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Kieryn:

I'm Kieryn.

Eve:

I'm Hannah. This is Kitchen Table Cult.

Kieryn:

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

Kieryn:

Hi Hannah.

Eve:

Hey Kieryn. How are you?

Kieryn:

I'm hanging in there, how are you?

Eve:

Feeling a little upset. I used to hang out in Squirrel Hill with people from church back in the day. So the shooting this morning is kind of terrifying.

Kieryn:

Yeah, I woke up and I saw that and I don't have words. Everything is just numb at this point and I don't even know. It's awful.

Eve:

I the thing that keeps happening with these incidents that's really telling to me is that every single one of these shooters, the Kroger shooter, this guy, the bomber this week, this is just the last three days. Every one of these incidents was someone who was a troll on Twitter who was harassing black women, black activists and who Twitter refused to censor or take seriously, so I think they felt like they could get away with more.

Kieryn:

Of course they did.

Eve:

So @jack, fuck you.

Kieryn:

Yeah. I mean like all of their platforms have been enabling them. The president has been telling people to target these people explicitly or implicitly. And even his denouncement of the bombers was basically read more like, "I'm sorry you got caught."

Eve:

Right? Yeah. They're following the dog whistle orders, it's really scary. Yeah, I think if anyone is surprised by what's happening it's because they're not paying attention closely enough and that's basically what we've been saying since day one, that's part of why we started this podcast is stuff like this is unfortunately not a surprise to us. And even though we weren't involved in the more explicit side of the white supremacist fundamentalist underbelly we definitely ran into things like in the 90s there's this spate of abortion clinics that were getting bombed by protestors and it felt the same. It felt like it was coming out of the same kind of political terrorism that is done by Christian fundamentalists, white supremacists, and basically just the far right wanting to take back what they feel that they have lost in terms of power in this country.

Kieryn:

Yeah, what's frustrating is this has all happened before and it's still happening. This week has been really hard at school because on top of all that violence, the Trump administration has been targeting specifically trans and inter-sex rights and protections and I feel awkward because I'm telling people at school, "It's going to get worse", like I'm trying to get a safe room for us to hang out in and decompress and be able to self care on campus between classes while all of this is happening. And I feel like I sound alarmist or like a conspiracy theorist because I'm sending these emails and I'm like, "It is going to get worse." But then the next day something worse happens and I'm just like, "I called it." I hate it so much.

Eve:

Right, so we sound like preppers and we sound like insane people but it's because we grew up with these people and we know how serious they are. Kieryn we've got a couple listeners talking about emailing us to show support for you and to talk about the news, do you have anything you want to say to them?

Kieryn:

Thank you for reaching out, it was helpful this week actually to know that people care and are aware because otherwise it feels really lonely sometimes, because most people this doesn't effect. So thank you for emailing me and reaching out, that was really good and helped a lot with the craziness that was this week. It's hard, that's all I really have to say, it's really hard.

Eve:

Yeah, it's really hard. But we're all glad you're here. So today's topic, we are responding to a listener who has this great question, do you want to read it or shall I?

Kieryn:

You do it.

Eve:

Hey Kitchen Cult pod, if you all are still taking listener requests for subjects and in honor of Halloween, I'd be curious to hear if you experienced the "Satanic Panic", in your homes or communities. I was wondering what sorts of things your families censored from the children or themselves and are there things that they arbitrarily seem to allow that you find odd? I feel like there's always some strange exception to the rule that people will bend over backwards to justify. The article I read talked about how people who actively censor media ideas, et cetera, are both authoritarian and like the security of being under authority, often in a group like a church and that censorship often arises from a feeling of fear. I can definitely see that at play within religious fundamentalism.

Eve:

I'd love to see that article, that's my first response. I'd really love to read that. The question about censorship and things that get eliminated and the desire for structure, I always go back to the catholic theologian, G.K. Chesterton in his book Orthodoxy, has this great little analogy that I have appropriated and turned on its head to use for the fundamentalists. He talks about, and he's using very outdated language, but he says the mad man is the most sane of all creatures and that's because his world is a closed system. And he talks about the mad man's box and he says, the mad man will make his world contained within the box and work like a clock, like a watch, everything will fit precisely and together and be completely coherent. But anything that doesn't fit that would disrupt that system that he's created, he leaves outside the box.

Eve:

So anything that challenges the assumptions of the system often get left outside. So when it comes to Halloween, I think we have this sense of Halloween is in pagan understanding a time when the walls between the afterlife or the invisible world are thinned. And so our ability to interact with the supernatural realms is heightened because just where the stars are aligning it makes it easier to pass through that veil and to interact with the other side. And I think that's a threat to Christianity because Jesus is supposed to be the access point for that and nothing else.

Kieryn:

Yes, that's true.

Eve:

So you're either participating in god's enemy as in the caricature of the devil from the book of Job who is kind of like god's drinking buddy who plays games on humanity. I mean that's functionally what that is. That's like the devil and god got drunk and then they set a bet and then the book of Job is about how this man-

Kieryn:

And Job is the fallout of that.

Eve:

Yeah. This is like a game. So anything that doesn't fit that, this theological system of Jesus being the access point to the other side, really means that it's a threat to that box, that closed system and so it has to be eliminated.

Kieryn:

Did your family have any conflicts in their censorship? So my family, I wasn't allowed to watch anything with magic in it after a while. My parents were like, "Magic is evil", thanks to actually the Jack Chick tracts. But we were also, we watched Philadelphia which is the Tom Hanks movie about the AIDS crisis and it shows gay people as not evil and people who just want to live like the rest of us. And I watched that when I was eight and I was really confused because I had been told up until this point, well and even after that point, that gay people were utterly evil yet we watched this movie for school somehow that is humanizing gay people.

Eve:

Kieryn, they're not utterly evil if they're on death row.

Kieryn:

Well, I mean I guess they were hoping for Tom Hanks to repent of his gayness and die.

Eve:

Tom Hanks is gay?

Kieryn:

He was in the movie. I don't know if he is in real life.

Eve:

I was like, "Wow, there's so much I missed."

Kieryn:

I just don't remember what his character's name was, I just remember it was Tom Hanks.

Eve:

This will give a hole nother layer to my mother being in love with Tom Hanks, this would leave her complicated. Okay, so moving on. Yeah, the things that were contradictory for us were, yeah magic was off limits, and it was set in terms of the story of King Saul, the first kind of the Israelites, going to a medium to consult his mentor. This feels like it's straight out of Star Wars, doesn't it? It's like Luke Skywalker is pissed that Obi-Wan Kenobi isn't around to answer his questions anymore so he goes to a witch to have a séance with Obi-Wan.

Kieryn:

As you do.

Eve:

And Obi-Wan's like, "You broke the rules of the force and cross over to the dark side by summoning me through this medium." That's functionally how that story goes. So Saul loses his kingship because he goes to the medium looking for advice from Samuel who has already died and the séance Samuel says something like, "This end of witchcraft is either equal to or as bad as the sin of rebellion." And that

refers to the old law that commanded the stoning of rebellious sons. So witchcraft is like, that was a byline in our house, witchcraft and rebellion are linked.

Eve:

So we were allowed to read Narnia books. We were allowed to read fairytales. We were allowed to read Lord of the Rings. We weren't allowed to watch the Lord of the Rings movies. And we were not allowed to watch Harry Potter or The Golden Compass and all these things. The difference was there was, I guess they said a [inaudible 00:13:04] debate that Lewis and Tolkien went back and forth about, like as friends, and it's the question of how do you portray evil in literature, especially if you're writing for an audience that may not have a strong moral compass, like children, if you're trying to teach something? And Lewis was like, "You can't ever let magic be good. You have to keep it as this really strong caricature." And Tolkien was like, "This is more complicated than that. Humans are more complicated in that you can't segregate it that strongly." That's a real bastardization of their conversation, I'm sorry. But that's the gist of it.

Kieryn:

I wasn't allowed to read or watch Harry Potter, obviously, but I also was not allowed to read Narnia or Lord of the Rings or watch Narnia or Lord of the Rings until I was 16 or 17 when my parents somehow stumbled across the movie The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe and then suddenly my parents understood metaphor. Because my dad was like, "Oh my god, Alan is Jesus." And I was like, "No shit, that's what everyone has been saying for eight years now."

Eve:

Oh my god. And I think maybe part of that problem is when you read the bible literally, you stop being good at reading metaphor. I don't know. I'm going to get myself in trouble here. But when you take the resurrection literally you get in trouble. Can I just go off on a little rant?

Kieryn:

Yes do it.

Eve:

This is a totally off topic rant. I believe that communion is witchcraft.

Kieryn:

That makes sense to me.

Eve:

It's casting a spell, it's a witchcraft ritual. It has all the same hallmarks of that. So when you have Christians who are like, "Oh, we don't participate in Ouija boards or tarot or astrology."

Kieryn:

But we drink the literal flesh and blood of our savior.

Eve:

"But we drink the literal flesh and blood of Christ." I'm like, "You guys aren't paying attention. Do you hear yourselves?" I've gotten really, really into astrology and tarot since leaving the church because it feels so familiar because tarot is interpretive storytelling. It's recognizing tropes and symbols and reading it and astrology is interpreting these larger patterns and symbols in a certain light. I don't know, I just don't think that these things are so disconnected. And that's part of what this question was getting at, like what is the stuff that was left out that doesn't make sense?" And it's like so we're incredibly superstitious about the words we say because of the power that they have. We don't say swear words. In my house we didn't say things like gosh or darn because they were substitutions for actual swear words so they would carry the same weight. Gosh was a stand in for god and that was a way of taking the lord's name in vain. So we put all this superstitious weight on these things and then we have these rituals. We have bible time every morning and this liturgy, it's just human to do that, to have rituals, to have liturgical practices, to put emotional significance on physical objects and to orient yourself around them. So I just don't see the qualitative difference between practicing Christianity and participating in communion and practicing witchcraft or Wicca. It feels the same in terms of the habits.

Kieryn:

Yeah, I think that's why a lot of people when they leave Christianity go into Wicca or paganism because it's really familiar.

Eve:

And I think there's this element that that's part of why Halloween is so scary to Christians because they know. If you haven't figured this out yet, a lot of Christian tradition was the existing pagan tradition for whatever region the missionaries or the Christians were coming in to. So as Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire, they started picking up. Like okay this region has this practice and it feels sort of similar to this tradition that we have so we're going to blend them. So we've talked about this a little bit before, but yeah All Saints Day, that whole tradition is a direct appropriation of Samhain and there's all of these overlaps. So Halloween and being scared of Halloween is one of those historical, Christianity, American problems, at least in my mind.

Kieryn:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). That makes sense to me. How did your family deal with Halloween?

Eve:

With fear and loathing.

Kieryn:

Did your churches do any of, ours did trunk or treat because going to your neighbors house was morally wrong but sitting in your parking lot with the cars and going to the cars in the church parking lot was fine.

Eve:

Well here's what I don't know. I since have talked to people outside of my particular community, I grew up in Visalia, California up until when I was 12. And Visalia was one of the places that the Golden State Killer hit before he went further north. So it was one of his starting points, he was the Visalia Ransacker. And so there was this deep set communal fear of strangers that still pervaded that community. And I

don't know how much of it was the shadow that he cast over that town or just the, what did our listener call it, Satanic Panic of the 90s. So there's a sense that going to go trick or treating was like you might get poisoned, you might get kidnapped, you might find razor blades stuck in the candy or apples or whatever so you didn't do it. It was a way of protecting your kids, it wasn't so much about the holiday. And that's where trunk or treating became popular, was a way of limiting access.

Eve:

So we did Awana, which is this bible memorization church thing, usually in Baptist churches. So we did Awana at a church that wasn't ours and they always had trunk or treat but I don't think our church did, we had harvest parties.

Kieryn:

Our churches they would do trunk or treat or we would have fall festivals. When I lived in Florida, the first year that my parents stopped doing Halloween because they realized that Halloween was evil and celebrated devils and sin somehow, because you know demons and spookiness. Our homeschool group had reformation day and so we all dressed up like we were from the time of Martin Luther and some people dressed up as Martin Luther and we would stick little paper theses on the doors of the church.

Eve:

Were they the actual 99 theses?

Kieryn:

I don't know if they were the actual 99 theses, they were just standing in supposed to be.

Eve:

So there was a guy in my college, my undergrad college was very Presbyterian, very, very Presbyterian, and so reformation day was a big deal so people would wear orange as like, "We're not Catholic." It was basically appropriating the Irish conflict, I don't know, super weird. So they would wear orange and then there was a guy who would always put the 99 theses on the door of the chapel. This guy, he wrote for the op ed column for the school newspaper and he was vehemently anti-Catholic, if he had been on Twitter at that point he would have been, I wouldn't say he was a mega troll, but he was bordering on that level of [inaudible 00:22:22]. We had an anglican church client come to town and he wrote a series of articles against them because Anglicans are apparently Catholic, I don't know. It was just so weird.

Kieryn:

There's a lot of Catholic hate in Protestant Christianity.

Eve:

Yeah, fall festivals, harvest parties, whatever to denude the idea that we were participating in this thing. And then my family when we were in California, we stayed home, we'd go into a back bedroom and we'd make caramel corn and we'd put on a movie and keep all the lights in the front of the house off and pretend we weren't home.

Kieryn:

That's what we did too. If we weren't at a church harvest festival thing then we stayed home, we turned all the lights off on the front porch. We were really quiet, we watched a movie and had popcorn in the back of the house somewhere until it was passed whatever trick or treat o'clock was.

Eve:

We did one year in California, and I feel like this must have been our last year before we left, which would have been 1999, so full on Y2K terror. We had Chick tracks and we were handing them out with, I don't know, granola bars or something gross.

Kieryn:

That's the worst.

Eve:

I know, we were that family. These are the granola bars that I can't eat still, these are the Nature Valley honey crunchy ones. My Peace Corps friend Leah and I, she grew up in a big Catholic family in Chicago and she had them too because their family went to Costco and we called them diaper bag granola bars.

Kieryn:

I mean basically.

Eve:

Because they were sit in the diaper bag for months and then you would be starving and that would be the only thing you could find to eat and it would be stale and gross.

Kieryn:

They're terrible.

Eve:

Oh my go. But we gave out diaper bag granola bars and Chick tracks. And then I think we did that in Virginia too after we moved there but I think we upped our candy game. But what the hell are Chick tracks? Can you please enlighten our listeners to this delightful piece of trivia.

Kieryn:

I mean, you've probably run across them, they were everywhere in the 90s if you went to a church at all. It was this one dude named Jack Chick and he just wrote these comics. I don't know how we got a ton of them but we always had access to them somehow. They're super cheap, they're like tiny little zines.

Eve:

I feel like churches would buy them in bulk.

Kieryn:

Yeah, and they just had them out. And actually, the Chick track is why I wasn't allowed to read Harry Potter and what really cemented my parent's magic is evil thing was the Chick tracks. And these are all black and white.



Eve:

Yeah. Some of them had color, maybe for the first few panels. But yeah, they were mostly black and white and there would be a lot of bible verses cited throughout and they would only use King James version, not even New King James version.

Kieryn:

Yeah, it's a point in one of the comics, it brings it up, it's like, "Only the King James version because that's the only one that the devil hasn't touched."

Eve:

Okay. So the KJV as the only good version of the bible was a thing that I remember hearing mostly in independent Baptist churches. And I'm not sure why that was the case, it may have something to do with some of the history around that denomination starting and whatever theological debate they had being based on a translation interpretation, that's usually how that goes. But yeah, so there's this definite sect of Christians that were very, very, very KJV only. And so the Chick tracks were also a part of that. And they were more common, again, in Baptists circles so I don't know what the connection is. But yeah, the Harry Potter stuff was made fun of in there. They made fun of drinking. They used the slippery slope fallacy heavily, every single time. So it'd be like, "So you go hang out with your friend who's not a Christian, that was your first mistake. And then your second mistake is you're friend who's not a Christian has beer and you had beer. So then obviously now you are an alcoholic. And now that you're an alcoholic, you're also gay and you're also participating in witchcraft and now you have AIDS and you're dead and now you're in hell and Satan is dancing on your grave."

Kieryn:

And you could have been saved if only you were a Christian.

Eve:

Well you could have been saved if only you didn't have friends who weren't Christian.

Kieryn:

Right, exactly, or had evangelized to your friends instead of gone along with it.

Eve:

Yeah, it was real aggressive. I will just say, for those of us who grew up with Jack Chick's, I was going to say Jack Tricks.

Kieryn:

I mean.

Eve:

Chick Tricks. With his crummy material as a household staple, there's an obituary website where you can add a memory of him if you feel like it.

Kieryn:

Yeah, you can talk about your memories of reading these tracks and what they did to you.

Eve:

Express your feelings. So Harry Potter was not banned in my house because of the Chick tracks, we were kind of outside of their sphere by then. It was because of World Magazine.

Kieryn:

Oh yeah, also that. Everything was just reinforcing.

Eve:

They were really against it. But the idea was Harry Potter was going to get you interested in witchcraft and getting interested in witchcraft was going to send you on a direct path to hell. Do not pass go, do not collect 200 dollars, do not kiss your mom goodbye.

Kieryn:

Yeah. There's this panel in the Chick track that is someone asking, "Tell me, how did you two get into the craft?"

Eve:

They're witches, right?

Kieryn:

Yeah, well sort of. She's like, "Through Harry Potter books, but we wanted real power. Other books told us to call for spirit guides and they came and they led us into other stuff. Curses, magic spells, potions, Ouija boards, crystal balls." And you know what was hilarious? Is when I had decided to actually watch Harry Potter and listen to the book and my ex's family were also like, "But they'll teach you about how real magic is." And I was like, "It's Latin. The spells in Harry Potter are derived from Latin. Your kids are learning Latin, they know the words. I'm sorry but is Latin somehow evil? I don't think so."

Eve:

Yeah. Well again, that plays into anti Catholic hate. Okay, so we are so anti catholic that we are anti Vatican 1, we are anti mass, we are anti everything. There was this classical curriculum popular popularity thing happening in the home school community where I grew up, so a lot of kids were learning Latin, so I had started learning some in California before we left. I don't know if you ever had this, Latina Christina was the name of the curriculum, and it was great because the woman on the tapes had this really heavy Texas accent so she was doing these verb conjugations with this really heavy Texas accent and I, growing up in California, didn't take that seriously and I was like, "Mom, I can't do this. I'm going to sound stupid." Which is horrible. There was also this sense of I was the weirdo for learning Latin because nobody learned Latin because that was what Catholics did. This anti Catholic hate was everywhere.

Kieryn:

I learned Latin, I taught myself Latin, but also a bunch of my friends were learning Latin because it helped us in speech and debate when we were doing our preparation and what not. So a lot of people in my community learned Latin and taught ourselves Latin, but obviously didn't learn how to speak it. So

we knew how to read it, we knew how language referenced it and what not, but we couldn't really speak it.

Eve:

Yeah, Patrick Henry was really big on Latin. I remember right after we started, one of my acquaintances who went there, they had a Latin Winnie the Pooh themed birthday party for her and her friend. And they read Winnie the Pooh in Latin, really weird.

Kieryn:

What?

Eve:

Okay. So let's go back to Halloween. Did you believe in demons?

Kieryn:

Yes. But I also had the weird background of being in a cult that believed literally demons inhabited stuffed animals, doorknobs, gold and whatever for like two years of my life.

Eve:

Gold?

Kieryn:

Gold, yes, like the metal.

Eve:

Why? How?

Kieryn:

I don't know. It was just demons lived in everything, Christians, doorknobs, metals.

Eve:

They're horcruxes.

Kieryn:

Basically, yeah.

Eve:

The communion wine.

Kieryn:

Right. Well not the communion wine because that's sacred.

Eve:

The holy spirit is definitely not a demon.

Kieryn:

Right, it's different somehow.

Eve:

You want to be filled and possessed by the holy spirit and say weird things and do weird things but it's totally different.

Kieryn:

Right, it's totally different from being possessed by an actual demon because, you can't logic it.

Eve:

It just doesn't make sense.

Kieryn:

No it doesn't, you can't logic it. But yeah, we did believe in demons.

Eve:

We believed in demons pretty seriously. I had a lot of nightmares about demons growing up as a kid. Regular, reoccurring, repeating dreams, the exact same dream over and over where it would be the devil chasing me down the hall, being really angry because I had thwarted a plan of his, or being stuck in a theater where the entire cast of the show were demons and I was backstage with them afterwards and I couldn't get out and they had me trapped in there.

Kieryn:

Oh no.

Eve:

Yeah, it was just this weird stuff. But I think a lot of that came from reading the Frank Peretti books.

Kieryn:

Oh yeah, those books were creepy for what I was exposed to.

Eve:

Those were really intense books. Frank Peretti is a sci-fi/fantasy writer who was popular among the Christian community. He wrote This Present Darkness and a couple of other books for adults. He was kind of like the Stephen King for Christiandom.

Kieryn:

Yeah, he was like Christian horror.

Eve:

Yeah. And then there was a series of kids' books that were kind of Indiana Jones inspired, mystery, supernatural situations.

Kieryn:

The covers reminded me of Goosebumps, which I never read but saw in the library all the time.

Eve:

They looked like Goosebumps meet Indiana Jones.

Kieryn:

Yeah.

Eve:

They were pretty intense. It'd be like some sacred object from another culture has got a curse on it and you touched it and now you're demon possessed and we have to save the entire tribe to get them to believe in Jesus to save you. I don't know, weird stuff like that. I'm making that up but that's based on my impressions and my memories of reading a dozen of them.

Kieryn:

Yeah, it was pretty standard and the solution was always Jesus, obviously.

Eve:

It was bad fear mongering.

Kieryn:

It really was.

Eve:

And it's also like this weird white supremacist, colonialist stuff. Like again, we are going to be afraid of other cultures because they don't look like us. Even though, this is what I keep going back to, is Christianity has its own cultic rituals.

Kieryn:

Yeah, but it's fine because it's Christian.

Eve:

Right, so anything that is the same but different is a threat so it must be exterminated.

Kieryn:

Yeah. Something that has been interesting to me that I've kind of talked about with my friends who practice paganism more than I do is that the Christian god is an extremely jealous god and can't deal with other gods existing at all. The Christian god is really insecure compared to other pagan gods who are like, "Yeah, there's other gods, that's fine." But the Christian one is like, "No, only me."

Eve:

Right, because the Christian god stole you from your other traditions. He knows that if you cheated on your former gods with him, you'll cheat with someone else on him.

Kieryn:

Yeah, the Christian god is like a really abusive partner.

Eve:

Well that's the other thing is looking at the, this is a totally off topic but related topic discussion, looking at signs of abuse after I got out of my family and my marriage I started realizing there's a lot of these conversations going around where we were like, "We just read this checklist of what an abusive relationship looks like. And not only does it resemble everything I experienced in my family of origin but it also resembles everything I experienced in church and everything I believed about god."

Kieryn:

Yeah. I also had that where I would be reading about abuse contextualizing my childhood and then realized that is the exact same relationship that I have with religion.

Eve:

Yeah. So I don't think we've ever really talked about our deconversions strictly so much, but I left the church not because I stopped believing so much as I physically couldn't go to church. I would have migraines and panic attacks and dissociation and I physically could not sit through a sermon anymore without hurting my body. It became like a form of self harm to go to church.

Kieryn:

Yep, I was the same after I left. I went to church every week for like a year still and then we realized we were adults and didn't have to do that anymore. And around that same time, well not even that, during that year that I was still going to church going to church became very stressful and I would get panic attacks and be anxious and I would have adrenaline rushes in church, I would feel nauseous and sick. I brought a flask of rum with me whenever I had to go and I would just go hang out in the bathroom. I would hang out in the bathroom during communion so I wouldn't have to do that. And I eventually stopped going because it was just too toxic for me. And I would try to be good and listen to what the preachers were saying, and everything that they said whether or not they meant the same things that my parents said, everything was filtered through that. And it was just abusive and toxic and terrible and people at church obviously were like, "Well you just need more church." And I'm like, "No, you don't understand. This is bad for my health."

Eve:

Yeah. It's very, very triggering. And I don't entirely know what I believe in in terms of an alternative to Christianity, I consciously deconstructed and reconstructed everything except for my faith. I consciously deconstructed my faith to a point where I was trying very, very hard to find ways to believe in the same systems while trying to dismantle power differentials and abuse systems and basically wasn't able to do that. So I've never replaced it with anything, but I think this is why I've felt drawn toward witchcraft and paganism because it's ritual, it's a lot of the calendar times, like similar times of year for major events. Easter and Halloween are drawn from pagan celebrations. So I'm able to keep a lot of the same seasonal

patterns of behavior and tradition in terms of observing changes of year and major astrological events that line up pretty closely to a lot of the same events that the church was absorbing, largely because the church appropriated those old things. So it's nice because I don't feel like I've drifted too far from routine and there's a lot of a history that I can learn from. And my heritage is Scottish and German, so there's a whole lot of those more druidic traditions that I can draw from that are not appropriative religious traditions in any way. So I feel a little more at home practicing those things without stealing from other cultures.

Kieryn:

That makes sense. I also, basically I deconstructed Christianity but I didn't replace it with anything because after going through all of that, the idea of organized religion is too much for me still. So I'm drawn to paganism and I practice, I dabble in paganism a little bit personally because it makes sense to me and also in a way that's very much, "I only do it for me and I'm not going to try and convince you that my warding and shielding and spells work universally but they work for my brain so that's it."

Eve:

Yeah that's the other thing is these rituals and things, we're self directed in terms of how we're practicing them. It's a decentralized tradition, it's a matriarchal tradition, it's not something that we're participating in in an abusive power structure. We're participating in something that, I mean hedgewitchery is what women have done in the kitchen for forever, it's like mother witchcraft. It's like ways of protecting your family and your home and establishing routines and boundaries and emotional safety nets. It's just common sense stuff. And I look at a lot of the implicit traditions that my mother gravitated to in terms of stuff around the house that she did, which in her mind were homemaking things but I think a lot of them overlap with the traditions of hedgewitchery.

Kieryn:

That makes sense.

Eve:

Little things like lighting a candle and clearing a space and washing things at certain times and bringing in herbs or burning things, just kind of all feels the same.

Kieryn:

Yeah, there is a comforting similarity in it without it being oppressive, which is nice. So what are your feelings on Halloween and stuff now? What's changed?

Eve:

I have kept my any sort of observance of Halloween kind of low key, I've never really participated in it. I went with a boyfriend to a garage band concert one Halloween a couple years back and dressed up as Buffy and I feel like that's the closest I've ever gotten to observing Halloween. The crowd was bad and it was cold and I got sick off the beer and so it was a weird night. So I haven't really celebrated Halloween. My ex husband and I, we were going to do a Harry Potter Halloween costume party at some point and it must have been when we were fighting a lot because that never happened. But I really loved Harry Potter, really loved reading that as an adult. I got in trouble with my dad because I was reading it in his house and I was newlywed and it was one of my first times visiting home and I was reading the third

Harry Potter book or something in his living room. And I was talking with my mom or husband was talking with my mom and we were all sitting in the living room hanging out and my father walks in and he sees what I'm reading and he's like, "Get that book out of my house." And I just kind of looked at him and my mother was like, "She's an adult." And I was like, "I'm married. Your kids won't see it, it's fine."

Kieryn:

You can't tell me what to do.

Eve:

Yeah, you can't tell me what to do anymore. But so tonight I'm going to, a classmate's having a Halloween party and I'll be dressing up as the Jodie Whittaker, new Dr. Who.

Kieryn:

Nice.

Eve:

I think that will be my first real celebration of the holiday with people.

Kieryn:

That's awesome.

Eve:

Oh there's a drag show in town too, I'm going to go to that. Yeah, it'll be fun.

Kieryn:

Yes, oh my god, tomorrow afternoon I'm biking in drag and heels with a bunch of other people to vote no on repealing the gas tax, which I'm excited about. It's great. Yeah, so I also haven't really done anything with other people intentionally for Halloween but I usually dress up for fun and this year school is having a trick or treat for the children's center because we have a children's center on campus so people can do school and have somewhere for their kids to be. So the queer club is going to table and I have a Hogwarts uniform, I have a Gryffindor tie and a gray sweater and a cauldron that I'm putting candy in. So I'm going to dress up like I'm a Gryffindor student and hand out candy.

Eve:

And let's talk about your tattoo.

Kieryn:

Oh, yeah, so speaking of censorship. When I was 22 I got my first tattoo and my tattoo is the deathly hallows.

Eve:

You designed it.

Kieryn:



I did, I designed it myself. It's the deathly hallows and the elder wand is 11's sonic screwdriver from Dr. Who and the reason I chose this tattoo and the reason I chose to get fandom put on my arm was because of just how heavily censored my childhood was and I wasn't allowed to watch Harry Potter. And I read it as an adult, I listened to the audiobooks while I painted and it resonated with me a lot. I related a lot to Harry's experience as an abused, sheltered child.

Eve:

With a Messiah complex, let's mention that.

Kieryn:

With a Messiah complex, yeah. Like, "I am the chosen one, I have to save the world and die." And it just resonated a lot with me.

Eve:

That has nothing in common with the way we were raised or think about ourselves in the world.

Kieryn:

No, no, no. There's no similarities at all. Also not with the orphaned thing and all of anyway.

Eve:

Raising yourself and chosen family and yeah.

Kieryn:

Yeah. So because I put that together and I resonated a lot with the story, I decided that I would get the deathly hallows on my arm as owning myself and owning my body and telling myself that it's okay to enjoy things and also fuck censorship, really. and so I have the deathly hallows tattoo on my arm because you can't keep people from learning things about themselves, and that was really what Harry Potter represented to me was the start of me learning who I was and what I liked and what resonated with me. It was my introduction to fantasy and Dr. Who was sort of my introduction to sci-fi.

Eve:

Yeah, similarly. That makes sense. Did you ever have any resonance with the, I was just about to say Gandalf as an abusive character, but I meant Dumbledore? I conflate them in my mind because they are both-

Kieryn:

They look very similarly.

Eve:

Yeah, but Gandalf is not nearly as abusive as Dumbledore is. How did you feel about that later?

Kieryn:

Yeah. After getting through it I was like, "Oh my god, that's a dick move. That's terrible." That's sort of something that I wind up deconstructing and in a way it's not so dissimilar to, also, how I was raised to

be an arrow and to sacrifice myself to the good of whatever. Dumbledore was kind of also a sneaky version of my abusive parents. And god, kind of, TBH.

Eve:

Right, yeah. It really does feel similar. And I think it's interesting that we are critical thinkers, we are able to discern these things, why couldn't our parents have trusted our judgment to figure that out when we were still in the home?

Kieryn:

Because I think we would have figured it out and applied it to them. They didn't know because they didn't bother to read it because they were like, "This is just evil, pure and simple, we're not going to allow it in the house." But also, I probably would have put it together.

Eve:

I think that is what it comes down to really, I think you're right. I think reading these things or interacting with these things would have poked holes in our belief system because Christianity as a supernatural faith, or superstitious faith rather, parallels so much of the mythology around Halloween that it would have felt so similar and we would have started being able to see through things.

Kieryn:

Right. That's kind of, I did speech and debate and after everything went down and I left, I learned that my siblings aren't allowed to do speech and debate because of what happened with me.

Eve:

Oh yeah, I wasn't allowed to do speech and debate because I was already "too good" at arguing and winning arguments.

Kieryn:

Right. They want critical thinkers but they actually don't.

Eve:

Right. So thank you for this question guys, this is a great question. Obviously we've strayed very far field and come back. And I do want to put in a plug for one request, I'd love to get a guest who is professionally educated, not just experientially knowledgeable but professionally an expert, to talk about how Evangelical Christians appropriate and abuse Judaism and are politically using the state of Israel and the whole question of who Israel belongs to. That's something that we've been getting questions about from our readers but I think both of us feel that we should not tackle that solo because it is so nuanced and it's so complicated and it does definitely relate to a lot of the political maneuvering that's happening right now with the move of the embassy to Jerusalem and all of that.

Kieryn:

Yeah. My family was extremely appropriative of Jewish culture but I am not qualified to speak on it.

Eve:

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And my family was too, and my family is as I said ethnically German and Scottish and my name is the anglicization of the Hebrew pronunciation, it should not belong to me, it's kind of fucked up and I have a lot of feelings about it. But yeah, so we'd love to talk about this. This is an important topic but I've love to get some more voices in on this.

Kieryn:

So volunteer, email us Tweet at us if you're interested or know someone who might be. Because it's something that I feel like it's really important to talk about but it should be done with someone who understands it better.

Eve:

Thank you. So if you want to get 24 hours advance access to each episode you should support us on Patreon or just pay for our coffee habits.

Kieryn:

We need so much coffee to do this.

Eve:

We need so much coffee and also so much booze.

Kieryn:

Yes.

Eve:

Let us be honest. So our Patreon handle @kitchentablecultpod. You can follow us on Twitter, also @kitchencultpod.

Kieryn:

And I'm Emmick Starkwater on Twitter if you want to add me.

Eve:

And I am haedinger. You can email us with your questions through our website, kitchentablecult.com.

Kieryn:

And if you like our music, the person that does that is The Heavens and it's wonderful.

Eve:

Yeah, Jack Holloway's band. They're starting to do some live events so look them up and see if there are any near you. He's centered in Brooklyn, you might be able to go see him live.

Kieryn:

That would be lovely, next time I'm in the East Coast.

Eve:

Episode 15 Halloween, Harry Potter, & Hocus Pocu... (Completed 11/10/20)

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Thank you so much to Erin for saving our asses every week and producing this podcast.

Kieryn:

Editing out all of Blanch's adorableness so it sounds coherent.

Eve:

My puppy is so distracting and so adorable.

Kieryn:

And if you want you can Venmo or Square us money for Halloween candy or just for fun. I take Square and my handle is Kieryn. I think Hannah does Venmo.

Eve:

Yeah I do Venmo and my handle is the same as my Twitter handle, haetinger.

Kieryn:

Thanks for listening, tune in next week for something. Email us your questions, do all of the things.

Eve:

Thank you for joining us, talk to you later.

Kieryn:

Bye.

Eve:

Bye.