I have championed just as much as I championed Matt. And then tagging that author's supposed victims, three women. One of the women that was tagged came forward and emphatically denied that any such allegations were true. The agent of one of the other women stepped forward and lambasted that anonymous account for such behavior. And the author himself of course denied any and all such allegations. So while all this is going on, I decide to look at the screenshot that Anon 1 posted. Analysis determined that there was a high probability that they were photoshopped.

Matt W: Yes, they were. You can tell by looking at it.

Brian: I'm not gonna say a fact that you can tell they were by looking at it. But I'm gonna say that they was a 99% probability they were photoshopped.

Mary: A number of people who have photoshop backgrounds as experience -- as an experienced opinion, said that they looked faked.

Brian: So, I texted Matt, and I said, you want to tell me why my computer is telling me these were photoshopped? Matt grew very defensive. He accused me of accusing him. I explained to Matt that, well, you've lied to me a number of times now. So I think I have a right to ask questions. But I'm not accusing you of anything. I'm asking, why is my computer telling me these are photoshopped. Well, over the course of that conversation, Matt admitted, to me -- and then I put him on speaker phone and had him repeat it to Mary -- he admitted to both of us that he created the second alt account, Alt account 2. The one that retweeted Alt account 1's screenshots, and the one that engaged with Cassie and others. So. By his own admission, Matt Hayward admitted to creating a fake Twitter profile to contact a woman who has stated she wants

no further contact with him. If you are still on the fence and say, I don't understand how this is harassment, fuck you.

Mary: I have a feeling that's going to be a refrain here...

Brian: If that offends you -- Dave, how many fucks do I give?

Dave: None!

Mary: Behold the field of fucks which you give. The barren land. [laughter, crosstalk]

Brian: For the record, let the record show, Matt Hayward denies that he created the first anonymous Twitter account. All three Twitter accounts have since been deleted from Twitter. Now we will get into personal opinion, and I will label it as such.

Mary: Uh oh. Oh no, the knuckles are cracking... [laughter]

Brian: It is my personal opinion that at least one other individual was involved in the creation of these fake accounts. But I can't prove it. Or can I? Maybe, maybe it was just Matt. Or maybe Matt had some help. But it's not lost on me that that first account read a lot like the way I would talk. And it's not lost on me that that third account came after someone else I consider a protégée, and tried to do a lot of damage. I have no proof. Maybe I'm just talking out my ass, or maybe I'm not. The ball is in your court. That's all I have to say about it, end of personal opinion.

Poltergeist Press has decided to dissolve their English language division. They had hoped to keep the Russian language division going, however, since Matt Hayward created that fake Twitter account using a phone number directly connected to Poltergeist Press's Twitter account, I decided that I could not continue Russian translations, so I asked for a rights reversion there. I know a number of other authors have stated that they've done the same. Matt Hayward's agent has dropped him as a client, Thunderstorm Books has dissolved another ghost imprint that was a joint imprint they had with Poltergeist Press. Poltergeist Press's Twitter account has been deactivated; their web site remains active. There are now, as of press time, when we are recording this, twelve women whose allegations match Cassie's.

That's all I have to say. Does anyone else have any commentary, before we dig in?

Mary: I have things to say about all of this in general, but not this specific story. It can wait until we're done.

Brian: No, go ahead. I need a break. My blood pressure is up.

Mary: Okay. This is not specific to Matt, this is just in general. I think that if you have women in your life, it's a safe bet to say that nine out of ten of them have experienced sexual harassment, assault, or rape in some way. I know that in these discussions in the past, I have alluded to having experience myself. This is probably the first time I will ever say, and the last time, and I will

answer no questions about this should it ever come up anywhere else. I was raped by a boyfriend when I was seventeen, I was sexually assaulted in my thirties, I have been harassed, coerced, and bullied into sexual things a number of times. I have been flirted with, I have been hit on, I have been propositioned to trade sex for business things, and I am sure I am not the only woman that can say that. One of the things I would like to point out, since this has come up several times in the course of the last two days, is that I, and any other woman with common sense, and probably any man with common sense, knows the difference between flirting, which I am absolutely a participant of as much as a receiver of, being hit on, which is I think is a little bit of a step, and being harassed. Harassed means that there is either a shift of power, a shift of balance, where you feel that you are somehow pressured or bullied by the sexual advances because of the power the other person has over you, in a personal or professional way. Or, that you feel generally uncomfortable because of the nature of your relationship, however it is, with that other person. Harassment to me is when flirting crosses a line and you have stated or maybe not even have stated, that it is making you uncomfortable. Although, I think a lot of women learn that at least stating it once, it makes you feel better. Because I know that lots of women, a lot of women, when these things happen to them, they go over it and over it and over it in their heads, what did I do, did I lead him on, did I say the wrong thing, am I going to somehow have this come back and bite me in the ass because I should have been clearer, I should have been meaner, I should have been harsher. And we're not trained to be aggressive. We're not trained to be mean. We are trained to look for the signs of predators that might hurt us, but we don't expect those predators to be coworkers and friends and family. We expect that we can trust those people, and when they violate our trust, it throws us for a loop. So sometimes our responses may seem strange to you. But the fact of the matter is, that we are navigating this with the tools that we have, at the age that we are, and we are doing the best that we can to, as women do, keep the peace and not hurt anybody. The people that I referenced in the beginning of this long and probably meandering speech, I have never named publically and won't. The first guy, I know where he is, I know where he lives, what state he lives in, and that's about it. I have him blocked every social media I can. The other person was somebody I considered a friend. And I would not do anything to hurt his family, despite the fact that he hurt me. Another point I wanted to make is that if you are a powerful man, like -- and again, I want to be careful in how I say this, because I don't want this to reflect negatively -- but I have heard Brian, our friend Chris Golden -- I've heard men like that say "I didn't know, I had no idea. If I had known, I would have said something, I would have done something, I just didn't know." There's a reason women don't say anything. We talked about this a couple weeks ago, in the episode where we discussed how this was affecting people in Texas, in movie companies, [Cinestate?], where this woman was now seeing professional repercussions as well as personal repercussions. People call you names, they accuse you of lying, they decide they're not going to work with you because your drama is just trailing after you everywhere you go. And also, like I said, women, they second guess themselves, even though they know intellectually they didn't do anything wrong, they think, well, what am I doing to someone else if I make this public? [36:03]

[At this point I had too much other work land in front of me and couldn't continue. Sorry! I will try to pick it up again soon....]