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Kieryn:

(Music) I'm Kieryn.

Eve:

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

Kieryn:

We're two Quiverfull escapees talk about our experiences in the cultish underbelly of the religious right.

(Music) Hey, Eve.

Eve:

Hey, Kieryn. I've got my friend, Ramy, here with us.

Kieryn:

Hi, Ramy.

Ramy:

Hey. Hi.

Eve:

This is a special episode where we have something very uniquely weird to the evangelical culture to talk about. Also, I'm sorry for my dog's noises in the background as usual. Now, when we met, you were also doing a worship dance team thing.

Kieryn:

Yeah, I was sort of. I'd been doing worship dance ballet-ish stuff from the time I was seven until I was 13. And around the time we met, I was just ending that, but starting this dance thing at my church, or trying to join this hip-hop dance thing at my church, which was also exciting.

Eve:

Gotcha. And then Ramy and I met in a "liturgical dance troupe" here in Richmond when we were 15 and 16, and that was a lifetime ago.

Ramy:

Literally.

Eve:

Yeah. What is the premise behind worship dance? What the fuck is this?

Kieryn:

I mean, it was basically for me, I guess personally, and maybe in my group of people, it was the way we could do dance without being part of the evil world of dancing where there is gays or sex or both.

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Eve:

Or is ballet bad?

Kieryn:

No, because you're not dancing with a partner.

Eve:

Until you're doing the [crosstalk 00:02:22] actually doing ballet.

Kieryn:

Unless you're doing [crosstalk 00:02:26]. But it's not like ballroom or anything scandalous like that, where you're not usually touching a boy.

Eve:

We did ballroom and the way it was sold to us was it's a perfect example of a complementary relationship.

Ramy:

Yes.

Eve:

Because he initiates and leads, and you follow. You have to practice submitting in public and making small talk and playing nice with the opposite gender.

Kieryn:

I feel that was how we justified learning the waltz.

Ramy:

And we were a picture of God and the church, God leading and the church following.

Kieryn:

Oh, yes.

Eve:

Right.

Ramy:

Oh, yeah.

Eve:

That's just the extra layer of Presbyterianism that was going on there. Covenant theology.

Kieryn:

Right. Yes. It was also very important. I did, some of my friends when I was in speech and debate, taught me swing and English country dance. And it was, yes, the boy leads. This is good practice for men leading and women following. That was a huge...

Eve:

That's a good practice for marriage.

Kieryn:

That was how we were allowed to touch hands of other boys, is we were learning how to follow.

Eve:

There were some girls in our group who would wear cute little white gloves so that they wouldn't actually be holding hands, technically.

Kieryn:

Right. The skin isn't touching so it's fine. I remember my heart was racing for the 10 seconds that I was holding this boy's hand while doing the line, or the Charleston, or whatever.

Eve:

Homeschooler erotica right there.

Kieryn:

Oh. It felt like my hand, it was fleshy and warm.

Eve:

Did you just want to eat it?

Kieryn:

No, no. I have Raynaud's so I was just trying to absorb the warmth through his skin into mine.

Eve:

Oh, okay. My mom got us into worship dance. My mom did ballet all through high school and then, she also did clogging and square dancing and English country dancing, so she was already very fluent in the world of dance and choreography. And then they got involved with the Vineyard Churches, which were a charismatic church movement in California that, kind of like some Grace Ministries. They put out some of their own music, their own CDs. And then, they also created a dance team.

And the flagship church in Anaheim had this massive praise dance team. They used these huge flags. They would do it for special occasions. My mom, when we moved to Visalia in central California and started at our own church, she would get a group of girls together and choreograph dances for special Sundays, so for Easter or whatever. A couple years in a row, she would choreograph some dances and we'd dance in the aisles of the church and up front.

Then we moved to Virginia. My mom stopped putting me and my sister's in ballet. We'd been doing that all along before. Then she heard about this worship dance troupe called His Handmaids, which was in Richmond. How would you describe His Handmaids?

Ramy:

Well, Connie liked to describe it-

Eve:

Connie's the founder.

Ramy:

Yeah. She liked to describe it like we weren't attached to a denomination or a single church. It was just this group who wanted to usher in the presence of God. That was her whole point, so she wasn't trying to tie it to a church or a denomination. She just wanted to just lead worship.

Eve:

We'd show up at, yeah, nursing homes or individual church services or a funeral, occasionally. We did a couple weddings, but yeah. And the thing that was interesting about Handmaids as opposed to the dance stuff that my mom was participating in when I was a child, was that instead of it being traditional dance, it was more like a pageant. It was more like creating a scene, so this group of girls, they are a backdrop and they don't move for the entire thing. It's not a traditional ballet chorus. They're like a wall. There are a couple other people who are moving out in front of them, but it was always very much more theatrical rather than true dance.

Kieryn:

Yeah.

Ramy:

It wasn't technical.

Eve:

Yeah. It wasn't very technical. It was very, very precise.

Kieryn:

Right.

Eve:

But it wasn't actual dance. It was like it's own thing.

Kieryn:

Yeah. Yeah, that was similar to mine. Mine was through my homeschool group, instead of a church. It was just, there was this one woman who lived in New York for the summer and came down during the winter and spring and taught my homeschool group worship dance. We would perform at this one church's Mother's Day event thing, or we'd have a recital in the studio where we practiced. We did dances to hymns and worship music, and we incorporated a bunch of different kinds of steps, but it wasn't overly technical.

Eve:

Did you guys wear all white also?

Kieryn:

No. We could pick our own leotards. We were very, very chill and low key. I had a pink leotard with a blue skirt.

Eve:

Nice.

Kieryn:

And it was just whatever, a lot of us even that we were homeschoolers and also doing 4H, made our own skirts to go with our leotards. I had a bunch of different skirts that were just really cute.

Eve:

Yeah, the stuff that my mom did was kind of like that, where it was wear all the same color, but everybody could make their own skirt and pick out their own leotard. Handmaids itself was much more rigid. They thought that leotards were immodest and too form-fitting.

Kieryn:

Right.

Eve:

So we had to wear these frumpy white dresses.

Ramy:

Which weirdly enough, you could totally see through. They were completely see through. And the greatest part is that Connie would be like, "You have to wear white underwear." And we'd be like, "Well, that's how you get lines because these are see through." And she'd be like, "Well, if you wear anything else, it's drawing attention to yourself as potentially being sexy so you have to wear white underwear." Even though that you had-

Eve:

You had to wear full-on briefs, white briefs.

Ramy:

Yeah. [crosstalk 00:09:09] slip.

Kieryn:

Oh, slips.

Eve:

She would bring out samples and be like, "You can't wear thongs." [crosstalk 00:09:14]

Ramy:

Oh, yeah. Thing of the past. [crosstalk 00:09:16] Yeah. Full slips and then the white dresses.

Kieryn:

Oh my God.

Eve:

And these dresses were total circle skirts, so if there was any elevated platform, everybody saw everything, even if we were wearing a slip. It was pretty funny. We were also not allowed to wear nail polish or jewelry.

Kieryn:

Well, I mean, of course, because those, they don't edify God, somehow.

Eve:

All right. I wanted to bring Ramy in on this episode, because I feel like there's this element of this performative worship dance kind of thing where it's performative femininity that really echoes how women are treated in these churches, is the madonna/whore complex, where you can either be held up on a pedestal and completely pure, or you are defiled and done for.

And the way this romantic idea of womanhood was always performed in these worship dance troupe settings, I thought was really interesting. And I wanted to get you to talk a little bit about what you do now and how you feel like there might be overlap or not. Or if you want to get into this.

Ramy:

Yeah. Actually, no, there's definitely a lot of overlap. And y'all have actually caught me at a very interesting time because as of this weekend, I am now dancing at a club that's full nude, which brings a whole different aspect to-

Eve:

In case you haven't figured it out, Ramy's a stripper. I think at this point, it's pretty obvious. This is one of the things that she does.

Ramy:

Yeah. Up until this point, I have been dancing only in Virginia where the clubs are topless, but they're not full nude. And then, this weekend I transferred to DC where it's a totally different game. And it's all full nude. [crosstalk 00:11:19]

Eve:

How did these experiences of performing... Because Handmaids was very much about you have to be this blank, smiling, image of femininity that they could project their worship on, in a way, and inspire people in the congregation to these... It was like a sort of religious ecstasy. I just keep thinking of the image of St Theresa who's clearly having an orgasm in this altar piece. But this religious fervor, this being completely caught up in this moment, that was what we were trying to get people to experience in church.

Kieryn:

Yeah.

Ramy:

Yeah. You weren't allowed to have any identity in Handmaids because you were part of the picture. You were part of this experience and you weren't allowed to be an individual. And that's where the whole no fancy hairstyles, no nail polish, no jewelry, nothing that would make you an individual. It was all about turning their attention to God and not yourself.

It's actually pretty interesting. When I started stripping, I would get on stage and it would actually be a very similar feeling because the men there don't care about me as a person. They don't care that I'm an individual. It's like your body is worth something, but you as an individual, that doesn't matter.

Eve:

You're selling them a certain experience outside of themselves that has nothing to do with who you are.

Ramy:

Right.

Eve:

It's not a connection, it's something different.

Ramy:

Right. That whole feeling, actually the labor, the work I was doing was new, but the feelings attached to it were very familiar because that was how I was raised. When we were growing up, you existed for God. You were all of that. And when we were dancing, it was like, "No, you are supposed to be turning people toward God. You aren't there to perform for people to look at you."

Eve:

And I think that came into play in our lives and families. Ramy's also from a big family and had a lot of the same experiences that Kieryn and I did. And this whole just setting your needs and your identity aside for the good of the group and to just perform these tasks and these roles to make everything easier for everybody, putting that self aside to just participate in that moment. And I got really good at just subsuming myself into whatever was going on and turning into autopilot robot mode, and not bringing an identity or a personality to a situation so that I wouldn't make anything worse.

Ramy:

Yeah. You pretty much have to compartmentalize everything and just realize that you're there to perform, but you as a person almost don't matter. It's weird.

Kieryn:

Yeah.

Eve:

As I've been listening to you talk about doing this work for the last couple years, it sounds like all the same stuff that we talked about with our families and what we were raised to be. This is the other side of the coin. This is the natural outlet for that skillset.

Ramy:

Yeah.

Kieryn:

Yeah. That makes sense.

Eve:

What's it like doing that? How has your family reacted to your job? Do they understand how this is easy?

Ramy:

Well, I don't think my parents know. I haven't told them. Unless maybe one of my sisters has mentioned it, then as far as I know, they are not aware of what I do. My sisters, the older ones know, I think. I've alluded to it several times and I'm just, "I'm working at the club or whatever." And they haven't asked a whole lot of follow-up questions, so I don't know if they're just, "Okay..." Or if they fully understand. They also-

Eve:

Or if they assume your bartending, still.

Ramy:

Right. I don't know and I haven't really explained it. I know... I think Ruth knows. I think Rachel knows. But I've just never really asked them, "Do you want to talk about it? Do you want to ask me questions?" Whatever.

Yeah. I mean, it's just such an interesting life. It's such an interesting life.

Eve:

How would your younger self see this? And what would you say to her?

Ramy:

Oh my gosh. Okay. Okay, this is a funny story. I don't know if you could put this on your podcast. You can edit it out.

Eve:

We can probably put anything on our podcast that we want to.

Kieryn:

Yeah.

Eve:



Warning, adult content.

Ramy:

Warning, adult content. Okay. Actually, Friday was my first night at this club. I'm in my hotel room. I'm freaking out. I don't know, are all the girls, does everybody shave? I don't know what to do.

Eve:

Because you've never been... When we did our road trip in Canada this summer, you were like, "I don't want to go into these clubs because I've never seen a totally nude club."

Ramy:

No, no. I had. I had.

Eve:

Oh, you had?

Ramy:

Oh, yeah. I said I didn't want to dance.

Eve:

Oh, you didn't want to. Okay.

Ramy:

Because I hadn't danced full nude.

Eve:

Gotcha.

Ramy:

I was like, "I don't know. I don't know what to expect." I freaked out. I was like, "Fuck this, I'm shaving everything to be on the safe side because I do not want to stand out on my first night. Nope, Nope. I just want to blend right in." I'm shaving my pussy. I haven't done this since I was 14. Dude, 16 years I've been in this, so I'm shaving. And I was like, "I haven't done this in 16 years."

And I remember the day because I was 14 and I was in Florida because my dad was doing a work project and he'd taken me to help him. And I was, as most people do when they're going through puberty, freaking out. And I was like, "I don't know what's happening, but this has got to go." And so, I take the razor, which I was really bad at. And I was just-

Eve:

Was this your father's razor that you just stole?

Ramy:

You know what? I don't know.

Eve:

It probably was.

Ramy:

Oh God, I don't know. I'm taking this razor and I'm like, "This is all got to go. I don't know what's happening." And let me tell you, I really sucked at shaving back then. I have since used a razor perfectly. I can do that now. But then I was just like, "Okay, all of this has got to go." Bad experience, would not recommend. I had the worst razor burn.

Kieryn:

Oh, no.

Ramy:

And I was in pain for three days. That was my only experience. Then Friday night I was like, "Oh God, I hope this is not going to be a repeat of 14-year-old me trying this."

Eve:

Because coming in for night two at the club with razor burn everywhere is not going to fly.

Ramy:

It would not be good, no.

Kieryn:

Yeah, no.

Ramy:

No. Okay. Let's just say my razor skills are a little bit better and everything's fine [crosstalk 00:18:28]. But yes, all of it had it go. And I'm standing there being like, "What would 14-year-old me say to me now?" "What are you doing?" No, that cannot be me in 16 years. Absolutely not. It's crazy. But I was like, "Okay."

And then, so that's cool. I go into the club. I don't know which stripper god I have pissed off in the past month, but guess what? My very first night dancing full nude, I decided to get my period.

Kieryn:

No.

Ramy:

Oh, hell yes.

Kieryn:

No. No. No.

Ramy:

And I was like, "Cool. We're just going to jump right in. Let's just have all of the experiences.

Kieryn:

Right now.

Ramy:

"Let's just bleed everywhere tonight."

Eve:

Tonight.

Kieryn:

All of the bad things out of the way first.

Ramy:

[crosstalk 00:19:17] Let's just get all of the shit out of the way. I'm like, "Okay."

Eve:

I mean, it's better now than later, right? Just rip off the bandaid.

Ramy:

Right, right. Let's just try everything, all of the experiences tonight. I go in there and I'm like, "Yep, we're cutting the string off the tampon. We're doing this." There's mirrors all over the dressing room because you have to make sure you look okay. You've got to check because once you're on stage, it's too late. And it's the worst thing in the world for someone to come up. "Hey, by the way... Oh, look. You're on your period."

Eve:

Oh my God.

Ramy:

You're twerking and everybody can see your tampon because it's starting to wiggle it's way out. That is what you want to avoid. And I have seen it happen.

Kieryn:

No!

Ramy:

Oh yeah. I have seen it happen. There's been girls where I'm like, "You got it... You should probably go to the dressing room. You should go the dressing room right now."

Eve:

This is why everybody should use the menstrual cup because those things don't come out.

Ramy:

Oh my God.

Eve:

They're so good and they can last up to 12 hours.

Ramy:

Well, yeah. Well, I didn't have one and I don't own one. And I don't want to get my period.

Eve:

I'm just making an advertisement. It's fine.

Ramy:

Yeah. We're going to have all of the experiences right now. A period on my first night dancing nude. I haven't shaved in 14 years. I'm just like, "Oh my gosh." And then, I go into this club and they're like, "Okay, you're going to do a shower show."

Kieryn:

What?

Eve:

What's a shower show?

Ramy:

What the hell is a shower show?

Eve:

Yeah. Right.

Ramy:

I had this floor guy walk me upstairs. And he was like, "This is the shower." And this is in the middle, this was at midnight. Full club, Friday night, full club. And he's like, "It's your turn. You're going to do the shower show tonight." I have never done a shower show. Okay, we're just checking all the experiences. Yep. Guess what?

Eve:

What is the shower? You just take a shower?

Ramy:

You literally, [crosstalk 00:21:04] you're just in a clear shower. Yeah, it's up above the stages and they-

Eve:

You're just playing with suds and stuff?

Ramy:

It's not even soap. It's really literally just water. And then you fog up the glass and then you can hold on and dance. It's actually, it can be kind of cold-

Eve:

[crosstalk 00:21:20] cage dancing.

Kieryn:

Dancing in the shower, okay.

Ramy:

Dancing in a steamy, wet shower.

Kieryn:

Okay.

Eve:

I can do this.

Kieryn:

Yeah.

Eve:

We're not talking about golden showers. That would've been bad.

Ramy:

And he was like, "Yeah, you've got to move back and forth. Everyone's watching you," because they turn the lights off and they turn your lights on and then no one else is dancing. So the girls get off stage and it's just a shower show. And I was like, "Okay."

Eve:

It's actually kind of cool.

Ramy:

It is kind of cool. And I was like, "All right. Well, here we go. Shower show." And I was just like, I don't know. That's my life. This is my life.

Eve:

Wow.

Ramy:

I'm naked in a little shower. And the floor guy was actually really sweet and he peeked his head at one point. He's like, "You're doing so well, have you done this before?" And I was like, "Sure haven't. First shower show for this girl."

Eve:

Oh my God.

Ramy:

Yeah.

Eve:

Well, okay. So, but that's a little... Okay. Can I just bring this back full circle? That's how it felt joining Handmaids because I was 15 and I was tall compared to everybody in the group. And so there was this leadership group that Connie had started that she called the Old Maids. She just like yanked me into the Old Maids.

Ramy:

Because you were so tall.

Eve:

Because I was so tall. She thought I was like 17 or 18 and I was 15, maybe. I was 14 or 15. We were real young. So the first day I was at Old Maid's practice, she was like, "How old are you?" I told her and she was like, "Oh, you're not supposed to be here, but I guess you're here already so we'll just roll with it." Because I was too young.

And one of the first weeks that we were there, we had this like show that we were doing in the same church or down the road. So we had a program that we were doing in the middle of rehearsal. We left and came back and she just put me in front. She made me be God.

Kieryn:

Oh my God.

Eve:

In the Majesty and Glory pageant. There's this song, Majesty and Glory, and it's all set in heaven and it's based off of a hymn and there's this character of God who's standing front and center being adored by all these little girls who are representing the church coming home. So I had to go be God in one of my first programs and I had never done anything like this before, and I had never seen this dance done. It was one with their staples, but I'd never seen it. We just practiced it for maybe like 30 minutes before we went on. And then it was just like, "And then there you go. And now you're God."

Kieryn:

Sure, okay.

Eve:

And I was just like, "Okay."

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Kieryn:

Okay.

Eve:

That's what we're doing. We could just roll with it. It's fine.

Kieryn:

That's fine. That's what's happening now. It's cool.

Eve:

Yeah. And then it was one of those... Afterwards, "Oh, wow. You did such a great job."

Ramy:

Yeah.

Eve:

You're too tall for that job, but you did such a great job. It was just so weird. But...

Ramy:

Yeah?

Eve:

These universes are very funny and really, I've never heard of anyone else doing anything like this in pretty much any other culture.

Ramy:

I know.

Eve:

I know there are religions that they have a lot of dance and pageantry in their like celebrations, but I feel like this kind of thing is very particularly unique to evangelical Christians.

Kieryn:

Yeah.

Ramy:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Eve:

And I'm not really sure why.

Kieryn:

I remember it being a thing in some of the charismatic churches that I went to, they would have entire teams that had the flags and they own, very own, special church worship dance team. And all these individual churches had them that I went to. It was just like a thing that happened.

Eve:

Well, that's what my mom was involved with. She started that team at the church in the Central Valley in California. It's such a... I tell people, "Oh yeah, I did this." And they're just like, "What is that?" It's one of the things that is maybe the most like out there and confusing to people. They've heard of homeschooling, they've heard of the Duggars, but-

Kieryn:

Have you heard of worship dance?

Eve:

[crosstalk 00:25:44] worship dance?

Ramy:

We did this worship dance.

Eve:

And they're like, what?

Ramy:

It's really hard to explain to people.

Kieryn:

Yeah. And it's so eclectic. It's not like there was just this one brand of worship dance that existed. It varied by church and by group, and by homeschool group, and community, and whatever. It was just like this weird... It's weird.

Eve:

And some communities were super, super against it.

Kieryn:

Yeah.

Eve:

I think more in the Baptist circles, there's all those jokes about Baptist don't have sex standing up because somebody might think that they're dancing.

Kieryn:

Right. And also that's [crosstalk 00:26:24]

Eve:



Those are jokes that I heard in those circles.

Kieryn:

So, clearly.

Eve:

Yeah. Sex leads to dancing.

Kieryn:

Yeah.

Ramy:

Sex leads to...

Eve:

Shannon used to say that one all the time. Yeah, anyway. So there's certain Evangelical church groups where this is very taboo.

Ramy:

Yeah.

Eve:

And then there's certain Evangelical church groups, I think you're right, it does kind of go along that charismatic line of the people who believe that the gifts of the spirit are active in Valley today are the ones that tend to do these [crosstalk 00:26:58].

Kieryn:

Yeah, the overlap-

Eve:

However [crosstalk 00:26:59].

Kieryn:

... between those ones and the ones who spoke in tongues is basically a circle.

Eve:

It is basically a circle. But then there's the piece where the group that we were in was run out of a Presbyterian church. They were very much, "Gifts of the Holy Spirit? What's that?" That was a one-time thing, but we're dancing.

Kieryn:

Dancing, Yes.

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Eve:

We're dancing!

Kieryn:

That's the part that isn't in the circle. It's the weird crescent sliver that's just shy.

Eve:

It's like those oranges that just grow baby orange penises on the side of them. This is just, that's [crosstalk 00:27:32] on that venn diagram.

Kieryn:

That's correct.

Eve:

Ramy is like, "All right, you guys are weird. I'm done."

Kieryn:

It's important that we construct our data references correctly.

Ramy:

Yes.

Eve:

Do you have anything else you want to add?

Ramy:

I feel like I have a lot of things I want to add, but they don't have that much to do with relating directly to Handmaids. Just in general, I felt like what I experienced as a dancer, I can relate to, or I feel like it almost applies more to my past and just growing up fundy. That and purity culture.

Kieryn:

Yeah.

Eve:

I was going to say, how does it connect to purity culture?

Ramy:

It's crazy. It's crazy.

Eve:

[crosstalk 00:28:27].

Ramy:

There's a lot of similarities there.

Eve:

How?

Ramy:

Just, you know how purity culture says that your virginity is worth more than everything.

Eve:

Right.

Ramy:

That's where your worth and your value is.

Eve:

Right, right.

Ramy:

That, your body, is your worth and your value in the club. So I got to the club, so I don't know how to do stripper things, but that mentality was already... The fact that I can value my body because I was taught to value my body, but on the different [crosstalk 00:29:08].

Eve:

In a capitalist, consumerist kind of way.

Ramy:

Yeah.

Eve:

My body is something to be consumed.

Ramy:

My body is something to be consumed or traded, or valued, and my dad owns me until I'm married. All of that, that was very similar. So I had a lot of [crosstalk 00:29:23].

Eve:

Does the "no touching" thing get into this at all?

Ramy:

Well, there is touching. Depending on the club and everything, there's definitely a lot of contact. It might just be in the back or it might be on stage. It depends by the club, but you're definitely taught your body is worth more than your mind, and just capitalize on that. And I felt growing up in a purity culture, we

were pretty much taught the same values, but they were sanitized and made to look like that's how you should be thinking.

Kieryn:

Yeah.

Eve:

Well, and I think this is why I was mentioning the madonna/whore complex. This is a very classic, literary trope. It's an understanding of women as only one or the other. They're either a virgin or a slut. You're either Mary or Mary Magdalene. There's no in between, so when you dehumanize women one way, the other way matches it, and is very, goes hand in hand with it. That's why I think that mindset's transferable because it's based in the same system.

Ramy:

Yeah.

Eve:

And so when you leave that world, you have to complicate both of those systems where, so strippers may not all be empowered, but they, a lot of them, are enjoying their jobs and don't feel degraded by what they're doing. And a lot of moms, homeschool moms, who save themselves their marriage and have only slept with one person are being used for sex by their husbands in ways that are not respecting their bodies. These things can both coexist.

Ramy:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kieryn:

Yep.

Ramy:

I mean, this is a conversation we could have for the rest of our lives, just unpacking all of this, these issues.

Eve:

You read Jessica Valenti's *The Purity Myth* at the same time I did. That's when we started going down this road of conversation where I was finally abandoning modesty rules as a young newlywed, and I was like to wear... I was wearing spaghetti straps out in public and feeling scandalous.

Kieryn:

Oh, my God. I remember that time also.

Eve:

Yeah. And then you were like, "I think I'm going to go take a pole fitness class." We were very defensive about, "This is not the same thing as stripping and it's fine!"

Ramy:

Yep.

Eve:

But it's that same holding onto that dichotomy and trying to complicate it. It feels very risky because you are stepping out into what feels like thin air and you don't really have a new system to replace it with because our culture as a whole has bought into that system very thoroughly.

Ramy:

Agreed.

Eve:

I don't miss this part of church stuff at all. I do miss dancing, sometimes, but I don't miss this very performative femininity element of it. It's really nice to just, where would I want? And not have to think about it not be thinking about, "Oh, am I going to make men stumble? Am I going to stand out too much? Am I going to get too much attention?" I had to think that way in Peace Corps a little bit with the kinds of attention I would get, because I would stand out there. But it's really nice to be in a city and be able to just go someplace and blend in and not worry about getting seen as a commodity.

Ramy:

Yeah.

Eve:

What was that thought, Ramy?

Ramy:

Just yeah. When I'm not at work, I just wear a hoodie all day. It's great.

Kieryn:

Yes.

Ramy:

I just wear a hoodie. Yeah. I don't want anyone to look at me. "Don't look at me. Don't touch me. Just leave me alone." I can play this part at the club, but not anywhere else.

Eve:

It's nice to be off duty.

Kieryn:

Yes.

Ramy:

Sure is, sure is. Although half the time you're ignored anyway. There's this, I saw this meme or something on Instagram from like this dancer account. And they're like, "You know you're in a strip club when you can do a handstand in the middle of the room bare-ass naked and no one gives a flying fuck." Yep. For as much time as we spend being naked, we actually are ignored so often. So often.

Eve:

Well it's because you're just one in a sea body.

Ramy:

Exactly. We're just-

Eve:

You're not a person.

Ramy:

Exactly. Your customers will react more to the TV behind you than to you know. I just got upstaged by a football game.

Eve:

But have you seen those butts?

Ramy:

Fair point.

Eve:

They have pretty good butts.

Kieryn:

It's true.

Ramy:

My gosh.

Eve:

Well, thank you for making time to do this episode with us.

Ramy:

Yeah. I'm sorry it took forever, but thank you so much for having me.

Kieryn:

No, it's so nice to actually be able to talk about this weird thing that we did.

Eve:

So weird. I wonder if any of our listeners have had similar experiences. I'm very curious.

Kieryn:

Please tell us.

Eve:

How many people did this.

Kieryn:

Please tell us if you have.

Ramy:

Oh, now that you say that, there's a couple girls at my old club that told me they were homeschooled. One of them said they were homeschooled. And I feel like one of them at least grew up really conservatively, if not homeschooled.

Eve:

We should make...There should be home a Homeschooled Strippers Union.

Kieryn:

Oh my God. Yes.

Ramy:

Yeah, I think [crosstalk 00:35:27]. And we only talked for a minute in passing, so I kind of forgot about that, but I was like, "Oh maybe there's more of us out there."

Kieryn:

Probably.

Eve:

I bet there is. Because as you said, these skills are incredibly transferable.

Ramy:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kieryn:

Yeah.

Eve:

Thanks for joining us.

Ramy:

Thank you for having me.

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Eve:

All right.

Ramy:

Bye.

Kieryn:

Bye.

Ramy:

Bye.