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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. Hey, Eve.

Eve:

Hey, Kieryn.

Kieryn:

How are you?

Eve:

Well, it's snowing here. And Blanche was very confused and didn't want to go pee in it. She didn't mind it last time, but now it's just coming down really heavy. And I think last time she slept through it falling and now she's like, "What is this stuff coming from the sky?"

Kieryn:

Yeah. It's one thing when it's still and on the ground and it's fine. But when it's moving through the air-

Eve:

It's just like it might attack you, like you might die.

Kieryn:

Of cold.

Eve:

This is not safe.

Kieryn:

Yeah, exactly.

Eve:

How's your day?

Kieryn:

It's good. I got my driver's license in the mail yesterday. So, I'm excited.

Eve:

Where can people find that neutral gender marker, how to again?

Kieryn:

It's on my website, mxdarkwater.com. It's in the show notes from last week. So, if you go to kitchentablecult.com and click on the episode for Doubt, it's in the notes there. And you can find it easily.

Eve:

Cool. Super awesome. Well, what are we talking about today?

Kieryn:

Well, I went through some old photos and found an old journal entry from 2006.

Eve:

Yeah, I've been going through a lot of journals for memoir drafting, because I remember when things happened but it's always really good to be able to go back and corroborate dates and when was I upset about this thing and did I ever write about it in my journals? And the answer is usually no in a straightforward fashion. I didn't really write a lot of today this happened and then that happened and then that happened, and then I yelled at my mom and she yelled at me and then my dad came home and spank me, that kind of stuff. But I did a lot of a different journaling that is almost as telling. I did prayer journaling and devotion journaling. So, I would copy out Bible verses that were relevant to whatever was going on or how I was feeling. And then I would write these super overblown prayers in my journal.

Kieryn:

I remember doing similar things. I had my private journal that I kept for all of my angst. I hid that somewhere that would be hard to find. And I wrote in cursive as a barrier for siblings to read it, but couldn't read cursive. But for my sermon notes and my prayer journal and stuff, those were in a different notebook that was obvious, so it was safe for other people to see. So I didn't put anything too personal in there. I was very vague.

Eve:

I think I did that for a little bit. But we basically had no privacy at our house and people would go through your stuff all the time. Whether it was siblings looking for paraphernalia to get you in trouble with or parents just not caring about your privacy. And I never really separated them out after a certain point, because I just stopped saying things, honestly, at a certain point. So, I can read between the lines still and kind of get a sense of what I was upset about.

Eve:

I don't remember a lot of the details of it. But I do know I would get lectured about how I was disrespectful or pushing back on my parents' authority or challenging decisions that they made. We had a system where you were allowed to appeal. But I did that a lot. And so, we'll get cracked down on and be told I was ungrateful. And so, a lot of my journal entries are praying to God to help me stop being so selfish or ungrateful or lazy, and just submit to authority and accept what God has given me and be grateful for it.

Kieryn:

Yeah. I feel my journals got more religious and prayer the older I got. The one journal that I have photos of happened in 2005 when we were moving from Florida to Georgia. So a lot of it is moving angst. And a lot of what I didn't wind up photographing was the parts where I'm being really angsty and sad and feel sinful and terrible about having feelings about this thing that God is doing because my parents were like, "Well, God is having us move and it's a good thing so you should be happy."

Eve:

You were really not happy about that.

Kieryn:

No, I was really upset about it.

Eve:

A lot of my angst was about watching my younger siblings and more kids arriving and not having a social life because of it. And so, because we were so staunchly pro-life, I couldn't complain about the fact that we were having other children. I could complain about like, "Oh, I'm not free to do this and this is my lot in life and God is calling me to this lifestyle. And it's very hard and this is not what I want." But I believed that was why God willed for me so I just had to find a way to make peace with it.

Kieryn:

Yeah, December 13, 2006, I found an entry. And the first line is mom is pregnant, it's going to be a long haul. That was all I could say. I couldn't have feelings about it. I couldn't be sad that there was another pregnancy and that meant I was going to lose my life for the next nine months. All I could say was, well, it's going to be a thing.

Eve:

Yeah, I had this entry that's in 2004 where it's like the baby was breech and was due within two weeks. I think he was due almost a month later after this. But I'm just asking for more passion for God's glory, which was code for I am not happy right now and I would like to be contempt with my circumstances, because I believe that this is what God wants for my life. And then the next day, I write this entry where I'm like, I guess this year has been a loneliness year for me at least, I've had little contact with my old, meaning last year's friends at church and not much more with another girl who was more involved with my family.

Eve:

And then I think I could count on my hands the number of times we've gotten together one on one. And then I'm like, "Yeah, I'm thankful to have grown closer to the Lord, my mother, my father. I've enjoyed moments at home with my family that I would have missed if my social life had been more alive. But I still feel starved of contact with other Christian girls in my same situation in life. Is it wrong, Lord, to want a friend who will pursue me for a change and to yearn for human company and fellowship?"

Eve:

And it's interesting, when I first left the church, I talked a lot about code switching and having to phrases like that were so overblown, the language is very flowery and vague. And I wasn't able to say things

directly for a very long time about my emotions or my needs. And a lot of it was due to that was so frowned upon that everybody found very "spiritual ways" to express those things. So that it would like downplay the desire, but just talk about it in terms of, "Well, I'm struggling with this thing but this is what I want. So let me frame in more positive language in terms of what I want the Lord to give me instead of this emotion that I have that we're not going to talk about."

Kieryn:

Yeah. I feel like I also did that a bunch, which is being very vague. And I feel bad about this feeling that I'm not allowed to have or not supposed to have. I wrote a lot in my journal from when I was 14 or 15 about how... Actually, let me pull it up because I wrote a lot about loathing having feelings.

Eve:

That's hard for a Pisces.

Kieryn:

Right. Yeah, yeah. I wrote, "Did I ever mention that I loathe having feelings? I do. And I hate the ones that make me sick and my heart ache because I'm homesick and lonely and all my friends are far away. I thought I had it covered and myself [inaudible 00:09:29] my emotions nailed an airtight container, never to come out where I'd be safe from hurt and heartache and homesickness, or my tough face would be me and not just an act. That way I wouldn't have to be scared of myself, my feelings. I hate showing weakness." Yes, crying is weakness. This is why it's so hard to cry now. "I hate feeling and wanting to cry. That just makes me feel worse for betraying myself."

Eve:

Betraying yourself, why would that have been a betrayal of yourself at that point?

Kieryn:

Because I literally wasn't allowed to have feelings.

Eve:

So if you cried, how would your family react?

Kieryn:

My mom told me when I was three that I should never cry in public. So I didn't. I just wasn't allowed to have those feelings. And when I cried, it was always met with hostility, like how dare I.

Eve:

I think I've mentioned this before. Rebecca Solnit's book on rage is really good. Because one of the things she talks about is how, in the workplace, women will often push away their feelings, or people have been socialized as women, so that they only explode in tears when they're really, really, really angry because they are not allowed to express rage and they're not allowed to express vulnerable standards, sadness, emotion.

Kieryn:

Yes.

Eve:

And so the wires cross over and they'll be put in this position where something will be deeply unfair and they will be very angry and they'll just start crying. And the men in that situation or people who've been socialized as male will not understand that this person is livid. They will read it as just weakness and sad. And that's not the case at all.

Kieryn:

No.

Eve:

And that was my experience for a lot of years with crying, because I remember being 11 or 12 and bragging to someone that I only cry when I'm mad. And then I remember later saying that to my ex-husband.

Kieryn:

Yeah.

Eve:

A lot of our miscommunications were because I was not able to communicate vulnerability and sadness before it would explode, as a piece of anger that had just been so pent up. And a lot of that is related to this just having to buckle down these emotions and shut it all down and seal it off and not let anyone in, because that's a way of having means.

Kieryn:

Right. And that's not allowed. I mean, I was really upfront about how much I was shutting myself off with my parents. And they praised it. And they called me the Iron Lady, like that was a good thing.

Eve:

Wow.

Kieryn:

Yeah. And so, I learned that the only emotion I was allowed to have was no emotions at all, and smiling, like only smiling. I could only express joy-ish. But when you're so shut down, you don't know what joy is.

Eve:

What is the phrase, the bright countenance?

Kieryn:

Yeah.

Eve:

What is the Duggar phrase that they use?

Kieryn:

I don't remember.

Eve:

Yeah, just basically pleasant and bright countenance pasted on positivity.

Kieryn:

Yeah. And that's what my parents demanded. The way I imagined myself years later, I actually painted it out, was as this wilting rose inside of metal armor. And that was how I saw who I was, which was just not allowed to have feelings or express feelings. But there's still that in there that I couldn't get rid of that I just hated so much.

Eve:

Right. One of my friends when I first got out of the cult, her name was Kelly back then, she wanted to get a tattoo, basically, with that same design like an iron cage. I think it was a bird inside that was flying away, though, as an expression of I'm allowed to have feelings now.

Kieryn:

Yeah. Yeah, mine is like the roses peeking out of the opening in the helmet.

Eve:

This is a similar concept. I talked a lot now about reacting to emotions in real time, because it's really hard for me. So I'm really proud of myself, if I immediately react to something as it's happening, instead of shutting it down. Because I don't know how not to shut it down, I just know how to get more acquainted with myself and the repressed things that she's holding on to. And so, when we get to a moment where we're in sync, my body in me is really positive. If something happens and I have a panic attack in that moment, that's great, because that's a healthy and appropriate response. And that shows that I'm integrated and I'm not just associated.

Kieryn:

Yeah, I still have the thing where the physical sensation will hit me after. And I'll be like, why do I have all of this anxiety and angsts and fear? In my body right now, after I've mentally processed it, it's just because they have to catch up. And I've gotten faster over the last couple years of instead of that taking three days for me to figure out, it takes me a couple hours. And I'm like, progress.

Eve:

Yeah, EMDR has been really good for that. And I'll say this has been related to my sex life, too, actually allowing myself to feel pleasure in the moment. That's taken a really fucking long time, because it's part of that that's showing vulnerability. And they have to really, really, really be comfortable with what I'm feeling in that moment to be able to connect with pleasure. Another thing I did in my journals, as I'm looking through, is I copied out a lot of Bible verses, 90% of my journals are Bible verses that I copied out. And I think that kinetic process of handwriting these passages, some of these are long passages that I was copying out as a way of trying to overwrite my own thoughts with this scripture. Did you do that, too?

Kieryn:

Yeah. Especially for punishments, my parents would be like, you have to go write a Bible verse about the thing that you did or find a Bible verse about the thing that you did.

Eve:

Oh my god, my dad would do that.

Kieryn:

So yeah.

Eve:

He would be like, "Go get the concordance, the passages on humility, and copy them out and then tell me what you learned."

Kieryn:

Yup, yup.

Eve:

Yeah. Hang on, let me find it. I've got a passage on one of these. Where I did, it was a search on humility. Hang on, let me count. I have 46 entries of Bible references, Bible verse references. And I have check marks next to each other. I copied this all out. I found them all and then I read them all. I didn't copy them all out. But then I synthesize, the next couple of pages are like bullet points. So if you've committed wrong, humble yourself before the one you wrong. Humility before honor, all with the purpose to make yourself humble so that you can do good. Humility is always rewarded, that's underlined. Humility is listened to as the Lord honors it and destruction is usually avoided.

Eve:

The Lord is honored greatly, underlined, in humility. Humble yourself before the Lord and He will exalt you at the proper time. And this is me synthesizing it. At the heart of humility is an understanding of your weakness and smallness before God's strength, power, and might. It's a willingness based on His understanding, to admit failure, accept your inability to trust God with it, whatever it is, and then to glory in His ability, be content with holding everything in open hands, letting Him have free rein.

Eve:

With my parents, it means, I understand that God is using them as an authority in my life and they're His tools and servants. I need to respect this and act accordingly and allow them to have their say and listen to it and take their word at heart, trusting that God is working in me through them. And then it just keeps going. But this will serve my parents [inaudible 00:18:25], I'll make my days easier and will glorify God. Yeah, it'll make your days easier so you don't get hit.

Kieryn:

Exactly, yeah.

Eve:

So that's the kind of thing that is really peppered throughout my journals. I think this is one of the few ones where I synthesized it. In my journal, usually, I had to write that on a free sheet of paper and hand it in to my dad. But yeah, this is a way of just using the Bible as like blunt force to shut down emotions.

Kieryn:

Yeah, that was how it was used for me, too, that and a good helping of shame for having feelings to begin with. And I think this is also when I'm angry, I smile because I couldn't express anger, so I had to smile. And now that's my take. When I'm really pissed and really angry about something, I smile and everyone's like, "You're not angry," and I'm like, "You have no idea how fucking livid I am actually."

Eve:

Yeah. It's interesting, looking at this, this reminds me of stories that I've heard of reeducation camps for cultural brainwashing.

Kieryn:

I mean, yeah, that is exactly what it is. My parents were even open about it. They saw all school as indoctrination. So they were like, obviously, we're indoctrinating you. They were really candid about that.

Eve:

Yeah. Well, I mean, I guess that's the thing is they see children as blank sheets that left alone will go to evil. So you have to rewrite everything, reprogram. I think we've already shown it practically, but how would you summarize the difference between diaries and Bible journaling or devotion journaling?

Kieryn:

One allows for more personal anecdotes and experiences and the other is less personal and more vague, I suppose.

Eve:

In my experience, journaling was more reflecting on what you were learning rather than what was happening, or your feelings. I did devotions probably once or twice a day for a decade. What did that look like for you when you did devotions? Was that a thing?

Kieryn:

Yeah.

Eve:

What did you call it? Because I know some people call it quiet time or something.

Kieryn:

So we had both devotions and quiet time. We had morning devotions and night devotions that we did as a family.

Eve:

Every day?

Kieryn:

Every day. And on Sundays, they were extremely long, sometimes would last all day if we didn't go to church. It was exhausting. So we would have family devotions that we did every day. And then on top of that, we were supposed to do our own devotions, which happened during quiet time. And that was usually when we were by ourselves with our Bibles doing a Bible study about whatever it was that we did wrong that day or yesterday. And it was kind of that like our own personal devotion, quiet time had a less scheduled time, like it didn't happen at the same time every day, because it was just when you could get around to it but it was still expected.

Eve:

Yeah, my mom would ask us things, I'd be like, "Hey, can I get on the computer and check my email," or like, "Can I be free to read a book," or just like, "Can I be excused from chores?" I finished my schoolwork and I finished my work around the house and I'd like to go do something fun for me, which getting to the point of being able to ask that question didn't happen a lot. But the response I'd get would always be like, "Did you have your quiet time yet?" She really didn't want us reading fiction or reading for fun until we'd read out of the Bible first. And it had to be a minimum of 20, 30 minutes where you would be reading the Bible and then journaling to reflect on what you had read.

Kieryn:

My parents also-

Eve:

And then the prayer time, obviously. I don't know a lot of people who were very serious about individual devotion, like prayer as part of their devotion.

Kieryn:

Yeah. I feel like that was just sort of assumed to be lumped in as part of it if it happened.

Eve:

It's kind of a more performative social thing.

Kieryn:

Yeah. Oh my god, we should talk about prayers as performative at some point, because that's a thing.

Eve:

Father God, please, we just want to ask you, Father God, Father God. Please just come and be with us, Father God.

Kieryn:

Yeah.

Eve:

Daddy Jesus.

Kieryn:

And then, how you phrase the things and whether you did them in certain order and-

Eve:

And how you had to phrase it so that you weren't just asking God for stuff, you were also making sure you knew that you appreciated Him.

Kieryn:

Yeah. And also begging for forgiveness for existing and all of-

Eve:

For even like breathing and bothering Him with all of that.

Kieryn:

Yeah. Like, I'm sorry, Lord, that I did all these bad things. Please help me be a better person. Grant me the patience to do whatever.

Eve:

Thank you for making me human but I'm sorry for having feelings.

Kieryn:

Yeah. Yeah.

Eve:

All right. So here's a question for you. Did you ever get into scripted prayers?

Kieryn:

No, because those seemed less authentic.

Eve:

Yeah. So they were often in the more charismatic of angelical circles they're in and they were often despised as being not sincere, less genuine, they were written off as being part of the performative [inaudible 00:24:37], which is actually probably a racist term. And that's the whole thing that we should get into sometimes, this fake performative, religious mode. And a lot of it was associated with anti-Catholic sentiment.

Kieryn:

Yeah. I think a lot of the staying away scripted things is because the Catholics are bad.

Eve:

Wow.

Kieryn:

I know.

Eve:

One thing that I got into in high school and college, at the end of high school, because my church started getting obsessed with like Jonathan Edwards and like John Calvin and started becoming more Presbyterian and getting into church history a little bit more. And they found this book called The Valley of Vision, which is like this book of prayers. It's basically like a Puritans Book of Common Prayer. So it's like all of these Puritan theologians writing out these prayers as alternatives to the Book of Common Prayer, basically.

Kieryn:

Yup.

Eve:

And they're full of really intense self-loathing. They're not happy or light. They're very, very dark. And I didn't realize this was happening. But when I first started having PTSD symptoms around reading the Bible, I would go and read those prayers as alternatives for my devotions.

Kieryn:

That makes sense. Yeah.

Eve:

Because they wouldn't be triggering, but the Bible would be.

Kieryn:

My parents, for the most part, didn't do devotionals. For the most part, it was like tarot, like wherever you fall in the Bible is what you were supposed to do that day or learn that day or whatever.

Eve:

Did you guys did like the plop and drop stuff?

Kieryn:

Sometimes yeah.

Eve:

Do you want to explain what that is?

Kieryn:

So you open the Bible to wherever it just opens to.

Eve:

Yeah, hold it up. You hold it upright so that it can just fall open.

Kieryn:

Right, yeah. And then wherever that is, is there's something there that you were supposed to learn or that God was supposed to be speaking to you.

Eve:

I feel like tarot and astrology have a whole lot more calculated systemic way behind them. There's a process that makes sense. And plop and drop just doesn't.

Kieryn:

No. No, it really doesn't.

Eve:

Yeah, yeah, I don't know. It's just so funny. It's like it was held up as being better.

Kieryn:

Right. Yeah. Well, I mean, it was God. And you can't argue with God.

Eve:

Right, obviously. It's like putting out a fleece.

Kieryn:

Yeah. But if I was being particularly lazy, I would use a devotional that was written for teams or whatever. And then I would just go through that and that would count. But that was sort of seen as lesser, because it wasn't me doing it myself. It was being guided.

Eve:

Did you ever do a Beth Moore devotional?

Kieryn:

Yes, sort of. I tried. My mom loved Beth Moore. But it was so women-centered. And I was so dysphoric and had no understanding of that at the time. So it was really hard for me to get through, because it just felt so wrong on a level I didn't know how to express. So, we tried to do the Beth Moore stuff but it wasn't really working for me so I just did my own thing. But I did sit through some Beth Moore stuff. I went to a Beth Moore conference that happened in Atlanta. That was rough.

Eve:

So I remember there was this time when Beth Moore was surging in popularity. And some of the ladies in my church really wanted to do a Beth Moore Bible study and they couldn't get it approved by the pastors

Kieryn:

Weird.

Eve:

Because she was a woman teaching. And there were men in the video. So the Beth Moore Bible studies would often be this video recording of her talking and then you'd have Bible passages and journaling and like Q&A and group discussion. But the video component was pretty important. And there would be men in the audience when she preached.

Kieryn:

Yeah, I remember my parents had a whole big deal about that that they had to work through, because a woman can't preach in front of men.

Eve:

It took a year of my Bible study leader, the wife who was trying to get this through, push this through and get it to happen. It took a full year of her haranguing the pastors about, well, our group is only going to be women, so it's not an issue, before they would allow her to hold the Bible study in one of the conference rooms at church.

Kieryn:

Oh my gosh.

Eve:

So they were like, "Yeah, you can do this but it can't be affiliated with our church and you can't use our property for it. We can't endorse it." And she was like, well, it's like the group is going to be too big, we can't do it. We need the AV equipment. Please just let us do it at church. And so, it took a year but they finally agreed as long as there weren't going to be any men who'd be participating in the study.

Kieryn:

Right. We should eventually talk about gender roles in this aspect where it's a woman preacher at all is so controversial. I remember my mom having to justify Beth Moore also, because it's like, well, she's not really talking to the men, they're just there for some reason. We don't know why they're there. They just are.

Eve:

They put wax in their ears beforehand.

Kieryn:

Right. So that they don't hear-

Eve:

They don't hear the siren.

Kieryn:

Right. Because women aren't allowed to preach in a lot of these churches. They're not allowed to step up to the podium. Women pastors are not a thing. In fact, my parents adamantly went to churches that did not allow women to be pastors or speak outside. They were kind of okay with prophecy, because sometimes women are prophets, but otherwise-

Eve:

Right. But as long as a man is the one translating.

Kieryn:

Yeah, yeah. There has to be a man translating. Because otherwise it doesn't have the correct God authority. And they got really upset once when someone was prophesying at a church and it didn't happen in the way it was supposed to happen.

Eve:

My parents did that, too. Yeah, like somebody would prophesy and they didn't have a follow-up where a man would reinterpret what had happened. And so, it was like, wow, you guys are just flaunting your flagrant disrespect for the Bible.

Kieryn:

Yup, yup.

Eve:

So, I have a really good story about my dad. And I guess that's we're talking about, I'll just go into it. So the Southern Baptist Church tried to ordain women at one point in the '80s. And it was wildly unpopular and didn't succeed, but they did have the first woman who was ordained. I have this news article that I've got set aside for my memoir research. Let me pull it out here. So it's from the Southern Baptist register. The Baptist Press is what's called. The new service at the Southern Baptist Convention.

Eve:

And this is from 1993. California Baptists refused to seat messengers of church with women pastor. Santa Rosa, California. In a series of close votes at the start of their annual meeting, Southern Baptist in California overruled their credentials, committee, and parliamentarians refused to seat messengers from a San Francisco church because its pastor is a woman. This is amazing. Julie Pennington-Russell, pastor of 19th Avenue Baptist Church, said after the decision, the tent has just gotten considerably smaller. Now, that woman at 19th Avenue Baptist Church was ordained and installed as pastor when my parents were attending there before they got married.

Kieryn:

Oh, wow.

Eve:

My parents met at that church and were attending there together and had been dating for a couple years. And then the male pastor either died or left, I don't remember. But they were searching for a new replacement. And Julie Pennington-Russell was the pick. And they took some time with the discernment process. And then on the day when they ordained her and installed her as pastor, my father sat up at the front of the church. And when she got up to give her inaugural sermon, he got up and left in protest.

Kieryn:

Oh my god.

Eve:

And he never went back. And he basically had to convince my mother, too, like stop attending that church, because she really liked Julie. And actually they've reconnected and they're friends.

Kieryn:

That's cute.

Eve:

Which is cute. Yeah, yeah, they really got along. But my father was just so incensed that he was basically calling anyone who supported her ordination a heretic in public.

Kieryn:

Oh my god.

Eve:

I had a call with her and she was telling me these stories about, yeah, there was this panel about women in ministry and your father got up and started challenging everybody and being like how does it feel to be a heretic, basically.

Kieryn:

Oh, my god.

Eve:

Right?

Kieryn:

Oh my god.

Eve:

So yeah, women in ministry, really touchy, touchy subjects.

Kieryn:

Yeah, yeah.

Eve:

And the Southern Baptist Church eventually wouldn't work with her so she had to switch denominations to maintain her work. She's still pastor at a church and she's in DC now.

Kieryn:

Oh, wow.

Eve:

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Super cool lady. But yeah, weird life. Okay. So, devotional journaling has this whole heritage in literature. Do you want to talk about what you were exposed to that influenced your journaling style, your writing style?

Kieryn:

Yeah. So, not so much for devotional journaling but the way that I learned history was by reading a lot of history books and some historical fiction that I read that still influences the way I journal to this day was the Dear America series, which was these historical fiction books with-

Eve:

I think they're put out by Scholastic Press.

Kieryn:

They are put up by Scholastic. And it's written in the form of a diary. And all the ones I read were written by women. I don't know if it's only women journalists or if they have-

Eve:

They had a few boy ones that they start publishing later on, but they were originally-

Kieryn:

I think it was all girls for a while.

Eve:

It was all girls for a while. And the boy ones, they always called them journals because apparently diaries-

Kieryn:

Right. Yeah, diaries are girly or something.

Eve:

And they had the Royal Diaries, which I loved. Because high court drama, hello, yes, I am there for it. Let me have gossip and backstabbing and poisoning and arranged marriages and gangs, so good.

Kieryn:

Yeah. So I just devoured those. And I started reading them really early on around the time when I started journaling, which I started when I was six or seven or so. And the format of documenting history as a journal, that was how those books are formatted is how I journal now sometimes when stuff goes down. So, immediately post-2016 election, that was how I journaled and wrote was just this is the stuff that went down and this is how that happened.

Eve:

I read those and was obsessed with them. Another book I read, and I don't know if you read this one, but it was called Stepping Heavenward by Elizabeth Prentiss. And Vision Forum sold it. It was an old

book that they got the rights to and reprinted. It was out of print. Has a blurb on the back cover from Elisabeth Elliott.

Kieryn:

Of course.

Eve:

Of course. The copy I got is from a homeschool library. It's the homeschool gathering place. It's a used book. Let me figure out what year it was originally printed. So this woman died in 1878. So this book is ancient.

Kieryn:

Wow.

Eve:

It is like this journal of this woman who marries an older man and he moves his father in and they have to take care of them. And she's trying to be more and more godly and she resents having to take care of her cranky father in law, and then has a couple miscarriages and wants to have a job and can't do it, and is chronically ill and bedridden with her kids running around the house. And her husband is either a doctor or a pastor. But it's morality fiction, basically.

Kieryn:

Yeah, yeah.

Eve:

And it's in the form of a journal. And it's very, very involved kind of the same style of religious self-loathing that I was reading from my own stuff, where it's like, God help me be grateful for this, and I'm such a wretch and da-da-da-da. And then similarly, the journals of Jim Elliot were very popular. And I don't know a lot of people who read them all the way through. There's in the Shadow of the Almighty as Elisabeth Elliott's biography of Jim Elliot. And a lot of that material was taken from his diary. So there's a lot of selections from the journals. And again, it's the same kind of like this is what's happening in my life. So, there's some historical facts and then a lot of summarizing it and spiritualizing it and asking God to fix your emotions.

Kieryn:

Yup. So much of asking God to fix your emotions is a thing. The other thing that I also remember now that I'm thinking about it is even though the Elsie Dinsmore series wasn't so much written as a diary, that was still a huge influence on how I wrote my diary and how I processed myself in the world.

Eve:

Elsie Dinsmore is like-

Kieryn:

I want to burn everything.

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Eve:

How to be a pedophile 101.

Kieryn:

That has to do with Elsie Dinsmore.

Eve:

She was groomed by, fell in love with and married her father's best friend, could be.

Kieryn:

Yeah. And it was so gross. I was so angry when I got to that part in the book. And then I didn't read anything after that, except the next book.

Eve:

Oh, it gets worse.

Kieryn:

It just got so much worse. And then like the KKK came in, I was like, "Yeah. No, none of that."

Eve:

Well, her husband was apparently against them. They burned a cross in their yard, because they were pro-black. They were still running a plantation with like-

Kieryn:

Right. They were like the nice slave owners.

Eve:

... of slaves as your servants. The other that gets me-

Kieryn:

They were the nice ones. It's like no.

Eve:

The other thing that gets me, and this is in Stepping Heavenward, too, both the husbands in both those stories in the Elsie Dinsmore's books and then in Stepping Heavenward, the husbands refer to their wives as child, just like an endearing term. They're like, "Oh, my child. Don't trouble yourself with this."

Kieryn:

Yeah. And I mean, in Elsie Dinsmore's case-

Eve:

She was fucking child.

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Kieryn:

She was a child.

Eve:

She was 17 or something.

Kieryn:

Yeah. And stuff had been happening since. It was ridiculous. It's so gross.

Eve:

She's was like 14 or 15.

Kieryn:

It's so disgusting. I don't know why those books exist and are sold as something to look up to, because it's like to groom people.

Eve:

... Elsie Dinsmore when he was growing up?

Kieryn:

Probably.

Eve:

I'm sorry. That's a very bad joke.

Kieryn:

It's so bad.

Eve:

It's so bad.

Kieryn:

And then people wonder why there's this problem. And it's like we're giving this book to girls to read to emulate.

Eve:

Because it's been fucking normalized.

Kieryn:

Yeah, it's ridiculous.

Eve:

Well, these are things that really shaped how I learned how to write. You probably didn't do this and I don't think I did either. I tried for a little bit and I was squeaked out by it. It was just wasn't my cup of tea. I thought it was a little weird. But the whole writing letters to your future husband.

Kieryn:

Oh, yeah. People also wanted me to do that and that squeaked me out. And it was weird. And I was like, "I don't want to get married."

Eve:

Yeah. I tried. I wanted to but I was pretty bummed out about the whole idea of just writing letters to someone who wouldn't respond.

Kieryn:

Yeah.

Eve:

Because I guess my standards for that emotional fantasy were higher than they were for God, because I could just interpret my day to day feelings and interactions with the world, like paranormal interactions with God in various ways. But I couldn't trick myself into believing that with the future husband thing.

Kieryn:

Yeah, it didn't work for me. I tried. I think I did two letters to my future husband or something. I tried really hard, because it was-

Eve:

But it was a really big thing. People did that.

Kieryn:

Yeah, it was a huge thing.

Eve:

And they would get married and give the letters to their husband on their wedding night. And I remember a lot of the bloggers who would write about this later. They would be, yeah, my husband thought it was weird.

Kieryn:

Right, it is weird.

Eve:

I was so disappointed. And I was offended, because I put so much energy into it and I was like, "Oh, god."

Kieryn:

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Yeah, yeah. I thought it through for a minute also, eventually, and it was like I'm not really going to give this to my future spouse if I marry them anyway. Why would they want something that I wrote when I was a 15-year-old vaguely having pants feelings?

Eve:

Erotica is not that good.

Kieryn:

It's really not, especially for not knowing what sex was or how to do it.

Eve:

Yeah. It's like you don't want to read erotica written by a virgin.

Kieryn:

No, you really don't. This is a complete sidebar. But I was looking at dance belts, because I'm taking ballet this semester and I have enough of a dick that it's useful. So, I was looking at the reviews and one was written by someone who had no idea what thongs were or how they work and had never worn it before. And I'm reading it and I'm trying so hard not to laugh, because this dude is like, "So there's this thing, this string, and it goes inside your buttocks and it's weird." And I'm like, "Yes, that's how thongs work." And I was like [inaudible 00:45:00]. But I'm like, "Yeah. And your point is what exactly? This is how that works."

Eve:

Wow, that's so fun.

Kieryn:

It's just like I was shocked. And it was so funny. I didn't realize like that was a thing that people had no experience with. And then I remember [inaudible 00:45:23].

Eve:

We're going off on tangents today. Do you have the sense that thongs were bad?

Kieryn:

Yes.

Eve:

That was like-

Kieryn:

They were like evil somehow because your butt... I think that's just where it ended. I think it was just your butt.

Eve:

Your butt? I think it was something about along the lines of you're asking for it like you want-

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Kieryn:

Like thongs are only allowed in the context of marriage. You can only wear a thong for your husband, really.

Eve:

Wow, we're really going out.

Kieryn:

I know.

Eve:

Did you give in lingerie for your wedding?

Kieryn:

Yes, but not by my parents. It was by-

Eve:

My parents didn't do that either. They were mortified that I was having-

Kieryn:

My maid of honor gave me my one pair or my one set. It was great.

Eve:

And I remember just being, well, all this is very scratchy. And also, I'm just going to take it off. I don't want to stick things between my butt cheeks. And these things look weird. And I look better without it. So why bother? Yeah. So journaling.

Kieryn:

Journaling.

Eve:

Anything you want to add?

Kieryn:

It was a thing.

Eve:

It was a deeply intense thing.

Kieryn:

It was-

Eve:

Oh, and it got me into blogging.

Kieryn:

Yes.

Eve:

I think a lot of my day-to-day processing turned into blogging stuff.

Kieryn:

Yeah, yeah, it did for me, too. I tell people I've been writing for over 20 years, because it's true. I started journaling when I was seven. And then that turned into blogging. And I've been doing that since. But I still journal. It's not as oppressive... Yeah, until I left, all of my journaling was really just a way to continue repressing myself.

Eve:

Right. So a lot of my journaling now is trying to process things but it's very light. I don't really get into a lot of details. Still, I can't kick that habit of I don't really want to have this on the page.

Kieryn:

I still do that, too.

Eve:

If it's private. Because I don't have anything to hide anymore. And so, why bother when I can just send someone an email and talk through something with a real person. And I think this is part of why blogging came to me so naturally is the assumption that everyone was going to be reading my journals. So who cares if I put it on the internet? I can say more and say it more coherently, and also typing is easier. And so it was a very natural transition because I never assumed that I had that privacy in the first place.

Kieryn:

Yeah. I think that that's true for me too. Because I always knew that whatever I wrote in my journal would probably be read by a sibling or a parent. So I was always very cognizant of that. And when I was blogging, I knew, obviously, that my parents would be reading it too. So there was no concept of privacy. I've never approached my blog as something that is a private journal that people shouldn't read. Because I'm like, my dudes, if I wanted it to be private, I would write it down and put it under my mattress, or I would put it on the internet.

Eve:

... never write it.

Kieryn:

Exactly. It would live in my brain forever. They wouldn't see the light of day. So, it's fine if you want to read my blog. Go for it.

Eve:

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Right. Thank you for joining us today. The music you hear in this episode is Janet by the heavens from their album Love Songs.

Kieryn:

If you want to support the podcast through a Patreon, ask us a question, or follow us on Twitter, you can check at our website at kitchentablecult.com.

Eve:

And big thanks to Aaron Bechtel, as always, for producing these episodes.

Kieryn:

We love you, Aaron.

Eve:

We love you, Aaron. Bye.

Kieryn:

Bye.