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Kieryn:

I'm Kieryn.

Eve:

And I'm Eve. This is Kitchen Table Cult.

Kieryn:

Where two Quiverfull escapees talk about our experiences in the cultish underbelly of the religious right.

Eve:

Hey Kieryn.

Kieryn:

Hey Eve.

Eve:

How's it going?

Kieryn:

Good. Finals is over and I slept.

Eve:

Yay.

Kieryn:

How are you doing?

Eve:

I'm good. I am in New York. I am here for a class I just took, a comedy writing class, and I'm visiting some friends. So if you hear my friend's crazy cat running around behind me or New York street noise, that's why.

Kieryn:

Nice.

Eve:

Yeah. It feels really nice to be back here.

Kieryn:

That's really exciting. And very cool that you took a comedy writing class. That sounds really fun.

Eve:

Yeah, no. I mean, all these men for my entire life told me that I wasn't funny, and I should stop making these jokes, and then I just discovered were just not that smart, and my jokes are actually really funny.

Kieryn:

Yeah, yeah, yeah. No. Why are men? And you're hilarious.

Eve:

I am really funny. It took me almost 30 years to figure out that I was funny, but that's been a revelation of 2018 is like, "Oh, actually I'm pretty funny. I should probably lean into this."

Kieryn:

Oh my god. That's also been my theme this year is leaning into things. On Thursday, I had drinks with some of the people at my school who helped organize all of the queer stuff that I've been working on this year. And one of the people who's been huge behind that is the president of the school, actually. And so, she was in a meeting and she left the meeting specifically to go down to say hi to me at this party and hang out for the length of a drink and then go back to the meeting, which was great.

Eve:

You are so special.

Kieryn:

Yeah. And then, some people were asking me how I got into organizing, and I just explained that I can't not do it. And so, at this point, I'm almost 30 and I'm just not fighting it anymore, and I'm just going to lean into it, because my first memory is organizing a rescue on a playground, and I just kept going. I'm not fighting it.

Eve:

Look, when I was six, I used to basically podcast into one of those Fisher Price mics on blank cassettes and record myself talking about family life. I really should've known-

Kieryn:

That's amazing.

Eve:

... that I'd end up here. Yeah.

Kieryn:

Right? Yeah.

Eve:

My sister used to walk in and try to comment and I'd be like, "Go away. This is my show." I've gotten a little better at sharing.

Kieryn:

Speaking of-

Eve:

Leaning in.

Kieryn:

... yeah, leaning in, but also things that we did when we were kids. What are we talking about today?

Eve:

I don't acknowledge this holiday anymore.

Kieryn:

Fair, same.

Eve:

We've both finished our semesters. Yay. Which means that everyone around us is getting all very, very excited for Christmas.

Kieryn:

Right. And I'm just sleeping.

Eve:

Well, I got a Christmas tree for the first time ever. I had a tiny little plastic one that sat on my desk once, but this is my first real tree of my own.

Kieryn:

Neat.

Eve:

But I got it because it was up on Bent Mountain, where the Mountain Valley Pipeline's being built, and I wanted to support one of the local people up there who was selling his trees. So I got a real Christmas tree and it smells great, but I want to celebrate Christmas by doing things that are really great, but feel nothing like Christmas.

Kieryn:

Yes. I feel that. I also have a tree for the first time in years, actually.

Eve:

Aw.

Kieryn:

My brother sent it to me the day I took my last final and it showed up. And so, now I have a tree. And I was like-

Eve:

Aw, that's so cute.

Kieryn:

... "Aw, that's adorable." But I haven't celebrated the holiday with trees in so long, so I don't have ornaments, but I did make a tree topper that is the anarchy symbol.

Eve:

That's nice. I got a really cheap two dollar light that runs on watch batteries-

Kieryn:

Nice.

Eve:

... at Walmart, and somebody saw it, because it kind of looks a little antiquey, it's just plastic with plopped in glitter. And somebody was like, "Is that a family heirloom?" And I was like, "Yeah, yeah it is. Yeah, it is. Definitely. From my family starting this year."

Kieryn:

Yep. Correct. It is now, thanks.

Eve:

Yeah. My marriage fell apart over Christmas and he left me the day after Christmas, so that was Christmas 2012, and I have not observed Christmas with family ever since. I've been doing very unconventional things for Christmas. One year, when I was living in LA, I went up to the beach in Malibu and just laid on the beach and read books-

Kieryn:

Nice.

Eve:

... all day. And that was great. And then, another year I was in Madrid visiting a friend and we went and wandered around the city, and I got dim sum in this tiny little shop that was in an underground parking garage in the middle of Madrid, and that was great.

Kieryn:

Nice.

Eve:

And then, one time I was camping at the Grand Canyon with my brother and we woke up to a snowstorm. That's was beautiful.

Kieryn:

That's also exciting. Yeah.

Eve:

But also fucking cold. But yeah, I really just don't do normal things for Christmas anymore, because it stresses me out a lot.

Kieryn:

Yeah. My last two Christmases since getting divorced, I have not been at home. I was in Mexico City the first year. There was that, and that was my first time out of the country.

Eve:

Amazing.

Kieryn:

And it was great. I walked around Chapultepec Park, I think. And we went everywhere. It was great. I just hopped on a bus and just ran it until the end, and then hopped on another thing and I went in a big loop around Mexico City.

Eve:

Cool.

Kieryn:

And then, last year, I was in Los Angeles. And this year, I don't know what I'm doing yet.

Eve:

Well, you guys were going to go to Akron, right? And then that got changed.

Kieryn:

Yeah, because it's cold.

Eve:

That is the downside of Ohio. Right, [Erin 00:07:07]?

Kieryn:

So Akron's going to happen, hopefully, over spring break when it's less cold.

Eve:

Cool. Cool, cool. Do you still feel like Christmas is special or is it a holiday that you just want to avoid or how do you feel about it now?

Kieryn:

It doesn't bother me so much that I want to avoid it, it's just I'm kind of ambivalent now. And it's just this thing that it weird that normies do, and people who are less radically queer and whatever the fuck I

am. And so, it doesn't bother me so much, but I don't really celebrate it. I just do my own thing, and enjoy the one day that everything is quiet and nobody is out.

Eve:

It's so nice.

Kieryn:

I walked around LA on Christmas Day and it was silent. There were zero people. And I just walked down this massive downtown, and it was great.

Eve:

Scrooge was an evil capitalist, but on the other hand, I feel like people misunderstood the value of privacy and silence.

Kieryn:

Yes.

Eve:

It's a really great feeling to just have a day off to be quiet.

Kieryn:

Yeah. What was some of the weird traditions that your family did?

Eve:

Oh my god. Where to start? Now, I knew some people who didn't celebrate Christmas, because they believed that Christmas had its origins in a Pagan holiday, which I think there's some truth to. I think people didn't really know when Jesus was born. And so, the church arbitrarily picked a time that sort of mathematically worked and also coincided with some Roman festivals that they wanted to co-opt to use to their own advantage. I mean, brilliant marketing strategy, really. Because of this, I knew some people growing up who wouldn't celebrate Christmas, because it had Pagan origins, and this is not original Christianity. My family was not of that ilk, we always celebrated it, but we also focused on it very much as, "This is Jesus's birthday, so we're going to do things for Jesus that are appropriate for a birthday." So my mom would make a cake and we would sing happy birthday to Jesus and blow out candles all together.

Eve:

And I hated that so much. It's like, "This is embarrassing, mother. Why are we doing this for no one who's here?" And we had a tree. We would have a tree and my parents had this great little class divide compromise, my father was from a middle class family and my mother was from a working class family and she really liked big, tacky, 70s lights, and my father was like, "That's ugly. We have to be elegant and classy."

Kieryn:

Oh my god.

Eve:

"I want tiny little white lights." So we had tiny colored lights for our tree, and we had ornaments that we'd all made throughout the years and some cutesy things that people had given us when we were born, and an angel on top of the tree. And then, my siblings and I, I don't know when it started, I must've been involved when it started, but mostly, I remember after we moved from California, my siblings would put on, and I would either be asked to direct or asked to not be involved in it, a play where they would put on a pageant of whatever, Matthew chapter whatever, describing the nativity. And so, they would all jockey for a position to see who could be Mary and Joseph and the angel. And then, who would be the wise men and the shepherds-

Kieryn:

Naturally.

Eve:

... and whoever was in the dog house would have to be the donkey. And it was this chaotic mess. And so, they would rehearse for weeks and weeks leading up to it, and then it would just collapse into somebody screaming at each other. And it would be this massive meltdown, and my father would just be like, "Well, that was great. Everyone go to bed now." And then, whoever had been the best behaved at that was asked to elf, which was help him get all of the presents out of the attic and put them under the tree.

Kieryn:

Oh wow.

Eve:

And set it up for the next morning. And my grandmother's Episcopalian, so when she moved near us in Virginia, we would go and attend the midnight mass service at her church, because she used to sing in the choir. That was always nice. We had a little bit of formal liturgy. My church always had a Christmas Eve service, so we'd go to that first and we'd do our family stuff in the evening. Christmas Eve was pretty involved, and then Christmas Day itself was cake for Jesus and presents and just then my father would be like, "All right. It's resting time. Go pick one toy to play with and go to your bed and don't get up for three hours."

Kieryn:

Oh my god.

Eve:

And then, we would have the big dinner.

Kieryn:

Yeah. I think the thing that stands out that is the weirdest tradition that we had was we would get my Bitty Baby-

Eve:

Oh my god-

Kieryn:

... who, for authenticity reasons-

Eve:

... I just forgot that Bitty Baby existed.

Kieryn:

... yes, yes. For authenticity reasons, my Bitty Baby was the darkest, to that would be the one that would be chosen for baby Jesus, because baby Jesus was Middle Eastern and not white.

Eve:

I mean, I'm glad that they were willing to give accurate representation.

Kieryn:

I know. The one thing.

Eve:

Once upon a time, my brother who's now 13, blond, blue-eyed, was asked to be the baby Jesus in a pageant that we were part of.

Kieryn:

Oh my god.

Eve:

Womp, womp.

Kieryn:

Yeah. And then, what we would do is we would put Bitty Baby Jesus into a cardboard box and wrap the cardboard box and leave the Bitty Baby Jesus under the tree-

Eve:

Oh no.

Kieryn:

... until Christmas. And we did this until one of my siblings pointed out that we were suffocating the little Bitty Baby Jesus doll and was really upset about it. Because, I mean, even if you put air holes, if you wrap it, you're not helping that.

Eve:

It's not like a kitten that you can put in there for a couple hours, possibly, on Christmas Day. That's child abuse.

Kieryn:

Right.

Eve:

Oh wait, that's Bitty Baby abuse.

Kieryn:

It's Bitty Baby abuse. Yeah.

Eve:

Yeah.

Kieryn:

And then, that would be the first present-

Eve:

Wait, who would unwrap it?

Kieryn:

... that we opened. I think we would all unwrap it. We would all-

Eve:

It would just be a madhouse free-for-all, where you're tearing out each other's eyes trying to get to the paper?

Kieryn:

Well, we were more gentle than that.

Eve:

Oh, okay. That would be my siblings.

Kieryn:

Or we would have a designated, somebody would open it, whoever volunteered or whatever.

Eve:

My family's pretty rowdy. We would not have stood for that. We would've murdered each other to get the honor of opening the box.

Kieryn:

Yeah. Honestly, that box was more just in the way. That was had to be opened before all the other presents, so it was really just like, it doesn't matter.

Eve:

It was just a way to stall you guys so that your parents could get their cup of coffee and get down to the living room.

Kieryn:

Yeah. It's like the, "Here, this is the ceremonial present that we have to do-

Eve:

Oh my god.

Kieryn:

... before the actual presents occur." But that was the weirdest, if only because after you thought about it for more than 10 seconds you're like, "Why am I putting something that is representative of a small human into a box and suffocating it for several weeks?"

Eve:

Because you're pro-life, obviously.

Kieryn:

Right. Clearly. That's how that works. It's like being in the womb, right? It's fine.

Eve:

No, no. It's just not. That's just not how that works. Wow. Well, okay, is that your weirdest family tradition?

Kieryn:

That's the weirdest. But we also did some things that were really annoying, which was the tradition that I hated the most was we would always have these huge holiday parties, and I would be the one who had to bake for them and set them up and clean up after then. And all of the-

Eve:

For people in your church or your neighborhood? Or what?

Kieryn:

... We would invite people from our church to them, but they would basically be a glorified fundraiser for the crisis pregnancy centers.

Eve:

Oh, that's cute.

Kieryn:

Yeah. Especially my last year that I was at home, when I started realizing how horrifying crisis pregnancy centers are, that was terrible. I was really grumpy that we were having a fundraiser for that. And we would also, my mom would just decide that Christmas was the one time we were going to meet all of

our neighbors and everybody. And so, we would bake cookies for a week straight I would just be over and oven baking dozens upon dozens-

Eve:

Oh, you guys did this, too. Okay.

Kieryn:

... upon dozens of cookies. And we would take them to all of our neighbors, or we'd make those jars with the flour-

Eve:

Yeah, the cookie mixes?

Kieryn:

... so that people could make their own cookies. Yeah, and everybody got them.

Eve:

My care group would always organize, I think actually every care group in our churches... and care group is what Sovereign Grace Ministries cult code word for Bible study group was, because it wasn't just a Bible study, it was also accountability and correction for your sinfulness. We're caring for your souls. Care groups would get together and they would pick somebody's neighborhood, and maybe a week or two weeks in advance of the Christmas Eve service at church, they would collect a whole stack of invitations, printed by the church office. And everybody in the care group would make cookies, and we'd bring them all over, and we'd arrange them on plates, so everybody got a good mixture. And we'd go caroling door-to-door, and we would give them the cookies and an invitation to the Christmas Eve service.

Kieryn:

Yep.

Eve:

And I'm a really good caroler, thanks to all that.

Kieryn:

Yeah. That does not surprise me.

Eve:

Yeah, so we did that for many, many years. And it was really pushy and obnoxious and I don't think caroling was ever for evangelism so much as it used to be a charitable thing that people would do to go make shut-ins or the sick in hospitals feel less lonely during the holidays. My in-laws had a family tradition. They all sang parts. So they would go to a nursing home, and they would sing carols for all the residents. We'd walk around to the dementia ward and we'd go into the cafeteria, and we'd do this, and that was nice, and that felt different, because there wasn't any agenda, it was just like, "We're doing something that's beautiful and nice."

Kieryn:

My parents would do that, but with the tracks and stuff accompanying. So they're like, "We're going to go sing Christmas carols and also teach these-

Eve:

Heathens about how they are going to hell.

Kieryn:

... yeah, yeah. Which is kind of assumptive for a nursing home.

Eve:

I mean, but they're in a nursing home and their families aren't looking out for them-

Kieryn:

Right, obviously, their family-

Eve:

... so obviously, they neglected their children somehow, so they're going to hell.

Kieryn:

Right.

Eve:

Oh, I hate these people and I hate these assumptions. Oh, it's so gross. I never actually got into the weirdest Christmas tradition that we did. Can I talk about that for a second?

Kieryn:

Yes, yes, yes.

Eve:

We all know now, thank you for... what is the book? Something called Prairie Fires or something. It's a history of Laura Ingalls Wilder and the actual story behind her books and how Pa was just this violent, libertarian racist who was of the mindset of, "The only good Indian is a dead Indian," and that kind of bullshit that was popular during that time for white people to promote. And he knew, when they were in Kansas, he knew they were on indigenous land and they were not allowed to be there. And he just walked in and was like, "Yeah, I'm making a bet with the government to see if I can stay, because I'm just going to beat out these natives."

Kieryn:

Right.

Eve:

Super sketchy. Along those lines, my father was really obsessed with the Little House on the Prairie books and would read them out loud to us every year, the entire series.

Kieryn:

Oh, holy shit.

Eve:

Yeah, I know. It was-

Kieryn:

That's a lot of books.

Eve:

... it is a lot of books. He was very faithful with reading bedtime stories to all of us, but it was a lot of propaganda.

Kieryn:

That's still a lot, yeah.

Eve:

It was Little House on the Prairie, James Herriot Little Britches series, a whole bunch of different ones, and they all rotated through. But Little House was the one that he always returned to. And there's a story in the second book, The Little House on the Prairie, where they can't get to, I guess it's Independence for their packages for Christmas presents, and there's not much money around, so the girls aren't going to have Christmas. And then, the creek that they would have to get through to get to town floods and so they're trapped. And their friend Mr. Edwards shows up and crosses the creek in the middle of winter and brings them some presents from town and tells them this whole story about, "Yeah, I ran into Santa and he was riding a burro and he sent you guys each a tin cup and some brown sugar candy and a candy cane and an orange and a dime." Or a penny. So the girls each got this little gift set from this man.

Eve:

And my father kind of reimagined this whole thing and he invented Salsa Claus. Salsa Claus rode a burro and was the character from that story, and was visiting our house every year and would drop off ingredients for pico de gallo and would put garlic and onions and bell pepper, or not bell peppers, jalapenos and serranos and all that in our stocking.

Kieryn:

Oh my god.

Eve:

And then he would write this letter from Salsa Claus in the most racist, horrific Spanglish.

Kieryn:

Oh my god.

Eve:

Being like, "well, this year was a really tough year. Sorry you don't get that many presents." I don't know. Just all sorts of stuff. And, "Wow. It's really cold in Virginia, why did you guys move here?" And so that was our mid-morning snack. And that was nice, my dad does make really good pico de gallo and we would snack on that until the big dinner. And that was nice, but-

Kieryn:

But there's ways to get salsa without-

Eve:

He had to make an-

Kieryn:

... Salsa Claus.

Eve:

... elaborate process out of it, that basically gave him a gold star for helping around the house.

Kieryn:

Yeah, which is-

Eve:

And getting us presents. It was creepy-

Kieryn:

Oh my god.

Eve:

... and racist and weird.

Kieryn:

Yeah. Yeah, that is weird. That is way weirder than putting a baby Jesus in a cardboard box for two weeks.

Eve:

I mean, I still crave salsa on Christmas, and I'll generally indulge in that at some point, around that time. But it still makes me feel really strange.

Kieryn:

That's fair.

Eve:

We asked our Twitter followers for some of these same kinds of questions like, "What was the weirdest Evangelical super Christian tradition that your family participated in?" And we got a lot of answers.

Kieryn:

Yeah. Apparently, something that was really common was the birthday cake. The birthday cake for Jesus, super common.

Eve:

Where did that start? That must've been a James Dobson article or something.

Kieryn:

It must've been.

Eve:

Or Mary Pride must've said she did it once or something.

Kieryn:

Yeah. Also, I vaguely feel like I remember it being part of an Adventures in Odyssey thing or some kind of Focus on the Family radio thing, but I can't remember.

Eve:

All right.

Kieryn:

But it seems familiar.

Eve:

Listeners, if you know where this came from, this birthday cake thing, let me know, because I'd love to write it up. This is super weird. Jesus doesn't want a birthday cake. He's not Elijah at whatever the holiday is, Passover or whatever.

Kieryn:

Oh right, yeah. Not waiting for dinner.

Eve:

We're not saving food for him. We're eating this. It's so strange.

Kieryn:

The other one was, and this is something that my parents also did-

Eve:

Oh really?

Kieryn:

... which is bringing everything back. Yeah, Cash or Cass.

Eve:

Yeah, Cass is great. Cass is someone I went to college with. And yeah, they said that-

Kieryn:

Yeah, everything is always brought back to the crucifixion and the real reason for the season being Jesus's death and that's something that my parents also did. And one of the things that Cass mentioned was putting an iron nail on the Christmas tree and my parents also did that. I think my dad learned about that from Promise Keepers or something.

Eve:

Is that Promise Keepers? Weird.

Kieryn:

It was somewhere around the time he was going to Promise Keepers. I feel like he picked that up at Promise Keepers.

Eve:

That's a Pagan protective symbol, to have an iron nail.

Kieryn:

I mean, what isn't just completely co-opted by Christianity?

Eve:

It's so strange.

Kieryn:

All of the holidays and everything is just like, "Oh, we took this thing from this culture and totally appropriated it. See, look the iron nail is totally for Jesus now."

Eve:

And so, yeah, Cass also said that their family had a crown of thorns on top instead of an angel or a star. Did you guys ever do that?

Kieryn:

No, I don't think we did the crown of thorns.

Eve:

Okay.

Kieryn:

I think we might've thought about it, but it's hard to make stick on a tree, so we mostly did angels-

Eve:

It's also hard-

Kieryn:

... or stars.

Eve:

... to build. Yeah, we did an angel. We did an angel. And then, another follower, Danny, and this is a good one, because this is something that my family talked about, too, that I completely forgot. This is part of why we did Salsa Claus instead of Santa. Danny says, "Well, my parents taught me, when I was tiny, that Santa was an anagram for Satan, and so there's no Santa only Satan, so I went around telling people that when I was three."

Kieryn:

I also did that.

Eve:

I ruined Christmas for my cousins one year, because I told them that Santa wasn't real, and my aunt had to rush in and be like, "Ha ha, it was a joke. It's fine. We're still leaving out cookies."

Kieryn:

Oh no.

Eve:

I never believed in Santa, because we were told not to believe in Santa. And I think it's this anti-Catholicism thing that comes up with all of this stuff. Where, "Oh, Saint Nicholas," who, by the way, was a total baller. Let's just get back to that in a minute. But Saint Nicholas is Catholic, and Santa isn't real, and this whole thing is this consumerist, selfish, "I deserve presents. I'm a good person. I was good this year, so you have to give me stuff." With the [inaudible 00:27:15] theology that we grew up with, "You're a sinner. You don't deserve anything. Anything you get is more than you deserve, because you deserve hell, so be fucking grateful that you're alive. And you don't deserve presents and why are you so entitled and selfish?"

Kieryn:

Yeah, I also had that. And my parents also discovered the thing about the, "Oh, it's just if you rearrange the letters it spells Satan, so obviously Santa is evil." Because they're real good with the logic.

Eve:

Real good with the logic. Okay, so Saint Nicholas, the story of Saint Nicholas, beyond what you already know, there's this whole great moment at this... there was a debate about with books of the canon will be included in the official Bible, which books had been circulating and which were scripture and which were not, and they were trying to decide what goes into the Bible and what doesn't. And he was so

passionate about, I think it was the total humanity of Jesus and he was very against the gnostic concept of Jesus was a zombie possessed by God, rather than he was actually a human. Some theologians can write in and tell me I'm got this wrong. It's been a while since I studied this, please be nice to me. But that's the gist of what I remember, and he got so mad about it. Imagine one congressman punching another congressman on the floor while they're in the middle of a debate. It was like that.

Kieryn:

Oh my god.

Eve:

Saint Nicholas punched some dude about the divinity of Christ and the humanity of Christ and the heresy that they were debating. He punched him out. I'm kind of a fan of Santa-

Kieryn:

I mean, yeah.

Eve:

... as a concept. I kind of respect being willing to go to the mat for that like that. He was probably an asshole. It's whatever.

Kieryn:

But still-

Eve:

But still-

Kieryn:

... it's a good story.

Eve:

... it's a great story.

Kieryn:

Speaking of the humanity of Jesus, though, how was your family on the virgin birth? Was that, "Yes, literally," or was there some trickery?

Eve:

We, obviously, believed in the virgin birth as literal, but I think there's some element of this whole pro-life universe... do you remember The Nativity Story? That movie that came out?

Kieryn:

Yes.

Eve:

That was this pro-life propaganda?

Kieryn:

Yeah.

Eve:

I'm sure the makers of it didn't really have that in mind, but that's how it was used in our community, and it was like this, "Look, you can see the social ramifications of this woman keeping this baby. What if Jesus had been aborted?" There was this really strong messaging around that. But, ironically, they never brought up the, "But what if she had had him because she was fooling around with some other dude?" That was never a question. And there's a meme I saw earlier this week, it was an icon of the Virgin Mary and it was like, "Abstinence is 99.9% effective." And I was like, "Yeah, bitch."

Kieryn:

And I'm like, "See, this is why I don't have a uterus."

Eve:

Yeah, the rest of us aren't so lucky. I mean, it was just really funny. And it's like, yeah, that's the inherent paradox of this whole stance of adhering to the idea of the virgin birth and also using it as a pro-life stance. It skips the slut shaming step. And that's what the pro-life stuff is pretty much all about. It's like, "Oh, you're a slut. You have to wear it."

Kieryn:

Yeah, unless you're Mary. It's only okay if God is the one who impregnated you.

Eve:

Yeah.

Kieryn:

Yeah.

Eve:

It's fun because the Catholics get even more complicated about that. They believe that Mary couldn't have conceived, because I guess they believe that the sin nature is passed down through the mother, not the father. So they believe that Mary couldn't have conceived Jesus without sin, unless she herself was conceived without sin. Her mother, Saint Anna, purportedly got a special dispensation at the moment of conception.

Kieryn:

Oh my god.

Eve:

It was like a threesome with an angel, basically. Where the angel was like, "And this baby is without sin."

Kieryn:

Oh my god.

Eve:

Which is why she gets hailed as Queen of Heaven.

Kieryn:

Okay. Wow, that's elaborate.

Eve:

I mean, all good mythology is elaborate.

Kieryn:

That's true. See, I feel slighted now, because my dad grew up Catholic and I've never heard that story, and that is amazing.

Eve:

No, her name is Saint Anna and she's completely baller.

Kieryn:

Yeah, yeah. Clearly.

Eve:

I mean, in Dante, she's basically handmaiden to her daughter as Queen of Heaven. She's the right-hand person.

Kieryn:

Oh wow.

Eve:

It's pretty great. Besides Beatrice, who's up there.

Kieryn:

Yeah, my parents are definitely like, "No, it was totally a miracle child-

Eve:

Okay, complete virgin birth-

Kieryn:

... of God, literally."

Eve:

... absolutely. The Holy Spirit fucked her [crosstalk 00:32:46] and she had a wet dream about a dove and it was fine?

Kieryn:

Basically, yeah. Yeah. Basically, I don't know, she just spontaneously became pregnant, so that terrified me my entire life.

Eve:

Right? I mean, so did you have the same thing I did where you had nightmares about being pregnant-

Kieryn:

Yes.

Eve:

... and would wake up and be like, "Oh thank god."

Kieryn:

Yes, yes.

Eve:

Aw man.

Kieryn:

Yes, that was a thing that would happen.

Eve:

What a shitty way to live.

Kieryn:

Right? Right?

Eve:

No, I still had them for years, basically until after I was divorced. I would nightmares about being pregnant.

Kieryn:

I had one post-hysto.

Eve:

No.

Kieryn:

And in my dream I remembered I didn't have a uterus anymore and everything got instantly better. [crosstalk 00:33:37] I was like, "No, wait. That's not physically possible."

Eve:

I have not had one of those in years, and it's really nice, but I used to wake up having a panic attack, because Mary was able to get pregnant that way, at any point in my life-

Kieryn:

It could happen.

Eve:

... God could just be like, "And you're trapped."

Kieryn:

You're the next Mary. Yeah.

Eve:

"You're trapped, you're trapped, you're trapped."

Kieryn:

Yep. Yeah, no it was horrifying. I never really grasped how much the story of Mary really stressed me out until now.

Eve:

Well, and the people who would be really, really positive about being pregnant. I understand, if you're my friend or my listener here, you probably are someone who's had a baby, and you may have had a really shitty pregnancy or a really great pregnancy, I know so many stories that go both ways, and everybody has really strong opinions about it, so I hope you understand this is just my unique perspective here, but I would be terrified at the idea of pregnancy being a happy thing. Because Mary didn't have a chance to consent really. I mean, she did. She was asked. Consent happens in that narrative, but it's kind of Bill Clinton and Lewinsky having an affair. It was consensual, but the power differential was so much that was it actually?

Kieryn:

No.

Eve:

God's like, "Hey, you're going to have my kid." And she's like, "Yeah, I like you. This is fun." But does she actually have a choice? Because if she says no, what's God going to do, smite her?

Kieryn:

Exactly.

Eve:

She's going to be a fucking pile of dust or a salt pillar as a warning to other women who say no to God.

Kieryn:

Yeah, there's no coming back.

Eve:

Talk about ultimate incel energy.

Kieryn:

When you don't have the option to say no and have that no respected, your yes is not consent.

Eve:

Exactly. And so, I never really felt comfortable about that. And it's the whole sex with your husband meant you had to be constantly available and sex as existing to procreate meant that always had to be an option, so the whole thing just felt really loaded all the time.

Kieryn:

Yeah. Yes. I extremely feel that.

Eve:

Wow. Well, we just got really deep. I am going to request a break, so I can grab another beer.

Kieryn:

Yes, yes.

Eve:

Write in and tell us about how you felt about the story of the virgin birth, because that's a thing, apparently.

Kieryn:

There is a can of worms. Oops.

Eve:

All right. Stay tuned. We'll be right back. All right, and we're back.

Kieryn:

Hooray.

Eve:

Thanks for that break for sanity.

Kieryn:

Sanity breaks are important.

Eve:

Especially when you're talking about heavy topics.

Kieryn:

Yes. Especially when that happens unexpectedly.

Eve:

I'm still traumatized. Why did I do this?

Kieryn:

I didn't think about Mary when I thought about Christmas until now.

Eve:

Okay, so do you have anything about Christian Christmas that you still like at all?

Kieryn:

No. I don't know that there's anything that I still like about Christian Christmas. I like what I've done on my own to mark the seasons passing and my own kind of celebration. With the exception of I will occasionally make buckeye balls, I haven't kept anything.

Eve:

Do you celebrate Yule in any particular way? Do you observe it in a Pagan way at all?

Kieryn:

No. I just take the day itself as more of a starting point for reflecting on the year, and it's just like, "I am thinking about all the things that happened and unwinding." And it's like, "This is a time for me now, to just reflect and relax and regenerate for the next year."

Eve:

Yeah, that's nice. I used to make a buche noel every year, for a while. The French yule log cake.

Kieryn:

Nice.

Eve:

And maybe I'll do that again for actual Yule, observe Winter Solstice properly. I haven't really done anything like that. I've just done adventuring, like I was saying before. Every year I have one high church, because I went Episcopalian after I left the cult for a little bit before my divorce, and then that kind of ruined it all for me. But I still kind of miss parts of being Episcopalian, at times. And every year, there's one service or another is the one I'm missing. Last year it was Ash Wednesday, and this year it's Advent. So maybe next Sunday I'll go to the last Advent service at a church. And I think I like it because all of the hymns are minor key Christmas carols. They're beautiful. I really still love some of the carols. There's this Christina Rossetti poem that's been set to music by Gustav Holst and it's beautiful and mournful. And

then, Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silent is another good one. I'm kind of a music nerd, and so I miss the music.

Kieryn:

Yeah, the music is nice, or it can be nice.

Eve:

It can be.

Kieryn:

There was one year my dad took me to see Denver and the Mile High Orchestra and they're a Christian big band or whatever, and they were amazing. And I miss that kind of music.

Eve:

Yeah, there's some nice bits about it. I've had a lot of friends this year wanting to send me Yule gifts. Like Erin, our producer sent me coffee beans.

Kieryn:

Yes, it was so good. Thank you, Erin.

Eve:

Oh my god. I've drinking [crosstalk 00:40:13]-

Kieryn:

It was the best coffee.

Eve:

They're so good. It's been really lovely. And my brother sent me a bookcase. I opened the door and the UPS guy is like, "This is really heavy, let me carry it in for you." And I'm like, "What the fuck?" And it's a bookcase. And then, my friend who's an astrologer, she sent me a book about my Saturn return. She did a reading for me about my Saturn return, in addition to that. That's the actual labor. Because I'm 29, turning 30 and it's happening soon. But yeah, there's some really sweet things about that, and I haven't had that in a long time, so now I'm like, "Oh, maybe I should get back into this," because it feels really good to be on the receiving end of it. And I, maybe, for the first time in a long time have spoons to reciprocate.

Kieryn:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah. The gift giving part of the holiday season is my favorite part, and I still like doing that and participating in it. In just like, "It's a holiday time thing and I'm thinking about you."

Eve:

I'm kind of bad at Christmas and birthdays, but I do like giving my friends gifts throughout the year as I think about it.

Kieryn:

Yes.

Eve:

I know that if I don't make it for Yule, I'll make up for it at some point. I'm not trying to be super hard on myself, but I guess that's also another trigger from the cult, because I don't know if you guys had this, but all of the teenage girls in my church would make each other little gifties. It was like a classroom gift exchange, functionally.

Kieryn:

Oh wow.

Eve:

Everybody would make each other bath bombs or little cookies or little sugar scrubs or give you a stationery set. I don't know, just everybody gave each other gifts, and I was inducted into this culture, which was so Southern, and I was like, "Oh, I don't have anything for anybody. Wow, this is so nice." And I thought, for the first two years, I was like, "Oh wow, these people really want to be my friend," which is like, "Nope, that's not how this work. They're just being nice, because they think they have to." And so, I caught on and I did things for people, too. And I wasted a lot of energy on that. So now it's like, "Okay, I don't have to do anything. It's only if it feels right." [inaudible 00:42:41] I'm a very generous person, but I also really want it to be super sincere and not coming out of that obligation place.

Kieryn:

Yeah. Yeah, my family were always the one who made those things and handed them out, but I was never really was in a situation where I was part of a group gift exchange that wasn't somehow going to someone who wasn't me. Because my mom would organize these things, but then we would never get to keep any of the gifts that were exchanged. They would all be donated to somewhere.

Eve:

Wait, did you get presents growing up?

Kieryn:

I got presents growing up on Christmas. And sometimes we would do, speaking of appropriation, we would sometimes of Hanukkah.

Eve:

Oh, okay.

Kieryn:

Of course. And we did the 12 days of Christmas once, which was the best, because it's 12 days of presents, instead of eight. But anyway, but at some point, after I was about 10 or so, my parents were like, "Well, it really should be about us giving people things, instead of us receiving things from other people." So we would have parties, and we would never be allowed to accept presents for ourselves, but we would always give them or collect them and donate them to somewhere else.

Eve:

There were a couple years where that was the [inaudible 00:43:56]. My grandparents, on both sides, were very, very generous, and so we'd often spread things out and save things for Epiphany, and that was nice. But my parents, at some point, just basically realized that we didn't all have the spoons or the money to get everybody presents. And so, we would draw names out of a hat and everybody do a secret Santa kind of exchange. I mean, it was nine kids, it gets to be a lot.

Kieryn:

Yeah, it does.

Eve:

When you have an allowance of two dollars a month.

Kieryn:

You had allowances?

Eve:

Very tiny ones. I had an allowance-

Kieryn:

My parents were like, "Why would we pay you to live with us?"

Eve:

... I had an allowance of \$12 a month for all of middle school and high school, that was where it capped out, which is not really that much money, if you think about it. It was enough to buy me a coffee or a book. But I would always have to scrimp and save and find babysitting gigs and stuff. It was tokens. It wasn't real. Yeah, so we didn't really have the money to buy each other presents, and my parents weren't about to fund us buying each other presents. It was nice when they did that, because it made it a lot easier. And you could be like, "All right, I'm going to get this one person this one thing that's maybe worth \$20 and I'll hustle to make it happen."

Kieryn:

Yeah. My parents would... well, they didn't believe in allowance, so we never had allowances to save. They would take us to the Dollar Tree or something and let us all go pick our presents for our siblings, because then you'd be like-

Eve:

The Dollar Tree.

Kieryn:

... yeah, yeah. It'd be, whatever, \$50 bucks or something, but we would all have gotten presents for each other. And then, they're like, "All right, we don't have to deal with that anymore," and then they can go do the other things. But, at some point, they started coordinating with other members of the family, also, especially on big things.

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Eve:

Oh yeah, we did that, too.

Kieryn:

Something big that a kid wanted.

Eve:

It'd be like, "The family gift for everybody this year, from all of your extended family relatives, is a trampoline or the membership to the neighborhood pool.

Kieryn:

Oh, and I feel like we would be remiss talking about Christmas, if we did not talk about how we are responsible for the war on it, of course.

Eve:

Oh my god. How could we forget. The war on Christmas.

Kieryn:

The war.

Eve:

Hey, congratulations gays, you won. Go us. Go team us.

Kieryn:

I was talking with some friends of mine about this in the Mission the other day, and we were like, "Man, we're so powerful. They keep blaming us for this war on Christmas, and we have done so little, and yet we are winning. We are winning this war. We're doing so well."

Eve:

We can cause natural disasters. We can end Christmas. We're so good, it's amazing.

Kieryn:

Oh my god. But what is the war on Christmas even about really? Do we know?

Eve:

Okay, the way I understood it growing up, and I just really haven't researched this, because I would like to stay away-

Kieryn:

Like not.

Eve:

... from it. I'm just like, "I don't want to know."

Kieryn:

I'm so tired of it.

Eve:

But the way I was told is certain people were abbreviating Christmas to Xmas, as a shorthand, and someone who was super Christian got offended and was like, "Oh wow, you're trying to X out Christ from Christmas, so we have to put the Christ back in Christmas." And then, around that same time is when it became common to say happy holidays instead of merry Christmas to-

Kieryn:

So obviously, they're both the same.

Eve:

... yeah. And so, it was kind of bundled together as this liberal scheme.

Kieryn:

Well, to include other cultures even and acknowledge they exist is just terrible and horribly un-Christian.

Eve:

I got really pissed about this, and this was before I got out of the cult. This was when I was 12, because I knew enough to know that the X is the Greek letter that starts the word Christ. It's Chi.

Kieryn:

Yep.

Eve:

And so, it's using the Greek letter as a shorthand for Christ. God, there's other uses of it. That's why you can use it for Christmas. And that's why I will always abbreviate Christians as Xtians.

Kieryn:

Yeah, what's hilarious is everyone got so up in arms about Xmas for Christmas. And yet, I saw those same people using X for Christians all the time, and that was fine.

Eve:

Right? It just doesn't make any sense. Yeah, I mean, it's basically an illiterate overreaction, in my take. Is that how you understood it when you were a kid?

Kieryn:

Yeah. But I thought they were more valid, because they were like, "Oh no, and they also don't want to acknowledge that the Christian holiday even exists and it's terrible."

Eve:

Right, because it was like, "We only observe Santa and presents and there's no nativity involved." Okay.

Kieryn:

Yeah, yeah. That too. They're like "Oh yes, there's no nativity scene-

Eve:

They won't go to church.

Kieryn:

... yeah.

Eve:

They don't talk about the cross and why Jesus was born.

Kieryn:

Yeah, yeah. They don't talk about the reason for the season.

Eve:

Oh my god. That was the thing. We would have a sermon that would be really more fire and brimstone than Easter-

Kieryn:

Oh yeah, yeah. Yes.

Eve:

... on Christmas, because it was like, "The reason for the season is that God made this baby be born in this tiny little fragile infant is the one that's going to be sacrificed for your sins."

Kieryn:

Yep.

Eve:

Oh my god, God is so kind to us. Wow, wow.

Kieryn:

Come back in three months, and we celebrate his death.

Eve:

That's infanticide. I thought that was illegal.

Kieryn:

Well, I mean, 33 years have passed in this time. Yeah.

Eve:

Yeah. And only pre-born children have rights.

Kieryn:

Right.

Eve:

Got it.

Kieryn:

As soon as they're out of the womb, it doesn't matter. They don't count.

Eve:

Womp, womp.

Kieryn:

Yeah. Mm-hmm (affirmative). On your own at that point.

Eve:

Fend for yourself, guys.

Kieryn:

Yes, good luck small defenseless infant.

Eve:

I mean, God did this to Abraham and Isaac. Why wouldn't he do it twice?

Kieryn:

I mean, right? The only thing that he promised not to repeat was a flood. That's why fire's next.

Eve:

I think God is the ultimate incel.

Kieryn:

I mean, yeah.

Eve:

I think I'm going to stick this. Should this be new merch?

Kieryn:

Yes.

Eve:

This Christian God is the ultimate incel. All right. Let us know if you like that joke, because I think it's really on the line, but I think it's really funny, and maybe I have no sense of anything. But thanks for joining us.

Kieryn:

I don't think it's wrong. Yeah.

Eve:

Okay. Thanks for joining us, guys. Tell us if you think God is an incel. Tell us what you think about the virgin birth and let us know what you're doing to celebrate Xmas.

Kieryn:

Yes. Merry Xmas and happy holidays.

Eve:

Whoa.

Kieryn:

Although, I mean, we'll see you next week, but who's counting.

Eve:

Yeah. For next week, Kieryn, I think we agreed we're going to do a recap of headlines from this year.

Kieryn:

Yes, we should do that.

Eve:

Like some crazy stuff. Send us the news story that confused you the most, that might possibly be related to Evangelical or Fundamentalist culture. Send us your best stuff that you remember happening this year, and we'll cover it in our recap. All right. No more pregnancy dreams.

Kieryn:

No, none of those. [crosstalk 00:52:04] No more virgin births.

Eve:

Dreams of sugar plums, not babies.

Kieryn:

Correct.

Eve:

All right. Bye.

Kieryn:

Bye.