

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:00:00 Today's episode of Hidden Forces is made possible by listeners like you. For more information about this week's episode or for easy access to related programming, visit our website at [hiddenforces.io](https://hiddenforces.io) and subscribe to our free email list. If you want access to overtime segments, episode transcripts, and show rundowns full of links and detailed information related to each and every episode, check out our premium subscription available through the Hidden Forces website or through our Patreon page. And remember if you listen to the show on your Apple podcast app, you can give us a review. Each review helps more people find the show and join our amazing community. And with that, please enjoy this week's episode.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:01:06 What's up everybody. My guest this week is Eve Ensler. Eve is a Tony Award winning playwright, author, performer, and a prolific international activist. She's probably best known for her episodic play, *The Vagina Monologues*, but she's also the founder and co-founder of several mass action organizations including V-Day, One Billion Rising, and the City of Joy, which is a revolutionary center for women survivors of violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Those of you who heard the overtime to my episode with Johann Hari on depression and anxiety will recall that Johann mentioned Eve and her book, *The Apology* and how powerful it was. I hadn't read the book at the time but I have now and I can say that it stirred so many emotions in me that between the responsibility I felt to do her story justice and the vulnerability I experienced in being opposite someone who speaks so courageously about the most intimate details of her personal life, I was worried that I might not be up to the task.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:02:24 My hope from doing this episode is not just that you find the conversation meaningful and that it adds value to your own understandings about the subject of the book as well as the larger movement for women's issues that Eve has been such a pillar of for over 40 years, but that the nature of the conversation serves as an example, however imperfect, for the types of conversations that we need to be able to have, not just about gender or racial issues, but about anything where different people come from different perspectives, but who can still leave with a deeper appreciation for the experiences and viewpoints of the other person. And that requires listening, and that's not something we do very well lately. And as good as it might feel to take a whack at someone whose views you don't like or watch videos and read articles from people who tell you that "you're right and they're wrong," none of that is going to help us make it through what I believe are going to be some very difficult years ahead. We have so many challenges ahead of

us and right now I feel like we're fighting with two hands tied behind our backs. Not just bickering, but actually mowing each other down in broad daylight, making it impossible for anyone with a good conscience to feel safe being imperfect in public. And guess what? We're all imperfect. But we all need one another. So what are we going to do? How do we build community? How do we build empathy? How do we break this vicious cycle? I don't know. But I do know that listening, really listening, is a pretty good place to start. And with that I bring you my conversation with Eve Ensler.

- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:04:25 Eve Ensler, welcome to Hidden Forces.
- Eve Ensler:** 00:04:27 Thank you. Happy to be here.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:04:28 It's exciting having you here. I'm a little nervous having you here to be honest.
- Eve Ensler:** 00:04:32 Well, we can go into that later and explore it. [laughter]
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:04:35 Your book is ... It's hard to find the words to describe it. I wrote down a bunch of thoughts. I always do these things at the beginning of rundowns. I create these elaborate documents ahead of episodes and I preface them with the question: "Why do I care?" And I try to answer it in order to help me formulate some idea of how I want to do the episode. I also take quotes from books oftentimes. This was very difficult to quote, so I did something I've never done before which is I have about eight pages here of sections of your book that I took out quotes and I gave them subtitles like oblivion, for example and I want to discuss that. That limbo. It was a very emotional read. I've never read anything like it. I also watched an interview you gave at the 92nd Street Y with-
- Eve Ensler:** 00:05:26 Glenn Close.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:05:26 Glenn Close.
- Eve Ensler:** 00:05:26 And James Naughton, yes.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:05:28 Yes. And they said the same thing. I imagine they know a lot more than I do. And Naughton read passages and he could read them so much better than me, so I mean I feel, besides exploring the book I think it's also valuable to have you here and to talk about something that's so important. And also your work, you are an incredible activist in this community and have been an activist for how long?

**Eve Ensler:** 00:05:51 Since I could breathe.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:05:51 So I think it's valuable. I think it's valuable to have this conversation from the perspective of someone like myself and to an audience like this that isn't accustomed to this type of subject.

**Eve Ensler:** 00:06:02 Well, thank you for having me on. I really appreciate it.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:06:04 Yeah, it's my pleasure. So as I said the book is ... I'll just say just generally for the audience to know, the book is essentially an apology written ... You called it an invocation. And I'm curious about that. Maybe you could just tell us to begin with, why did you write this book or what led you to write it?

**Eve Ensler:** 00:06:24 Well I think there were a few factors. I mean I think there's always a combination of things that get you to write something. I think one, having been sexually abused by my father from the age of five until I was 10, and then physically battered and emotionally battered until I left home at 18. I always waited while my father was alive for an apology, which was never forthcoming and I've certainly yearned since his death 31 years ago for an apology. And then having been an organizer and an activist for most of my life but particularly for the last 21 years and the V-Day movement to end violence against women and One Billion Rising, I've traveled the the world, I've heard women's stories, I've seen women breaking the silence, calling men out, telling their stories. And then with the recent iteration of the Me Too Movement that's escalated. And I was thinking in all of this time I have never heard a man write or give a public thorough authentic apology about sexual abuse or domestic violence. And I thought to myself, that's amazing. Maybe in 16,000 years of patriarchy we've never heard that.

**Eve Ensler:** 00:07:33 So I decided I was going to write the apology that I needed to hear and write the words I needed to here, and try to trace what the anatomy of an apology would look like. What is the structure of an apology? What's the practice of an apology? Because I think it's a practice, I think it's a journey, I think an apology is a journey. And so I decided to write the apology to myself in my father's voice to say the words I'd always longed to hear, and that's what became "The Apology."

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:08:01 How much was the reader in the front of your mind when you were writing this? And how much was ... Or maybe the reader was not. In other words, when you were writing this, was this a solitary act where it was just for you and your own purposes, you didn't have necessarily any conception that you would

share it? Or as a writer and as someone that's been so vocal about your life for so long, you never imagined that you wouldn't share it. I just wonder what that process was? How much of this was for you and how much of this was as you say, about a larger recognition around the lack of apology and-

- Eve Ensler:** 00:08:34 I think it was a combination. I think in the writing of it, the imagined audience for me always changes. I don't like to second guess what people will think and what people will feel. I try to just go into it deeply. But I always knew that I would publish this and then part of that was that I wanted to try to see if I could come up with a kind of blueprint of what an apology would look like so it could open a pathway for other men and other perpetrators to begin to look, oh, here's what I could-
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:09:04 Yeah that's interesting. I didn't think about it that way. That's really interesting.
- Eve Ensler:** 00:09:05 Yeah. Because I don't think we've seen what a real apology looks like and I don't think we've heard one. It was funny at the 92nd Street Y, how many women came up to me to say how totally freaked out they were and excited to hear James Naughton read those words.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:09:19 Oh my God, he was so scary.
- Eve Ensler:** 00:09:19 He was so scary but also they'd never heard it before. They never heard a man say these are the specific things I have done. This is the way it hurts you and I know that it hurts you. I see you as a full human being. So I think it was a combination and I think once I got into writing it, I know this is going to sound a bit odd, but I was in kind of a four month trance state, where I just kind went into my father and he came into me. And to be honest, it's not my voice, it's not my language. A lot of the words he uses are not my vocabulary. So it was a kind of a transmutation of sorts.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:09:53 Yeah I am interested to ask you about that because it didn't feel like you. And when I was writing very naturally I wrote about how I'd say your father said, your father wrote. I didn't feel like you wrote it-
- Eve Ensler:** 00:10:05 No and the way I'm describing it is that he said, he said, he said. I think one of the interesting things, and it really, really became clear to me writing this, is that when you've been abused by someone, when you've been raped by someone, or harassed by someone, or beaten by someone, they actually enter you. They

become embroiled and embedded in you. And I think my father's been inside me my whole life. And I think I've been in a dialog with him consciously or unconsciously my whole life. I mean if things go well, it's proof that he was wrong. See, I wasn't that stupid. See I wasn't that horrible person. If things go badly, it's proof that he was right. And I'm always proving to him or showing him, or raging at him. And I think one of the things that I realized in writing this is that his voice is so deeply embedded in me. You know we know, particularly if the abuse is in your family and it's every day, you know the footsteps of your abuser, you know what mood they're in by the way they walk or the way they're talking. You know if they've had two or five drinks and what the impact of those two or five drinks is going to be. So it wasn't that hard to allow him to inhabit me or me to inhabit him. He was already there to some degree.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:11:16 Well you're also extremely open and you felt your father being quite literally evoked from this place that you describe as a void and as a limbo, an oblivion. You actually say "Since I left the world of the living I have been stuck in a most debilitating zone. It is very much what people describe when they describe limbo, a void, oblivion. And it felt very much like that. Like a crack in space and time." How did that manifest? What was that like describing that and that coming into being because it was so specific?

**Eve Ensler:** 00:11:50 Well you know, something really wild happened writing this book. I realized that the dead are all around us. They're all around us. And they really want to be in dialog with us, particularly those that are trying to get free. And he just showed up there. I mean he literally started speaking from this limbo state and I could see him there, I could feel him there. And I also felt how he's been there and been spinning there since he died because so much of what he did here in this world he never talked about, he never processed, he never owned, he never took responsibility for. And I just want to say I don't think any of us get out of this. If you do really bad deeds and you hurt people and you're cruel to people, it's in you. It carries through in your cellular spiritual makeup into some form or another. And somebody said to me the other day, well what would be the motivation for men to do apologies? And I said, to get free. To get free of darkness. To get free of poison. To get free of the contamination of carrying guilt and shame and feeling some self hatred based on acts that you've done. And to me that's a pretty good motivation.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:13:01 I imagine it's also extremely difficult to apologize in public. It's even more so right? It's a different level. But women are I think,

seeing for myself, are conditioned to apologize more. There's a really heartbreaking part in your book where your father actually ... He said that "You were always apologizing, begging for forgiveness, I had reduced you to a daily degrading mantra of I'm sorry", which was heartbreaking. And I can say also that what was so remarkable was how unremarkable you were. You were just a little girl and an adorable girl and adoring. You also wrote about how you would write him letters in your little ... You said your little girl handwriting, attempting straight lines but wandering all over the page. I mean speaking for myself, it does seem that women are conditioned to apologize much more readily than men. Why do you think that is?

- Eve Ensler:** 00:13:53 Well I think in the case of my father, my father was never wrong. I mean, what sustains patriarchy? Dominance, control, power. So to admit that you're wrong would be giving away power and giving away control. And I think, women have traditionally been "peace makers". They want to keep relationships going, they want to keep families going, they want to keep life going. So they're constantly taking on the role of I'm sorry or apologizing to ... Look, one of the things I learned about apologies is that we teach prayer. We teach devotion. We teach the concentration of prayer. We teach the humility of the petition. But we don't teach apology. It's a practice the way prayer is a practice. And I think to apologize is to humble yourself. It's to become vulnerable. It's to be equal. You can't apologize from a position on top, you have to come down to the human level. And I think in the case of the patriarchal state we live in, my father says it in the book, to be an apologist is to be a trader to men.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:15:01 I thought that was interesting.
- Eve Ensler:** 00:15:01 You break the male code. You admit that you are no longer in allegiance. And I think once a certain number of men start to apologize the whole story begins to crumble. So I think for me at any rate as a child, I was just sorry. Sorry literally, I was a sorry thing eventually. And I can remember somebody being accused of stealing in one of my grade school classes and I said "I'm sorry." I hadn't even stolen it. I was just so ready to admit what a bad person I was at any minute because I was so wholly convinced of my badness.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:15:33 Also you grew up in a time where this was much more prevalent. I mean you could feel it. When did women get the right to vote? In 1918, 1917?
- Eve Ensler:** 00:15:41 I think it was 1918. I think 1918 yeah.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:15:44 And your father didn't fight in the war, he was actually too old.

**Eve Ensler:** 00:15:48 No, he actually fought in the way because he was Jewish and he signed up late.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:15:51 Oh he did fight in the war. Okay wow. So I mean we have seen a tremendous amount of progress I imagine since then.

**Eve Ensler:** 00:15:57 Yes and no. It's always, you know the two steps forward one step back. Do I think childhood sexual abuse is rampant today? Absolutely. I mean we only have to look to the church.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:16:06 I hear this also.

**Eve Ensler:** 00:16:08 Look at the church.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:16:09 How rampant is ... Because it is shocking for me to read this. There are things that were relatable for me in reading your book. For example, the place where it was easiest obviously to relate was when your father talked about his upbringing. I could appreciate the pressure and things like this. Of course there were aspects that I couldn't relate to with him.

**Eve Ensler:** 00:16:27 Were you an adored boy?

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:16:28 No I wasn't actually. So that was actually not relatable. I was not an adored boy so I thought it was interesting how that impacted him. I wonder ... So that was hard for me to assess. To say okay, how would this have impacted me if that happened? Do you want to talk about that? I mean that was-

**Eve Ensler:** 00:16:43 Well I think one of the things I learned writing this, and I think one of the things about an apology, is so many survivors are obsessed and possessed in a way with the why. Why would my father want to destroy his daughter? Why would my best friend drug me and rape me? Why would my boss put his hand up my skirt when I'm doing a really good job? I mean we can go down the list of the why. And I think we spend our days trying to unravel that. And doing this book I began to get to some of the why's of my father, not as justification but as explanation and I think there's a difference. And I think for my father, he was born late long after the other children. He was the chosen boy, the golden boy, divine right of kings. He was going to be the one who lifted the family and saved the family. And he was adored. But adoration is not love. Adoration is projection of what people want you to be and expect you to be. So you're not allowed to be who you really are and that usually includes feelings of

tenderness, feelings of confusion, feelings of where you want to weep sometimes. Feelings where you are lost. Feelings where you don't know your way. And I think tenderness, tenderness, tenderness, it just wasn't allowed.

- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:17:53 So interesting. Do you think it's possible for love to exist alongside adoration or are you saying that adoration separates you from the person and turns them into an object somehow?
- Eve Ensler:** 00:18:02 I think it's a hierarchy. You're the adored one.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:18:05 That's interesting.
- Eve Ensler:** 00:18:06 And you're put up on a pedestal and you're lifted above so you're not allowed to be amongst the humans. And I think it's a brilliant creation of narcissism. Because you are now somehow separated from the rest of us. So it's all about you.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:18:20 Well you were talking about the experience of being the adored, but I'm saying the experience of adoring someone. Because what I'm asking is, can someone adore you and also love you at the same time where-
- Eve Ensler:** 00:18:30 I'm sure they can. But I think in most cases adoration substitutes for love. And by that I mean, my father's mother or father cuddle him and hug him and let him be messy, and let him be weak. That story of the bird, when he picks up that bird, you know.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:18:49 It reminded me of the story with Backhand the cat.
- Eve Ensler:** 00:18:51 Yeah exactly. Oh I love that you remember her name. You know, he wasn't allowed to experience that tenderness. And so my father was forced to push all those feelings underground. And they eventually metastasized into what he defines as the shadow man who really came to be at my birth.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:19:08 Well that was what I found relatable. The experience of being harsh on myself and vulnerability and hurt not having a place. So this is another thing that was really powerful about the book was ... And it was hard to really follow it, because it wasn't as clearly articulated as other aspects of the experience. And I think it came ... I mentioned Backhand, your cat. You were 16 at the time? It came up in that scene where I feel like we sort of saw that there. Where he had that experience that, for him for whatever reason, was so difficult and impossible to accept the pain. I'm curious, maybe you could speak about that. Maybe

you could tell our audience what that was in the book. Because like I said I still don't fully understand it.

- Eve Ensler:** 00:19:55 Well I think my father was unable to ... After it got terrible and after the sexual abuse and after he stopped and when the beatings began, he rarely showed me moments of tenderness after that. And so I went from being a very adored person, someone who was the center of his universe, to a person who was nonexistent. And there would be these moments where that would crack. Where I would see what was underneath there. And I had this cat that I adored and for some reason my father took to my cat, which was the way he was expressing his tenderness to me or expressing love to me. And I went away for the day and I came home and my cat had been run over. And my father was holding the cat in his arms and I looked at him and he was crying. And in that moment I realized what my father really felt for me, but I would never really see again. It was a glimpse into what he was repressing and what he was pushing down.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:20:56 Why was he repressing it?
- Eve Ensler:** 00:20:56 Why was he or how was he?
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:20:57 Why?
- Eve Ensler:** 00:20:58 Because ... Okay, it begins ... If we have to go back to the sexual abuse. When I was born I think my birth catalyzed this kind of experience of overwhelming love and tenderness in him that he had no ability to process because he had killed off those parts of himself. He had no ability to just sit with it. To say I am sitting with this overwhelming love and tenderness. He had to do something about it. And so that led to incest, that led to invasion, that led to exploitation. You know what it's like, it's like when you look out at an astounding scene in nature. Whether it's the ocean or ... And you get overcome with beauty. And some people take pictures of it. That's how they deal with it. Some people walk away. Some people talk a lot. But some of the times if you just sit there and let the beauty wash over you, you become undone by it. And we're meant to be undone by it but we're not meant to hurt people in a way of getting out of those feelings.
- Eve Ensler:** 00:21:59 And I think when my father began to act out and began to sexually abuse me, he was coming from this place of unbearable feeling, unbearable tenderness that he had to get rid of because he didn't know how to experience it. And then when that ended he had to kill off the evidence in me of what his abuse had done

to me. But that didn't mean he had fully killed off his deep affection for me. Somewhere underneath layers and layers and layers, that affection still existed.

- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:22:34 You write about it. You said he was speaking and he said "But it was your birth Evie, your arrival that spun me into the deepest bewilderment and distraction. Nothing had prepared me for the tenderness of you. Nothing would prepare me for the tenderness you would evoke in me. In your very early years I would not trust myself with you. Each time I held you in my arms, felt the soft flesh of your warm baby girl body, each time your little fingers wrapped around my grown man fingers, a surging pulse would rush through my whole body. The fire of this connection was a more compelling sensation than anything I had ever felt. More electrifying than winning the job of CEO, more erotic than orgasm, more ecstatic than deepest prayer. This energy filled every cell of my being. It called me out of myself."
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:23:21 I read that and I thought about, I don't have children but I love children and that's actually another thing that's ... And I know that's not necessarily common, there are a lot of people that don't like children. And you mentioned that you also talked about how in the book ... And this was also very painful to read, that your father said that children were nothing more than props for his and his wife's evolving lifestyle.
- Eve Ensler:** 00:23:42 Well I said that. Yeah.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:23:44 Oh you said that.
- Eve Ensler:** 00:23:45 Yeah. Yeah. Well I think he imagined... He didn't see children as people because he didn't see himself as a child as a person. He saw himself as an adored object. He was never materialized in flesh, he was always objectified. And so he didn't see children. He saw children as annoyances, or props for a lifestyle, or something about his legacy. But we weren't real. We weren't human beings with feelings and flesh and blood.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:24:12 This was also a time in America ... This was when? In the '50s.
- Eve Ensler:** 00:24:16 Yeah, madmen time.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:24:17 Yeah. And also this was a time when ... I actually went back and I did a little research. I watched some commercials. I don't know what you would call them. No, no, no. These were actually educational sort of commercials. It was that classic male voice. I

don't know with who. Seemed like the same person doing every single one of those.

**Eve Ensler:** 00:24:35

Yes.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:24:36

And he's said that the children we now know from psychology, we know they have personalities, they are little people themselves. And there was a lot of education about people and raising them and children became kind of the center of the home.

**Eve Ensler:** 00:24:52

That was not happening in my home. My father was raised where children are to be seen and not heard, where punishment ruled, and my father was a punisher. He grew up and he was from a punishing family and he really believed that the way you taught children was to bring about a lot of pain on them and that they would learn from that.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:25:12

So one of the things that ... We've talked a bit about your father and his development and there's so much more to discuss about that but there's also you obviously, you're central to this story. One of the things that I wondered about when I read that book was if ... First of all, I don't know how many people could survive what you went through and it seems that you came very close to not surviving it on many occasions throughout your life. You talked about at some point how your father came home from a night out with your mother and that you basically turned your back to him, and that's when he said that is started, where your defiance. I thought that was also interestingly enough something that possible saved you, the fact that you were so defiant.

**Eve Ensler:** 00:25:57

Definitely.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:25:57

I'm sure it's a big part of your activism. You wouldn't be who you are.

**Eve Ensler:** 00:26:01

Of course it is.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:26:01

You're very defiant. Like I said you are a woman on fire when you speak in that particular Ted Talk that I'm thinking about. But I was remembering when he talked about how you became a ghost. He said becoming stupid and you were forgetting. I thought that was ... That resonated with me, that idea. Was that all happening because you were trying to sort of die in way? To be dead to the experience?

**Eve Ensler:** 00:26:26 Absolutely. And I think one of the things that we do when we don't want to remember painful things is we block them out. But the way memory works is you have to begin to block out all the things that connect you back to that particular memory. So you have to block out more and more and more of your memory. And I think one of the reasons for me at any rate, I had a very hard time learning. I had a hard time. Like for example you could say to me two plus two is four, and then you could give me a test and I wouldn't know what two plus two was. They sent me to therapist to understand why.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:26:55 You were depressed also I imagine.

**Eve Ensler:** 00:26:57 Very depressed. And the pressure to have to know something was so agonizing to me that my memory would just die and go blank because again, to remember is to remember. I think that sexual abuse and that brutality completely rearranged the capacity of my brain. You know I was thinking the other day when we talk about girls and traumatized girls and what it does to so many aspects of our being, but particularly to our ability to retain data. Because I think that part of your brain that is retaining data is retaining memories of your own childhood. And so it has to almost go on delete for a while until you're able to get strong enough ego structure to begin to remember and piece back what actually did happen to you.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:27:43 One of the most powerful parts of the book for me was how your father explained how it started. And I reflected on why that felt so powerful and I think it broke the walls of disconnection. I might be quoting you now from something else. Breaking the walls of disconnection from your own body, that's actually from your Ted Talk. But it broke the walls of disconnection. It created a line of empathy. Because I think it's so hard for us ... For me for example to understand how this could happen and how an otherwise normal family this can happen.

**Eve Ensler:** 00:28:16 Well I think what we have to remember is that if boys have been taught to deaden themselves, to deaden their hearts, to deaden their tenderness, to deaden the parts of them that are scared, to deaden their openness, what happens when something suddenly unlodges that? It feels both terrifying but it also feels incredibly good. You're suddenly awake, you're suddenly alive, you're suddenly a human and you want that. You want that. You want to be in touch with that. You want to be connected to that because you're craving, you're human. It's completely distorted and perverse, but it's understandable on another level if you've been completely shut off to your own

heart for all of your life. And I see so often the way we treat boys. The way we mangle them. The way we forbid them their deepest sensitivities, their deepest compassion, their deepest empathy. It's almost like their empathy's forbidden. Do not go into another person and feel what they're feeling because then you wouldn't be able to conquer them. Do not go in and feel what your enemy is feeling because then you wouldn't be able to shoot them.

**Eve Ensler:** 00:29:23 We can go down the layers and layers and the ways that we kill off empathy. And so I think what happens when suddenly those portals are opened and you have no control over them, and they're suddenly rushing through you, I think that was my father's experience.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:29:39 You know, another thing I was thinking about before this episode is all the ways in which our society ... There's evidence for this. Most people don't even know it. For example air conditioning. The temperatures in buildings are set to be comfortable for men but not for women. Cars, the way they're built there's no place for handbags. Pharmaceutical industries build ... Drugs have traditionally ... I don't know, I think it may still be true. But they test drugs at dosages that are basically for male weight.

**Eve Ensler:** 00:30:05 Female bathrooms are always the farthest away and never have enough stalls.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:30:08 I didn't know that, but there's so many examples of these things. And these are the artifacts, the physical imprints of a world that has been largely built by men. But I think what's more powerful are the invisible. I don't know how I would describe it. The masculine archetype is at the center of so many of the dominant institutions and cultural practices. And the reason I bring that up is because I wonder is part of the problem that women in order to attain power, in order to attain position in society, have to go through and inhabit that archetype? That it's the archetype, the masculine archetype that is sort of the dominant imprint. And what we're seeing in a sense ... Also another thing I was thinking about, because I said to you interestingly enough, the agent who sent me your book was the same person that I was in touch with about Jordan Peterson. And so I was thinking about how women, I thought this for a long time, are doing more and more, and men are doing less and less. But very much a generalization, you know the idea for example of the Peter Pans who are like boys that never grow up.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:31:15 Women are taking on now more and more of the male roles, but they're still doing all the female roles. Why is that? That imbalance. Where does that come from?

**Eve Ensler:** 00:31:25 Wow.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:31:26 Because the reality is that men aren't happy with that. Men don't want that. Men that aren't providing or aren't fulfilling the masculine roles don't feel really good about themselves. So there's an epidemic among men, which again brings us back to the Jordan Peterson thing.

**Eve Ensler:** 00:31:40 Well I think ... This is my own perspective on it. I think women are breaking free from so many confines and so many cages, and so many ways that they have been made unequal in this society. And they're in their struggle to find their voice. Find the work that gives them pleasure and gives them some power in society. Find a way to express themselves. Find a way to bring their stories forward and have their stories matter and their narratives matter. I think what hasn't happened yet is men haven't moved with this new story. And by that I mean ... Men have been called out. Let's just look at sexual abuse. Men have been called out. Some men have lost jobs, some men have lost face. Some for short periods of time, some for longer periods. But there's been no ... And I think some men are on guard, a lot of men are on guard now. Everybody knows you have to be careful. But that doesn't necessarily mean you have changed. That doesn't necessarily mean you have done the critical work of going inside yourself and doing real self interrogation of who am I as a man? Am I a man who has abused women? What does that abuse look like? Am I a man who has demeaned women, degraded women? What is my childhood? What is the man I want to be?

**Eve Ensler:** 00:33:03 And I think that investigation and that process, as far as I can tell, hasn't happened yet. And part of the reason is that men have to initiate that process. Women can't initiate. They can't be fighting for equality, fighting for the rights, fighting to protect their bodies, fighting to end violence against women, and figuring out how to unleash this new story for men. And I guess my question for you is, what will it take to catalyze men to really join in opening up this new paradigm that is begging to be born?

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:33:42 I'm happy to answer that or to try to answer it. I wanted to begin by responding to something that you said, when you said on being on guard, because I thought about this. I haven't felt on guard. When I was a teenager I think there are things that I

did that were crossing the line. You know, like a lot of guys did that. I think a lot of that unfortunately has to do with pornography and like what we learn as teenagers, as boys. Like what women want sexually is completely ... Sex looks nothing like what you learn about from pornography.

- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:34:15 But in general I haven't felt that. I mean it's not how I conduct myself. But I have felt defensive, very defensive. And I've tried to think about why that might be. I'm very fortunate, I have a wonderful father and he was an incredible role model for me. And I think as I reflected on this honestly, I often feel ... And I think what I'm often feeling is as if men categorically are being attacked, and that I feel like my dad's being attacked. And I want to say I had a great father. He was a great man. He was great to my mother, he was great to me. He didn't exhibit all these qualities that all these people are saying that men are and men need to do this and need to be called out. He doesn't need to be called out. He's a good man.
- Eve Ensler:** 00:34:55 But can I just address that?
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:34:56 Absolutely.
- Eve Ensler:** 00:34:58 Yes you had a good father, but you're living in a community of men. And I want to say it's not enough now to say I'm a good man. Men have to work with other men now. Be responsible to their brothers to say "Look how you're talking about that woman. Look how you're behaving with that woman. Look how you're treating that woman." It's not enough. It's like when you're doing anti-racist work as a white person. I hear white people say all the time "Well I'm not a racist." And first of all there's no one born into America that's not born into racism and doesn't carry racism. So part of it is like, to give up this notion that of exceptionalism. That somehow we're outside that story. None of us are outside that story, we're born into a misogynist, racist world and our work is to decolonize ourself. And our work is to de-sex and find ways to make ourselves less sexist and less racist and less hierarchical. That's what we're doing here. So I think part of it is yes, there could be ... Anyway I think that's-
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:35:58 No, that's interesting. If you want me to give you the answer, this is something else I thought about. And again I told you my friend Erin was very helpful. We talked a lot on the phone. And there's a saying. You bring it up in the book and we talked about it with Erin, this notion of king of my castle. And I think you used the word king or-

**Eve Ensler:** 00:36:15 Divine right of kings, yes.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:36:16 There you go yeah. And it's good to be the king. It's good to be the king. And I think that on some level there is selfishness that I acknowledge.

**Eve Ensler:** 00:36:26 What does that mean, it's good to be king?

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:36:29 It means that it's good ... You made it something that was relatable. You're saying something ... Look how you're talking about that woman. I've talked about women in ways that I would never say in person to them. And it's oftentimes completely supposed to be funny.

**Eve Ensler:** 00:36:42 And why is that funny though? I'm just honestly asking you that.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:36:44 Absolutely and I think this is great and I'm happy to have you here because I want-

**Eve Ensler:** 00:36:50 I appreciate your honesty because I know there's a code that goes on between men that's very, very different and we know it as women.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:36:58 That's a great question.

**Eve Ensler:** 00:36:59 We can feel it. We know it's in there. And so that impacts our ability to trust, our ability to be intimate, our ability to love, because we know that that talk is degrading to us. That talk is demeaning to us. It doesn't see us as full human beings and it's so normalized at this point that I don't think men are even aware when they're doing it. My friend Tony Porter who's a beautiful man who runs an organization called A Call to Men, tells this story in his Ted Talk of when he was a boy a group of his peers went and there was a girl that they were all raping and she was a disabled girl.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:37:41 Sorry, where was this?

**Eve Ensler:** 00:37:42 It was in his neighborhood. And he went into this room and the guy sent him into the room and his job was to do what they had done to her. And he said he couldn't do it, but when he walked out the door he pulled up his pants like he had done it. Now to me if we were living in the new world that man would have shut that down, would have protected that girl, would have made sure that never happened. Wouldn't have gone along with the male code to prove to them he was really a man because he had indulged in the horrible behavior they had indulged in. And

that's the leap we have to make. And look, I struggle every day working to end violence against women on what is going to be the thing that catalyzes men to be willing to know that their allegiance to that male code and that legion of men is less important than ending the suffering and the degradation and the inequality of women.

- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:38:41 I think this entire conversation on this subject is littered across the board with nuance. Even with what you're describing there and standing up for women when they're there versus not standing up for them when they're not there. That's another gradience. This idea of male code, certainly I know what that is. I mean I have some sense of it. It was stronger when I was growing up. But I think now for example what resonates more is ... I don't know if maybe this is what you meant by male code, but I think you were asking me why do I think that's okay or why do I do that or why have I done that again, I think in some sense it's almost like a performance. In a sense you are kind of all just declaring your masculinity in a way.
- Eve Ensler:** 00:39:22 It's performance.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:39:22 Right. But again, there are levels of it. We all heard the video with Donald Trump. Some of us cringed. Some of us didn't. I know there are men who didn't cringe when they heard that. They thought it was normal. I actually don't think that that's locker room talk. I actually think that in a way it's unfortunate, I think a little sad unless I'm living in a bubble, that that was portrayed as being somehow generally normal in locker rooms. That's not what I hear in locker rooms. I don't really hear people talking like that. That was pretty graphic. And perhaps maybe that's a sign of the times and it's just gotten better because he's 71 and that he's-
- Eve Ensler:** 00:39:56 I'm not sure though. I'm not sure. I don't know. Because I'm not in those locker rooms. But I will tell you that performance, he's president. Performances actually lead to things whether they're performances or not. They have power. And I think whether men are performing, which I think to a large degree men are performing, that performing has bought them a lot of power.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:40:16 I think also though it has a lot to do with insecurity. I think that the more insecure you are, the more likely you are to do things like that.
- Eve Ensler:** 00:40:24 Absolutely. And the less rooted you are in your own humanity. So why do people perform? They perform because they don't feel like they have a core self that is actually there. They have to

mask a self or they have to create a self. But what would be amazing is if we could actually break out of performance and be in our real messy, true selves with each other.

- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:40:45 This kind of brings us back to the thing that I think in my head when I was thinking about this felt like it was the most challenging thing and it speaks to the imbalance. It goes back, why is it that women have felt comfortable taking on male roles but men have not felt as comfortable I think taking on female roles. And I can tell you personally I do feel comfortable for example staying home. But would I feel comfortable feeling somehow that my wife was wearing the pants so to speak? I wouldn't feel comfortable with that.
- Eve Ensler:** 00:41:15 Maybe that expression.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:41:17 Yeah.
- Eve Ensler:** 00:41:18 Why isn't she just wearing whatever she's wearing?
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:41:20 Well that's an interesting point. Why? Why?
- Eve Ensler:** 00:41:23 And this isn't all men because gay men don't have those issues.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:41:26 Right. Some wear the pants, some wear the ... I understand. I'm kidding.
- Eve Ensler:** 00:41:29 Gay men and I think trans people and other people can move, and gender fluid people can move through those. It's really straight men. And I think, look, I was saying to somebody recently whose son really wanted to dress up in sparkles and they were having huge issues with it and I was like "Is there a reason why a boy can't wear sparkles?" What is happening here? Why are we telling this boy he can't wear sparkles? Why are we telling him that?
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:41:55 So interesting. I want to say one thing though. I will say though, I have heard from my gay friends or people that I know who are gay that actually some of them have had difficulty taking on more feminine roles in a relationship. I don't know if that's-
- Eve Ensler:** 00:42:07 Look, there's no generalizations.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:42:10 No, I'm just saying that in general, especially I think for people I've heard that are older, let's say going back to the '70s or whatever, that it was even harder to be more submissive. I tend to believe that in any relationship there's always going to be

someone who's more or less submissive, someone who's more or less agreeable. I don't know that both people can have the same energy. There seems to be ... Anyway. I don't know.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:42:33 Yeah, I don't know how I would feel about that. I can tell you that as I've gotten older I've become more comfortable with the idea of, let's say if I had children, if my children were gay. When I was younger I would not have been comfortable with that idea. Now as the society's become more accepting it seems more okay. And I think the reality is I'm kind of somewhere in my life where the only thing I really want is my children to be happy and for them to be accepted. And if I felt like they wouldn't be accepted for who they are, well I would hope they would not be whatever that would be so that they would not feel that.

**Eve Ensler:** 00:43:02 Yes, but I think in a way if we as adults model an ability to be gender fluid, to be all things, to develop our feminine sides and our masculine sides and we play with them and we change them up and we switch them up, our children will be comfortable doing the same things. Everybody gets slotted into the story they're born into. And I think there are men now who are more comfortable bringing up children, taking care of the children, being stay at home parents. I know those men. It's what the world does to those men, how the world demeans those men in the same way that your mother and your boy child is in a playground and someone hits your child and your child cries, your boy child cries, and rather than picking your child up and holding your child and saying it's terrible that someone hit you, you're feeling forced to push your child to man up and fight back because that pressure is on you. And I think all the ways in which the push to gender confirmation are hitting at you all the time, we have to be really conscious of that and what messages we're communicating.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:44:07 That's another interesting ... When I was a kid we moved around a lot and when people tried to bully me I would get into fights. So my nature was to get into fights but I was also very sensitive. So again, this brings up what I would find relatable, which was the shadow man aspect with your father and the suppression of certain things. But when I look back ... I had this conversation actually with someone recently because he had a similar experience but the way that he ... We talked about for example if someone hit you or bullied you what would you do? And he said "Well I would tell someone." And I was like "Well I would've thought that would be ridiculous and never advise my kid to go tell someone. You need to figure out conflict on your own." This brings us back to the conversation, Jordan Peterson,

which is man up, handle your business, et cetera. This is the typical sort of message.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:44:53 I mean that to me resonates. However, when he said to me "That would have been a betrayal of who I was." And I thought that made a lot more sense-

**Eve Ensler:** 00:45:03 You mean to hit that person back?

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:45:03 Yeah.

**Eve Ensler:** 00:45:03 Yeah.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:45:03 So as I think about these things, this is not just ... Obviously your episode, you coming here, has made me think about it more, but it's something that I try to think about generally as I get older and older. I try to evolve with the changing landscape. Another thing you brought up that I think about, which is there are so many gender pronouns now. And there are so many things that everyone needs to become accustomed to so quickly and the change is so quick and I think one thing that would be helpful for society in these conversations, if these types of conversations could happen without the accusations of bigotry and things like this. I think this puts people on the defensive because people like me would be terrified. In general I don't even talk about politics on this show because I don't want to get into any conversation ... There's no upside. You know what I mean? Because what if I say something ... And of course there are all these bad actors in the world.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:45:57 People can take something, take a clip, put it on Twitter, and then all of a sudden you're a racist. That's terrifying. So I think the thing I was pointing out about all the gender pronouns is there's so much change and people have an idea-

**Eve Ensler:** 00:46:10 And it's happening fast.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:46:10 Yeah, it's happening fast. And people have an idea of how it is and I think there are plenty of people that are good people who are open to evolving into accepting whatever the new norms are but it has to just happen in a way that feels normal, feels right for them. And not everyone's ready. And I'm not-

**Eve Ensler:** 00:46:28 The thing about revolutionary change is though, it always happens through outrage. Outrage is really what drives change.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:46:34 Because you have to break the complacency is what you're saying.

**Eve Ensler:** 00:46:35 Absolutely. So is always holding two opposite thoughts at the same time is honoring those that have been oppressed and exploited and undone because of their gender and who are bravely breaking new ground to kind of bust out of the gender jails. And at the same time how do we do it in a way where people who are not familiar or not awake, or not conscious yet can absorb it and change with it? And I think it's hard because the energies are really different. One's a contemplative energy and one's an outrage energy and they're kind of happening simultaneously.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:47:12 Also isn't there something about what's lost? Because change means that things die. In order for things to come into being things have to die right? And this brings us back to these notions of masculinity. Do you think that there needs to be ... You side like on the playground some kid gets slapped, man up or whatever, you know you're crying, don't cry. Is there some role for that? Is there a place for that type of strength, that manifestation of strength? Certainly there used to be right?

**Eve Ensler:** 00:47:42 See to me strength is crying. But that's me. I think the greatest strength is vulnerability. I've always believed that. I don't think there's strength in violence. I think it's superficial and pathetic actually. It's masking huge insecurity and I don't feel protected by it. I feel protected when people are open. I feel protected when people are true. I feel protected when people are vulnerable. And I think if we resolved our conflicts with people opening their hearts to each other as opposed to people pounding each other over the head it would take us a lot further. If we resolved our conflicts through people diving underneath what is causing that person to want to hit rather than punishing. Because look, I was punished to the point of insanity and I was beaten to the point of insanity and I was whipped to ... So I know what that does to a person and I could tell you it is not effective in transforming one's soul into becoming a deeper, more loving ... All it does is make you hate yourself and hate other people.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:48:48 I agree with that. But let's follow this. In a world where other people can be aggressors, other people can be violent, is there a need until and unless that were to change? And the question also is can that change given our biology? Men are very aggressive. They're more aggressive than women. They tend to get into fist fights-

**Eve Ensler:** 00:49:07 But it depends.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:49:08 Generally speaking.

**Eve Ensler:** 00:49:09 Yeah, I live with two gay men who are the most beautiful, tender men and hate the idea of someone hitting somebody. Okay, men are different. I don't think we can characterize and generalize.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:49:23 But you don't think on average though men tend to be more aggressive?

**Eve Ensler:** 00:49:24 But that's how they're conditioned to be.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:49:25 You don't think it's hormonal? You don't think that that plays a role?

**Eve Ensler:** 00:49:28 I don't know. I've never had testosterone pulsing through me so I can't tell you.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:49:32 You do have testosterone. That's where your sex drive comes from.

**Eve Ensler:** 00:49:34 Yeah, but I don't have the layer that you do.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:49:36 Did you know that though?

**Eve Ensler:** 00:49:36 Yeah. No, I don't know. And I don't want to believe it's testosterone because then it just feels hopeless. I actually think-

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:49:43 What do you mean for the sex drive? Oh, for the aggression.

**Eve Ensler:** 00:49:44 Yeah, for aggression because then-

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:49:46 But it makes sense. They actually did studies.

**Eve Ensler:** 00:49:48 And even if that's true, I have things that pulse through me but I learned how to redirect them and control them and manifest them differently.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:49:57 Right. I agree with that. But I'll just say, and this kind of brings us back to this notion of lost. I'm such a nerd the fact that this came to my head right now but I'm thinking of Star Trek 5 which was the worst movie ever. But there's a scene where Captain Kirk says "I want my pain. I need my pain." He's trying to take his pain away. And there are things that I identify so much with who I am. I understand that it's not for everyone but I am proud

of how I dealt with adversity growing up in that I overcame the fear of being in fights or meeting violence with violence. And that word sounds very ... We're using it but it didn't ... You know, I got into fist fights and things like this but I wasn't pulling out knives or anything. But I learned through that to be tough in a particular way that has served me and it's so much part of who I am, being a fighter, that in a sense bringing us back to being defensive, there is a sense in which I feel like some of the things that I hold dear are attacked in some of these conversations.

- Eve Ensler:** 00:50:58 Well they're being questioned. They're being questioned. I would say I love the fact that I was under siege for my whole childhood and I never became a violent person. That's my greatest achievement. That I never did that to anybody else.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:51:15 You're remarkable.
- Eve Ensler:** 00:51:16 No, but I'm not saying I'm remarkable, I'm saying that's what gave me strength. That's what gave me a sense of accomplishment and that I was able to overcome. That I didn't become that. And I think all the things that have made us are cultural and when we-
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:51:34 No, but you are remarkable because most people wouldn't ... Again I don't know much about your life other than what I've read. But it seems that when you face adversity you go into it. Not everyone can do that.
- Eve Ensler:** 00:51:46 Not everyone wants to.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:51:50 Exactly. And certainly talk about it and just be so open about it. I was telling my friend that I was nervous beforehand and I was trying to describe for her what it felt like. I felt almost like we were going to do the interview naked. Because you're so open about everything that I felt like I had to really bring a certain level of openness in the conversation.
- Eve Ensler:** 00:52:08 But what are we doing here? What are we doing here? Isn't our work here to become open? Isn't our work here to tell the truth? Isn't our work to get out of performance and break out of the masks?
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:52:19 Sure.
- Eve Ensler:** 00:52:20 Isn't that what we're doing here? I don't feel particularly brave. I want that relationship with you. I don't want to sit here and

pretend I'm somebody and you pretend you're somebody and then I leave and I go well that was ... Right? I mean I think you were saying at the beginning why should I care? I ask myself all the time what am I doing on this crazy planet in this thing called life as a human being? And I think for me, and I think about this all the time, I'm really here to get free. Free of my competition. Free of not wanting the best for everyone I meet. Free of the legacies of racism that my white ancestors are connected to. Free of the genocide on my Jewish family's side that we can end genocide and stop these cycles of genocide. Free of self hatred. Free of rancor. I feel like that's my life's work. And that's all of our life's work I the. Isn't it?

- Eve Ensler:** 00:53:18 I mean isn't that what we're trying to do, evolve ourselves as human beings so we can figure out how to live in this world and honor the earth and respect each other and live without hate and live without violence?
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:53:30 Three big things to address there. First, to address the question, whatever it was exactly what you said, it's about feeling safe. In other words can I feel safe to be open in conversation with you? And that brings us back to the fact that I think one of the great disservices that is done in these conversations is that many men, for example, don't feel safe. And they're right not to feel safe. So I just wanted to point that out.
- Eve Ensler:** 00:53:56 Okay, but I want to go back to safety. Can I just go back to that for a second?
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:53:58 Absolutely.
- Eve Ensler:** 00:53:59 If I wait to be safe in order to be real to say the truth, I'll never say a word.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:54:06 But that's different. I do want to draw a distinction though between the public domain and your home. Because in the public domain you can be strung up and dragged through the streets and you did nothing wrong. It's really true. And I think a lot of men see that and they react very negatively to it. There's just a lot of confusion for men about what is this, what's that? Are we comparing Louis C.K. to Bill Cosby? That's also a confusion. There's all sorts of nuance that confuses men that doesn't mean to say that it's okay what Louis C.K. did which was I think for me just kind of sadder than it was anything else.
- Eve Ensler:** 00:54:39 I think it was more than sad but okay.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:54:42 Well I wouldn't want it done to me so maybe you're right.

**Eve Ensler:** 00:54:44 Yeah, hello.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:54:45 So there's something else. You were talking about so passionately isn't this what we're here for, to be open, to basically be real. And I think that's very true for you. I think it might be true for all of us. But I think for you it's much easier to be that way. You're here. You want a conversation. I mean I can feel it. You want to have that conversation. You're wide open. I've never heard anyone speak into the microphone from such a distance and it sounds like they're right in front of me. It's really amazing. Your voice carries. I mentioned to you at the start that I had been through my own wringer with a brain tumor and surgery and radiation. That experience opened me up in many ways and it changed my life. Both being diagnosed and living with it for years was one particular thing. But then the actual having to just give in and go through the surgery and go through the radiation and go through all of that, it opened me up in ways that I've heard David Letterman for example talk about when he went through heart surgery.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:55:53 So I think that-

**Eve Ensler:** 00:55:54 Didn't that experience feel good?

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:55:56 Yeah. It felt very good. What's interesting is the difficulty that I've had in my life was really in the years after that. Having to figure out how to come back into the world. And for me that journey has been ... I've written about it. It opened up this connection with life and love. I mean that's really what this is. What we're talking about is-

**Eve Ensler:** 00:56:15 Absolutely.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:56:15 Right. It's about-

**Eve Ensler:** 00:56:16 That's what that freedom's about because once you get free from those things then you can love. And I think that is what we're doing here. I hope so.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:56:25 Yeah, it's also kind of destroys fear right?

**Eve Ensler:** 00:56:27 Yes.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:56:27 Because when you have to confront death so viscerally there's not much left to hide from.

**Eve Ensler:** 00:56:32 No. I don't know about you but when I went through my stage three, four cancer experience I feel like I died. And to some degree I feel like I'm already dead. Like whatever this is-

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:56:42 Borrowed time or whatever.

**Eve Ensler:** 00:56:42 It's not even borrowed time. It's like I died and now I'm free.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:56:48 You don't fear it anymore.

**Eve Ensler:** 00:56:49 No, not at all.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:56:50 That's interesting. Fascinating.

**Eve Ensler:** 00:56:51 Do you?

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:56:51 Yes.

**Eve Ensler:** 00:56:52 You do?

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:56:52 Yeah. I was terrified before my surgery and it was also very, very terrifying because ... I didn't have cancer but I had a very, very pernicious brain tumor in the very center of my brain that caused dementia and I was extraordinarily lucky. But I remember by the time I was doing my radiation, I've called it the greatest honor of my life. I had no real fear during that time and I felt, I've described it once as saying like walking through a hallway with axes hanging from very loose strings and just gliding my finger past the razor. But after, as I reintegrated into the world, that has been less so. I've worked to try to go back now. That's sort of what's happened. But I am still afraid of death. I'm still afraid of loss.

**Eve Ensler:** 00:57:47 Loss is different for me than death. I'm deeply sad and overwhelmed by the idea of losing my friends or losing my dog.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:57:55 But isn't that what death is? What is death? You also write, I have a very interesting sense of your intuitive feeling of what this is that I get and a lot of it resonates.

**Eve Ensler:** 00:58:10 I don't know if I would say I'm afraid of dying. I don't feel afraid of dying per se. I'm sad to leave. I live in this beautiful, beautiful land, upstate New York. And I'm in that land, that land is in me. And the idea of not being able to see that land again crushes me. Not being able to see the people I love crushes me. But to leave this plane and the go to another, that kind of excites me.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:58:37 That's interesting.

**Eve Ensler:** 00:58:39 Like I'm kind of really excited to see what's next.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:58:43 That's really interesting.

**Eve Ensler:** 00:58:43 You know. And I always say the biggest event of our life is the one thing nobody every talks about. I love to talk about death. I love to imagine what it's going to be like, where we're going and what portals we're going to be going through, and is it the end absolutely or is it the beginning? We have no idea.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:58:58 I actually had this idea for a podcast but no one would come on. Which is basically celebrities, politicians, whoever, come on a podcast and for an hour all we do is talk about death.

**Eve Ensler:** 00:59:08 I will come on anytime you want.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:59:10 I'm sure you would.

**Eve Ensler:** 00:59:12 No, and I have read the most amazing books on death. Like I'm obsessed.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:59:14 Like what? What have you read?

**Eve Ensler:** 00:59:15 Oh, I'll send you a list of just people who have had near death experiences and where they've gone. People who've gone into the metaphysics of death. People who've ... Philosophies of death. And I have to say, I think an exploration of death is really the deepest exploration.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:59:30 Do you think that's part of what drives ... And I agree with that. A lot of people think that talking about death is somehow melancholic, morbid. I guess there's a sort of morbidity to it in a sense. Morbid by its nature, you're talking about death. But it's really about talking about life.

**Eve Ensler:** 00:59:47 Of course it is.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:59:47 It's a way of talking about life because what is life if there's not death? It's about bringing the urgency to live.

**Eve Ensler:** 00:59:53 And like if our lives are novels or if our lives are three act plays, we got to look at the ending to understand the beginning right? And we've got to see where are we going and what is our life amounting to, and what does it mean? And what do we think will happen there? And I love having conversations imagining

what are the possible things that death is and where do we go and who do we become?

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:00:16 Do you have any notion of that, what that might be? I mean I think death is without question the disillusionment destruction of ego.

**Eve Ensler:** 01:00:23 Absolutely.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:00:24 But that's super scary for me. And I know, like this goes back, I remember when I was in the least egoic state during that time, it was amazing. But at the same time, as I started to come back into the world I remember feeling more and more like I didn't want to lose that. I wanted that and I wanted to have more of an egoic experience before my life was over. And I've read many books on death as well and I worked with a nonprofit to put on a conference on death and dying in 2015. What helped me in that process was myth.

**Eve Ensler:** 01:00:59 Mm-hmm (affirmative). Definitely.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:00:59 And Joseph Campbell helped me a lot. And he specifically gave me permission to live an egoic life in the world and that that was part of what the experience of having a life is. Having an identity but being able to let go of it when the time came to let go of it.

**Eve Ensler:** 01:01:17 But you have to practice. Even the Tibetan Book of the Dead, the Bardos that you can get caught in. And it talks about the work is how do you learn to release ego now and learn to dissolve ego now, so when that time comes you're not caught?

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:01:32 You're right.

**Eve Ensler:** 01:01:32 And I think ... You know, what is ego? We were talking about this the other night. Like when did ego first insert itself into the human consciousness? I think it arrived the same time as patriarchy. I think it was about the same time. And I think this notion of the-

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:01:44 Why do you say that?

**Eve Ensler:** 01:01:45 Well because I think this assertion of the dominant eye and the dominant me and me as the center of everything, I don't think it was always like that in human times.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:01:54 So you've used that word often, it's used a lot also in the media, patriarchy. In your view, where did that emerge from? I mean because-

**Eve Ensler:** 01:02:00 Well it's said agriculture. When we first started to see that we could own the land, tame the land, cultivate the land, everything became-

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:02:08 But didn't aboriginal societies ... First of all there was tremendous amounts of violence. Pre agriculture societies were even more violent than post agriculture.

**Eve Ensler:** 01:02:15 Yeah, violence is different than patriarchy though. I don't know that those systems had an equal relationship for example between men and women or that there was one dominant. We don't know.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:02:24 You're saying that the aboriginal societies ... Well I'm sure some-

**Eve Ensler:** 01:02:27 I'm not idealizing anything. And by the way, I have no idea and nobody seems to know in all the books I've read. Nobody seems to know what actually initiated patriarchy. Like what was that initiating moment when it came into existence?

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:02:38 I'll say we did an episode with Dr. Nicolas Christakis on his book on Blueprint, which about the blueprint of a good society, basically evolution. And we did talk about all these different societies and there are cases of matriarchal or gynocracies, but they're extraordinarily rare.

**Eve Ensler:** 01:02:56 Right. And if you go back to pagan societies or you go back to societies that were much more focused on cherishing and honoring and putting women in the center of societies, those societies actually existed.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:03:08 So what is patriarchy then by your definition? You talk about it as being something that emerged around the time of agriculture. What is it?

**Eve Ensler:** 01:03:13 I think is the dominance. It's the father being the absolute authority. It's the men all have the power. It's inequality between men and women.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:03:22 Oh that's interesting.

**Eve Ensler:** 01:03:24 It's really ego. I mean it's God the father. It's the emergence of the offline God who is controlling us from above rather than a

pagan God which makes us absolutely connected to the earth as one. It's the separation to some degree between the earth and people. It's the end of Genesis. It's go have dominion over the earth. It's that separation and I think-

- Demetri Kofinas:** 01:03:46 Does it inherently require men, or would it be possible for a system like that to evolve from women?
- Eve Ensler:** 01:03:52 Who knows?
- Demetri Kofinas:** 01:03:53 I bring that up because one of the things that we were learning today is that gender and sex are not equal right, that's another thing that's very difficult for people to get their head around. I'm just starting to get my head around it. And so in that sense is patriarchy not necessarily a male phenomenon, it is something that ... It may be in this particular duration.
- Eve Ensler:** 01:04:10 Yeah, it has been a male phenomenon.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 01:04:11 But it isn't necessarily that women could exist ... Again, this confuses terms because patriarchy comes from the-
- Eve Ensler:** 01:04:18 The father.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 01:04:18 Padre.
- Eve Ensler:** 01:04:19 Yeah the padre, yeah. I could only address the patriarchy where in. Because I don't know what could have. I do know that going back to the ego and ego death and one's relationship to ego, when you said before, I'm most terrified of releasing ego, I think the struggle we're in to some degree right now is can we turn our egos towards an understanding that for example we're not separated from the earth. That the earth and human beings are actually one organism. That would require a loss of the dominating eye. That would understand that we are working in cooperation. That this is one ego system that human beings are a part of. Not the dominant of. We wouldn't be killing off 200 species a day if we understood that they were central and connected to every part of our essence. So to me the work in some way is to melt that ego down and go through that horrible kind of ego feeling where you're no longer special, you're no longer one, you're no longer it, and feel what that feels like. Go into that space where you can feel yourself melting into a kind of oneness.
- Eve Ensler:** 01:05:35 And I don't mean to sound like crazy out there, but I practice this a lot. I was in a near plane crash and-

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:05:42 When?

**Eve Ensler:** 01:05:43 Years ago. And the plane dropped like thousands of feet out of the sky-

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:05:47 Holy shit, really?

**Eve Ensler:** 01:05:47 And people were flying and screaming and kissing people goodbye.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:05:50 Commercial airliner?

**Eve Ensler:** 01:05:51 Yeah, yeah. Pakistani Airlines. And people were just screaming and kissing everybody goodbye. And people had head concussions and people were saying goodbye to each other.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:05:58 Oh my God.

**Eve Ensler:** 01:05:59 And I went into this amazing state. First I went through rage, like I can't believe I'm going lose my life. Then I went through total fear. And then I went to this incredible state of bliss. I've never been in that state before in my life. Like I don't know if it's certain chemicals in the brain that kick in at that moment. But I realized in that moment there was this incredible dissolving of all those boundaries. And then the plane caught, it was incredible.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:06:25 Crazy.

**Eve Ensler:** 01:06:26 It was crazy.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:06:27 I mean look, I get what you're saying. I don't think it's woo woo. I know it sounds like woo woo and stuff but I've been through that, I get it. And I actually think ... I'm of the mindset, actually not even a mindset, it's sort of pompous for me to say, but I think it's ridiculous when I listen to materialist theories of reality. Theories that put empirical science in front of consciousness or before consciousness. Makes absolutely no sense, you need to have an observer in order to make objective views of the world. You can't objectively view your own consciousness. So this thing you were saying about the world and the crisis in the world is what you talk about in your book, In the Body of the World. I agree with that. It also makes me think back to what we were saying about, it's good to be the king. I think one of the challenges also is that people that are in positions of power that are able to make change, they have the most to lose. The better your life gets, the better it gets. It's

good to be the king. It's great. Now I have all of these things that ...

- Demetri Kofinas:** 01:07:21 And also certain personality types tend to be more successful. People that want something, when they get it they want more and they want more and they want more.
- Eve Ensler:** 01:07:28 But what is better? I want to just ... Language that we use. They have a better life. I've had a very fortunate existence in that I've gotten to know a lot of different, different types of people. I'm a grassroots activist and I've actually had success so I've been allowed entrance into some of the ... What is better? The people who have the most. The most money. The most things. The most prestige. Often the most unhappy people I've ever met. And are in constant seeking for more and more and more and proof that they matter and proof that they're relevant and proof that ... Because they've gotten hooked into that system.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 01:08:07 It's about insecurity.
- Eve Ensler:** 01:08:07 Yeah.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 01:08:09 And about fearing that you'll never be enough without all those things. You need to acquire more and more to have-
- Eve Ensler:** 01:08:12 So I'm not convinced that's better.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 01:08:13 Right.
- Eve Ensler:** 01:08:13 I think better is like where we are right this moment. Where we're connected. Where we're trying to listen to each other. Where we're trying to feel each other. Where we're trying to know each other. And it doesn't matter what we have. It's like we're in human communion with each other. To me that's better. That's the life I want. Or when we're sitting out and there are 10 million robins flying on the first spring day and crashing and diving and the herrings trying to eat the koi and the fish. And the tress are so green you feel I you've just landed in a mystical moss patch and it's spring in a way you've never known it. To me that's better. And I think we as human beings have to start defining what better is.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 01:08:51 So I feel what you're saying. And I think this brings us back to why for example going through a death experience or losing someone you love or having something that jars you out of that egoic state can help connect you to that. The challenge is, how do we bridge that divide? How do we do that as a society

because not everyone is where you're at? Quite literally, not everyone, most people are not where you're at. If everyone was, we'd be there, and everyone would see that that is a much more fulfilling place to be in.

**Eve Ensler:** 01:09:20 I think the function of art ... And to me that is the function art, the function of writing, the function of poetry, the function of-

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:09:27 So writing, for example, this and having it be ... By the way is this going to be performed by-

**Eve Ensler:** 01:09:31 Yes, I think eventually it will be.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:09:32 I imagine. It seems like it would be the perfect monologue.

**Eve Ensler:** 01:09:35 Yeah. I think it's going to happen. I think art is one of the ways that we catalyze that opening in people and we catalyze the melting of the ego and we catalyze getting out of dualities and this or that, or right or wrong. But we open up to the much bigger, more radiant world which contains all of us and isn't about winning and losing and isn't about I have more than you have. You know, look at the pattern of growth in this country. Look at the more, at the more resources, more this, more growth, more growth. Going where? Where are we going?

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:10:11 Look, I agree with you entirely.

**Eve Ensler:** 01:10:14 How about going deeper? How about going more connected? How about going in another direction as opposed to growth?

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:10:21 I agree with you wholeheartedly that the most effective way to transform is individual by individual. The challenge is like you say-

**Eve Ensler:** 01:10:31 How do we do this fast enough?

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:10:32 Well, yeah, so the challenge is that ... Yeah, exactly. And that brings us back to the problem with fear and that we all have different levels of fear. Some people are more fearful and in some sense, and this is not a sort of statement around what is appropriate or not appropriate, but just fundamentally in many cases it's not fair to ask certain people ... Imagine for example there are people that are in their 60s or 70s that have lived their whole lives a particular way. You bring up your father, it's a great example. I mean he invested himself so deeply in the American model of the man, what it was he saw when he went in the silver screen, when he went to the movies and he saw

that. He spent his whole life building that and there was a certain moment it came clear in the book, I don't remember what it was or how it was but he was determined to go straight to his grave that way. He was not going to make a stop. There was so much anger in him that it was propelling him there and he wasn't open to seeing you.

**Eve Ensler:** 01:11:28 Well I want to argue with you about the calcification of old people.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:11:34 Sure. What do you mean calcify? I never said that. You put words in my mouth.

**Eve Ensler:** 01:11:36 No, but about, you know they're old, they're in their ways. I'm going to be 66 this month.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:11:40 Yeah, but you're so exceptional.

**Eve Ensler:** 01:11:41 Okay, but no.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:11:42 You really are.

**Eve Ensler:** 01:11:43 We have a choice about the fluidity, about the flexibility, about the openness of who we want our lives to be.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:11:51 But not everyone is ... I understand-

**Eve Ensler:** 01:11:52 But you can make that choice. That's a choice.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:11:54 It is a choice.

**Eve Ensler:** 01:11:55 That's a choice.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:11:55 Well it's a choice but it also ... It's a choice.

**Eve Ensler:** 01:11:57 It is a choice.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:11:58 Some people are more able. More able.

**Eve Ensler:** 01:12:00 But where does ability come from? It comes from desire. I'll give you an example. I remember that beautiful Martin Luther King thing where he said "It's not that I don't have fear. I have plenty of fear. But I'm not a slave to my fear."

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:12:16 Right. Well that's what courage is.

**Eve Ensler:** 01:12:17 Right. And so do you think it wasn't scary to write this book? It wasn't scary to put this book into the world the week before it came out?

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:12:25 Sure, it was super scary.

**Eve Ensler:** 01:12:25 I was on my floor. But that doesn't mean ... I really do believe, go to the thing you're most afraid of. Go to that thing.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:12:34 Okay, so I agree with you. And that's courage. Courage is action in the face of fear. I agree with you. But I think what I've learned in my life, and this is not a solution, but in certain areas of my life one of the ways that I've actually found a way to make progress with people that I love is to recognize that I can't necessarily get everything I want from them.

**Eve Ensler:** 01:12:55 No, absolutely. But that's a different subject.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:12:57 But it kind of isn't because some people aren't ... It brings us back to this. I could feel it in you. You want connection. And I'm sure that you've had difficulty in your life-

**Eve Ensler:** 01:13:07 I'm not in a relationship if that's what you mean.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:13:12 No. So you connect deeply with everyone and I imagine that you've had frustrating experiences in your life with people that you want to connect with and I imagine you've had, earlier on and less in your life that was extraordinarily frustrating and it brought up all sorts of emotions and you didn't know how to deal with it. So what I've learned in those types of situations, because I am someone that's very open and I want to have deep connections, I've realized that one way or the other people just aren't ready or aren't able. And some people may not have the capacity.

**Eve Ensler:** 01:13:41 And I don't disagree with you.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:13:43 And it feels like a lot of people are like that.

**Eve Ensler:** 01:13:46 But that doesn't mean we don't keep trying.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:13:47 Sure, but don't we scare the shit out of them a lot? Like don't you think a lot of people in America are scared shitless when ... For them, you could be super scary right? Your message which is full of love could scare the shit out of them.

**Eve Ensler:** 01:14:00 But that doesn't mean ... Okay, yes. And by the way I'm not unaware of the degree to which people don't want to play. You know what I mean? I've been trying to play with a lot of people for a long time. But I also feel that what I'm doing here is I'm stirring things up.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:14:19 No shit. Yeah, I know.

**Eve Ensler:** 01:14:19 I'm a catalyst. I want people to wake up. I want people to wake up. Look we've been given 11 years by the climate scientists. The climate crisis is on the verge of throwing us all out of here. We have to wake up if we're going to even have a modicum of some amount of human beings left here. And I think we can keep pushing even if let's say 70% of the people don't want to wake up, maybe 30% do. And maybe the 70% will begin to move incrementally in the direction of waking up. I mean what are we doing here as artists but trying to connect with people, inspire people, tell stories that they haven't heard before that may tweak something in their brains in another direction. I mean that's what our work is right?

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:15:08 Yeah. So I'm acutely aware of what your assistant told me, which is I need to get you out of here.

**Eve Ensler:** 01:15:15 She's my editor.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:15:16 Your editor. I think yes your book was very courageous and I can't imagine what it would take to write something like that. I think it also stirs a lot in the reader and I would implore listeners to get it and read it. I think if anything to stir the pot like you said. So normally we do overtime segments. Eve, you've got to go so we're not going to have time to do that. But I am going to put together an overtime for my audience where I share some further thoughts about your book and about this conversation and for regular listeners, you know the drill. Now for new listeners or people that aren't subscribed you can learn more about our subscription at [hiddenforces.io/subscribe](https://hiddenforces.io/subscribe) or go straight to our Patreon page at [patreon.com/hiddenforces](https://patreon.com/hiddenforces) and you can learn all about how you can support the show and the various subscriptions to our overtime and our transcript and if you want access to this rundown that I put together today from my episode with Eve, you can get all of that.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:16:17 Thank you so much for coming on the program Eve.

**Eve Ensler:** 01:16:19 I thank you and I really thank you for your openness and for being in a really true dialog with me today. Thank you.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:16:26 Thank you.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:16:26 And that was my episode with Eve Ensler. I want to thank Eve for being on my program. Today's episode of Hidden Forces was recorded at Creative Media Design Studios in New York City. For more information about this week's episode or if you want easy access to related programming, visit our website at [hiddenforces.io](http://hiddenforces.io) and subscribe to our free email list. If you want access to overtime segments, episode transcripts, and show rundowns full of links and detailed information related to each and every episode, check out our premium subscription available through the Hidden Forces website or through our Patreon page.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:17:09 Today's episode was produced by me and Erin Marsz. And edited by Stylianos Nicolaou. For more episodes you can check out our website at [hiddenforces.io](http://hiddenforces.io). Join the conversation at Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram @hiddenforcespod, or send me an email. As always thanks for listening. We'll see you next week.