

Cast:

Priya Hall

Leila Navabi

Robin Morgan

[Here to Judge Theme Song- With a Christmas Twist]

Priya: Welcome to Here to Judge where we scour the internet to dissect dilemmas and decide who's to blame. Here to Judge today is me, Priya Hall.

Leila: Me, Leila Navabi.

Robin: And me, Robin Morgan.

Leila: 'Am I the asshole for not wanting to live in Christmas central? I grew up in a family that didn't celebrate Christmas and I've never cared for the holiday.

When I met my now fiancée, her family was very into Christmas in a secular sort of way. No problem, everyone has their traditions, namely she and her siblings and her parents decorate the parents house in a massive way. People actually drive to see the setup every year. They participate at competitions, have it programmed so the lights dance to music. And actually put out donation boxes that comp the setup with the profit going to charity.

Again, I have no problem with this. I can respect the amount of planning, programming and artistic creativity in the process and that it's a family hobby.

A year ago, my fiancée's father was in an accident with a lengthy recovery. Their house is several storeys high and would not be easily converted to be wheelchair accessible, and he didn't want to be confined to the ground floor forever. They decided to move into a senior community that will be more set up for them. They

approached my fiancée and offered to sell their house at a great price. It's a beautiful place, and her parents are insistent that we set things up to our taste so we won't be living in an 'old person's home' (their words, not mine).

I was extremely excited about this, and we've been talking and making plans since this was decided. Somehow though, I missed that they all plan to keep on decorating the house for Christmas. When this came out in conversation, in my confusion I said I didn't want to live in a Christmas house, and said some unkind things about the tradition and the holiday in general.

I've apologised for how I addressed it and things are still tense with the in-laws, but I think I have a legitimate complaint here. I don't like the holiday. They literally start planning on Labour Day weekend. If I lived there, it would be a third of my year that my house will be lost to this. I can't imagine living with carols blaring and Santa handing out candy canes on my doorstep while I'm trying to go to work. I don't want to be known as the Christmas guy. My fiancée has pointed out the house is being sold to her, not me, at her parents' insistence. I think because we will be both financially contributing, I should have equal say as to what happens in the house. Am I the asshole for saying no big Christmas display once we move in?'

God this one has layers, doesn't it?

Robin: I like this one a lot.

Priya: Yeah.

Leila: Please tell me what you think.

Priya: I think he is the asshole. You're getting given a house for a really cheap price. Also, get a grip. It's some lights, it's not like Santa's in your kitchen eating all your food, get a GRIP. For a third of a year.

Leila: He's asking like he's being made to be like a Santa in a grotto. [Sings- Santa in a Grotto]

Robin: Yeah and you have to role-play Santa for all of the year in the house.

Leila: [Laughs]

Priya: If that's what it turns out to be, then yeah fair enough, but somehow I doubt it. Also, it goes to charity, get a grip, yeah.

Robin: I really like the fact, because I didn't know until you said 'I don't want to be known as the Santa guy' I for some reason assumed it was a girl throughout all of this. And then as soon as it sort of become gendered I was like, oh that is a man thing to do.

Leila: Yeah.

Robin: Of course it is. Like when he said that thing of like 'I don't want to live in the Christmas house' it feels like a line in a Christmas film where a bad man will then go on a journey and come to love Christmas, you know what I mean?

Leila: It's Scrooge isn't it?

Robin: Yeah totally.

Leila: It is.

Priya: Is that what you think this is? It's a writer of a Christmas movie doing research, being like 'Would people be able to relate to this guy?' And then if it's a hard no, then it goes in...

Leila: Exactly.

Robin: Yeah exactly it's called Christmas Guy [laughs]

Leila: [Sings-Simply Having a Wonderful Christmas Guy] Thank you everyone. What would it take for you guys? What's your like stopping point in living in a house? For example,

I live fairly near the house where Dennis Nilsen killed all those people and then put them in his pipes. The Muswell Hill murderer they call him.

Priya: Put them in his pipes?

Leila: He cut them all up and put them down the plughole basically, it's really bad.

Priya: Ah.

Robin: Oh I thought you meant like a smoking pipe, like a granddad pipe. [Sucking on a pipe noises]

Leila: No it was really bad. And basically they didn't-- stop.

Robin: [Laughs]

Leila: So this house it was like a three bedroom house in a good bit of London and it sold for something like £250,000 like and this house would normally be like a million quid.

Priya: Yeah.

Robin: Yeah.

Leila: The question is, would you live in a house for a smaller price because something awful has happened in it? Or [laughs] I can't believe I just compared this guys murders to Christmas decorations.

Priya: [Laughs]

Robin: This is how strong this guy hates Christmas [laughs].

Leila: If the house was subsidised, right you can have your house for £100 a month as long as every day you shout out of the window 'I've done a big poo'.

Priya: Who is selling you houses Leila?

Leila: [Laughs] No one. Would you do it?

Robin: Yes. Yes.

Priya: 100% yeah.

Leila: Yeah me too.

Robin: We're all of a generation where that is a steal [laughs].

Priya: I'd live in a murder house while the murderer was still there.

Robin: [Laughs]

Leila: [Laughs] But what about like...

Priya: A roof's a roof.

Leila: But what's the line?

Robin: [Laughs] Is that your defence Priya? A roof's a roof.

Leila: What about every day you have, you know those fermented eggs?

Priya: Oh yeah.

Leila: Would you eat one of those every day?

Robin: I think you'd have to shout 'I've done a poo, I've done a poo' because it would be such a violent...

Leila: [Laughs]

Robin: ...a violent bodily function after a daily fermented egg.

Priya: You might learn to enjoy it. You might start associating it with shelter and learn to enjoy it.

Robin: [Laughs] Like a Pavlovian thing.

Priya: [Laughs] Yeah.

Leila: Isn't that what a nunnery is basically though?

Robin: Fermented eggs?

Leila: No, no, no but like [laughs]

Robin: A daily fermented egg.

Priya: [Laughs]

Leila: Have you ever been so broke that you've thought maybe I should just join a nunnery?

Priya: Oh yeah.

Leila: I'm a gay woman so I'm like hopefully, I hope my mother doesn't listen to this, I would sort myself out, I don't need to be with anyone else. I'll be married to God and I get a lovely roof over my head and meals provided.

Robin: And a lovely egg every day.

Leila: Yeah, yeah exactly.

Priya: Just how I like it, fermented.

Robin: [Laughs]

Leila: Well, to wrap up the point of this story. Is this Christmas-hating man an asshole?

Robin: I think he is the asshole. I think I find it fascinating, those big old decorations, and it must be hard to be the house opposite, they surely don't enjoy it.

Priya: Yeah it must hate it.

Leila: Do you know the one like over that bridge that's in Cardiff?

Priya: In North Road?

Leila: Yeah, yeah, yeah, North Road.

Priya: Do you know the story behind that?

Leila: No please. Oh I feel like I do and it's really sad. Yeah go on.

Robin: So Dennis Nilsen ate an egg there every day.

Leila: [Laughs] Stop.

Priya: And shouted out the window 'I've done a poo and a murder!'

Robin: I've done (them both?) [laughs] He opened with poo and then closed with murder.

Priya: (Winning background?) with the second half.

Robin: [Laughs]

Leila: Oh God.

Priya: The story of that house is that like their nan went to a nursing home and you sort of could just about see the house, so every Christmas they light it up loads so that she could see it from her nursing home. I don't know if there's any truth in it. There are no nursing homes around there so.

Robin: Yeah, but that's very much like an excuse to the neighbours of why that's happened isn't it?

Leila: Yeah [laughs]

Priya: And it's been like 20 years now, like I'm not being funny.

Robin: Yeah.

Leila: She was sent to the nursing home when she was 40, like that...

Robin: Yeah she's a medical...

Priya: [Laughs]

Leila: She's a carer, she literally works there.

Robin: [Laughs] She's sent there every day at 7am.

Leila: Also would it bring you comfort to see your family home from like a care home? I don't know if I'd like that.

Priya: Just a reminder.

Robin: Lit up like the stars, like that's where they are, like Jesus was following it.

Priya: [Laughs] Like she keeps trying to leave in the middle of the night to go to the house but....

Leila: [Laughs] It's like a mirage that you get in the desert when you see a pool of water when you're dying of like thirst.

Robin: Yeah you see a Robotronic sensor just sort of going like that.

Leila: [Laughs]

Priya: [Laughs] A blow up snowman.

Leila: But the thing is she'd look nuts to all of her friends in the care home. She'd be like 'That's my house. They've lit up all the lights so that I can see it'.

Robin: Mm yeah.

Leila: And they would be like 'Come on Margaret, take your meds'.

Robin: Yeah, come on, come on mate.

Leila: Yeah, yeah.

Priya: Sure, sure, sure we've all got houses alright?

Leila: [Laughs]

[Here to Judge Interim Music- With a Christmas Twist]

Robin: 'Am I the asshole for getting mad at my boyfriend for giving me a stupid present? The title might sound bad, but hear me out. Also apologies if there's poor formatting, I'm typing this on my phone lol.'

I hate this person already.

'This happened over Christmas, but there is still resentment and awkwardness between me, 22, female

and my boyfriend, 25 male, over it and I just want everything to end.'

Leila: Fucking hell.

Robin: I know, bleak right?

'So basically I've written in diaries my whole life, and one that was specially important to me was one I had when I was around 12, which was a very... important time in my life where a lot of personal things happened to me, although I won't go into the details, I moved into my...'

Right OK it is badly formatted but she did say this before and I can't really judge it, but I am judging it.

Leila: She did preface didn't she?

Robin: 'I moved into my boyfriend's house in April of 2019 and I quite honestly have a lot of personal belongings, so moving in was quite the task. There were many boxes, and I somehow lost the diary I had when I was 12 when moving in. I was heartbroken, and was looking everywhere I could think of trying to find this missing diary, and my boyfriend was there to console me and help me look.

Fast forward to last Christmas Eve, Christmas of 2019, and my boyfriend and I had a Christmas party to go to with friends, and we decided to open each other's presents before going. I got him New Balance shoes that he had been wanting for a while, and he seemed pretty content with them. But I... was not content with my gift to say the least. You guessed it, it was the diary I had when I was 12'.

I already love her.

'After I opened the gift I was kind of in shock and he smiled and said 'Do you like it?' And I didn't know what to

say so I just shook my head and said 'How long have you had this?' He claims he found the diary while clearing out his messy car sometime over the summer, and thought that it would be a great thing to surprise me with for Christmas as he knew how important it was to me. I just looked at him in shock and then excused myself and never went to the party. Afterwards...'

Not afterwards, afterwords. Already hate her again.

...'he came to talk to me about it and told me that it hurt his feelings that I didn't like the present, and that he genuinely thought it would be a special surprise that I would enjoy. We argued back and forth for a while, and I told him that he shouldn't have waited so long to give it to me, especially not for Christmas and that it was a dick move on his part. Our friends are split on this and it honestly kind of become a kind of way bigger a deal than I ever expected it to be. Reddit, please give your honest opinions. Was I the asshole for not appreciating what might have been a well intended, considerate gift or was it a crappy thing for him to do?'

Leila: It's not a gift!

Robin: Not a gift?

Priya: No it's her own belongings.

Robin: Yeah.

Priya: Imagine giving someone their own belongings back to them?

Leila: [Laughs] I'm going to do that for Christmas. I'm just going to wrap up all my girlfriend's stuff.

Priya: [Laughs] Hide it from her for like six months first so she really misses it.

Leila: God, I don't even know like. This is just nuts. Like why are you doing, why?

- Priya: Also someone's personal diary, like I don't know what's on that diary but she clearly, it was personal enough for to miss it and notice it was gone. Like I wouldn't notice if I'd lost my 12-year-old me's diary so something is in that diary that is personal to her.
- Robin: Yeah.
- Priya: That's weird. It's a violation.
- Leila: But it's like a hero complex. Like you lost this thing that was precious to you but I took it. Like it doesn't make any...
- Priya: For me it's the hiding it and being like knowing someone is missing something and being like [evil laugh] this will come in handy in few months time. You, sociopath.
- Leila: He didn't get her anything else? That was that. So mm, I'm not into this.
- Priya: No.
- Leila: I think that he, like this is not even arguable. This guy's an asshole.
- Priya: I'm imagining he didn't even wrap it or anything. He just had it on his person...
- Robin: Yeah.
- Priya: ...just waiting for an opportunity to use it and then be like, oh shit I forgot to get her anything for Christmas.
- Leila: He probably returned it in a worse state than when he picked it up.
- Robin: Because he's definitely read it, hasn't he?
- Priya: Oh yeah.
- Robin: As well which is a whole other, kind of like, invasion of privacy thing.

Priya: Maybe that's why it took him months to get it back.

Leila: Has someone ever read your diary?

Priya: No.

Robin: I don't think I ever had one.

Priya: I had diaries when I was a kid. I don't think I put anything interesting enough. Like my mum absolutely would have read my diary when I was a kid.

Robin: What would you have put in there?

Priya: Not much.

Robin: Chips for tea.

Priya: Did not enjoy dinner, get it together, Mum.

Robin: [Laughs]

Priya: This life is a joke.

Robin: [Laughs] I'd really respect that.

Leila: So funny, yeah. I've not ever been a big diary person, I had loads of diaries as a kid that I'd periodically start but then I'd stop.

Priya: Dear Diary.

Robin: Was it the one, the Polly Pocket with the key?

Leila: Yeah, yeah, they're like one page in each book and there's so many of them that I have and I'd like write in it.

Robin: I have too many diaries.

Leila: I've had a horrible day at school and I hate my life and, excuse my French, but fuck this world. Is like the sort of stuff I used to write in it.

Priya: Brackets, sorry Mum.

Leila: [Laughs] Yeah I always used to write that, I have written 'Excuse my French' and stuff before. If I'm playing devil's advocate, I think it's very dangerous to write about your deepest feelings and to be that attached to a book.

Priya: Yeah.

Robin: Yeah. Put it on Reddit.

Priya: Having said that, she was 12.

Leila: She was 12 of course, so yeah this is all bollocks. Yeah he's an asshole, I'm not even going to bother playing devil's advocate.

[Here to Judge Interim Music- With a Christmas Twist]

Priya: OK Mumsnet, 'Vanity and Christmas gifts'.

Robin: Oh hello.

Priya: 'I don't wish to seem ungrateful but can never get over the vanity of this Christmas gift. Am I being unreasonable to not want a framed photo of my sister-in-law between me and darling husband?'

Robin: [Laughs] Oh.

Priya: 'For context, all members of the extended family received similar but alongside other things. Some of their photos have had her and the recipient in. We got nothing else and are not in the photo.'

Robin: [Laughs]

Priya: 'It was just a photo of her preening and the frame had scratched. We bought her things she had explicitly shown an interest in. Is this weird or am I right to feel unvalued?' This is amazing so...

Robin: Is this it? Is that it?

Priya: ...a frame with a photo of her in the middle and then. I don't understand.

Robin: This is so funny.

Priya: Oh, so it's not the sister-in-law standing between OP and darling husband, it's literally just the sister-in-law given to share between OP and the darling husband.

Robin: This is so funny.

Priya: This is.

Robin: This is a baller move.

Priya: We should all be doing this for Christmas.

Robin: Totally, this is it. You know these two people, not even us. Like these two random people we're talking about, that is our present.

Leila: I find this strange. My sister and my girlfriend really get on really well, they're like buds. And so like if she was gifted a picture of me, her and her, the three of us, then that would be like, quite sweet I think.

Priya: But if it was just the picture of your sister?

Leila: Oh wait hang on.

Priya: Yeah I misunderstood it as well, I thought it was a group picture but it's just a picture to share between them.

Leila: Oh no. OK oh my God, what? No OK sorry I missed that.

Robin: It's like meet and greet isn't it? It's like a signed meet and greet.

Priya: It's pure insanity.

Leila: No that's that not, like what sort of photo is it? Is the other thing that we want to find out here.

Robin: It's like one of those adventure photography things where you go for a photo shoot. When my son was born we had newborn photography and we didn't do it for my

daughter because we felt quite embarrassed about doing it for my son [laughs].

Leila: Why?

Robin: Because it's fucking mad man.

Leila: Is it the ones where they like lie them on a plain background?

Robin: Yeah you just put them in a bucket or something and yeah they go like...

Priya: They prop them up and stuff don't they? It really weird's me out.

Robin: Yeah and they sort of like they put their hands like that and it's like '£400 please' and I'm like that's fucking strange. And then we bought some canvases and stuff on the wall but we just haven't done it for my daughter but it feels like we love her less but that's not true.

Leila: Aww.

Robin: But I always found that sort of you know occasionally, and I'm really throwing it out here because I don't know your backgrounds in terms of your family homes. But you know when you used to go around friend's houses and they used to have those sort of family photo shoots on the wall?

Leila: Yeah that is a white people thing, you're right.

Robin: OK [laughs]

Priya: Having said that, my mum really leaned into it when I was a kid.

Leila: Oh really?

Priya: And there's a photo, so [laughs] for context, my dad left when I was three and my mum really, really leaned into being like I'm the cool single mother. And there is a

family photo of my mum sat on a chair and my brother is like stood next to her like a Victorian ghost.

Leila: [Laughs]

Robin: [Laughs]

Priya: And in a full suit, with his hand on her shoulder gazing directly down the barrel of a camera. And then I am down next to her dressed entirely in leopard print, with like leopard print hair band, leopard print jumper, leopard print skirt, leopard print tights, leopard print shoes, leopard bag.

Leila: Ahead of the curve, can I just say? Like really, Carole Baskin who?

Robin: Tiger Queen.

Priya: I looked incredible. It's pure insanity. My mum was dressed entirely in like red velvet.

Robin: Yeah.

Leila: Oh.

Priya: It's such a bizarre photo.

Robin: There's a lot of themes there.

Priya: Yeah, she really committed to a look.

Robin: [Laughs]

Priya: But it is a great family photo and had pride of place when I was a kid.

Leila: Should we get one? Should we get a podcast family photo shoot?

Priya: Can we recreate the one my mum had done?

Leila: Yes! Please. I fancy being your brother.

Robin: So I want to be the formal brother.

Priya: OK cool.

Leila: But that's what I just said.

Priya: I'll get the leopard print out. Sorry Leila, you've got to be the mum.

Robin: I'll be the mum. I'll be the mum. Fine.

Leila: So, to end this tangent.

Robin: Oh we haven't talked about the story in any way have we? [Laughs]

Priya: No, not even a little bit.

Leila: I think it is weird. But the question am I right to feel unvalued is a weird one. I think unvalued is like a weird thing to feel about this. I think we should feel like...

Robin: Disrespected.

Priya: Yeah.

Leila: I just think it's like so narcissistic to do that, that I'm like.

Priya: I kind of love it though. I love it. I think it's very funny.

Robin: I think big old A, big old Christmas A- Asshole!

[Here to Judge Theme Song- With a Christmas Twist]

Melanie: This has been a Little Wander production. Music from Rhodri Viney. Local artwork from Sam Roberts. Voice from Melanie Walters. With special thanks to Beth Forrest, Steve Pickup, Sam Roberts, Henry Widdicombe, and Jo Williams. Other podcasts from Little Wander include: I Wish I Was An Only Child, and Welcome to Spooktown. Subscribe now on iTunes, Spotify or wherever you get your podcasts.

[End of Podcast]