

Kieryn Darkwater:

I'm Kieryn.

Eve Ettinger:

I'm Hannah. This is Kitchen Table Cult.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Where two Quiverfull escapees talk about our experiences in the cultish underbelly of the Religious Right.

Eve Ettinger:

Hey, Kieryn.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Hey, Hannah.

Eve Ettinger:

Today we're taking a listener question. Bethany asked us a whole bunch of questions that I feel like could take up a whole lot of time, but we're going to try to cover most of them in this episode. There's a few questions that we don't want to answer, and we'll explain why.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Do we want to start with the ones that we do want to answer or just start from the top?

Eve Ettinger:

We can just start from the top and go down.

Kieryn Darkwater:

All right. "When did you start having sistermom duties in your household and what did that look like?"

Eve Ettinger:

I think we had the same answer to this question, didn't we?

Kieryn Darkwater:

Yeah, I think we did.

Eve Ettinger:

We should explain what sistermom is first.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Right. My experience was basically you're the oldest sister, and because of that reason, you're like an indentured servant, and you basically get to be a mother. I described it as a surrogate mom when I was in that culture. I did everything that my mother did, for my mother, despite not having children, not

being an adult, but I had all of the responsibility, especially as I got older, to do what my mother would have done, what mothers usually do.

Eve Ettinger:

I think indentured servant is a really good way of looking at it. I think there's this idea of you are obligated to be completely submissive to the agendas of the family and the needs of the family until the point where you are emancipated by having your own family to take care of. You never really get a break from any of these things.

Kieryn Darkwater:

It's all training.

Eve Ettinger:

Yeah, but it's all practice. Because you belong to the family, you are an asset to the family, you don't have really any choice for how you go about participating in it. This is why, we've talked about this before, where we really both related to all of those orphan narratives of the older sibling raising their kids. *Boxcar Children* isn't the only one. There's this entire genre of literature around this, where it's like some tragic accident happens to pioneer parents, and the oldest daughter has to raise them. Those were the stories that I resonated with-

Kieryn Darkwater:

All of them, yeah.

Eve Ettinger:

... because I've always joked that I've raised five kids already. I wasn't there from the beginning to end, but I was doing a lot of the work. I was mom's right hand, and I was second mom. Yeah, *sistermom*.

Kieryn Darkwater:

That's what that means. For me, I guess that fulfilling that role started when I was eight, between eight and nine.

Eve Ettinger:

Mine was seven when I started doing dishes and helping watch the baby. It was basically as soon as I was tall enough to reach the sink and help load the dishwasher, or old enough to be coordinated enough to fold laundry, I could do it.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Yeah. I guess I started doing really basic stuff when I was about seven, and my third sibling or sister was born, and then it was like, "Oh hey, you have arms, you can hold this toddler. That's fine."

Eve Ettinger:

I remember walking into the house of one family I used to babysit for, and they had a bunch of boys, and I remember at that point being really into this idea, because it was boys doing work. At that moment my family didn't really have my brother doing any of the chores. I think he did dishes and that's it. He didn't even do his own laundry. They had this four-year-old boy and his older brother, who's maybe five, they

were really close in age, up on chairs loading the dishwasher together. I was like, "Wow, that's so great," because it was only good because it meant that their older siblings didn't have to do so much work. I felt like that was something I wanted, because I was doing too much and I was overwhelmed.

Kieryn Darkwater:

That makes sense. Yeah. I never had the experience of getting to see what other families did because I was always at home doing all of the work. As soon as I was able to reach the oven, I was doing lunch every day. I always did breakfasts for everybody every day, and the dishes and the laundry and basically all of the inside chores, and then my brother would do the outside chores.

Eve Ettinger:

Yeah. We did things differently. Every couple years my mom would try to create a new system to do it. I will say, toward the end, my last year and a half of high school, I had fallen so far behind that my mom had this realization that I was not going to graduate on time if something didn't change, and so I think I got my dinner dishes duties and occasional babysitting, but I got relieved of most of the usual stuff. No, I still had a lot of the same chores. I just wasn't the one she would call to help. That's what it was. I still had all my same chore obligations in terms of the ones that were officially assigned, but she would go to someone else first in a crisis, which freed up massive amounts of time, and I was able to graduate on time. Even still, that shouldn't have happened.

Kieryn Darkwater:

No. What my parents did instead, after I started high school and that workload started becoming a lot, is they just decided that I'd learned everything that I needed and it was time for me to graduate, because they needed me to help run the entire household and do the budget and raise the children, because my mom's pregnancies over time got worse, to the point where she was incapacitated for nine months. That was why I graduated when I was 15 was because my parents were like, "Your school is taking up too much of your time."

Eve Ettinger:

We had different situations in terms of that. You were not expected to go to college. I was expected to go to college, which was such a unusual thing for ...

Kieryn Darkwater:

That was rare, yeah.

Eve Ettinger:

Then the next two questions are ... We're sort of going to answer them, but we're not really comfortable with answering them the way they're phrased. "Sistermom duties, how did that affect you and your siblings when you left the home, and how do you still see that affecting your siblings who are still at the home, if any of them are?" I think there's a dynamic that gets created by that, that's because you're parentified as an oldest sibling, you don't end up being allowed to be a child or one of the group. The younger siblings resent you, because they see you as having a whole lot more privilege than they do, because you get given all this responsibility, and with that seems to come a sense of authority, even though you are really getting just as much of a shitty deal as they are. You don't really have any say over it. I used to be really upset a lot that my siblings didn't understand that I wasn't the one who was being

the big bad. I was being the big bad because I was so afraid of getting punished for not being the big bad.

Kieryn Darkwater:

That bothered me too, because it was also the same for me, where I had all of the authority and none of the power behind it. I would get punished even more than they would, but they wouldn't know, because they only saw me as the enforcer or the caretaker, depending on what was happening.

Eve Ettinger:

My dad would, when he and my mom would leave for date night or whatever, he would be like, "All right, guys, you got to listen up to Hannah. While I'm gone, she's the supreme dictator." This is a phrase that he created. This created a lot of resentment. This made me seem to be like someone who was a despot. I didn't have any crowd management skills at that point. I was just desperate to have everybody finish their chores and go to bed. I really didn't have any investment in being mean, but because he set up that adversarial tone, my siblings would ... There would be little coups happening. They would play into that role of, "We're going up against this authority that dad set up, who's this evil person." I'd just be like, "Please, just can you just do your normal chores and just do your thing and we'll watch a movie and go to bed? This is so simple. Why do we have to create a fight, where like, 'No, we're going to go play on the computer for hours and ignore all of our chores and yell at each other and refuse to help with anything.'"

Kieryn Darkwater:

My parents would leave me in charge for hours, hours on end, and I would have no idea when they were coming back. They didn't set it up quite that adversarially. I was allowed to punish the kids, and they informed them of that and were like, "Listen to your sibling, because they're in charge, and they can spank you if you get in trouble, or they'll tell us and then we'll punish you if you get in trouble." I always just was like, "We'll just watch movies and it's chill," so eventually they all realized that when I was in charge it was basically just free play forever, because they didn't do as many of the chores. They did some chores, but I was the one who bore the brunt of it. It was less of, "All the chores need to be finished," and more, "Stop dying!"

Eve Ettinger:

I would be trying to keep a baby alive, and that would often take a lot of energy. Around this time it was when it was twins, twin toddlers. If you've ever had to chase two-and-a-half-year-old twins around the house when they cannot communicate-

Kieryn Darkwater:

I can't imagine twins.

Eve Ettinger:

... and all they want to do is get away from you and pee on the walls. There was no way that I was-

Kieryn Darkwater:

I'm sorry.

Eve Ettinger:

... going to be doing all the chores. I was just trying to keep these two kids from killing each other or someone else or themselves or climbing on top of the fridge and jumping off or locking themselves in the dryer. I was just trying to keep them alive, so trying to do any of the chores was not going to really happen.

Kieryn Darkwater:

This is why I'm like, "Everyone be in the living room where I can see you and watch a movie or play a game."

Eve Ettinger:

Keep them all visible.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Yes. If they're quiet, then I know something's wrong.

Eve Ettinger:

Then the next question was about our siblings at home. I think as much as I would like to answer this question, it's their story, not mine. I will say that when I left for college, I know it was really hard on my next sister down, because she had to take on a lot of stuff that I left. That was a difficult transition.

Kieryn Darkwater:

For me, I'm estranged from my family, and it is their story to tell, so I'm not comfortable explaining how they took it, because all I know is immediately after I left, my parents told my siblings that I abandoned them and I didn't love them, and that hurt them a lot. One of my siblings reached out to me about it, and we've talked since and they understand and that's good. I don't really know. I can imagine, but that's their story.

Eve Ettinger:

I will say things are very different with my family now that they're not Homeschooling anymore. That's made a lot of positive changes and a lot of massive lifestyle adjustments. The effects are long-lasting, they're not necessarily good, and they're not mine to talk about. What's the next question?

Kieryn Darkwater:

When do you see families successfully, in quotes, "Retaining their children and grandchildren in the cult as second and third-generation members?"

Eve Ettinger:

The followup question, which is related, "Are they more controlling or do they allow their children more freedoms but still require certain religious parameters?"

Kieryn Darkwater:

That varies.

Eve Ettinger:

In case you haven't figured it out yet, Kiernyn and I are both fairly Marxist feminist in our analysis of all of these questions, because it's the thing that makes the most sense. The families that successfully retain these people are the ones that have money, so the kids, either they don't want to rock the boat and lose the financial support of their parents or they just don't ever lack for anything, so they don't really ever suffer enough to look into the system very much.

Kiernyn Darkwater:

They haven't had a reason to question.

Eve Ettinger:

I used to talk about this a lot with my ex-husband, because there's a point at which he in his feminist awakening had not figured out that privilege was real and would argue that privilege wasn't real. I would be like, "Of course you would say that. You're a straight white dude." I was like, "You can't see it, because you've not been hurt by not having privilege." Privilege is their blinders, so you don't have any incentive to question, which is fine, but also-

Kiernyn Darkwater:

Also not.

Eve Ettinger:

... once you are aware that other people are having different experiences, it's something you should consider.

Kiernyn Darkwater:

This is my theory on why you see less ex-Quiverfull cis men talking about things and thinking about things, because they weren't sistermom. The entire system is created to cater to them. Their voice is silent because-

Eve Ettinger:

All they have to do is-

Kiernyn Darkwater:

... they haven't been bothered to think about it.

Eve Ettinger:

... stay in the system and they get ready-made, pre-trained wives who are just as sexually inexperienced as they are and won't tell anybody that their dicks are tiny, or I don't know.

Kiernyn Darkwater:

Won't have any way to know.

Eve Ettinger:

Or won't have any way to know that they're not having orgasms, I don't know, that they'll just recreate the system because it's paradise. It's like a 1950s man's wet dream.

Kieryn Darkwater:

It's exactly what they wanted, yeah. It's exactly what they're told to want really, and then it just is so convenient and accommodating, so why would you question it?

Eve Ettinger:

I will say that there have been some men that I watched coming out of that much later in the game, and it's usually once they've been married for a certain amount of time, they've had a couple kids or something, and then the wife starts opening up about stuff, and that catalyzes the man to realize, "Oh shit, this is kind of messed up." It's if the man is empathetic. If the man is not empathetic, the marriage ends and things implode and everybody covers up. If the man is empathetic, then there's a chance that things will recover and he'll take it seriously.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Obviously this is different for everybody. There are some people who do think about it, some men who do think about it. There are some men who learn from their wives or from their sisters or they realize things when they start having kids and they're like, "Oh no, that is bullshit. I don't want my kids growing up in that environment." I feel like a lot of questions that I've heard before, not so much recently, but is like, "Why aren't there any dudes talking about this?" It's like, "Welp."

Eve Ettinger:

There are, but they've just come really late to the game, or they are talking about this because they've, and this is something that I've experienced firsthand, where men I've been involved with in my family or dating or married to or whatever, they've started to pick up on some of the language, and so they talk about it because they want to present this façade of being woke so that people will trust them. They don't really understand what words they're using or what these things mean, so they'll try to turn it.

Kieryn Darkwater:

There's also that aspect.

Eve Ettinger:

I have one ex too who regularly flouts the "yes all women" thing by being like, "Yep, some feminists are abusive." I'm like, "This is why you're an ex. That's not how it works."

Kieryn Darkwater:

No. It's not how any of that works.

Eve Ettinger:

I think that the religion, the levels of religion and the freedoms or control, it all varies family to family, but it's what incentives do they have to keep people in the family. I usually think it comes down to just being upper middle class and financially stable.

Kieryn Darkwater:

I've noticed there's a huge difference also between how healthy the family dynamic is too. I had some friends who they didn't really question their parents, despite their parents being really radically conservative and stuff, because their parents are nice people. They're like, "They weren't mean and abusive like your parents were, so maybe they're fine." It's like, "They still hold all of these things and you're still doing all of these things that aren't great, you're believing all these things that aren't great," but there hasn't been that catalyst, because their relationship with their parents is fine.

Eve Ettinger:

The relationship with the parents is fine maybe because the dad's not a narcissist and he is an empathetic person who still believes terrible things, but he can make you feel heard and understood on an interpersonal level, and so you don't really feel like it's worth dying on that hill.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Exactly. That's a dynamic I've seen a lot.

Eve Ettinger:

I've seen that many, many, many times. I hope that answers that question sufficiently. The next question is a can of worms.

Kieryn Darkwater:

"How did you approach sexuality once you got married?"

Eve Ettinger:

When you don't even know what sexuality is, there's no approach. There's just a, "My body exists to get my husband off, the end."

Kieryn Darkwater:

I came out while I was married, because also I had no context about sexuality or what any of that was or that not-dudes had a sex drive and libido and all of that. That was a lot of trial and error, a lot of physical conditions. I had vaginismus. The only real kind of sex wasn't a thing that was actually able to happen, because it was painful for me. I had to entirely, and we did this together, reevaluate what we thought about sex and what counted as sex. That was really the catalyst that opened both of us really up to figuring out sexuality and how bodies worked, because I thought I was broken because I couldn't have the only kind of sex [crosstalk 00:21:25].

Eve Ettinger:

That whole penis and vagina, missionary sex narrative is incredibly destructive. Just as a total sidebar, the best sex I've ever had has been usually when that's not been on the table, because you get so much more creative, you get so much more personal. You get really focused.

Kieryn Darkwater:

So much more fun.

Eve Ettinger:



There's more of a focus on getting to know the uniqueness of your partner's body and their reactions and desires, rather than following a script.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Exactly.

Eve Ettinger:

Sexuality for us, when you get married, after purity culture, it's supposed to be a zero to 60 thing. I know that that was my mindset. I was like, "I'm just so randy, I'm just going to go for all of it." Honestly that just didn't work. Trying to push it was not healthy, because that's not how bodies are designed. When you do that, your body codes it as trauma. It's too much. I did some things. I did a photo shoot for a Christmas present right before our first anniversary. We got married in January. It was a boudoir photo shoot that I did for my ex. It turned out that I was the one who really benefited from it a whole lot more than he did. I'm sure he enjoyed it, but I really enjoyed this feeling of being sexy in my body without needing to satisfy someone else. It was just doing this for me without expectations on the other side of it was really nice.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Art was a huge part of becoming okay with my body and understanding it.

Eve Ettinger:

How so?

Kieryn Darkwater:

I tried to do self-portraits. I would just stand in front of a mirror naked and draw myself and figure out, "Okay, this is how my body works," or I would do selfie boudoir and stuff and just take the time to be like, "Okay, this is what my body is. This is how it works." It just helped, especially because I was so disassociated without realizing it, for so long. I didn't really, especially when I was just married, have a concept of my body and what that even looked like. I could see it in the mirror and I knew what it looked like, but I didn't really understand or have a mental image of what my body looked like until I started drawing it and seeing it.

Eve Ettinger:

For me, I think the thing that really helped the most is figuring out how to have autonomy, because sex in fundamentalist marriage is so centered around pleasing your male partner and getting him off, and your needs are secondary or questionable even if they exist or not. Saying no is allowed, but it's looked down on as this selfish action. Instead of self-protective or emotionally intelligent, it's framed as this negative thing. This is definitely TMI here, so if you're listening with kids, maybe skip over this next 30 seconds here-

Kieryn Darkwater:

Pause, yeah.

Eve Ettinger:

... or something. After I got divorced, I went on a little series of adventures where I would try to escalate to the next level. I'd go on a date and I'd be like, "Okay, I'm going to hold hands on this date," or like, "I'm going to kiss this person on this date," or like, "I'm going to go home with them," or, "I'm going to invite them back." I would have a limit where I'd say, "I'm not going further than this in my mind." Every single time I would leave it open to myself to decide if I wanted to go further than that, but because I'd already planned that this was my edge, I would say no, and it would be a really nice way of testing how much they respected my boundaries. It gave me practice saying no, because I was really bad at it.

Eve Ettinger:

That turned into discovering that one-night stands were incredibly empowering, because I could be performative in a way that didn't leave me super vulnerable. I wasn't expecting to get off. I wasn't expecting to create a relationship. I just wanted to have a good time and show someone else a good time, and then say no whenever I wanted and leave whenever I wanted. That was transformative. That laid the groundwork for me being able to be in a normal relationship and ask for what I want or talk about my needs or be like, "Hey, I like this," or, "I don't like that," which are all things that were off the table up until I was divorced and dating.

Kieryn Darkwater:

That's really good. I like that approach.

Eve Ettinger:

It's not necessarily a method that I recommend for anyone else, but for trauma survivors who need to relearn that they have autonomy, it's really important.

Kieryn Darkwater:

That makes so much sense.

Eve Ettinger:

The last question.

Kieryn Darkwater:

"Are your ex-spouses still religious fundamentalists?"

Eve Ettinger:

This episode is not about them. This podcast is about us.

Kieryn Darkwater:

I'm not talking about my ex more than is really necessary for context in this podcast. Their path is whatever their path is.

Eve Ettinger:

My ex and I do not talk. Our relationship is nonexistent. When I talk about him, I am speaking in terms of my experiences with someone who grew up in the same culture as me, not about him as a human or where he's at today. All of this is about me and my experiences, and he's off the table. Literally, off the Kitchen Table Cult. We left him outside.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Far, far, far away. This wound up segueing more fluidly than I thought it would into what I wanted to talk about, which is this weird space that I'm in right now where I have all of the expert of growing up as a woman, but on school I'm read as a dude, and so people listen to me, and now as it turns out, people come to me for advice on how they can be better, how can they support people who are being harassed. I wanted to talk about that.

Eve Ettinger:

You should talk about that. I will just say, two things. One is, for anyone who doesn't believe that the patriarchy is real, go interview a trans-masc individual.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Oh my god. I have so much to tell you.

Eve Ettinger:

Someone who grew up assigned female at birth and who is now read as a dude, god, their experiences are so nuts.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Dating is really weird right now, so I'm not dating anybody else, because I-

Eve Ettinger:

Besides your partner you mean?

Kieryn Darkwater:

Right, besides my partner. It's weird, because the power dynamic is so confusing, because I have all of this lived experience, but I am read completely differently, and I'm trying to figure out how to balance that. It's hard. That's besides the point. It's just a frustrating thing that I'm dealing with right now.

Eve Ettinger:

You've talked to me a lot about how once your voice started changing, people would listen to you in class or in meetings more, when people don't interrupt you as much, that kind of stuff.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Yeah, which is fun, because it means I can teach a lot of dudes about being decent human beings and learning empathy, because apparently the low octave is the thing that ... Why are men?

Eve Ettinger:

I was just talking to someone about this yesterday. This is tangentially related. I saw A Star Is Born. A lot of the musicians I know have been criticizing Bradley Cooper for singing in a register that's too low for his actual voice. It's like, "Oh, he's going to be damaging his voice if he keeps singing in this register, because it's an octave too low." I was talking to two guys in my cohort about it. One of them was like, "Oh, I think I do that too. My natural voice is higher than what I use to speak in." I was like, "Yeah, that's because that's internalized misogyny, because if you sound effeminate, you don't get taken as seriously,

so you've dropped your voice, because you don't want to be dismissed for sounding female." You have a whole segment. Go for it.

Kieryn Darkwater:

I have a whole segment. With everything that's happened this week, I've had a lot of people, because I started, I did the Queer Coming Out Week this week on campus, and so I've had a lot of people ask me questions about how they can be better supportive of people who they see experiencing harassment and being targeted. As someone who can see, is in both worlds really, I'm like, "Okay, this is what you do. This is what's helpful." This is what I did when I was more femme, and it worked to varying degrees, but it's much more effective as a masc person. When you see someone or you know someone is being targeted for harassment, some easy things that you can do is to use your body to physically put distance between the person who's being harassed and the person who is doing the harassing. Literally come up, stand next to the person who's being harassed, and look menacingly at the harasser until they back off.

Kieryn Darkwater:

I did this at a party last week with a friend of mine who is always targeted by creepy cis men at these events, because she's young and pretty. I was there in my leather jacket. I saw her and I just went over and stood near her and hung out and had other conversations, but was in her vicinity enough and close enough that when dudes came over and tried to ask her out, I would just look at them and I would let her take the conversation and direct it however she wanted and say nothing, but they respected her no.

Eve Ettinger:

Because-

Kieryn Darkwater:

Because I was there looking menacing at them.

Eve Ettinger:

... a masc individual was backing it up. We did that in Kyrgyzstan too in the Peace Corps. We would often have a guy with us if we were going out someplace that was new, or we'd just often travel in groups. It'd be this situation where if we're going out to this club or we're going out in the city or whatever, and if I start getting harassed, one of the guys would pretend to be my boyfriend to back me up. They would just jump in and just stand there and be, like you said, just a passive threat.

Kieryn Darkwater:

That is super easy. It's super easy to do, and it's super effective and helpful-

Eve Ettinger:

I talk about this a lot with-

Kieryn Darkwater:

... if in this situation.

Eve Ettinger:

... my friends here, because street harassment's really bad in this town that I live in. It's worse than I've ever had anywhere else. As soon as I got a dog, it stopped. Just wandering around with a dog meant that I was a female occupied, and so I had a reason I was allowed to be out.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Wow.

Eve Ettinger:

That's how I read it at least. It was funny, because if I was walking alone, obviously I have no reason to be out and about other than to get attention, so they would-

Kieryn Darkwater:

Clearly.

Eve Ettinger:

... harass me, but if I got out with a guy, it stops. It's so bad.

Kieryn Darkwater:

It's awful. The other thing is in these situations, it's also totally okay to point out that the questions or propositions that the person is making are completely inappropriate and to take the attention of the harasser off of the target and onto yourself. Please direct his attention somewhere else and point out that it's rude and inappropriate and not okay.

Eve Ettinger:

This goes on the internet too. I have some guy friends who have done this for me, where if I post something about these topics or related to the Me Too movement or whatever, and some guy comes and starts trolling me and is like, "Yeah, but do you have evidence for that?" or just casting aspersions on it, I know I've got several guys that I can just tag in the post and they'll just come in and take it over, and I don't have to do the work of educating that person, because I know the argument will go on a lot longer than I want, and he won't actually listen to me, but if I guy comes in and says the exact same things that I would've said anyway ... It's so annoying. I hate it so much, but it's effective.

Kieryn Darkwater:

I talked about this in therapy. It's frustrating. A good portion of my therapy session was like, "It's really frustrating, because I know the only reason that I'm being listened to is because my voice is lower than the girls in my class." It's infuriating to me. My last point is, learn empathy, for crying out loud. I don't know how to explain empathy, but it's not hard to learn. You just have to have a little bit of imagination. I'm pretty confident that everyone has enough imagination to learn empathy.

Eve Ettinger:

A good example of that imagination, like that thought experiment that was going around about imagine if a woman kicked you in the balls.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Yes. I have that link. It's going to be in the description. Go read that.

Eve Ettinger:

That's really good. That's a great thought experiment. Empathy is based on your imaginative capacity. When you're at the top of the heap socially, your imaginative capacity is usually pretty weak. This goes along with the whole emotional labor muscles being atrophied that we've talked about before. Go and read that, and imagine living like that. That's how it is being an assault survivor.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Every single time you leave the house.

Eve Ettinger:

It's rough. It's rough. I have to put on emotional armor before I go out. This is a lot of times why I stay in and don't do things. Today's a gorgeous day. I want to go for a hike, but I'm thinking about do I really want to go put myself in a position where all these other people are going to be outdoors today and I will run into men on the trail and have to introduce my dog to them and say hello and let them monologue at me. I'm just tired. Maybe I'll just stay in.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Yep. Any kind of excursion is so many spoons, because there's just so much that you always have to think about. It's really irritating.

Eve Ettinger:

This is not me assuming the worst. This is just reality.

Kieryn Darkwater:

It's not even overreacting. It's like putting socks on and tying your shoes. It is just part of what you have to do.

Eve Ettinger:

It's part of my hike. I also have to do it any time I'm talking or reading stuff online from allies. This is something I wanted to talk to you about on here. There's a post that's been going around about believing survivors in an age of narcissism. It's shared by a member of an organization that I'm generally a fan of. It's about believing women and believing abusers who might have body memories, or abuse victims, sorry, abuse survivors who may have body memories, that their bodies are reacting to trauma that they may not remember themselves. Talking about why this woman on her wedding night who had never been with someone else had this extreme physical reaction to trying to have sex with her new husband, and called up the author of this piece. The author was like, "She's probably got some trauma in her past. We have to look into where this came from. Don't do anything." The author of this piece, who seems like an ally, had made an aside comment, that was just a super short line, but it was like, "The husband was so kind and giving. He didn't expect anything, and he didn't force her to ... He was willing to wait, and that was sacrificial." The assumption of, by not having sex with your wife who's just discovered that she had sexual abuse in her childhood is sacrificial, excuse me? You're entitled to something?

Kieryn Darkwater:

You don't get cookies for that. No. No cookies for you.

Eve Ettinger:

That's rape culture. That's rape culture being perpetuated. I have to be on.

Kieryn Darkwater:

All the time.

Eve Ettinger:

I can't just read something. I can't just read something. I have to be scanning for things like that all the time. I have to be like, "Okay, this person seems like they're saying something good, but can I trust them? Oh wait, nope. Nope, can't trust him, because he doesn't understand this piece." It's exhausting.

Kieryn Darkwater:

It really is.

Eve Ettinger:

I'm sure he has the best of intentions and means well and isn't aware of it, but it's that empathy piece. He hasn't had to be aware of it, so he doesn't know that he just said something that perpetuates the idea that rape within marriage doesn't exist because your wife's body belongs to the husband.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Yeah, because he's never had to question that.

Eve Ettinger:

It makes me so angry.

Kieryn Darkwater:

It's so infuriating, which is why, dudes, it is on you to be better. Educate yourself. Learn things. Think about things. Think about the things that you've never had to question before. If there's something you realize you've never questioned, start questioning it now. Do it now. Think. It's not that hard.

Eve Ettinger:

Stop feeling sorry. Stop feeling bad. Stop hating being a man.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Your guilt does nothing.

Eve Ettinger:

Go learn. It helps no one.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Your education does.

Eve Ettinger:

Don't be sorry, be better.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Right, which leads into the question that I got earlier, because I was asking people for questions, because it was like, "Hey, I'm going to talk about this. What do you want to know?" Someone asked, "When should we be listening and when should we be speaking out?" Do you want to take that one?

Eve Ettinger:

I think we already kind of addressed it. There's this speaking out when it's bolstering someone else's opinion. It's a, "No, you need to listen to what she's saying," backing up someone who's already saying what needs to be said, because then you're not interrupting or talking over someone. There's also this part where, yeah, okay, so speaking up, you have good intentions, but this is continuing the impulses that you have been raised with. You believe that you need to say something because you have always believed that it's valid for you to say something, because you exist as the final opinion, because our entire society is geared around you being the center of it. Speaking out is not necessarily going to do anything unless you have already done the work. I would say just shut up and listen. Go read. Magnify femme voices. Magnify trans voices. Magnify survivor voices. Retweet. Share. Emphasize that people should listen to things. This is such a basic thing.

Kieryn Darkwater:

I know.

Eve Ettinger:

Go to your male friends and make them read the emotional labor meta filter thread that was going around a couple years ago. It's 70 pages. It's worth your time. It's a slog. It's hard. Go read it. Humble yourself. Do a book club with your guy friends about it.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Yes. Do that. Also when you speak out, amplify the voices that aren't your own. If you're going to say something, use your microphone as a platform to someone else, and be like, "Hey, yeah, you should listen to this person." Point it somewhere that isn't you. Amplify other people's voices.

Eve Ettinger:

That doesn't look like you. This is the conversations that are often had about racism and white people going to black people for education, like, "Oh, should I be speaking up about this?" No, don't talk to the people of color about how you're sorry that you're racist. Go talk to your racist white relatives and tell them that they're racist and help them be better. It's the same kind of thing. It's like, go talk to your own.

Kieryn Darkwater:

You're the only people who apparently other dudes will listen to, if you're a dude, so educate each other. Do that work. Listen to our voices and then take our information and tell your dude friends, "Hey listen, this is bullshit."

Eve Ettinger:



The minute you start feeling fatigued with doing that work, remember that we've been doing it all our lives, and stop complaining, because we're not going to be listening to you bitch about it.

Kieryn Darkwater:

No. This is every single day with no end. You're welcome. Please join.

Eve Ettinger:

Yep. All right, this has been Kitchen Table Cult, with Kieryn and Hannah.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Thanks for listening. You can find our Patreon at Kitchen Table Cult Pod on Patreon. Back us and you get this a day early, or however early it is until Wednesday.

Eve Ettinger:

We usually try to give it 24 hours at least. We should plan an After Dark episode pretty soon. It's been a while since we did that.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Yes. That'll be coming soon. We keep having ideas about Veggie Tales and stuff that-

Eve Ettinger:

Stay tuned. We might do a Veggie Tales drinking game.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Oh my god. Yes.

Eve Ettinger:

Subscribe to the Patreon if you want to join us for that. You can follow us on Twitter. I am HAEttinger.

Kieryn Darkwater:

I am MxDarkwater.

Eve Ettinger:

You can ask us how to send us coffee money. You can retweet us. You can just follow along for the potential-

Kieryn Darkwater:

For the fun ride.

Eve Ettinger:

... Veggie Tales drinking party.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Yes.

Eve Ettinger:

All right.

Kieryn Darkwater:

See you next week.

Eve Ettinger:

Bye.

Kieryn Darkwater:

Bye.