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Scary Stories Audio.mp3

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START OF TRANSCRIPT

[00:00:01]

Good morning, Wellspring's. It's good to be with you again.

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One of the things we're starting to see kind of roll out as this unbelievable, unprecedented year comes to a close is actually something that's quite familiar in December. It's the end of year, year end, best of lists like I just got delivered to me on notification just a couple of days ago of my Spotify. Most listen to tracks, really enjoying it. And we're starting to see online magazines, newspapers starting to produce a lot of best of music, best of movies, best of all kinds of creative arts. And I got to be I got to be honest with you, when I saw the first best of twenty twenty, I thought.

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It must be kidding me.

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Best of 20, 20 feels like like an oxymoron, like with something I don't really like and couldn't imagine really liking under almost any circumstances.

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Best of pineapple pizza. It doesn't work for me. I can't stand pineapple on pizza. I like pineapples. I like pizza. I can't stand them together. But I know for some of you like best of pineapple pizza, that would be a real thing. So I don't want to offend any of you. So moving on, what else could we pick?

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Best of toxic waste dump with poisonous snakes and venomous alligators and radioactive reptiles.

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All right, so probably not something that any of us would think of in the best of category, but actually might make for a really good horror movie. But more about that a little later on. But the thing is, after that initial response, that best of something from 20, 20 was an oxymoron, that the two didn't fit together. I recognize there's been all kinds of great stuff created this year, like Bruce Springsteen produced an album, this year's first one with the E Street Band in quite a long time. And Bruce has given me so much over the years, more than I ever could have asked for. So know that the album in many ways isn't really groundbreaking, but it is really comforting.

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And in twenty twenty, that is not to be denied the value of something that's surely comforting.

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One of my other favorite bands, a lot less famous Bruce Springsteen, that you may have heard me talk about him before Mountain Goats they just came out with. I think they're their third recording this year alone. And I absolutely adore all those recordings. But when I think of the single favorite piece of music that I heard this year, the one that I keep going back to over and over again repeatedly, kind of really drawn from its richness, its value. To me, it's not Bruce Springsteen.

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It's not the multiple recordings from the Mountain Goats. It's Taylor Swift and her album Folklore.

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Now, I've got to say, I was not an anti Taylor Swift fan before this album, the art and craft of putting together a really seamless, beautiful pop song and making it so accessible to so many millions of people, there is tremendous

skill in that. So I've always respected her and always actually found quite a number of her songs I liked, but didn't really kind of reach deep into me.

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That change with folklore, 15, maybe 16 songs on it runs almost an hour length of time.

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It plays off of itself, the songs kind of refer to each other and weave together and all kinds of interesting ways, and it assumes different perspectives and and multiple identities and represents different ages of the people speaking within it and has tremendous, beautiful, sometimes heartbreaking and uplifting themes of heartbreak and loss and forgiveness. And and I was just absolutely bewitched with it when it first came out. And I can say over these months since it came out this past summer, I think it came out in June, it has lost none of its powers and they only grown even more, in my estimation. There's a song on it that I particularly love. And actually I don't skip any of the songs. I think they're all just essential.

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But one of the songs that really kind of utterly adore is a song called Seven, and in it she sings from the perspective of an adult reflecting on a childhood friendship.

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Or French used to be used to have in childhood, it's called seven for the age, seven were led to believe, and in it she kind of shifts perspective and she offers this line.

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I've been meaning to tell you, I think your house is haunted. Your dad is always mad, and that must be why I think you should come live with me and we can be pirates, then you won't have to cry or hide in the closet. I mean, it's amazing how much is packed into that little couplet of lines right there. I mean, the friend who clearly grew up in an abusive household, a difficult household in which fear was a regular presence. And the skillfulness of Taylor Swift's writing their. Wanting to make something that to a seven year old must be so scary. The dad is always mad and picking a reason that might explain why a way to perhaps make the the fear manageable, that your house is haunted. You know, little kids, elementary school kids tend to think in these ways. Even if haunted houses are not real. It's a way in a developmentally appropriate fashion. For Taylor Swift, in the perspective of a child to try and make that fear something really scary and really frightening, more workable. It makes sense from that perspective, and that's what all great art does, it helps us enter the mindset of people who might see the world differently than we do from their perspective.

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This message series that all of us who are preaching within it, all four of us, how to be afraid. A lot of what we're focusing on is how we can make our fears, which are different amongst all of us, how we can make our fears workable. How to be afraid. And I got to say that one of the things that has worked for me most of my life and as long as I've known myself, fear has been a president, has been a presence in my life, I have what is diagnosable as an anxiety disorder.

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It doesn't have nearly the control or detrimental effects that it did earlier in my life.

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But anxiety is still part of who I am and how I experience the world.

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And I think one of the ways that I've taken to kind of working with fear over the years, in addition to some deeply enriching spiritual practices, is another very different kind of practice, which is that I love horror movies. And you might say, well, maybe can. One of the reasons you're so afraid is because you watch so many horror movies. You may be right, but actually I disagree. I actually think that horror movies for those of us who for whom kind of struggle with anxiety, which can be so free floating and so large, it actually can be really helpful to kind of have a container of a horror movie which has like a beginning, a middle and an end to kind of locate our fear in. And I've liked all kinds of horror movies over the years. You know, I don't mind a good Gore splatter fest. I don't really like him as much as I used to. And I really can't abide any kind of horror movie that just shows people suffering for no other reason than to kind of gross people out like that cruelty. I just have no interest in that, really. The kind of horror movies I find myself liking these days, in addition to some of the classics like Halloween and that kind of stuff.

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It's what's called psychological horror in which there may not be much explicit horror or kind of violence happening on the screen, but movies like it comes at night or the ones is called it follows or The Babadook is one I really liked psychological harder. That kind of takes a look at how fear functions in our lives. And the one I really loved was the witch from a few years ago. I actually think I preached on that one. I think I really like it because it shows to me a way of gaining insight into my own mind about how to work with fear in a skillful, helpful way. Or as many of these

movies show, the costs of fear in an unskillful way. What happens when fear becomes kind of an insidious growing plant and it leads us to become deeply mistrustful of ourselves and other people, and fear can grow kind of paranoid wings and create all kinds of destruction. So that's one of the reasons I really do love horror movies still to this day and probably will for most of the rest of my life, even though they can generate some fear. It does invite me to work with fear and recognize fears, presence in my life.

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I think that finding the right stories, the right stories as containers for our fear, those containers that help us work with fear in the most skillful ways that we know, I think this is a profoundly important issue and something to work with that impacts our spiritual growth.

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Just recently, I was watching another movie, definitely not a horror movie, just came on late night on cable. And like, I haven't seen this in a while. It was home alone. It's on because it's Christmas season. I mean, home alone. And I got to describe you, the plot is one of the most famous well-known movies in the world. You know, little eight year old Kevin McCallister inadvertently left at home, but is not terribly attentive family as they get off for Europe. And he's left there in the Chicago suburbs by himself.

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And he has to encounter his fear and have also a tremendous amount of enjoyment and ward off the the robbers who want to come and steal from their home, but also points out why we have to be careful about the stories that we choose to help us manage our fear. Kind of like in seven. Well, Kevin's eight in this like the song seven about that same age. And he's in a home. Alone by himself, it's scary.

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And what is this fear pick up on the fear story that he starts to tell himself? It's about the old man on his own. The house across the street that doesn't look very holly jolly for the holidays and the old man and the old galoshes who just appears kind of grumbly. And he scares Kevin completely. See, this is what our minds do some time we associate things that might be unfamiliar to us. That might frighten us, a home that doesn't look very inviting or someone who's, in Kevin's case, much older than us and has kind of a wild shock of hair and doesn't look very happy, and we put a whole fear story to that. But of course, what we come to know in home alone is. The fear story wasn't real, that old man is just lonely and estranged and comes to Kevin's aid and saves him later on in the movie.

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The stories that we tell ourselves, especially the stories that allow our fears to either grab a hold of us and take us over, or the stories that allow us to make fear more workable and grow our hearts. I think it all comes down to kind of this test case. The stories for our fears.

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Of otherness or are the stories with working with our fears of togetherness? That, to me, is what defines a skillful, helpful fear story. Creates otherness or does it create togetherness?

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That's what Kevin's fear story did, it created others out of his fears and led him to suspicion of someone who actually turned out was profoundly kind and actually like Kevin was home alone.

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I think that's why it's so important that we find stories to work with our fears that truly are helpful, generate and allow us to grow bigger, wider and more loving hearts.

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One of the core stories for me, especially in the last decade of my own spiritual development about making what is unfamiliar and potentially fearful, very frightening, more familiar, and allowing that familiarity to enlarge our hearts through compassion. It's the Buddha's Awakening story, the Buddha, who was the rich ruler of the rich young man, the rich young prince who had everything arrayed for him in this life that he could want and was spared all difficulty. And still, he encounters in this mythological story that has told us this mythological story that is still so much very true, even if the facts didn't happen.

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He encounters old age and illness and physical limitations and death.

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Things that can frighten many of us, they frighten many of us because they can remind us of what is beyond our control. Or perhaps the fear of losing who and what we love or the fear that if and when these things happen to us, that they will render us uncared for or unlovable or unworthy.

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Especially in our society. In our society, a society like ours that's honestly sometimes feels like its greatest value is competition and dividing winners from losers above all else. This is one of the reasons that we can build all kinds of

marginalisation and oppression based upon things that we fear, even if inevitably they will all be part of our lives. And what I love about the Buddha story is his awakening comes by way of recognizing his own aging.

[00:15:05]

The temporariness says of him being able bodied.

[00:15:11]

The recognition that mortality and illness are a part of life. And his superpower, if we could call it a superpower, I think it is kind of one.

[00:15:21]

Is that mindfulness, their capacity to be with? And to sit with in a loving, kind and deeply attentive and disciplined way.

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So that our hearts grow tender and large.

[00:15:38]

Of making what is unfamiliar and frightening.

[00:15:41]

Familiar. And workable.

[00:15:46]

That's why I love the Buddha story.

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Because it invites me over and over again, indeed, it invites countless millions of people. To sit with. And an attentive, kind and loving way. And to make our fears workable. Not to avoid them, not to cling to them, but to be able to work with them and through that find a way back to our own hearts. And other people's hearts.

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And iteration a version of that story that is for me, very much a universal story. Like I said, the last decade or so the Buddha story has been the one that has found purchase within my own heart the most. And I contain that Buddha story within my overall being a universalist, because there are many universal stories. Of taking what is frightening and making it familiar and finding their loved. My most favorite story, my most favorite quote about the spiritual life, I've talked about it before, I want to bring it up, I don't know, every two to three years. And so important to me that it occupies as an image and as a writing the inside and the outside of all of my upper right arm. It's a quote from . And in it, she talks, I'm going to paraphrase here, because to me, this isn't just a matter of knowing the words, it's a matter of inviting myself and others into it to feel what this journey is like. She says so often the the journey, the invitation to the spiritual life is thought up and thought of as if it's to the tippy top of a mountain.

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And up at that mountaintop, we get up beyond the clouds and be on the not so great weather where it's clear where everything is perfect and pristine. And we get up there and we find we've left all the troubles of our lives behind, she says. The only problem with that story is it's not much of a story at all. It's just ourselves alone. And we've left behind our struggling or suffering pets or family members, I think, she says, are left behind our alcoholic brother in law, all those people who in our quest for purity and aloneness, are still struggling. And so she says now the the real meaning of the spiritual journey is not to the tippy top of the mountain, or if it is, it is as if the mountain is inverted and the mountain heads down and in to the very center and focus of the earth. And she says it's not up, up and away like that 70 song up, up and away in my beautiful balloon, transcending all challenges. She says, no, it's down and in and learning to walk slowly, patiently, openly, kindly.

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Into and with our fears. An awakening from the hold those fears can have over us.

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That can limit our love.

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And what she says we find there is that instead of to the tippy top part of the mountain, we're all just by ourselves, she says.

[00:19:01]

As we are walking down and in and down and in and down and in whether it takes a lifetime.

[00:19:12]

Or whether it takes many lifetimes, which I'm open to. What she says is that we discover we're not alone at all. That there are millions. All around us. That we find we are not alone, that they accompany us and we accompany them on their journey of awakening from fear.

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And she says down at the very bottom, at the heart of it all, we find the healing water of love. That does not die.

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And inexhaustible source, that inexhaustible wellspring, if you will.

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And this is what I believe.

[00:20:03]

That our fears so often are not made up. This is a scary world. Especially now. And if we can find workable, sustainable, practical, loving ways.

[00:20:17]

To walk down and in and with to know that we are not alone. We will know that we are not just in our story. But we are perhaps in the greatest story. A story of deep and unbreakable belonging.

[00:20:38]

A story that perhaps in the simplest terms, expresses what it's like when we really feel we are known.

[00:20:47]

You get me. And I get you.

[00:20:52]

And because of that, yes, even in this fearful world. We are together. May the presence of that togetherness, of that not aloneness, be with you today? Ommen. And may you live in Blaesing? I would ask you to join your heart with mine. In the spirit of prayer right now.

[00:21:30]

Noticing what is here in this moment.

[00:21:34]

Noticing the movement of the breath of the spirit.

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Reminding us that what we take in for a moment is a part of the whole.

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And we offer it back to the whole. Of which we are a part.

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As we allow ourselves to move into and with the spirit. We also allow ourselves space and room in the heart. To enter into those largest, most roomy most accepting stories. In which we know that we are not alone and others are not alone as well. May we give ourselves space and place this day to be with our fears and the most loving, kind, friendly, familiar ways? And to find that rather than being abandoned in our fears. It is what ultimately what can remind us of our deepest commonality with each other and with this life itself.

END OF TRANSCRIPT



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