

[sapphic intro music]

[00:00:05] **Laurel:** Hi, everybody! Welcome to season four of Sapphic Culture Club. We're your hosts. I'm Laurel Hechanova.

[00:00:12] **Audrey:** And I'm Audrey Nieh.

[00:00:18] **Audrey:** It's been almost exactly one year since our season three finale. Why did we take a year off between seasons, you ask? Well, we are gonna chalk it up to...

[00:00:30] **Both:** [in chaotic, echo-y distortion] LESBIAN CHAOS!

[00:00:38] **Audrey:** [imitating an echo effect]...chaos, chaos, chaos... Which is not entirely coincidentally the theme of this season, season four. The world is worlding, we are wilding, and we both had pretty chaotic summers.

But side note, we did get to meet today's guest in real life human flesh during the summer, which was not chaotic and very lovely. Uh, more on that later. But anyway, now we are here. We're queer. We made it. Hello.

[00:01:00] **Laurel:** And what better way to start this season of chaos than to descend into a dungeon of horror with our favorite ghoul, Dr. Horror Dyke themselves, Heather Petrocelli. And also, I want to point out that doctor is not like, it's not just like a fun nickname. You're actually Dr. Heather Petrocelli, which...congratulations!

[00:01:19] **Heather:** Yeah, I'm here for this lesbian chaos. This is amazing. You know I live for queer chaos.

[00:01:28] **Laurel:** There's more to come, it's gonna...yeah.

[00:01:29] **Warped echo-y, sing-songy sound effect:** lesbian chaos!

[00:01:33] **Audrey:** So, Heather, as you may know from our podcast, or just because you are a diehard fanboi of their work, like we are, is a writer, researcher, historian, and independent film scholar and critic!

[00:01:46] **Laurel:** And Heather, while we would love to talk to you literally any time, today we've brought you on because you have a fantastic book coming out, uh, actually it's probably, it's been out for...two fresh days now. Titled *Queer for Fear: Horror Film and The Queer Spectator*. Heather, could you tell us a bit about it?

[00:02:12] **Heather:** The book is essentially based on the largest empirical study in horror studies, period.

So queers currently have the crown.

[00:02:18] **Audrey and Laurel:** Wooo!

[00:02:19] **Heather:** Yep, right? I mean, I am actually very proud of queers for that. It's like marking our territory all over the place.

And the book is essentially taking that data and putting it with some theory and arguing for however many pages it is that queers have a distinctive relationship with the horror genre that's different than any other demographic.

[00:02:39] **Audrey:** So, we're going to mention this again at the end of the episode, but in case people don't want to wait, where can they actually get their hot little hands on your book? The cover of which, we should add, is fucking incredible, not just because we know Amie, personally, just Laurel and I, not Heather. [laughter] Um, but anyway, it's literally a piece of art on its own, and I think we could probably dedicate a whole episode to it.

[00:03:04] **Heather:** You should. It's actually genuine – it's beautiful artwork. And I think the thing that people miss is that every single thing in the painting is representative of something that is discussed in the book in some kind of capacity. Not literally, but each of the flowers is a symbol of a group of people from the queer community.

I'll let Amie speak to it better. And the print is available for sale too, actually.

[00:03:29] **Laurel:** Ooh, we will link to that.

[00:03:30] **Heather:** Yeah, I think it's called Buy Olympic? It's like a local press here in Portland, even though I am no longer here in Portland.

The book is available through – the press is the University of Wales Press in the UK, and you can get through their site, and then it's the University of Chicago in the US, but I think you can get it on all the places people get books, like, I think it's listed on Amazon and Barnes & Noble and all those places.

[00:03:58] Audrey: We'll link to it, obviously, in this episode. And one thing we didn't mention is Heather's amazing Instagram presence, which is also QueerForFear, and I think you can find the book there as well.

[00:04:09] Heather: Yes, I don't know if this is something I'm supposed to say or not, but if people DM me, for the time being, I have a discount code that makes an expensive academic book more affordable.

[00:04:21] Laurel: Oh, cool,

[00:04:22] Heather: So, DM me at QueerForFear and I will be happy to give the code for as long as it works.

[00:04:28] Laurel: Cool, yeah.

[00:04:29] Heather: And I will add, if people do have the means to get the book, please get the book, because if I can sell the first print run, which is hardback, I will get a paperback edition, which is much more affordable.

I think it'll be like something in the vicinity of \$25 maybe, as opposed to the current...\$75 maybe? And if you can't afford it, that's fine. I mean, if you can't afford it, request local libraries or university libraries, get it.

[00:04:56] Laurel: I will say that the hardcover version is gorgeous. It looks so good.

[00:05:01] Audrey: It's gorgeous, and it's portable, I'm just gonna say.

[00:05:05] Heather: It is, it's a good size, and um, I'm just going to go out on a limb here, because it's lesbian chaos, and say they don't print very many of these, and if it like continues to like ricochet through the world, it's a collector's item.

[00:05:18] Laurel: Ooh, nice.

[00:05:19] Audrey: This could be your retirement plan.

[00:05:20] Heather: It might not be worth anything.

[00:05:22] Audrey: Forget your 401k. Buy this book.

[00:05:26] Laurel: Buy several copies, just in case.

[00:05:27] Heather: I told that to Amie, I'm like, this is our retirement plan, we're buying ten.

[00:05:33] Audrey: I've already listed one on eBay. So if you would like to pay \$500 for a book.

[00:05:38] Laurel: And we're turning one into an NFT! I'm kidding. I'm so kidding.

[00:05:42] Audrey: Oh, that'd be so cool. Oh my god, this is truly chaotic.

[00:05:46] Laurel: Okay.

[00:05:47] Heather: Okay, yeah.

[00:05:48] A slightly different warped echo-y, sing-songy sound effect: lesbian chaos!

[00:05:52] Audrey: Just to set some context, it'd be great to learn a little bit about this journey, essentially,

right? Like, what set you on the path to becoming Dr. Horror Dyke? (I realize that's a really big question.) ...And then ultimately conduct this massive survey that led to the book. I feel like, I don't know, I would want to know if I didn't know.

[00:06:09] **Heather:** I'll try to do this as quickly as possible. I was always a kind of a dark, macabre child, always drawn to horror, darkness, always into the villains, and I always felt alone, and I knew I was queer. I came out in the 80s, uh, mid to early 80s, when I was 12. And I always felt alone in loving horror. Fast forward to moving to San Francisco and making friends with a man named Joshua, who is a drag queen named Peaches Christ.

And Peaches and Joshua had a thing called Midnight Mass. And it was the first time I found community – queer community, watching horror films on a big screen. And it just blew my mind. I couldn't, like, it was a galvanizing moment in my life.

Fast forward again, I moved to Portland, and in 2015, a drag clown named Anthony (Carla Rossi) started a thing called Queer Horror, and I started going to it because it completely reminded me of Midnight Mass. It was like a joy, it was like, I always look forward to queer horror.

Then 2016 happened. Which I'm pretty sure is the beginning of the end times. All these like, you know, Bowie, Prince, Carrie Fisher, they're like, "We're out of here." My brother died in 2016, and then Trump got elected like a few months later.

It was a, um...sorry, thinking about my brother, like, it's a little bit hard. Um, it was like a moment to really reflect and figure out how I could give back to my community because I felt like I didn't know what the future was going to look like and sitting here talking to you in 2023 with everything going on? Not good. The future does not look good.

So I wanted to give back in some way. I wanted to do something, and Amie is an amazing person who is like, follow a passion. Just follow a passion. Figure out something to hook into and do something with that.

So it was going to be horror loving queers, and it was going to be, the hypothesis was – I knew from Queer Horror, I knew from Midnight Mass, there was a special thing with queers in horror, but I needed to figure out, and I needed to figure out empirically. I needed to like, go to horror loving queers. So that is why.

[00:08:22] **Laurel:** Sorry, it's so good. That's...

[00:08:24] **Audrey:** I know, I...

[00:08:25] **Laurel:** That's, and we both kind of heard, you know, we've heard the background before, but yeah, I don't, I personally hadn't, um, put the live cinema stuff together with your origin story. And like, I knew that you loved it, but I didn't realize how impactful and sort of like path changing it was.

[00:08:41] **Audrey:** I also don't think I realized that, and you mentioned this yesterday when we were chatting in the chat room, um, on AOL, um, that you were just starting

your book when we maybe first met in, uh, what was that, 20, was that 2019?

[00:08:56] **Heather:** No, it was 20, it was early 2020, because it was *Portrait of a Lady on Fire*.

[00:09:01] **Audrey:** Right, right, right, right, right, right.

[00:09:02] **Laurel:** And we couldn't meet each other in person for months. Yeah.

[00:09:05] **Audrey:** Right, right. But I just think it's like insane that...the follow through. Like you did it, you know, like, I don't know. I'm just...it's so admirable.

Heather: I did it!

Audrey: And it's really like a masterpiece. Or a mistress piece, whatever you want to say.

[00:09:17] **Laurel:** Ha! Love it.

[00:09:18] **Audrey:** It's so incredible that, you know, like we were just kind of there on the sidelines, like as you were finishing your book, you know, so I'm just like so impressed and in awe of you.

[00:09:28] **Heather:** Thank you. I'm... I actually have trauma around writing it in the sense that I don't remember whole huge chunks of it. I literally sat down to write the book at the very end of February of 2020. So the entire thing was written from February of 2020 to December of 2020. And that was a...I don't even know what to call

that year, um, but it was, it was something. And Amie got really, really sick, and it was one of those things where she was so ill that I was afraid I was going to lose her, and she kept telling me, you can't stop. So I had to kind of keep going, even though I did multiple times say like, I'm done, I cannot do this. So, uh, if the trauma chapter feels like slightly visceral in a way...

[00:10:16] **Laurel:** Mm.

[00:10:17] **Heather:** ...there's a reason for it.

[00:10:19] **Audrey:** I think the idea of, like, blacking out or having amnesia for parts of the book, it means that when you go back and read it, it's like someone else wrote it, right? Have you actually gone back and read the book?

[00:10:31] **Heather:** I did have to kind of copy edit my own book and it's a long story. I won't get into those details, but I did have to read everything and it was almost two full years after I had written the vast majority of it. And I have to admit that sometimes I'd be like, "Yeah!"

[00:10:56] **Audrey:** That's so cool.

All: [laughter]

[00:10:57] **Laurel:** I was going to say that like, um, as someone who did not write the book, the experience of reading it, um, it really felt like just sort of sitting on a sofa with a bowl of popcorn and listening to your smartest friend, like, just calmly, casually, eviscerate cis heteronormative monsters.

[00:11:20] **Audrey:** Literal smartest friend. Yeah, I had the same experience where I felt like you were putting into words these concepts and ideas and just, like, feelings I've felt since being, like, a very young queer person, right? And a lot of things that I didn't even know I could be, sort of, articulated? And I kept oscillating between like, almost like sobbing and like gasping and being like, holy, like, I don't know, it was just amazing to have so much just articulated.

I just felt like so privileged to be able to read it. Everyone, go get your copy now.

[00:11:54] **Laurel:** I did definitely make noises out loud reading it, like, "Ooh!" You know? Like, "NICE."

[00:12:01] **Heather:** Thank you. I'm gonna be emotional because there's so much emotion in this frickin book. Um, I wrote that book for exactly these responses. Like, that's why I did it, so thank you.

[00:12:17] **Audrey:** Thank you.

[00:12:18] **Laurel:** Yeah. Oh my gosh, yeah. Like, one of the things I'll say before we jump in, or maybe this actually segues into jumping in, is, um, I love how...it sounds cliché, but how, like, bold and uncompromising it is about its stance.

From, like, literally page one, right? It's like, "Horror Is Queer", is the name of the chapter, so you've got it in these huge letters, it's the first thing that you read when you crack open the book, and it's like, so this is what you're in for, you know?

And it was great, it's great.

[00:12:50] **Audrey:** And Heather even levels up and I think makes the statement that film is queer, right? As a medium?

[00:12:56] **Heather:** Totally. So this is like one of the like kind of tricks of academia. So in academia, sometimes you can't just say a thing, right? I remember my director of study is always saying the art of a PhD is evidencing the obvious. So I couldn't just say things sometimes. So I'd have to go find other people who said things.

So then I could say the thing that all future scholars can now just quote me. And the sentence is, "Film is a queer medium." Quote that everywhere, little gaybies, queerbies, everyone, quote it. Because I do actually really believe that. This is building off of some things that other scholars have said, but the actual medium of film has a — now we're not talking about non normative sexuality and gender, we're talking about like an actual queerness that's disembodied. The actual like, if you think of what film is, it's the combination of something that's haunted and you're capturing a moment and then it's repeated ad nauseum.

Like how many dead people have you watched acting even though they're like ossified in that moment when they were something else? Well, when they were alive.

[00:14:03] **Laurel:** Right.

[00:14:04] **Heather:** On top of that. It's not only the spectatorial experience of looking at a haunted medium,

it's the actual assemblage of cinema itself is like a splicing of time together in different ways, in queer ways, as queers time.

So in layers, in the actual like production, and also ontologically, like kind of Baked into its DNA, when I say, when I say that, that's kind of what I'm meaning. There is a queerness to it. And it's — if I could ask questions, you know, you do a survey and it was a massively large survey, not just in response, but like, it had like 144 questions.

Like I asked a lot of horror loving queers. But I didn't ask them about them being cinephiles. Like, if I was doing another study, my hypothesis is that queer people have a higher rate of being cinephiles than any other demographic.

[00:15:01] **Laurel:** I don't think we've said the number yet either, but how many survey participants or research participants did you get?

[00:15:08] **Heather:** 4,107. I was aiming for 250.

[00:15:15] **Audrey:** That is very lesbian of you.

[00:15:17] **Laurel:** So...substantial.

[00:15:19] **Heather:** Yeah, I mean, I don't say this in a, like, I always hope someone beats it in the sense that that means that there's even a more robust data set out there, but it's going to be hard for someone to. That's, it's a lot of people. And I say it in the book, that level of, of 4,107 queers giving — I don't even know how much

time they had to give to answer 144 questions, um, it speaks volumes about the queer connection to horror in the first place.

[00:15:53] **Audrey:** And you had some open-ended questions in there too, right?

[00:15:57] **Heather:** Yeah. Many. The data, when you print it out, it's like almost 1,500 pages.

[00:16:03] **Laurel:** I could not, like, as I was going through the book, um, and I, like, appreciating all the quotes that you pulled out – I just, I was like, how did they sort through the, like, how long did it take to analyze and synthesize this data, you know?

[00:16:20] **Heather:** Took about a full year.

[00:16:22] **Laurel:** Mm hmm.

[00:16:22] **Audrey:** Wow.

[00:16:23] **Heather:** I mean, it was like, I had all the quick, easy hits, which are the compiled, like, how many lesbians answered it, how many cisgender men answered it, how many trans I had all the easy numbers that showed, but then it was the qualitative, the written in stuff that was, that expanded it out many, many, many...many, many pages.

[00:16:45] **Laurel:** But that's some of the juiciest stuff, too, though.

[00:16:47] **Audrey:** Oh yeah, the quotes were, I mean, I feel like it really speaks to how much of a community

there is around horror, like horror loving queers, but also how underrepresented, you know, they must feel, right? Because it's like, I was thinking about how when I get a new survey, I'll start filling out like a couple answers, and then almost immediately I lose interest.

And so the fact that you got so many respondents is really incredible.

[00:17:13] **Heather:** Yeah, no, I mean, it was, like I said, it speaks volumes about the relationship. I don't think I, if I were to do the exact same thing today, I wouldn't get the same response. The shift in queer horror, and I consider myself part of it, that shift in queer horror has shifted... [grumbling] Well, "that shift and queer horror has shifted" [laughter] ...but it has changed so much and even since 2018 till today there's been such a difference that I couldn't even tell you real quickly off the top of my head the number of explicitly queer horror films that have come out in the last five years because there's that many of them. And there's a documentary now that came out on Shudder. I think...was that this year? Was that last year? I don't even know.

[00:17:52] **Laurel:** What is time? It's fine.

[00:17:53] **Heather:** Exactly. And I think that queer horror fans feel a little bit more galvanized together in a way, or more assertive of their fandom. So, I mean, I'm hoping that, like, this book – the beginning of the origins of the book was part of that, like, milieu that stirred that pot.

And I'm hoping this will be, like, a big, fat exclamation point on it. And I hope people feel inspired to do... We can talk more about it, but do queer live cinema events, even if it's not queer live cinema events, figure out ways to just gather queers together to watch horror if you, if you don't have a drag host, which I know we haven't talked about that, but...

[00:18:32] **Audrey:** We can talk about it!

[00:18:34] **Heather:** [gleefully] Speaking of like queer live cinema events...I'm curious, have either of you, since you live in the Bay Area, wait, are we allowed to say this?

[00:18:42] **Laurel:** Yeah.

[00:18:42] **Audrey:** Yeah, yeah, we're open about that. I know we don't want to be perceived, but...

[00:18:48] **Heather:** And that is one of the globally, one of the most robust places to actually encounter queer live cinema. Have you been? Each of you?

[00:18:56] **Audrey:** Separately, I'd like to create a queer live cinema kit for people to take and do their own queer live cinema. But anyway, go ahead, Laurel, if you want to go first.

[00:19:07] **Laurel:** Uh, no, I haven't. Um, and we were kind of talking about this last night a little bit in the chat room and...

All: [laughter]

[00:19:18] **Audrey:** On AOL.

[00:19:21] **Laurel:** No one's going to understand why we keep saying "chat room". Um, I was like, "Of course I have. Of course I have." And I've been to, you know, like queer events. I've been to drag events. I've been to movies, obviously.

And I was like, "Wait, have I...have I not?" Cause I couldn't come up with a clear memory of having done it. And then I was like, why the fuck haven't I been to a live cinema event? And I eventually came up with several reasons, but I think the main one is that where I sort of became more of my queer self was in Chicago, and the friend group that I had there were just, you know, solid Midwestern sporty lesbians.

And the only thing that really tied us together as friends was the fact that we were all lesbians and we wanted to go to the same bars and clubs, but they weren't interested in anything else, you know, as far as the culture goes, actually maybe *The L Word* and that was not like a plus for me.

So that was the other thing, like the queer – or I probably should say gay, like the gay stuff that I came across wasn't very appealing either.

And so it was a combination of not knowing better stuff existed and thus not knowing how to find it or even to look for it, right? And also just being turned off by the stuff that I did find. So yeah, I haven't.

[00:20:56] **Audrey:** So I was gonna say my reason for you was that you were just waiting for Heather to take you on a tour of queer live cinema.

[00:21:07] **Laurel:** Yeah, I was, I was holding out. Yeah, I was, I was waiting for someone to come and queer knight my, uh, experience of live cinema.

[00:21:16] **Heather:** Yeah, it's number one, Audrey, yes, make that kit. I don't know what that kit even is, but whatever...

[00:21:23] **Laurel:** Whatever it is!

[00:21:24] **Heather:** ...it is, make it because I don't know if I got it – like sometimes you try to put things in books and you're told no. Sometimes you can get things through. And I really was trying to put a...it was like a call to all drag performers, or people who don't know yet that they are a drag performer, please do this. It's really important for the community, and it's important to have queer community not centered around alcohol.

[00:21:51] **Laurel:** Thank you. Yeah. Yeah.

[00:21:53] **Heather:** And I think that I have done so much research with horror loving queers, and I have talked to so many horror loving queers across the globe, that the number one issue is access. That's it. It's access. They just don't have it. And I want all queers to have had that chance and to have that access because I believe especially when everything feels so hard and heavy right now in the world, queers getting together and realizing that there is a different way of being is the only way

we're going to move out of this (also destroy capitalism), but that's part of it. So.

[00:22:30] **Audrey:** Yeah. For sure.

[00:22:31] **Laurel:** Well, this is part of how we destroy capitalism.

[00:22:33] **Heather:** Yes, exactly.

[00:22:35] **Audrey:** [singing] Lesbian chaos! Pew pew pew!

[00:05:48] **A different warped echo-y, sing-songy sound effect:** lesbian chaos!

Audrey: What year did you leave San Francisco again?

[00:22:46] **Heather:** I left in two thousand and, uh, oh my god, twenty...2005 or 2006.

[00:22:53] **Audrey:** Oh, okay, okay. Yeah, I'm asking because, uh, I was wondering if we ever overlapped at all, but, um, so my answer to your question is that I've, I've been to many live cinema events, like, I feel like it's at this point kind of a part of my DNA. I've gone to Midnight Mass, I've done, you know, the Nightmare on Elm Street 2 with Scream Queen Mark Patton as a guest, um, with the performance and the film afterwards, which was really a memorable experience. Um, I've done like *Beetlejuice*, *Death Becomes Her*, *Showgirls*, um, all that stuff.

I wasn't around during The Sick and Twisted Players, who you reference in the book, but I am very sad I... was not, because I feel like that's totally up my alley, just like the hybrid of, you know, like, weird ass film

performances. Um, yeah, I mean, recently I was at the Merylthon, which was this, like, three day Meryl Streep, you know, film fest.

[00:23:43] **Laurel:** They didn't call it the Meryl Streak?

[00:23:46] **Audrey:** Oh, shit! They needed you for branding, obviously.

[00:23:51] **Laurel:** It's right there.

[00:23:52] **Audrey:** And I, I, the, the shows I went to were, um, I went to see *Doubt* and, uh, of course, *Death Becomes Her*, Phonique came out and did a drag performance in between that was like this. really magical transition somehow from *Doubt* into, uh, *Death Becomes Her*. I didn't really have access to this in LA. Like, I'm sure it's more of a thing there now, but I left LA in 2009 and came up and like immediately, you know, I'm going to say T Shack was like, you know, my first sort of experience into the SF drag scene.

And ever since then, it's just been like part of my culture and community and like really a big part of who I am even though I don't personally do drag. Yet.

[00:24:29] **Heather:** Yet.

[00:24:29] **Audrey:** I yeah get this drag kit going and then uh the drag uh live cinema event kit and then...

[00:24:34] **Heather:** Exactly. Laurel's first live cinema event is you presenting.

[00:24:37] **Laurel:** Oh, perfect!

[00:24:38] Audrey: Oh my god.

[00:24:39] Laurel: You heard it here.

[00:24:40] Audrey: Oh yeah, yeah, sounds good.

[00:24:42] Laurel: No take backsies.

[00:24:44] Audrey: I'm gonna do some, uh, *Portrait* drag.
Um, get ready.

[00:24:46] Laurel: Oh my god.

[00:24:46] Heather: Oh my god, don't even promise this
lesbian chaos to us.

[00:24:51] Laurel: You can't — you can't say that and not
do it.

[00:24:54] Heather: Exactly.

[00:24:55] Audrey: Has anyone done it?

[00:24:56] Laurel: I don't think so. Even more reason
to...

[00:25:01] Audrey: Okay, well, I think your first,
actually maybe your first introduction into it should be
you also participating in it.

Laurel: What? No. I have to be a spectator.

[00:25:09] Heather: No, no, exactly. I'm on Laurel's side.
Yes. Has to have that experience.

[00:25:16] Audrey: Get ready for your own personal show in
your living room.

[00:25:22] Heather: Oh my god.

[00:25:23] Laurel: No, because I think part of the experience is having many, many queers in the same room together.

[00:25:29] Heather: Exactly. Did you read chapter 4?

[00:25:31] Laurel: Did you read the book?

[00:25:32] Audrey: Oh my god! Oh my... Wow. I feel like I'm, I feel like really just, this is...

[00:25:39] Laurel: We're bullying you into doing a live cinema event.

[00:25:40] Audrey: This is not, this is not like inclusive. This is lesbian chaos at its best. Okay, fine. Whatever. But I need, you know, dress rehearsal. I got to practice.

[00:25:49] Laurel: Sure, yeah.

[00:25:50] Audrey: You and Alli. Okay, cool.

[00:25:51] Laurel: Take all the two months you need.

[00:25:55] Heather: Somehow I imagine you'd actually be amazing at it.

[00:25:57] Laurel: Yeah.

[00:25:58] Audrey: Thank you.

[00:25:58] Heather: I really do.

[00:25:59] Audrey: Thank you.

[00:26:00] Heather: Well, I want to ask, so since you're someone like me who is kind of...

[00:26:04] Audrey: Gay.

[00:26:05] Heather: Those kinds of events have kind of made you who you are in some ways. It's like a reciprocal kind of two way thing, because your energy makes those events what they even are. How did you respond to Chapter 4? The live cinema, queer live cinema.

[00:26:18] Audrey: Oh my god. I was like puking and crying the whole time. Like that's my honest response. You know, that was, I think I may have actually read chapter four first. Cause I was like, what is this about me? Is this about my experience?

[00:26:31] Laurel: Oh, actually, can we pause on that for a second? Because I feel I had that experience too, was like when I would read some of the quotes and I was like, wait, did I take the survey?

Audrey: No, same! Same!

Laurel: Like I, I literally had to stop and like...

[00:26:43] Heather: Wait, did either of you take the survey?

[00:26:45] Laurel: I don't think I did.

[00:26:45] Audrey: No, I don't think I knew, like, I wasn't following you until...

[00:26:50] Laurel: I would have!

[00:26:51] **Audrey:** I know. You are the one survey I would have completed.

[00:26:53] **Laurel:** I kind of want to take the survey now, like, you know?

[00:26:56] **Heather:** No, I'm kind of like, let's do 144 questions right now.

[00:27:00] **Audrey:** Buckle in y'all. Episode 1, season 4 is...

[00:27:03] **Laurel:** Surprise, this is an eight hour episode. Yeah.

[00:27:07] **Audrey:** I had the same exact reaction, Laurel, when I was like, well first I was like, did I respond to the survey? And then I was like, when I realized I hadn't, I was like, really jealous. Or envious?

[00:27:16] **Laurel:** Mm hmm. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

[00:27:18] **Audrey:** was like... How do I go back in time and do this?

[00:27:20] **Laurel:** It's like all of these queers got this therapy session that I didn't get access to.

[00:27:25] **Heather:** And I do just want to take a moment, like, when I say that there's 1,500 pages, I'm not exaggerating. There are 1,500 pages of, you know, the short compiled data takes up barely any space. It's mostly all written in responses. And I have to give a shout out to the horror loving queer community, not just for

completing that in major numbers, but for the time, attention, detail, and intelligence of the responses.

Like, everything that you read. There's like 10 times, uh, 50 times that many still that are unread. That data, it's available. Like people should go use this data and, for lack of better words, mine it in different ways and find other stories.

[00:28:07] **Audrey:** To respond to your question, um, Yeah, I mean, I'm not joking when I said I was like puking, crying the whole time, but — ugly crying. But I will talk about one thing that really, really resonated with me, and I was kind of alluding to this earlier when I was talking about, like, how you were able to put into words these just, like, really subconscious and almost unconscious feelings I've had for a long time? But you talk about how these spaces, these, like, live performances, the drag create this feeling where the audience is like on a journey together.

I think that might literally be like a quote from, from one of your participants. And I think you compare it to sort of cis heteronormative experiences. And I was just thinking like, you know, when you go to a shared experience with like, let's say you go to like a Marvel film or something like that, or you, or you even go into like Comic Con, you know, I go to these things with like a fan base that have kind of this like-mindedness and interest in this one thing, but I never ever have that feeling of like, we're sharing something together.

It feels, it always feels, like, independent, even at a thing like Comic Con or any kind of convention like that, that's not like explicitly queer. But every single time, every time I go to any kind of queer event, especially, I'm going to say more of these events that you talk about where it really feels like a more inclusive space for like me, right? Like this, weirdo who like never really fit in anywhere. I just feel like we're doing this thing together and there's this like inherent sense of community that I don't get anywhere else.

And I mean, I even felt that when I went to see like the premiere of *Bottoms* at like Frameline, right? Which isn't horror, but it's like, actually, you know what? It is, it's a little horror actually now. Yeah. Now that I'm saying that, um, there's just this like energy and vibe and like, there's something that's like intangible that we all kind of share, and you feel like you're like on this like boat together. And I don't know, the way that you kind of talk about that was one of the most powerful things I read in your book.

I keep talking about it like, like I've been gushing about it to like so many people. So yes, I kind of liked it.

[00:30:07] **Heather:** No, thank you for that. That response really means a lot to me. And I think one of the narrators, CJ, said it best when he says, it's addictive. It's an addictive energy. And I recently moved from Portland. And I desperately, like ignoring the pandemic and ignoring health issues, like, I desperately miss that energy and having that, for lack of better terms, fix, you know? It, it feeds, it feeds me.

And I think Laurel, you had said something when you were in Chicago, the difference between someone who is queer and someone who is gay, like, these are queer events and they're inclusive and they just have a different energy than any other kind of event and I've been to lots of events in my life and all kinds and sorts and types and there's something else there. So we have to get you to one.

[00:31:02] **Laurel:** Yeah, well, it's interesting the, um, what you just said about moving away from Portland reminds me of a quote that you have pretty early on in, in the book, Amin Ghaziani? I think it's building off the work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, but "Compared to racial and ethnic groups, queer communities lack a clear sense of ancestral linearity. The absence of awareness, or who are my people, induces collective amnesia about our lives. This is one of the most insidious and painful forms of homophobia." Like not, not being able to have community is...

[00:31:41] **Heather:** It gives me goosebumps.

[00:31:42] **Laurel:** Yeah.

[00:31:43] **Heather:** Yeah, I mean. Queer people. So I don't know how many caveats I need to make, but of course, we're not, we're not a monolith. We're very different. But okay, I'm gonna give you inside knowledge.

Audrey: Ooh.

Heather: Actually, I put this in the book, but you have to really kind of read for it to really read what I'm saying.

The book is about consensus. The book is about putting forward the first portrait of the horror loving queer and focusing mainly on how the data came in overwhelmingly in agreement for the most part. But I spent a lot of time, if you like, look at the way the data is broken down. There was questions that asked people if they think their queerness influences their taste, and if they think their queerness affects their relationship – like how they see a film. And the majority of people said yes. So the majority of horror loving queers, again, are in agreement with each other. But that group of people who self identify as queer and who understand their queerness, they have the most special relationship to horror because they're the ones that really don't feel like there's a place for them outside of these worlds.

And kind of back to what you're saying, it's because it starts right from when, like, once you have a consciousness of like, there's something different about me. Most people grow up with that experience. They're different than their family,

[00:33:03] **Laurel:** Mm hmm.

[00:33:03] **Heather:** And of course there's like some adoptive stories, but most people don't have that story as a *group* of people.

[00:33:09] **Laurel:** Yeah, I actually, there was a second part, not to that quote, but your sentence right after that quote is quoting Richard Dyer, but "As gays, we grew up isolated, not only from our heterosexual peers, but also from each other", and that like, it hit me like a ton

of bricks, you know, that it's an isolation upon an isolation, or within, you know?

[00:33:31] Heather: Yeah.

[00:33:32] Audrey: This actually speaks to something we were talking about in the beginning about how like film is inherently queer as a medium, because I think like fundamentally film as a medium is, you know, you're watching it, you're like observing, often as an outsider, and often alone, you know, even when you're in a group.

And so I feel like that is the queer experience, right? There's so many parallels there.

[00:33:52] Heather: No, that's, I mean, that's like a brilliant point. I mean, completely. Yeah. Excuse me, editors, can we put that in? Put that in the book now, stat. It's like one of those things where it's like, film is interesting, reading straight theorists talk about film. I had a, I mean, I read a lot of books to do this.

Like one thing I am proud of is I marshaled a lot of data, a lot of quantitative and qualitative data from a survey, a lot of book data, like the theoretical side of it. I can't even tell you how many times I would read a book where I was just like, what? God, I don't even understand. Like, what? How do you go through this world?

Like, it's like the way, the way they see the world is so fundamentally different than my experience. Then I get to the queer books and I'm like...[clapping]

[00:34:41] Laurel: Yes. Right.

[00:34:43] Heather: So you can see that I leaned much more heavily into queer theory than horror theory.

[00:34:48] Laurel: And it's so interesting how confident a lot of these authors are about their viewpoint. I mean, of course, you have to be because you're writing a book about it, but, um, like... What was the thing that you were just talking about?

[00:34:59] Heather: Chaos!

[00:35:01] Laurel: I know. Okay, um,

[00:35:03] Audrey: [singing] Lesbian chaos! We need like a *do do do...*

[00:35:05] Heather: You need a, you need a sound effect.

[00:35:07] Warbly robotic singing: Lesbian chaos!

[00:35:10] Laurel: Oh, I got it, I got it! Um, it was, it was about catharsis and how watching horror is cathartic. And someone that you quoted said that that was presumptuous or something.

[00:35:27] Heather: Yeah, many people, many. I'm just going to be real. Numerous older, white, cis, het, male horror scholars have said things along those lines, but that's because there was no empirical evidence. So it was easy for them to be like, "Eh." But then they say it like, you're like, I'm like, well, how the fuck do you know that?

[00:35:44] Laurel: Right.

[00:35:45] **Heather:** You haven't even asked anyone! You haven't even asked straight horror fans! Like, what are you talking about?

[00:35:49] **Laurel:** Right.

[00:35:50] **Audrey:** It's because it's not their experience, you know?

[00:35:52] **Heather:** Yeah. Yeah. So...

[00:35:54] **Laurel:** but yeah, like... speaking of it's not their experience, it's like one of the things that I love throughout the book is how you demonstrated queer experience versus heteronormative experience and even stuff like how we experience relating to the monster, you know? Like we relate to the monster in terms of like isolation or otherness, whereas, um, I forget who said those or what exactly they said, but cis het males, I don't even think they made that distinction.

They just sort of like assumed that, um, you know, the young male viewer watches horror and relates to the monster to like, like, it's like a realization of their fantasies?

[00:36:38] **Heather:** Yeah, I'll give you more inside research knowledge. When I was in, okay, this is really early. I was young. I was a teenager still in the late 80s, early 90s. I can't remember exactly when, cause what is time, and my memory's shot. Um, I went to, I went to LA, drove to LA from wherever the fuck I was, and I went to a Fangoria Weekend of Horrors.

And it was literally a horror. It was fucking awful. And I left, even though I had driven hours to get there, I left. I had spent money. I didn't have money back then. I don't have money now! But I had like, I basically left and I was like, I will never, ever, ever, ever go around horror fans again.

And for this survey, for like this research project, there's a thing in Seattle called Crypticon. I thought, okay, I'm going to go for a few years and like kind of just get the vibe. Things have changed. Cause some behaviors are just like, literally not acceptable anymore. I mean, I say that, but I'm like, whatever. Of course they kind of are still, but have you guys both been to cons where it's just like famous people signing stuff?

And it's just like the lines for like Jason will be like for Kane Hodder, like it would be like out the door. And then there's a final girl next to them, and it's all the gay people.

All: [laughing]

Audrey: Of course.

Heather: And the line is, the line is very short. And so there was something that I left out of the book because I had to leave a lot of stuff out.

And I left probably two or three books out of the book. The one thing was I taught,

[00:38:06] Laurel: Yay! That's exciting for the future.

Heather: Uh, no. We're done.

Laurel: Oh no!

[00:38:09] Heather: Lesbian chaos. So, Amy Steel plays Jenny, who's the final girl, great final girl, the best final girl in my opinion of the Friday the 13th series. And I asked Cassandra Peterson, who is Elvira, they go to cons as kind of part of their career at this point.

And I said, do you notice a difference? In your straight fans versus your gay fans and without a beat, they're like, fuck yeah, we do! Of course we do! Like our gay fans are the best! You know? And there's a different approach because when they're being approached at these tables, people are kind of pouring a part of themselves out to them.

They're telling them. When I watch you, I feel okay to be me. I know that I'm gonna survive, whereas, I don't know what those fucking straight dudes like, Hey, fuck yeah, Jason! Let's take a selfie!

[00:39:03] Laurel: Ugh.

[00:39:04] Audrey: I'm like, I don't want to know what their, what their sort of like thoughts are as they're going in, especially when they're going to meet like Elvira, you know?

[00:39:11] Laurel: I know. Ugh.

[00:39:14] Heather: Uh...yeah. And then I will not name this person. There's a well known horror director who's a cishet man, white man, who I asked the same question. He's like, well, how would I know if people are gay or not?!

[00:39:26] **Laurel:** Oh my god! Wow.

[00:39:29] **Heather:** Oh, you just said everything I need to know for this chapter.

[00:39:32] **Laurel:** Yeah, we're good. Like, thank you.

[00:39:34] **Audrey:** Oh my god.

[00:39:35] **Heather:** So, but then I, I never did it.

[00:39:36] **Laurel:** Amazing. Yeah, yeah.

[00:39:43] **Audrey:** Has there been sort of like a more exclusively queer horror convention?

Heather: No.

Audrey: And if not, do we start one?

[00:39:47] **Heather:** yes.

[00:39:48] **Audrey:** I'm making a lot of promises on this episode because lesbian chaos.

[00:39:52] **Laurel:** I know!

[00:39:52] **Heather:** So Joe Fejerman, who's one of the narrators, I put it in the book, he quoted. Or maybe it's, I did a lot of endnotes, so I don't know if you've read the, I don't know where it wound up. I don't know if it's the endnote or in the text, but Joe is like, we need a queer horror con, and like, I've talked to him about it a lot actually, because like, and it can't be a static thing.

It needs to travel, because it needs to be able to get to people who won't have the access. So if anyone's really smart at those kinds of things, I'm happy to become a traveling clown, spreading queer horror wherever I go. Which is all horror.

[00:40:31] **Laurel:** I think we both also...

[00:40:33] **Audrey:** Are traveling clowns?

[00:40:35] **Laurel:** ...both offer, offer up our services as well, as well. Yeah, we're, we'll both be, yeah, clowns.

[00:40:42] **Audrey:** Total, like, tangent side note, but are you planning on doing, like, an audiobook by any chance? Just wondering.

[00:40:50] **Heather:** [laughs] No, I don't think that... Does any academic book have an audiobook?

[00:40:53] **Audrey:** You could be the first, like, why not?

[00:40:56] **Heather:** I'm like, [with gravitas] "Queer for Fear: Horror Film and the Queer Spectator. Chapter One..."

[00:41:02] **Audrey:** Wait, actually, can this be our season four?

[00:41:05] **Laurel:** Oh my gosh, yeah.

[00:41:08] **Heather:** That doesn't exist I don't think for academic books, but what I do plan on doing is... I am really approachable. I have QueerForFear@gmail.com. I'm [QueerForFear](#) on Instagram. I want to help people do their own studies, do their own things, and I want to help make

this work accessible. Accessible in the sense that it's like, affordable.

I know that an academic book is a major barrier for a lot of people. So, you can just always reach out. Things can happen.

[00:41:39] **Audrey:** Well as two people who have met you in real life, we can both attest to that, the fact that you are in fact approachable and real.

[00:41:47] **Heather:** I am squishy, squishy. Yeah.

[00:41:52] **Audrey:** What other questions do you have for us? Because I feel like this is like a good format.

[00:41:56] **Heather:** Oh, I was, I was curious about how you guys responded to the camp stuff.

[00:41:59] **Audrey:** Camp is life, man.

[00:42:00] **Heather:** Cause I think you're both pretty camp.

[00:42:04] **Laurel:** It was really great too because I love camp, but I've never really thought about it deeply. It's kind of like what Audrey was saying earlier, where I've had these feelings and these, these ideas, but like, I've never really taken the time to fully explore them and figure out what it is that I like about camp.

So I feel like you did those throughout the book, but I love that you talked about what camp is, how it's kind of undefinable by nature, uh, but you also, like, throughout the book, you're, like, laying the groundwork about horror film studies and then building on top of that, you know,

this is queer horror film studies now, so, um, with camp, it was educational, but then also super fun.

It's just a really fun chapter, too.

[00:42:50] **Audrey:** Yeah, on the topic of, like, fun chapters, I did that thing where I was, like, reading your book in preparation for this episode, but also, you know, I would have read it anyway, and I was like, let me highlight stuff that I want to talk about, and I ended up hiding, like, everything. I was like, what, like, I...

[00:43:03] **Laurel:** Right, yeah, yeah, yeah,

[00:43:04] **Audrey:** I'm like, what am I, what's the point of highlighting? So anyway, um, yeah, I think you talk about the connection between, like, you know, obviously queerness and camp, but also, like, horror and camp and It's like, again, another piece that really resonated with me because for me, camp is truly life. I grew up watching, you know, John Waters films.

I think that as queer people, essential to our queerness is like sort of finding alternative meaning in art that wasn't necessarily created for you. You know, part of that is humor, just... I think a lot of that is camp. There's that piece. And then there's the drag piece, obviously too, which, you know, we just talked about, but I think like drag and camp and camp and horror, they're all kind of connected together in this way that you very eloquently talk about that I cannot restate.

So again, go buy the book. But like my very first gay bar experience when I was, I think 15 or 16 was at, um,

actually a drag show in, I think it was like Buena Vista, somewhere in like deep, weird Orange County. It was very strange, but it was like. It's sort of essential to my queerness and ever since then, like, you know, I've been to drag shows in LA, obviously San Francisco, Boston, New York, like kind of anywhere I can go.

Um, I haven't been to Portland drag, but I would love to, uh, next time I'm there. So, you know, hit me up. Or let's go. But anyway, I'm kind of rambling about your question about camp, but it's just because it's like, again, very much a part of my like DNA and identity, it's almost hard to talk about my relationship to it because it's like so essential to who I am, you know?

[00:44:33] **Heather:** You're like, god, it's just me. Yeah, no, I get it. I mean, you touched on the thing I like. I have these like key things I'm like proud of. And one of the things I'm proud of is moving the camp dialogue to incorporate horror and talk about how camp and horror share heightened aesthetics. They share the subtextual coding. They share the transgressiveness.

When I started really kind of thinking about it and trying to analyze things, I was like, oh, how has no one done this? Like, I just don't understand how it hasn't actually been married before. But that's just because queers are always kind of peripheral, right? We're always so...

The main point of this book, like, I mean, I think it's the very last sentence is, you cannot be a horror scholar anymore without negotiating with the queer spectator. You have to figure out a way to talk about us. Because it's

ours, and you are the invited guests. So, um, and like, I also want to say this has been very chaotic, but I do speak about it much more better... "MUCH MORE BETTER"!

Heather: I actually just said that. "Much more better" in the book.

[00:45:26] Laurel: Hahahahaha

Heather: It's been a long, long, long, long...

[00:45:37] Audrey: I feel like you, you have not been chaotic. I feel like the chaos is coming from me

[00:45:42] Heather: Oh, I have been complete chaos! I cried twice. What are you talking about? Like what is even happening? I'm here like. I, I, I, well, I do want to say, I haven't, you are the first two humans – Amie read it, but when she was really sick – you were the first two humans who have actually read the book.

And so it was very overwhelming to, to feel like what I did, like the goal I had to hit a certain pocket for the horror loving queer and to hear what you said back to me feels like I got, I did it, whatever, like whatever fucking pool analogy I'm trying to do, I did it.

Laurel: Oh, you did it.

[00:46:14] Audrey: You, you did it.

[00:46:16] Laurel: I was gonna say, like, it's like you hit multiple targets, though, you know? You got us, right? You get, you get us. But then also you laid down this,

like, empirical foundation that is unshakable and undeniable, you know?

[00:46:29] **Heather:** Oh yeah, I mean.

[00:46:30] **Laurel:** Like wow.

[00:46:31] **Heather:** I was like, if I'm going to say something, I better have something to back this up. I mean, it could have gone a different way, but like, thank goodness my hypothesis was correct.

[00:46:39] **Laurel:** Oh my gosh!

[00:46:42] **Heather:** Can you imagine if it just was like, wah wah.

[00:46:46] **Audrey:** No, I can't.

[00:46:47] **Heather:** I wanted to say two things, like there is um, there is a little easter egg in the book.

I don't know if I've already ruined it for you guys, so I want to see who finds it first. And this is like a really random thing, but no one knows this. I wrote a book where I didn't use the words "discover" or "explore".

[00:47:03] **Audrey:** Holy shit!

[00:47:05] **Heather:** I think that's important for people to not quote unquote discover and explore because that's not what you're actually doing. And it's surprisingly hard. Academia, which just shows you everything you need to know about academia in some ways, it's kind of difficult to talk about. So you will find the words discover and explore. Because there are quotes I had to use, and trust

me I tried to find other people saying something else like it to not have those quotes But I couldn't and some of them were actual horror loving queers. So.

[00:47:37] **Audrey:** so would you say you're actually *decolonizing* academia?

[00:47:40] **Laurel:** I was going to say, yeah.

[00:47:50] **Heather:** I would say that I'm an anti-academic academic, and I think that having seen so much of the abuse in the system and having seen — like I even put it in the book when I did my call for narrators, I really wanted to make sure I had representation from BIPOC and or trans people, and I just did it the way we do it in academia and it was just like, hey, we want representation.

And of course, tons of people come forward and they don't expect any money. They should be paid. Like, I don't know how to explain it. It's just like, well, those things like built into the entire fabric of academia is exploitation of like a thousand different layers. So, not to say that I don't, I think deep thinking is incredibly important and the world needs a whole fuck lot more of it right now.

So they're two different things. One's a kind of corporation, and one is people need to learn to critically think and think deeply. [pause] Thank you.

[00:48:46] **Audrey:** Thank you for coming to my TED Talk.

[00:48:49] **Heather:** Exactly, it sounds so like...but it's just one of those things that, um, yeah.

[00:48:55] **Audrey:** Now that we've kind of handed over the reins to you, Season 4 host Heather Petrocelli...

[00:49:01] **Heather:** I think we are all very, very capable of lesbian chaos here.

Warbly robotic singing: Lesbian chaos...

[00:49:08] **Audrey:** Anything else on your end that you wanted to ask? Because we're making you do all the work apparently.

[00:49:15] **Heather:** I'm curious, like, Laurel, you had like kind of read the quotes from, I don't even remember now anymore. It was basically about how we are isolated and then isolated again. Like we have dual isolation because we are like the periphery of the periphery. And, you know, you have spent years now doing a podcast about sapphic culture.

And how many things have you talked about that don't exist anymore? Like, it's one of those things where, I think I'm negotiation a lot with the fact that the system is never going to... Like, we are always going to be shat on. That's it. Always. And so it's time for us to...

[00:50:01] **Audrey:** And let's end there.

[00:50:01] **Heather:** ...figure out ways to make, to make like, I don't know, I just want queers to figure out ways to find community in different ways that feel... Maybe I'm being nostalgic for 1990s San Francisco. I don't know. I just feel like something has to happen. I don't know. I don't know what to ask other than it's just like I'm more

personally interested in anything else. Like did you have any other quotes that like resonated or anything? I don't know.

[00:50:27] **Laurel:** So the, the quotes that resonated with me the most are the quotes from the research participants, but the quotes that I sort of had to like, stop and sort of like resettle myself after reading are some of the the research quotes from like cis white men who yeah wrote all these other books and like one of them, I think the first one that I came across was I'm not even going to say their names, but "Horror provides a forum akin to rites of passage for male and female adolescents to practice and demonstrate mastery of societally defined gender specific expressive displays." And I was like, fuuuck you.

[00:51:10] **Heather:** Yes, I mean, that book is like, I mean, it's the only other empirical book on horror studies that existed. They completely ignored the queer spectator altogether. And even for, was it 1987? I can't exactly remember, but even for a book that's that old, still, fuck you. Like, are you kidding me? And then you think about poor little baby us's growing up in a world that's like, organized around this thinking.

And then I just get sad again. And then I'm mad again. Maybe I will write more books.

[00:51:44] **Laurel:** I'll balance that out with, um, a participant quote though. This is a cute, fun one. [To Audrey] Oh, did you put this in? Do you want to read this one?

[00:51:51] **Audrey:** Oh yeah, yeah. This is in the chapter about fan status of queer spectators, and there were a lot of really, really good quotes here, like someone talked about how they were, you know, obsessed with, like, *Beetlejuice* when they were a child, and I was like, that's me! Actually, I don't know if you can see, but I'm wearing another *Beetlejuice* shirt, because, like, my wardrobe is 100 percent *Beetlejuice*.

[00:52:07] **Heather:** Oh, yeah, Lydia, exactly.

[00:52:10] **Audrey:** But yeah, someone, uh, actually I don't have a name, but they said, "I think my relationship to horror is actually really funny because I think I was born into horror in a way. My mom went into labor while watching *Cujo* in 1983 around 10am or 9am." Like, holy shit!

[00:52:23] **Laurel:** There are so many things about that that I love. It's like, your mom, your pregnant mother, was watching *Cujo*. In the *morning*, you know, right? Like, you were coming any second, and this is what she chose to do.

[00:52:37] **Heather:** Yep. That's um, Christopher. That's a quote from Christopher, and he's amazing. And he's like, he has a great drag persona, Crystal Lake Carrington. So he combined, yeah, there you go. So look up Crystal Lake Carrington. I'm obsessed. I was going to just pull up a photo for you, but Amie clearly moved it. So...

[00:53:00] **Audrey:** Oh yeah, blame Amie.

[00:53:02] Heather: Yeah, she's not here to defend herself.

[00:53:07] Audrey: There's a couple things that we haven't talked about yet that, again, I feel like we could have a whole nother episode on this, but you know, you have a whole section on like women and queers represented in horror, and I think there are some really good excerpts from that. Like the way that you, you talk about, I'm just going to go ahead and quote this, "Male enjoyment of horror is predicated on mastering any form of distress and conversely that female enjoyment is predicated on displaying distress. This underscores a gender specific socialization of fear and its mastery."

[00:53:34] Heather: That's not my quote.

[00:53:35] Audrey: No, no, no.

[00:53:36] Heather: That's being quoted.

[00:53:36] Laurel: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

[00:53:37] Audrey: I'm sorry I'm quoting from the book!

[00:53:38] Laurel: Oh my god.

[00:53:40] Audrey: Yeah. Uh, lesbian chaos! Um, anyway, you, you also go on to talk about how like women have a kind of a privileged place in horror, right? Like they have more screen time than men, and maybe that's not a quote from you and not, or not from you.

[00:53:55] Heather: Well, that was actually a Google study that came out that showed that they had more screen time.

I mean, but yes, I mean, women, so they do have a privileged place, but that is an interesting privilege, right? So women's bodies have been destroyed. More women have more time being terrorized on screen. If even if like, uh, like there have been studies, even if there's a body count of say, 12 people, and it's six and six more screen time is given to the women's deaths.

So it is a privileged place, but it's complicated. And then there's Barbara Creed who's like a horror icon who kind of came around in the 80s and started talking about the monstrous feminine and, and then that aspect of how women have become the monster at that time. And she just has a new book called *Return of the Monstrous Feminine*, which...love a smart scholar coming out and updating their own theories for the today. Mwah!

Like everyone, buy *Return of the Monstrous Feminine*. And I'm going to tell you, I'm going to tell you my pride points. My pride points is I got Barbara Creed, like seriously, horror icon to do a blurb on the back of the book.

[00:55:02] **Laurel:** Ooh, nice. Yeah.

[00:55:05] **Audrey:** That's so cool.

[00:55:06] **Heather:** Yeah, it is very cool.

[00:55:07] **Laurel:** One of the, one of, um, speaking of Creed and *Monstrous Feminine*, I think the other thing that I loved about your book is that it took me on all these other rabbit holes. Like I was looking, I was looking her up and that concept up and then I saw that she just put

out *The Return of the Monstrous Feminine*, and that one of the movies that she covers is like the *Babadook*, and it's like, Oh, this is gonna be so good.

[00:55:29] **Heather:** It's a great book. It's what scholars should be. She did something amazing. Like, more scholars should revisit their own groundbreaking work that is so influential that you can't get past it to update it to what is happening now. And I will always love the *Monstrous Feminine* because it was one of those very, um, foundational horror books for me.

But like, *Return of the Monstrous Feminine* is like, amazing.

[00:55:56] **Audrey:** That's so cool. Of course it's like a woman who's going back and, you know.

[00:56:00] **Heather:** [leans into mic] A *queer* woman, of course. In her 80s.

[00:56:02] **Laurel:** Oh, what?!

[00:56:04] **Heather:** Of course.

[00:56:05] **Audrey:** Love that.

[00:56:06] **Heather:** Yeah, she's like, I mean, like when I wrote about the queer elders, when I like started really like investigating and kind of piecing together that like, wait, this person's queer, wait, was horror science just literally invented by queer people?

[00:56:18] **Audrey:** I mean...

[00:56:18] **Heather:** That's how, that's how it felt!

[00:56:19] Audrey: Horror is queer and like fundamentally, you know, the first horror film's queer, it kind of makes, it all makes sense, right? All the puzzle pieces.

[00:56:29] Heather: Big queer party.

[00:56:30] Laurel: Is there a name for that phenomenon where you discover that some of your favorite people are queer? Like, that, it's a very specific kind of joy, too, that

[00:56:40] Heather: Oh yeah. Yeah.

[00:56:42] Audrey: Is there like a German word for it?

[00:56:44] Heather: It's like some kind of version of Schadenfreude.

[00:56:46] Laurel: Right, right, right, right, right. Yeah, right.

[00:56:50] Heather: Queerdenfreude! I don't fucking know. It's

[00:56:51] Audrey: You heard it here first, from, from Dr. Horror Dyke.

[00:56:58] Heather: I'm trying to think of anything else that like, I'm trying to think of like, I, I'm not, I, I was raised in a way and at a time that it's really hard for me to feel pride. I don't feel pride often. I mean, it's kind of a really weird thing for a queer person to say since literally our thing is called pride.

[00:57:15] Laurel: think that's why, that's why it has to be called pride, yeah.

[00:57:18] **Audrey:** I think that's why it is...

[00:57:18] **Heather:** Yeah. And I'm the kind of person that like if a hundred people say something good and two people say something bad, I will just think about those two people. And I work really hard to not be that person because it's. It's stupid actually.

[00:57:31] **Laurel:** It's a hard way to live.

[00:57:32] **Heather:** But one thing I'm really proud of, and it's a pride, I feel a pride for horror loving queers.

I do think that horror loving queers are among the best people on the planet. They're kind, they're giving. Um, it's kind of one of those funny things like, know, you read the chapter where you – the quotes from the Spanish horror festival where the guys will say things like the men will shout out at the screen all of those really terrible terrible sexist things But I feel a lot of pride about how good we are, and I feel a lot of pride that this empirical foundation shows – *proves* that it's the whole umbrella.

So it's not that I was trying to snatch something from cis gay men, but I guess I kind of was. I just didn't like, because anything that was like queer in horror studies was 90 something percent of the time cis gay men, or, of course, the lesbian vampire, but one figure, the figure of the lesbian vampire, so.

I feel pride. I feel pride that it's a very inclusive, in every way you want to cut a human's identity around it, it's like fully inclusive.

[00:58:45] **Laurel:** You said that you didn't want to, you didn't intend or set out to, like, snatch this from cis white men, but I feel like just in the process of uncovering stuff, it happens, you know? It's like, the more dust you, you dust off, uh, this queer... Horror Spectator experience. It's just like, oh yeah, this is queer, this is queer, that person's queer, they've been queer the whole time, horror has always been queer, it's, yeah, like, it could not be helped, I think.

[00:59:16] **Heather:** Gothic literature. Which was founded, like horror is founded on gothic literature, is queer.

[00:59:21] **Audrey:** I mean, it wasn't theirs to begin with, so...

[00:59:23] **Laurel:** Right, yeah.

[00:59:24] **Audrey:** ...it shouldn't be a snatching, right? You were, you were just...

[00:59:26] **Heather:** Yeah, it, it's one of those things though, right now, I'm living through this moment where I'm realizing that if you really stand back and analyze, like if you're going in with your analytical lens of what's happening in the queer horror space, of course, cis gay men still dominate in the, like, kind of space.

So I'm trying to figure out how do you train these men that when they're asked to do something about, like being an expert on queer horror, and they're not an expert on queer horror, for them to pass the mic. Like, how do you train people? Do you have an answer? Just kidding. Lesbian chaos.

[01:00:04] **Audrey:** You just gotta like, spew your...

[01:00:05] **Laurel:** It does feel appropriate to just grab the mic.

[01:00:08] **Audrey:** Oh, that, that seems less, less gross of a way than I was gonna say, but yeah. All right, before we wrap up, we have one more question for you.

[01:00:20] **Laurel:** Was there anything about the research that surprised you that you weren't expecting, you know?

[01:00:27] **Heather:** Well, one thing, I mean, I've said this before, because people always want to know that, and the most surprising thing to me was that bisexual women were the number one demographic that responded. It's just one of those things I was like, oh, that's, I mean, I was stoked. I mean, there were more women, like the inclusive women category, than the inclusive male category, which also felt really amazing because what it shows to me is that we don't make spaces.

We don't make enough spaces where these women feel comfortable kind of mingling in the, at the whole, I mean, this is like talking about like horror conventions and stuff. It's just like, the spaces aren't made for us, which I, I think I put a really super explicit call to people who do conferences and conventions of like, literally create a queer space within it so people can find each other and then kind of experience the con together.

So that was surprising and cool. Trying to think of other data. I think that like, when you're dealing with that

volume of data, you find little things that you're like, well, I'm not the person to tell this story, but please someone tell the Indigenous population story of like the data for horror fandom and for horror knowledgeability, Native American and Native Alaskan populations were the highest across any, and I had had a hypothesis in my head at one point that if your trauma is so every single day intense in your face in a way that feels like, say it's talking about the Black community and horror. Have you both seen *Horror Noire*, the documentary?

[01:02:15] **Laurel:** Mm mm.

[01:02:15] **Heather:** No, okay. Well, I highly recommend everybody watch that documentary. It's an amazing documentary. It's a documentary kind of exploring the, I guess it's like the Black spectator experience of horror, which is not good. Right? It's like, so it's a different, it's a different experience than the queer experience, which of course would be different than the Black queer experience.

But my point really is, I'm like just rambling, but it's like, There are these segments of people who have these different relationships that feel even more intense than in a general public. And I'm like, the general public of horror loving queers, not the actual, like, real general public. So that was one data point that stood out, that I want someone who is from that community to tell that story.

And... I want a trans man to tell the story, like, deeply tell a story of the trans relationship, trans man

relationship to werewolves, because they love some werewolves. And it makes perfect sense, like, I can think of all of the reasons, but I felt like it wasn't mine to tell. I mean, there's, like, literally so much data, I kind of, like, in my head I kind of can't, like, process, like, I can tell you that the avenues I wish I had went down instead, like, I wish I had gone down a much more figuring out a way to understand someone's understanding of their queerness to essentially get at the liberationist versus assimilationist, but you can't be like, are you an assimilationist? Because who the fuck is going to say yes, right? But there is something there. And I, that's, to me, it's really clear in the data that the people who identify as queer, because I had that as a marker — they might identify as other things too, like you might have put you were queer, you might have put you were a lesbian, you might have put you whatever the fuck else, gay, I don't know. But the ones who took the time and like selected queer, their data, it can be reflected different ways in each question, but it was the data that did show the most distinctive relationship to the genre. So I, when I say horror loving queers, I did that on purpose because it's really horror loving queers.

[Outro music]

[01:04:37] **Audrey:** Alright, I think that about wraps this up. Thank you so much, Heather, for joining us today. Where can people find you and purchase the book?

[01:04:48] **Heather:** They can find me at QueerForFear on Instagram, or they can email at QueerForFear@gmail. And then the book is available in lots of places, but I think

in those lots of places, it gets marked up, and it's already expensive. So if you're interested, go to either, depending on where you live in the world, University of Wales Press or the University of Chicago. And DM me for a code that may or may not work. Worth a shot. I just don't know. Like I had two codes and then one just stopped working. So I don't know how long this other code is going to last.

[01:05:26] **Laurel:** That's probably good incentive to DM quickly and try it now.

[01:05:30] **Heather:** Yes. And it's also like, I apologize for the chaos that came out of my mouth today. It has been a rough week and was it Tuesday today?

[01:05:41] **Audrey:** What?! Oh my god.

[01:05:42] **Laurel:** Oh my.

Heather: No, today's Friday.

[01:05:42] **Audrey:** Wow. No need to apologize, we are all in the same chaos boat. It's sinking.

[01:05:46] **Heather:** Yeah, so.

[01:05:48] **Laurel:** Never apologize for chaos.

[01:05:50] **Heather:** basically just listen to Audrey and Laurel's take on the book, not mine.

[01:05:54] **Audrey:** Um, okay.

[01:05:56] **Laurel:** We're actually going to edit out all of our parts and just leave your parts.

[01:06:00] Audrey: It's just you talking to yourself.

[01:06:01] Heather: That, oh my God, can you imagine? Oh my God. I do talk to myself a lot, actually.

[01:06:06] Audrey: Perfect. Another reason why you should host the season.

[01:06:09] Heather: Well, thank you.

[01:06:10] Audrey: Thank you.

[01:06:11] Heather: Thank you for making me cry. I appreciate it.

[01:06:12] Audrey: Always.

[01:06:14] Laurel: Thank you for hitting us in the chests with this book.

[01:06:17] Audrey: In a sexy way.

[01:06:18] Laurel: In the hearts and the minds.

[01:06:19] Heather: My pleasure.

[01:06:21] Laurel: All right, what have your...oh god?

[01:06:26] Heather: really, I literally right now, cause I'm looking at both of your beautiful faces. I thought what's on page 28?

[01:06:32] Laurel: Aww, what IS on page 28?

[01:06:34] Audrey: that the easter egg?

[01:06:35] Heather: No, that's not the Easter egg. Oh my God. That should have been the Easter egg. I mean, I hope

you, I hope you did notice. I hope you both noticed it was called "Portrait of a Queer Horror Fan".

[01:06:45] **Laurel:** Right.

[01:06:45] **Audrey:** Oh yeah, yes, yes, of course,

[01:06:47] **Laurel:** Any time I see the word portrait now, it's just like... [perks up]

[01:06:51] **Heather:** and I mean, that was literally for that. That wasn't like, I probably should have called it something else, but I'm like, oh no, it's Portrait of a Queer Horror Fan.

[01:06:58] **Audrey:** Yeah, for a moment I was like, what a weird coincidence. I was like, no.

[01:07:01] **Laurel:** What a weird coincidence.

[01:07:04] **Heather:** I was hoping page 28, I'd be like, oh my god, it's so special, but it's really, it's really not.

[01:07:10] **Laurel:** Well, I guess that's because you have to sketch a portrait of your lover on that page and then it's special.

[01:07:16] **Audrey:** Ohhh, can you imagine if that was the Easter egg?

[01:07:19] **Heather:** [turning around to shout] Excuse me, Amie!

[01:07:21] **Audrey:** Naked Amie in like a pencil doodle.

[01:07:24] **Laurel:** Oh my gosh!

[01:07:26] **Heather:** I mean, you know that this has to happen

[01:07:28] **Laurel:** In an academic book.

[01:07:30] **Heather:** Yes, this definitely has to happen.

[01:07:32] **Audrey:** When you sign this book and you do, when you do your book tour, that is what you need to do.

[01:07:37] **Laurel:** Right, yeah.

[01:07:38] **Heather:** Can you...? People are like, are you doing a book tour? I'm like, I don't leave my house.

[01:07:43] **Audrey:** We'll come to you and you will sketch our pictures, our naked...

[01:07:47] **Laurel:** It's the tour that comes to you.

[01:07:48] **Audrey:** I'll pose for you.

[01:07:49] **Heather:** Can you imagine? This will be like a version of Bad Portrait Art.

[01:07:53] **Audrey:** Oh, Teryn! Oh my god, Teryn.

[01:07:56] **Laurel:** Bad Portrait Fan Art

[01:07:57] **Audrey:** Well, we'll hire Teryn for your book tour. Oh, actually, this is a genius idea. You don't have to leave your house. Teryn will be you, and we'll go on book tour for you. And sketch...

[01:08:07] **Heather:** Uh, yes.

[01:08:09] **Laurel:** Perfect.

[01:08:10] **Heather:** And I need someone who's like much more eloquent on the spot, and I need someone who is...

[01:08:16] **Audrey:** I hope Teryn's listening.

[01:08:18] **Heather:** Like, you're hired for free.

[01:08:20] **Audrey:** You're hired as long as you can do the naked live portraits. But also, this is when I'm gonna debut my portrait drag show.

[01:08:27] **Heather:** I just need to know, like, are you going kind of drag clown? Are you going faux queen? Are you going like bio queen? Are you going like, like, are you a drag queen? Like, what, what are you? Are you a praying mantis?

[01:08:40] **Audrey:** All of the above. You're gonna have to wait and find out.

[01:08:43] **Heather:** Yes!

[01:08:44] **Audrey:** I'm gonna be a new genre of drag.

[01:08:47] **Heather:** Of course you would. Of course. I mean, I'm super into this, *really* into it.

[01:08:52] **Audrey:** Oh, oh wow, okay, let's move on before this gets, let's gets, uh... I thought we were topping you in this episode.

[01:09:00] **Laurel:** That's the saddest, that's the saddest thing a top could say. "I thought I was topping you!"

[01:09:06] **Audrey:** I thought I was topping you. I'm a lazy top, guys.

[01:09:08] **Laurel:** Oh my gosh, that's so heartbreaking.

[01:09:12] **Heather:** My God. We really should end. Let's end this!

[01:09:15] **Audrey:** Okay, let's get this...

[01:09:15] **Heather:** Dear Lord.

[01:09:16] **Laurel:** Okay, okay.

[01:09:17] **Audrey:** ...close up, please! Before this gets worse!

[01:09:19] **Laurel:** Dear listeners, what have your experiences with horror and live cinema as a queer person been like? You can post a comment on Instagram at SapphicCultureClub or you can email us at SapphicCultureClub@gmail.com.

[01:09:33] **Audrey:** You can find links to things we've mentioned as well as the episode transcript in the episode description, wherever you're listening to this podcast. Thank you once again.

[01:09:43] **Laurel:** Thank you!

[01:09:45] **Heather:** Thank you. Woo! I dunno what that is. That's just queer chaos.

[01:09:50] **Laurel:** And scene.

[01:09:56] **A final warbly song:** *Lesbian chaos!*

[End music]