

Cast:

Cathy Mason

Rachel Mason

Mark Watson

Paul Watson

[I Wish I Was An Only Child Theme Song]

Cathy: They look like they have more fun than us.

Rachel: Yes exactly.

Cathy: We don't have much fun.

Rachel: We work in fun but we don't have fun.

Cathy: We don't ever have any fun ever.

Rachel: Yeah exactly. Can we...

Cathy: Can we!

Rachel: Today we spoke to comedian Mark Watson and his brother Paul.

Cathy: Who is an enigma.

Rachel: Total Enigma. Enigma [laughs]

Cathy: [Laughs] '80s pop group.

Rachel: Total Enigma, I love it [laughs].

Cathy: They an '80s pop group who used to wear a monk costume.

Rachel: [Laughs] Yeah they had a lovely relationship.

Cathy: [Laughs] You've done it again.

Rachel: Oh God, I've fallen into the same trap.

Cathy: Yeah. I'm going to get a thesaurus of lovely. Hang on.

Rachel: Today...

Cathy: I'm going to look up what they say for 'lovely' and you can use another word.

Rachel: Oh yeah OK.

Cathy: Oh she's good.

Rachel: Today we spoke to comedian Mark Watson and his brother Paul.

Cathy: I'm just looking up 'lovely', hold on. Uh lovely.

Rachel: I mean these files are going to take hours...

Cathy: Very beautiful or attractive. Uh OK attractive, good looking? Fit, that's what it says. Ravishing, seductive or fit.

Rachel: OK come on focus.

Cathy: What am I doing?

[I Wish I Was An Only Child- interim music]

Cathy: Before we start I'm going to have ten minutes of hysteria and I don't want to do the podcast because I want to talk about, you live in Stroud.

Paul: I do yeah I do.

Cath: That's where we grew up.

Paul: Huge, huge.

Cath: That is my favourite place in the whole world.

Rachel: Big news yeah exactly Mark, let's do ten minutes on this.

Cathy: Come on, so we need to discuss that.

Paul: Wow. Let's do some local knowledge then. So I mean this would be good for the podcast too.

Rachel: OK.

- Paul: But some of those potholes when you go past Bowbridge, my God those potholes. And then they went through the whole rigmarole of pretending they were going to fix it and they didn't, right?
- Cathy: Exactly.
- Paul: Gold dust material.
- Rachel: Yeah.
- Mark: Am I right guys?
- Rachel: I mean.
- Cathy: Unbelievable, we grew up in Cheltenham but we went to Stroud every weekend and our dad lived in Stroud in Slad. So it's literally the place I always said I was going to end up.
- Rachel: Right good, OK.
- Cathy: And I worked in the retreat and you had a retreat in Stroud and a retreat in Cheltenham.
- Rachel: [Laughs]
- Cathy: I would do two hours on Stroud and I'm serious.
- Mark: That's quite near yeah, that's obvious.
- Cathy: I love it. It's my, you know when you go to a happy place when you're having an operation or something, that's my happy place.
- Mark: Mm yours is Stroud. There's often a podcast that's a spinoff of another thing, maybe you want to monitor this Stroud thing and if it becomes a regular enough feature you should think about a standalone venture.
- Cathy: I think we should.
- Rachel: Let's move on, go on.

Cathy: Right, who's the funniest?

Paul: I'd probably go with Mark in that he's a professional comedian of sort of relatively high acclaim. So I'd go with Mark on the basis of that.

Mark: I think I'd say funnier just because grammatically there's only two comparisons. But the thing is, I don't think I am actually. I just think I made it my business to do this professionally and Paul never, in fact none of the other siblings, never, ever had, or our dad actually. The old man is really funny but couldn't be less interested in entertainment or the accoutrements of show business. So basically I think we've all got the same sense of humour I reckon, but mine is plus the sort of ego or whatever you call the instinct that drives you to perform I think basically. I think if you saw all the Watsons together you'd be struck by how we all basically make each other laugh in the same amount but only one of us decided it was a good idea to hinge their life plan on this.

Paul: No but I think when you do something professional you get just very good at it, you do it day in, day out. So I always think that when I see Mark, especially doing an actual stand-up show is like large elements of it are just like he always is in normal life, it's not that different to that. But then there's that other level where he's just sort of taken it and become really, really good at it.

Mark: I suppose you do have to practice. You do have to do a lot of gigs to be a comedian, that's a fair point.

Paul: Yeah but it must be one of the biggest annoyances of being a comedian is that everyone who can be quite funny in a social scenario suddenly thinks, 'Oh I can have a go at that' But it is like someone being reasonably good at doing kick-ups and thinking they can be a footballer.

Mark: Yeah.

Paul: You know it is a very different thing.

Mark: In fact football is a good comparison because there's loads of people that can do that thing where they flick it up and catch it on their back and stuff and those people go mad on YouTube. Why is this guy not a footballer? And you're like well you don't need to know much about football to know the answer. If in a real match you catch the ball on your back it won't go very well for you.

Paul: [Laughs]

Mark: You're right though Paul, I mean you don't want to be too much of an asshole about it because I try never to sort of dismiss anyone that's not in this, I look up to people that have got proper jobs, but it is a common bugbear of comedians that everyone has got a mate that they think ought to be a comedian.

Cathy: Yes.

Mark: And sometimes you meet that mate. Every comedian meets people that are like 'Everyone always says that I should do this and have a go at it and stuff like that'. And actually I don't automatically dismiss them because for all I know they might be potentially a great comic. But I dismiss people who are always saying that and never do it. To those people I always say 'You should have a go at it, you should do an open mic or something.' Both with comedy and with books.

Cathy: It's with books, that's exactly why I say that.

Mark: Ten times as many people say to you 'I wouldn't mind a go at that' as will ever do it. And so to all of them if I'm asked for advice I always just say 'Have a go at it'.

Cathy: Do it.

Rachel: Just do it.

Mark: Actually do it. The best way to do it is do it. I mean it's not always that easy with comedy because as we all know gigs, even open mics gigs and stuff are massively

oversubscribed. But if you really want to do it then you will progress beyond just being that guy in the pub. Again it is a bit like football. You'll be watching the match in the pub and people will be looking some objectively outstandingly talented 25 year old but he's having a bad game and the guy in the pub will be like 'I could have done that but I just'. You're like, 'No you couldn't have because by definition you couldn't have because even if you were once that skilful at football, you never did go and spend years trying to get trials with clubs.' It's a bit like that with comedy you know.

Cathy: Exactly but Rachel's partner is a writer, my partner is a comedian.

Mark: Yeah.

Cathy: And we don't see them. That's it, we don't see them because they work so fucking hard at those simple things.

Rachel: Yeah

Mark: Yeah Jack, Rachel's partner, I was at university with him.

Rachel: Yes.

Cathy: Oh of course yes.

Mark: But I didn't know he was your partner until last week. Yeah his work ethic is something I've always really admired you know.

Rachel: Yeah it's mad.

Mark: Even at university he and I were two of the most prolific people for putting plays out and stuff but he was well ahead of me because he was already potentially a screenwriter. But I've always, and I think Paul is similar actually, we've always tended to just follow the impulse to do stuff, like rather than thinking about what we could do if we could be bothered [laughs].

Paul: It's like that stupid, it's quite funny, that cartoon of this little boy looking at a modern art piece in the gallery saying 'I could have done that mum' and his mum saying 'Yeah but you didn't did you?' And it's basically that.

Rachel: Exactly.

Paul: People ask me a bit about how did you manage an international football team, 'Why did you do that?' and basically everyone comes up with these ideas but no one actually sees them through. And the only thing that really separates you from everyone else is that you actually do it.

Cathy: It's hard work.

Rachel: So sorry, can we just clarify for people listening, what you do Paul?

Mark: You probably shouldn't just say becoming an international football manager and then just move the conversation on [laughs].

Paul: With like a massive asterisk as well. I mean not to shoehorn my career but basically when I was 25 me and my flatmate came up with the idea that about a million people have had of because we were never very good at football but we wanted to be, and we always wanted to play for England and that was never going to happen. Finding the worst international football team in the world, naturalising to play for them and therefore beating the system. So we would become international footballers simply by lowering the bar low enough. And this is the kind of conversation I think millions of football fans had in the pub and it usually goes no further than getting to the end of that. Kind of 'I could be in Andorra's team' sort of conversation. And we just took it to its very logical conclusion and found objectively the weakest team in the world and did go there.

Mark: But unfortunately, they were a long way away.

Paul: Yeah it was about 9000 miles, it was a tiny island in the middle of the Pacific. And instead of playing for them we actually ended up setting up a team that sort of disbanded, and coaching it. But basically it was that thing of anyone could have done it, we had no meaningful skills but the reason people don't do it is because they've got jobs, they've got loved ones, they're not crazy enough to...

Cathy: So you had none of that.

Rachel: You had none of that.

Mark: Well he did actually.

Rachel: Oh!

Paul: I had a rubbish job, I had a job I really didn't enjoy.

Cathy: What were you doing?

Paul: I was a football journalist. But it sounded very glamorous, I worked for Football Italia and everyone always thought, oh what a lovely job and pictures of me interviewing players in Milan and stuff, no I was on a laptop...

Mark: Drinking those really, really tiny espressos that they always do when you see Italians.

Paul: Exactly.

Cathy: Aww.

Paul: Drinking coffee that's so strong it can knock you off your chair.

Mark: You're not on a chair because you're standing up to drink it because you're in Italy, yeah.

Paul: [Laughs] I was basically translating Italian things into English in my one room flat in Acton being paid £14,000 a year with no real possibility of getting more. So really actually the job was not a lot of fun. But I did also have a

girlfriend who is now my wife, who put up with the whole thing.

Cathy: So what do you do now?

Paul: That's a good question. So now I guess football based projects but they are all voluntary. So I try and do other bits and pieces to pay the bills. But no my passion is sort of projects where football help people basically that's been...

Cathy: And Mark are you into football? So did you both grow up being obsessed with football?

Mark: Absolutely we did yeah. I often think it's to do with, well it's almost all to do with how you're brought up initially I suppose. When people aren't into sport they just normally haven't had it explained to them why it was meant to be interesting. But our dad is a big sports fan but he didn't really kind of inculcate it, he's not the sort of personality that instils things forcefully, he just opened the world of football up to us and Paul and I sort of ran with that and become enormous football nerds basically. And we supported and still do support what was then a third tier massively underachieving team and are now are like an all right team, but we've still never had a team like a Man United. We've basically been unsuccessful football fans for most of our. And so we've always gravitated, what we've always liked most was this odd nerdy domestic.

Cathy: The underdog.

Mark: The underdog, we were always. And it's one of the things that annoys me about the portrayal of football, it's like a bloke's thing where everyone yells in the pub and is also interested in cars. And that's a composite picture of a male football fan. Because a lot of the people I know who are like the nerdiest in the world are football fans, but their approach to football like ours is about the obscure teams, the weird countries, whatever and all this stuff.

Rachel: Yeah.

Mark: So that was always our specialist subject and Paul continued to immerse himself in this. And both of us have always been sending each other weird bits of football trivia, we're those kind of guys, anoraks.

Cathy: But you didn't sit and watch with your dad? It wasn't like that, you didn't grow up watching?

Mark: Oh no we did.

Paul: Oh yeah, yeah we did.

Cathy: OK.

Mark: He took us to games and showed us loads of sport and stuff like that, but he was always, I suppose slightly better adjusted about it. He's more of a gentle personality. He wouldn't have imagined the level of obsession that I'd end up with I think.

Rachel: Wow.

Mark: I don't know it sort of does him a disservice. He continues to be actively interested in football, follows it a lot. It wouldn't ruin his weekend if his team lost, which it sort of can do that for me, I'm 40 [laughs].

Rachel: No.

Mark: But because we both have that relationship, or like when we played computer games, football computer games, our favourite ones were the ones where you could change the names of the players to make them more up to date and accurate. That kind of attention to detail. And both of us remained those people. So I remember exactly where we were when he started talking about this idea of going to Micronesia for no real reason [laughs]. We were on the tube and he said 'I've got this quite difficult but possible idea' or some phrase like that. And he started describing it and I knew almost immediately that it would

happen, that he would commit to it. We didn't know how it would be funded, how it would be logistically possible, none of the details were clear but that instinct Paul has to take something and then somehow will it into existence.

Rachel: Very determined.

Mark: Yeah and I recognised it. And if you'd asked me at that moment, 'Do you think he'll spin off from this into living in Mongolia for a bit? And spending a lot of his life negotiating matters of citizenship immigration and stuff like that?' I could see it all in that one moment basically. I suppose what I'm saying is it's almost inevitable that Paul would end up going to loads of places that people don't know where they are and that being a sort of niche. But it does mean it's taken about ten minutes to get from your asking 'What do you do now?' to this.

All: [Laughter]

Mark: And that is common problem, every time people ask 'What does Paul actually do?' It is one of the most difficult to define lives that I've ever come across.

[I Wish I Was An Only Child- interim music]

Rachel: Because obviously you've got, well not obviously, but you've got younger twin sisters as well, haven't you?

Paul: If that was obvious to someone they'd have to be a real Sherlock.

Rachel: Exactly. They'd have to have researched you massively. So yeah thanks.

Mark: From the tone of his voice, he sounds like he's got twins in the family.

Cathy: [Laughs]

- Rachel: Yeah I can tell, you can just tell the way they're talking. So you were brought up in Bristol but you've got these...
- Cathy: So what was the dynamic like when you were growing up?
- Mark: I think Paul and I always got on really well. And I'm always really interested by siblings, I think this is you guys actually who didn't, like you said struggled to get on. Because that was never...
- Paul: Oh is that an awkward thing to bring up perhaps at this point? [laughs]
- Mark: Well no.
- Paul: So you two guys don't get on, is that?
- Mark: At one time.
- Cathy: We hated each other's guts...
- Rachel: Yeah.
- Cathy: ...for 20 years.
- Rachel: Yeah.
- Paul: I thought that was sort of a faux pas to mention that.
- Cathy: No, no, no, 20 years.
- Mark: I was confident to bring it up because part of the conceit of the podcast is that.
- Rachel: Absolutely.
- Paul: Wow.
- Mark: It would have been amazing if the two of you had just gone pale and then the meeting just ended.
- Cathy: [Laughs] Fainted.
- Rachel: Walked off.

Cathy: Yeah.

Mark: So this what's always really interested me. I've obviously now met loads of people who have had those relationships with their siblings or continue to have like you'll meet twins that can't stand the sight of each other even though it's the same face.

Rachel: Yeah, mm, mm, mm.

Mark: But Paul and I, I think have always got on really well. I don't know what your age gap is? But Paul and I, it's like a four and a half year gap.

Cathy: That's a lot. That's a lot. We're 18 months.

Rachel: We're 18 months.

Mark: See I feel that works in our favour, because by the time Paul came along I didn't experience it as a threat to my parents attention or all of the stuff that you hear about with kids that are closer together. I sort of felt at four and a half, alright I'm ready to do this now. My role as an older brother is appropriate here.

Rachel: Whereas you definitely weren't ready. Because there's 18 months difference, when I came along you were pissed off.

Mark: I think most kids are at that age, or at least they are uncomprehending.

Rachel: Yeah. Yeah. Yes.

Mark: And I do think it's fascinating to me how the shadow of that can hang over a relationship for years. I feel like probably not intentionally but our parents spaced us out successfully. And then the girls are way younger than both me and Paul. So both of us saw them as like a fun novelty rather than a threat as well.

- Paul: Yeah that's a really nice dynamic that actually. Because the sisters were so much younger.
- Rachel: So what's the age gap with the sisters?
- Paul: So that's seven years am I right? I'm so terrible at these simple questions.
- Mark: It's something like seven years...
- Paul: Seven years between them and me.
- Mark: And so me it's like they might as well be a different generation. They talk about me about as if I am a different generation and I talk about them and regard them as essentially babies, even though they'll 30 just after Christmas.
- Cathy: Yeah wow
- Mark: And I think that is one reason for the success of the sibling unit. We all had a chance to be our own person before the next in line.
- Rachel: Yeah.
- Mark: I was 11 when the girls were born. But even when Paul was born, I had enough of, if your own self identity or whatever the phrase is, isn't fully formed when a new sibling is thrown into the mix, I think that can be quite. A lot of parents advocate having the kids as close together as possible though. This mentality of like get it all done and get it out of the way.
- Rachel: Mm, mm, mm.
- Mark: But I don't think that always bears in mind what kids themselves are going to be all about.
- Paul: I think it's a career based thing isn't it?
- Mark: I suppose it is.

Paul: Now that we've got a little one, a lot of our peers had one child and then immediately had, or not immediately but very quickly had the second because it's that sense of this period is an absolute train wreck career wise.

Cathy: Totally.

Mark: Let's get this dog shit bit of my life out of the way.

Cathy: [Laughs]

Paul: And actually I really sympathise with that thing of getting back into it, especially for the mum who usually sadly it's still very much get the worst of it. But go back to work, re-establish yourself, and then you're back off again.

Mark: For sure, you can see why you'd want to minimise the period of your life you were living as the sort of second rate citizen that people's parents have...

Paul: But yeah for the kids I think four years is great, but yeah.

Rachel: I've heard it described as you know the second kid comes along and it's like your parents have shone all the light on you, loved you and then this kid comes along and you're completely shoved out of the way.

Cathy: I think it's the other way around.

Rachel: Well of course you would.

Paul: Well there you go that's the thing, yeah.

Rachel: Yeah exactly.

Mark: We were also very fortunate with our parents. Our parents are very, very nurturing and loving. We had zero childhood trauma or parental trauma type stories.

Cathy: Oh really?

Mark: Well maybe not zero.

Rachel: And you were saying your dad's really funny.

Cathy: Can we end the podcast please?

Rachel: Yeah your dad is really funny right? So tell us a bit more about your parents please because they sound...

Mark: I'm not suggesting that if siblings don't get on its anything to do with the fault of the parent, but I do feel like it was reasonably easy for us to all thrive because our parents just sort of nurtured us all individually. On my 40th birthday I was with my mum in fact, I went back to Bristol last year, oh no it must have been my 39th birthday which is the year before last now. Anyway the reason I went back was to watch us play QPR, but it happened to also be my birthday. And my mum was talking about my imminent descent into my 40s and stuff and she was nearly that age when she had the twins, she became a mum again of twins at 39. And I said 'What was that like?' Because you know having two kids has been enough for me to feel I've lost control. And she said 'Well it's fine, I mean I don't really remember my 40s. I was busy'.

Paul: [Laughs]

Mark: And it struck me as quite a big thing to say about a decade of your life really. But our mum has that pragmatism of like if there had been 11 kids in the house she would have gone about it much the same way. Just well you know, both of them were very, I don't quite know what the word is but there would be arguments and stuff but basically their relationship is very, very harmonious and that was translated to our household environment to a large extent I'd say.

Rachel: That's amazing.

Cathy: And what was the household like? Did you share bedrooms? Did you?

Mark: Well Paul and I had bunk beds for a while but that changed after an infamous incident where I fell through the top bunk onto him.

Paul: Yeah I still can't really sleep on the bottom of a bunk bed.

Cathy: Oh I get that.

Paul: If I'm on a sleeper train or something, I can't do that.

Mark: I just felt it all splinter beneath me and I was sort of dangling on top of him. But it was the middle of the night and it's not the sort of thing you want to wake up to I don't think.

Cathy: [Laughs]

Mark: I have been on a top bunk, me and my girlfriend went on a top bunk, well not both of us on the top bunk. We did a sleeper train this year and it proved to me that I still can't sleep on a top bunk without assuming I'm going to fall through it. So after that we got separate bedrooms anyway is the point.

[I Wish I Was An Only Child- interim music]

Cathy: Can I get you both to describe each other? So Paul, can you describe Mark?

Paul: Um? [Laughs] Such an odd question. I've got to say like you know of all the questions.

Cathy: Is it?

Paul: It sort of is. I mean it's something you're never asked to do and maybe it's something about...

Mark: Maybe he's six feet tall, that would be a starter.

Paul: Well I'm never sure exactly how tall you are for a start. Because I always think of you as being really tall. And I'm five foot ten and Mark has obviously always been taller than me, I never quite made it. I thought I had the run of him when I had a couple of years to spare and I just couldn't catch up.

Mark: You got lazy, you just stopped, you stopped working.

Paul: I didn't get him. So you know it still rankles with me that he's taller. But I always think of him as more like 6'2", I reckon if you stood up straight you probably would be but I've never seen you do that.

Mark: That's the thing, I think I probably haven't.

Cathy: He just sits down the whole time?

Mark: No I just hunch, my posture is so bad that there is an argument that I've never reached the potential height as a human that I could have had.

Paul: I think one of the reasons that the question is interesting is that I actually very rarely get asked to describe Mark. What happens a lot and I guess this happens for all siblings of relatively well known people, or people who are in the media eye in some way. I get told about Mark, I don't get asked about Mark.

Cathy: Yeah.

Paul: I get told time again 'I saw your brother on' and it's the absolute, it's the biggest conversational cul-de-sac there is. And it makes me sound like I'm sort of you know bitter, miserable.

Cathy: [Laughs]

Paul: But basically there isn't really a reply to it. And at first it used to happen when he was very young, when Mark was early in his career and it was still a really big deal for him to be on TV and we'd sort of gather around the TV in the living room to watch him, then if someone had said 'I saw Mark on TV' it was great. But what tends to happen to now is people still do it, routinely. And they'll say 'I saw Mark on' and they often don't even remember what they saw him on.

Mark: Yeah [laughs].

Paul: They'll say 'I saw Mark on something' and expect me to put in the details. I think it just comes from the fact that for most people if one of your siblings was on TV, that would be a sort of all the family around the TV moment.

Rachel: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Paul: But for us now after how many years, Mark can be on sorts of things. With the greatest of respect to Mark's output we're not going to all sit and watch all of the things he's on so.

Mark: Yeah.

Paul: People sort of expect me to go 'Oh yeah of course, it was this programme, this is what he did, this is what he said'. But instead it sort of ends with them going 'You know, I saw him on the thing.' 'What?' 'The thing he was on' and me sort of saying...

Cathy: Well hang on Paul, I saw you on Sky News this morning, come on.

Mark: There you go.

Rachel: There you go!

Paul: Right you probably saw me getting cut off by my internet connection by Sky News.

Mark: Our mum has got an even bigger conversational cul-de-sac which is she tells me about other comedians that she's seen on TV who she believes I'm friends with. '(Tim?) was mentioned in the Telegraph this week' and again there's not a lot I can do about that apart from say 'Yeah I expect he is, again he's very famous'.

Paul: You see that's the other aspect of it is that our parents have gone through exactly these phases but at first it was pretty tough for all of us. It was probably toughest for Mark that all they would talk about would be Mark's career. And then I think it got to a point where, he would

never say it, but I think he just achieved too much that it became impossible to objectively sort of make them excited. So it was sort of you know if Mark was on some big TV show, it would be sort of, oh yeah OK. And so for the rest of us with our relatively modest achievements [laughs] it became a lot harder to wow them.

Mark: It's definitely true, I talk about this, I was writing about this, this week. One of the things that can do you in mentally I think across this industry is there's endless focus on what is next. It's not just this industry. And Paul is right, it went from, understandably and it's not my parents fault or anything but they go from marvelling that you're BBC2 or something to be like 'What will be next?' and then you've got your uncles and your grandparents 'It will be Hollywood next'. And I realised not that long ago that part of the reason that I haven't ever perhaps taken enough satisfaction and pride in some of the stuff I've done is just this endless emphasis on, because then you start being like that. You start thinking how can I use this already interesting thing as leverage to another thing? And if you live like that, we all know people in comedy and entertainment who are never satisfied and I think it's because of that. Because you're often surrounded by people saying 'Well if you've done that then'. I made a joke about when Neil Armstrong came back from the moon it would have been like an hour before someone said 'So what's?'

Cathy: So what's next?

Rachel: Where are you going next?

Mark: Yeah.

Paul: Yeah but what would it have been for his sibling who had just sort of done a really good year in his accounting firm, and he got a little bonus you know.

Rachel: And that's tough.

Mark: And that's the thing. I'm not suggesting I had it worse definitely. I think there was definitely a period it was really tedious for the siblings because at Christmas or any family get together, the conversation would go back to me and my stuff in a way that I was I think actually equally annoying for me and for the siblings. Because all of us wanted to be there.

Paul: Yeah.

Mark: And of course with family gatherings, it is often once a year or a couple of them a year. So that exacerbates the problem because then it is a six month catch up for everyone else and you know. And as we all also know, a lot can happen in six months. But also fuck all can happen in comedy in six months, you know.

Paul: [Laughs]

Cathy: Well totally, cut to now.

Mark: Cut to now, yeah. You could be, yeah so this year's 'So what have you been up to?' is going to be a tricky one for most people in the entertainment industry.

Paul: This is the thing with Mark. It's annoyingly hard to find a bad word to say about him as a brother.

Cathy: Wow!

Paul: Generally speaking and I've got to say this is one of the things about him being more in the public domain is, as soon as someone becomes relatively known, everyone has got an opinion and usually for almost everyone there are people who irrationally hate that person or have something nasty to say. I've never had anyone say anything, I've never seen anyone say anything bad about Mark. It's kind of amazing to have someone who is like that. So I imagine people think, well behind the scenes I bet he's a real bastard. But actually no, growing up it was incredible that the fact that we had such a harmonious

relationship owes a lot to the older sibling. Because obviously I was boring and little for a lot of that time. But he stuck with it and persevered to the point where we could get to that relationship where we would just spend hours playing football in the garden or computer games. But I was still younger than him, so he could have quite easily just thought, like a lot of older siblings, he's not worth my time or I'll just play with my mates instead. But I was always part of those games in the garden, those endless games of football. He would make sure I was part of that. So I do think it comes a lot from the older sibling. Because I think the younger one just is happy to have the attention.

Rachel: Yeah.

Mark: I think I desperately wanted a sibling. Some kids are like that. I can't remember why but I saw it as being important. I was delighted at the idea of a brother coming. I wanted someone to play football with, I had faith in the idea that if I put some years in. Also looking back, there were these books called the Hardy Boys books, which were the counterpart of the Judy Blume and stuff like that, like trashy American teen. I read dozens of those and there were dozens of them, the guy wrote like about a hundred or something. And that was brothers fighting crime obviously. I read a lot of stuff where brothers got up to hijinks and I think that influenced me as well. I think I had a very rosy idea of what the relationship between brothers and sisters. Or The Famous Five I suppose, the more I think about it, I read loads of propaganda for successful sibling relationships as a kid.

Paul: [Laughs]

Rachel: When you were kids there must have been big arguments.

- Paul: I mean there were always arguments when sports were involved. I think this is one of the reasons, and I don't like to analyse it too much because it gets a bit wanky.
- Cathy: Oh I want you to be wanky.
- Mark: Yeah it's a podcast.
- Paul: Sorry yeah.
- Cathy: Let's do wanky.
- Paul: Sorry I'm new to podcasts.
- Cathy: Just do it.
- Mark: Well basically the more shit you talk the better it is for everyone.
- Cathy: Exactly, this is not Sky Sports.
- Paul: I think one of the reasons why sports are so good is they do allow you to explore and get emotions out in a way that isn't just sitting around a table like a sort of therapy session. So I think sport did provide us with the opportunity to have fights and hate each other for periods of time. But it was all within the framework of sport but I'm sure stuff came out there of feelings of being inadequate compared to the other one. That kind of stuff all comes out but it comes out within the context of, we had a game of cricket, Mark bowled me out and I threw the stumps in through the window, something like that you know. So it's a more healthy way to...
- Cathy: It sounds interesting.
- Rachel: Yeah.
- Mark: It is interesting actually because it's true that the relationship between us was almost impeccable but yet if there was one thing Paul was infamous for in the family it was if you got out in cricket [chuckles]. We had quite a big garden in those days and the house overlooked the

garden and my mum would watch out of the window and she would always be able to pinpoint the moment when Paul was about to come storming inside. She's see some sort of decision or some instant in the game. I remember once being given out and turning to face his stumps and just smashing them up with the bat, knocking them out of the ground. But again you did not see this aggression from Paul other than in sport.

Paul: No but you've got to remember, these are the days before Hawk-Eye, before video referees and stuff. So for me as a player it was frustrating and quite often I would...

Mark: Yeah you had no right of appeal, this was before...

Paul: Exactly.

Cathy: [Laughs] Oh my God.

Paul: In a way I wonder if this sped up the process of technology?

Rachel: Yeah, yeah.

Cathy: Yeah absolutely.

Mark: I reckon the reason they brought in the appeals system at Wimbledon was the number of people that would just smash their rackets up and stuff, it was starting to become expensive for them to stage the tournament. But away from sport and stuff, it happened so rarely that I can still remember beating or inflicting damage on Paul physically once, because I'm still guilty about it. There was a morning where I was trying to lie, in, I'd reached the age, early teenage where you've got no interest in ever leaving your bed. But Paul was still about eight or nine so he still wanted to do stuff. And all of us were in bed and he went out onto the landing and shouted 'My bed is cold and I've got nothing to do. My bed is cold and I've got nothing to do'.

Cathy: Oh that's so sweet.

Mark: But he just kept doing it. 'My bed is cold' dozens of times. And I was just lying in bed thinking, well I can't be doing with this guy. You can't just keep repeating yourself over and over again. And I got out of bed, didn't say anything but just gave him what was known at the time as Chinese burn, presumably it still is, where you do that to their arm.

Cathy: Oh yes, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Mark: And he started to wail and I became conscious, it was a medium sized family drama at the time, but even that was all done and dusted that day. But the fact that stands out in my memory from 30 years ago, suggests that there were very few instances of violent between us?

Rachel: Paul do you remember that?

Paul: No.

Mark: That's good.

Paul: And I think that's quite telling, I have no memory of it whatsoever. I have only remembered it through the retelling. But I think that's like a lot of childhood isn't it? Like you're never totally sure what your memories are and what are the memories of you being told by other people?

Cathy: Absolutely.

Rachel: I have no memories until I'm about 13, I've got a tiny handful.

Paul: Because 13 is late.

Rachel: Yeah.

Mark: And especially with our mum as well because our mum is an absolute devil for having these famous family tales which are recycled at every occasion. My mum has got about a stock of about 12 anecdotes which plot our

course from babies to the present day. And both me and Paul have heard them so many times we've got no idea if we remember them or if they happened or what. Although her most famous one is before either of us can remember, because it was the day I was born. The nurse...

Rachel: And this is the most famous one, the day you were born?  
[Laughs]

Mark: I think it is my mum's favourite anecdote which again is probably telling yeah [laughs].

Cathy: [Laughs]

Rachel: Yeah very telling, yes.

Mark: It will soon be Christmas and we don't know what the Christmas regulations will be, but me and Paul are potentially about a month away from hearing this again. But essentially I was a big baby and the nurse or health visitor or some lady came in and said 'Fat baby, fat adult'. And obviously I turned out to be quite a thin adult. But my mum has never tired of the fact that a) the nurse was wrong b) she, if there's a pattern to these stories it's our mum being proved right or validated over a very long period. 'And he said, you'll never be able to park the car there. And do you know what? I did park there'. And thirty years on if she saw that nurse now, she'd still be on about it.

Paul: She should track her down at the age of 94 and just say on her deathbed, show her photos of Mark 'Is this a fat adult would you say?'

Mark: We should pick a show where Davina McCall reunites our mum with all of these people that have been wrong in her anecdotes.

[I Wish I Was An Only Child- interim music]

Rachel: So then obviously there was a big gap between when the twins came along. So is there still a bit of a division? You all get on really well but obviously you two were very close. And because Mark you said they feel like a generation.

Mark: I felt like Paul was closest to their age because he was, Paul was more adjacent to the girls as kids. Like he was six/seven and they were toddlers. I was already at secondary school, so I did feel that I was perhaps slightly a different proposition from the three of them in a way because I was now dealing with teenage stuff and they were essentially all. So there was a bit of period where I felt like it was, there was never any enmity but there was a bit where I felt like it was one of me and three of them, a little bit just because suddenly I'm 13 and they're still the kids and that felt like a sort of meaningful division.

Rachel: Yeah.

Mark: And I'd say that all of that is gone now except that the girls do retain an intra-twin bond which is impenetrable probably even to me and Paul, like they are their own thing. They are those twins that you get who I don't know if they actually have a psychic connection but they're so close that that they've participated in studies to show whether twins have a psychological.

Rachel: Wow.

Mark: About every year they go to some funny place where they're asked to name a colour, think of a pig, smoke a cigarette, like 12 things like that and they get 50 quid and then their results unnervingly matchup, they're those guys. So I think we've only been divided in the sense that twins have got a magical thing. And I've enjoyed seeing that, I think twins are a fascinating phenomenon, and I feel really privileged to have witnessed it close on.

Cathy: Oh God amazing. Was there any parental favouritism?

Mark: [Chuckles] Well...

Rachel: We think we know that.

Cathy: It will be interesting to see whether your mum was sort of closer to the twins because they're girls.

Mark: The only documented favouritism is there is a kind of trope that I was always the favourite one because I was the first and like a golden boy, and then went to Oxbridge. But also my mum had made a series of faux pas where she's basically said things which implied favouritism towards me [laughs].

Paul: And also there's a famous incident now in family folklore where my dad's mum, my grandma, we went to hers at Christmas. And by this point we were reasonably old, we must have been about 16, Mark would have been I guess 20, and it had already become a thing that you know we very much knew Mark was the golden boy. And every year we'd go visit that side of the family and everyone would just want to hear Mark's stories, understandably because he was starting to do interesting things. You know even just the fact that he was doing an English degree at Oxbridge and all this kind of stuff made him a lot more popular with family.

Mark: I ticked every grandparent box really.

Cathy: [Laughs] You did.

Paul: Me and my sisters walked in and my grandma who is not particularly an effusive person, almost yelled 'There he is' and went out with arms outstretched.

Cathy: No.

Mark: That's right.

Paul: Yeah. Neatly sidestepped me and went to Mark who was behind me and wrapped her arms.

Cathy: That's awful.

Paul: And we still talk about it as a joke.

Mark: We still talk about it.

Paul: It's sort of a family joke.

Mark: It's taken me a long time to live down someone shouting 'There he is' to all four of us' [laughs].

Paul: And walking literally past me.

Cathy: How did you feel?

Rachel: Yeah but...

Cathy: How did you feel?

Paul: To be honest by that point that ship had sailed somewhat I mean.

Cathy: Yeah.

Paul: Yeah you've come, the fact that we were able to laugh about it shows that I don't think there's any great pain there. But it's quite an amusing...

Mark: It's not been forgotten either though.

Paul: No it's not [laughs].

[I Wish I Was An Only Child- interim music]

Rachel: I've just finished your book Mark, I've just finished Contacts which I loved. This is relevant to what I'm going to ask you.

Mark: That's fine, even if it wasn't, I'd be more than happy with that.

Paul: [Laughs]

Rachel: Sally very drunk has the revelation right, that family was more important than anything and a brother and sister

should be able to tell each other anything. So that made me think how honest are you with each other? And in terms of your story there Paul?

Mark: I mean in the book she has sort of as a drunken revelation but it's never quite followed through, it's one of those things that people think you know. But I think, well? I think we've got a pretty, all of us have pretty honest relationships but with the caveat that we were sort of brought up, like for all the openness and harmony and love in the family house, it wasn't a big family for talking about feelings or hugging or.

Rachel: Ah.

Mark: Our dad himself was brought up by the grandma that Paul just mentioned, the 'of there he is' gate.

Rachel: Yeah.

Mark: So our grandparents on that side are reasonably traditional Victorian style disciplinarian parents. And then on my mum's side, she was brought up Church of Wales by two lovely wonderful but extremely fierce scary parents [chuckles]. So both our parents grew up in not very emotional households and I think that did translate. Me and Paul and the girls and all of us had to negotiate the idea of emotional relationship between ourselves, sort of from scratch I think.

Cathy: That's interesting.

Mark: Well not exactly from scratch, it's not that we weren't shown how to do that, we just weren't that family. I used to go around to people's houses where you know people would hug a lot more for example, or there would be much more performative we are a great family and stuff. And I used to think, wow imagine living like this all the time? I didn't envy it, I was intrigued by it I think.

Rachel: Well we're always intrigued by big families.

Cathy: Yeah, yeah totally.

Rachel: Because we're kind of brutally honest with each other.

Cathy: Really honest.

Rachel: Which I think makes other people uncomfortable.

Mark: Frighteningly honest, yeah.

Paul: [Laughs]

Rachel: Yeah, yeah. Which we think is a good thing but actually certainly people that are around us are sometimes quite surprised by it.

Cathy: But Paul are you as happy that the childhood was like that or do you wish it was more like mine and Rachel's sort being very open?

Rachel: Awful what do you mean?

Cathy: Awful.

Rachel: Yeah our childhood was terrible, that's not good.

Cathy: Your childhood was terrible?

Rachel: Yeah. No.

Mark: You've really sold it.

Rachel: Yeah exactly.

Cathy: Be open, it will ruin your life.

Paul: I wish I had one of those dreadful honest childhoods [laughs] I mean to be honest, no I wouldn't change it. I think we were incredibly lucky. I guess all childhoods leave you with things that are good and things that need to be worked on. As Mark says, one of the things that has been a bit of a shock in later life is people talking about emotions I suppose. That was just something that we didn't do, and still don't do in the family really, in a sort

of family unit. So it was quite a revelation to me getting to know people better I guess coming into my late teens and those ages where people would talk to their parents about how they were feeling. Or something very personal and deep and that just wasn't something we did.

Mark: No.

Paul: So you do that elsewhere I suppose.

Mark: When my marriage was sort of falling apart for example, I was aware that I was going to get divorced and stuff and it's the sort of thing that in an American indie movie, a person would stand up on Christmas day and say 'Guys, I have news' but the only way I could do it was just drip-feed the awareness of it into the brains of everyone else.

Cathy: Wow.

Mark: Like over the course of a month. We've never been a family for big announcements or those family moments that are the pivot of a lot of, I don't know why I say American movies but I associate it with the Wes Anderson type setup.

Cathy: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Mark: I think I always liked films like that because I cannot imagine a situation in our house where a piece of news would be big enough that someone would stop Sunday roast for it.

Paul: [Laughs]

Cathy: So there was no tears? You wouldn't cry? You wouldn't get hysterical? You wouldn't do any of that?

Paul: I'm sure as children but not...

Cathy: But I suppose older?

Paul: No I mean I just don't think it's that. It still isn't that dynamic.

Mark: No there's a lot of joking, there's a lot of love and a lot of what used to be called banter. It's mostly at that level I think, our interactions as a family.

Paul: Yeah and I don't think that's necessarily a bad thing. Someone was saying this about, I think it was sort of in reference to my relationship with Mark and how a lot of the time it feels like we're very close but we don't necessarily talk in that way. And I was saying part of what is actually really lovely about it, is just to have one relationship in your life which is still like that. Where it's very simple.

Rachel: Yeah.

Paul: And it's just fun and it almost is like a relationship that stays completely untarnished from the one we had when we were children. And there are loads of people you can over the years hopefully if you're lucky, you get a lot of people you can talk to about your deepest, darkest moments. But it's also nice to just have one relationship where you can just shoot the shit about football every now and again.

Rachel: Yeah.

Paul: I know if there was something really deep, we could talk about it but it was more, it's quite nice to have one relationship that's just purely, it's just always fun and I just always feel happy when I talk to him.

Mark: I think I'd agree with that. I have a treasured memory of me and Paul went to Ukraine to watch a football match, well a football tournament basically, but we only had tickets for one match and this is 2012 so 32 and 28. And loads of stuff was going on in our respective lives by that point that we could have been talking about. It was like we flew there, spent the day there an overnight train, a sleeper train although absolutely no sleep because the woman that was in with us had the most extraordinary cough...

Paul: [Laughs]

Mark: ...that I have ever heard or will ever hear.

Cathy: And you were falling out of the bunk bed.

Mark: They were bunk beds as well so there was that nostalgia.

Cathy: [Laughs] Yeah.

Mark: And we had that moment of trying to sleep for about 20 minutes and then both of us peering across at each other going, I think I used the sporting phrase 'unplayable' the woman was unplayable.

Paul: [Laughs]

Mark: Paul likened it to trying to return the serve to Federer or Sampras or something. It was the great coughing/snoring exhibition.

Paul: [Laughs]

Cathy: Aww!

Mark: So we ended up spending like a day doing that, a whole night and then another day messing about in Donetsk before this match, and then back to the airport. So a frantic trip. But yeah for that whole time we didn't talk about anything except the fact that we were there. The trip itself. What the match was going to be like. All of that.

Rachel: See that sounds lovely, that sounds so nice.

Mark: It kind of was, that's the thing. And I remember people asking like you know 'Why didn't you talk about this or that?' because all sorts was happening in my life then. But that sort of as Paul said was sort of the point, it's pure escapism and I do think that's a really valuable thing to have. It was discontinued for a couple of years but we have a game where we predict the results of games on Saturday, bet minute amounts of money like 10p and

stuff like that. I mean a couple of those things, the fantasy leagues and stuff like that and people often think it's peculiar that groups of men use those things, you know have those bonds but don't use them to talk about deep stuff. But I do think it's almost a conscious thing, it's great to have worlds you can disappear into which don't require you to be wrapped up in your own brain 100% of the time. And that's what sports does for generations of men. Yeah, and people always criticise that.

Cathy: Totally.

Mark: People say 'Oh you guys talk about football rather than anything else'. And they're right to criticise it because sometimes it does suggest a sort of emotional illiteracy. But I know a lot of very emotionally able men who just like having support because it's that. Because it's a break.

Rachel: Yeah.

Mark: However serious it is, it's still a break.

Cathy: My partner who is obsessed with football, it's so intense and such a huge part of his life but at the end of the day he said he gets so much emotion out with it. But at the end of the day it doesn't matter as much as the really heavy shit.

Mark: Exactly.

Cathy: And that's his escape.

Mark: Even as an obsessive fan you accept that it still doesn't matter as much as the big stuff. So that's good, it's good to have something that seems enormously important for those brief periods of time.

Rachel: So we need to find a sport.

Cathy: Yeah we need to find a sport.

Mark: Yeah get a sport [laughs].

Rachel: Because obviously we work together.

Mark: Yeah, which is hard.

Rachel: But in a weird way it takes us away from the sibling, that is our sport. Do you know what I mean?

Cathy: Yeah I think work is our sport.

Rachel: It does take us away. Anyway, can I ask what was the last present you bought each other?

Paul: Um?

Rachel: So we're very insightful.

Mark: Well the answer to this is interesting or rather trying to work it out is interesting. Because Paul and I haven't spent the last Christmas's together for I'd say four or five years now because of our respective family units and stuff like that. But for a very long time we did. All the siblings went back to Bristol and it was a proper big family Christmas. And for years we all were buying each other presents. And in that period Paul and I had a long standing tradition, not that the tradition doesn't exist anymore it's just harder to do now. But we used to have an annual tradition of trying to spring a present on the other one which was impossible to predict. Like an impossible thing. For example one year, this is impossible now, this could never happen in 2020.

Cathy: [Laughs]

Mark: But when I was at university I found out that the Super Furry Animals who were a band that we adored were playing at the Corn Exchange at my uni. But I found it out in May and I bought tickets, and I kept the existence of this show a secret from him for six or seven months. I removed the NME from his room. I cut adverts out.

Cathy: Aww.

- Mark: People were sworn to secrecy. You couldn't do that now because within six seconds now if your band is on...
- Cathy: Twitter.
- Rachel: Yeah Twitter.
- Paul: Yeah.
- Mark: But in those days a band could be in our town and you wouldn't find out until the day. So we had this tradition of like secret or surprise gift ideas.
- Rachel: Aww.
- Mark: Like for example that trip to Ukraine, I did that as a Christmas present. And the reveal was I wrote it on an apple or something. It was some sort of in joke which I can't remember.
- Cathy: Aww.
- Mark: I went on Google translate and wrote in Russian 'We are going to this tournament'. So then I wrapped it up and obviously you couldn't tell what it was. So we were always doing stuff like that.
- Paul: It took me about four months to work out what it said.
- All: [Laughs]
- Paul: I had to get a Ukrainian course, it was difficult but.
- Mark: Or you'd wrap something up that wasn't the real present, there would be a dummy one.
- Paul: Yeah.
- Mark: Or you'd deliberately change the shape of it. We really prided ourselves on that.
- Paul: And the presents were the big ones for Christmas, I remember that. Once our parents had sort of, we weren't really their responsibility in that way anymore once you

get to that age where your parents presents aren't a big deal anymore.

Mark: Where your parents just have to say 'Look, what do you actually want?'

Cathy: Yeah.

Paul: Once we were at that phase, what kept Christmas exciting and I think more exciting than any other person I knew, you knew the other one would be cooking up something really big...

Mark: Yeah.

Paul: ...and special. I remember once I got Mark, I was in Verona at the time, I was living in Verona and I came back for Christmas and I had got Mark a trip to Verona to come and watch Juventus versus Chievo which were the team in Verona at the time. Again, I think I presented it by just wrapping up scarves of the two teams. So he opened up the scarf and just looked a bit disappointed and obviously thought, oh the magic is over, we're just giving scarves now are we.

Mark: It was a present with about nine different props attached to it [laughs].

Rachel: Yeah [laughs].

Paul: And it was a great trip. I mean the most memorable part of that trip still remains to be that Mark managed to take my flatmates passport to the airport.

Mark: Instead of mine.

Paul: Instead of his own.

Rachel: Oh!

Cathy: No.

- Paul: And so I had to get in a taxi in Italy and say 'Go as fast as you can'.
- Mark: Which you should never do [laughs].
- Paul: And the guy's face, he looked absolutely delighted, it was the moment he'd always dreamt of and I remember barrelling down the motorway about 140 miles an hour, and making it just in time. Having Mark having delayed the flight with his passport.
- Mark: In fact also on that trip to Ukraine we were cutting it a bit fine with the flight because the only way we could afford to it was to leave the stadium and almost immediately get there. And that was another occasion where I remember us jumping into the back of a car without seatbelts, Paul saying 'We need to go as fast as we can' and then within moments us thinking, we shouldn't have said that to this gentleman.
- Cathy: Did you only do that with each other? Or with the twins or with the parents, did you do the weird presents with them?
- Mark: We did always, there was a family tradition of having to make it as mysterious as possible, whoever you were giving a present to. But Paul and I were just better at it because we knew each other's minds so we'd know instinctively what the other person would want.
- Cathy: Yeah.
- Mark: And these days because we're all older and people don't have money, well it was never about money, it was always about the surprise aspect. But our mum does an annual thing of saying 'With presents this year, maybe if we could just do a £5 limit or we'll all just agree on one thing. Or we'll just do presents for the kids'.
- Cathy: Yeah.

Mark: But as sibling unit we're all quite resistant to that because we remember when again, the presents were our sport really [laughs]. The only reason we haven't continued to it I think, because if you're not physically together on Christmas day. Like you've got to see the person's response to it. It's about the pantomime of it basically.

Rachel: Yeah.

Paul: Yeah it was, wasn't it? And the fact that you'd sort of be able to look at the present under the tree and think, well it looks just like a book. But it would be a book with one page cut out and on that page there would be quotation that would send you somewhere to attic and in the attic there would be...

Cathy: That's brilliant.

Rachel: That is brilliant.

Paul: ...sort of a Frenchman who would recite a myth to you. You know so it was [laughs].

Mark: [Laughs]

Paul: If you thought you knew what the present was, you couldn't be further away.

Mark: That's right.

Cathy: That is so good.

Mark: We'd unveil them on Christmas eve and look at each other's but you knew that they were by definition it was unguessable.

Rachel: Aww.

Paul: And again it's a childhood thing that you look back on and think it was lovely to have that time in our lives where we could behave that way.

Cathy: No time now.

Rachel: Because there is no time.

Cathy: No when you've got kids.

Paul: No I think that's the other thing, as soon as Mark had kids and then I have a little boy, and obviously it's just a different life now isn't it.

Mark: Left to the wild we'd still behave like that. I'm sure in our 60s we'll revert to doing this.

Paul: Yeah true [laughs]

Cathy: Yeah I'd say.

Rachel: So who is most likely to be late out of the two of you?

Mark: Me.

Paul: Mark.

Mark: Yeah, easy.

Rachel: OK clear. Paul, is Mark scatty? Is Mark disorganised a bit?

Paul: No I don't think scatty, but I think Mark is always doing too many things at once. He's always trying to do 15 different things at once. And to be fair, I think I did go down the road of always being late and then just had a few moments where I thought, no I've just got to rein this in. And so I'm generally on time for stuff but Mark is always, to be honest he's always trying to do about 15 things, so it's not.

Cathy: Mark is writing a novel right now.

Paul: Exactly.

Mark: It comes to that thing where my brain will go, alright you've got to be there in 15 minutes, so if you do 12 more emails that should be about right I reckon. And I can't switch that off, I'm always trying to cram. And these days I have a partner who if anything is even worse at it. We're those guys, this is not a secret, basically we egg

each other on to worse and worse timekeeping because both of us are like this. Both of us think, and it's the same problem, she also doing a million things at once. So we convince ourselves and each other. So where people find it stressful to travel with us because we won't be at the station more than three minutes before the train. So if you're one of these people that's there with the tickets, half an hour before, you don't want to be going with us. And even with planes, she's worse than me though, I get nervous at the airport. [Laughs] We've got a catchphrase which is 'It's just boarding'. Because I panic when it says 'Go to gate' or whatever but we've been in an airport where it says 'boarding' and Lianne will still say 'That's just boarding'. 'Yeah but that means everyone is getting on the plane'. 'No, no it's just boarding'. It has to be in the air before she admits that we're in any trouble.

Rachel: Whereas Paul, you would be there very early, absolutely on time yeah?

Paul: Yeah to the extent where, obviously when you have a kid it changes life, so to some extent being in an airport is just the greatest luxury you can have because there's nothing that can be demanded of you, you just have to be in the airport. So I started getting flights really early when we had a kid because it's like, right this life's paradise. But what I used to do is get there so early that once I went to entirely the wrong terminal, sat, had a coffee, and then realised I was in the wrong terminal and still made it to the flight.

Mark: [Laughs]

Paul: I had to run that time but.

Cathy: That's brilliant.

Paul: I'm very, very early with stuff generally. Yeah and I think it was partly because we used to get later and later. My wife works in travel which is in a way the worst thing for travelling because she's amazing at it, but she's amazing

at it to the point where she got too far that way. Where she was so blasé about flights closing. Like with Lianne and you, got so blasé that I'd be there going, 'No I think we probably do need to get on'. And she'd say 'Honestly I've been on 14 flights this month, it's going to be fine'. And sure enough we had a couple of very close calls and after that I thought, no not for me [chuckles].

Mark: I did actually miss one eventually going from New York to LA. When they said 'It's too late you can't get on'. I did have this thing of like 'What do you mean?'

Cathy: That's awful.

Mark: Like I've been watching this movie for years, I never actually miss it, this is just a thing I do.

Cathy: But Paul does it make you angry? Because I get really angry, Rachel you are late for stuff.

Rachel: I'm not.

Cathy: And it really winds me up.

Paul: It is tough.

Cathy: So does it wind you up that Mark is late for stuff?

Paul: No not really, I mean we don't do a lot of stuff where it's a big problem for me. No it doesn't really wind me up when people are late generally actually. It's funny, it's a thing that should annoy me but it doesn't. Maybe it's just because my time actually genuinely is less valuable than other people's [laughs].

Cathy: [Laughs]

Paul: It's never really bothered me. I actually hate people being early. If I'm caught on the hoof, if I think, oh I'm going to be doing something in 15 minutes and someone calls me then...

Mark: Yeah.

- Paul: ...God that throws me. Because for some reason I just haven't settled my brain into that mode and I find that absolutely awful.
- Cathy: Yeah.
- Rachel: Yeah. No I agree, I agree.
- Mark: I don't even like it when someone is exactly on time. When someone said 'I'll come around at noon' and then on the stroke of noon they knock on the door, and you're like alright bloody hell.
- Paul: Yeah [laughs].
- Mark: I know we said noon but I mean...
- Rachel: I agree.
- Mark: ...you know not actual noon, surely.
- Rachel: This may not be a question you like, but is there anything you want to say to each other that you've never said before?
- Paul: I'm not certain this would be the forum for my views. I'm holding out for deathbed.
- Paul: [Laughs]
- Cathy: [Laughs] Oh come on, give it us, it's a new podcast.
- Mark: That's a great idea for a podcast, you interview people on their deathbed.
- Paul: [Laughs]
- Mark: I suppose there's some possible sort of pitfalls but by God you'd get some exclusives there.
- Rachel: Let's do it.

Paul: Yeah but imagine the pressure on the record then, you'd want to record on quite a few different formats wouldn't you just in case?

Cathy: [Laughs]

Mark: Oh yeah, you'd be 'I'm sorry, I know you're about to die but there's a thing called clean, yeah clean please'.

Paul: [Laughs]

[I Wish I Was An Only Child Theme Music]

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

Rachel: Thank you, thank you that was lovely.

Cathy: Paul, I'll see you in Stroud. He's gone.

Rachel: He's gone.

[End of Podcast]