

I Wish I Was An Only Child – Ollie & Rosie Jones

[Guitar and flute music]

RACHEL MASON: Welcome to I Wish I Was An Only Child, with me, Rachel Mason –

CATHY MASON: And me, Cathy Mason.

RACHEL: Where we speak to siblings about the dynamic of their relationship to see where we're going wrong.

CATHY: This week we spoke to comedian Rosie Jones.

RACHEL: And her younger brother Ollie, who's an English teacher and video editor.

[Flute sounds]

RACHEL: And, um –

CATHY: We will have a row in this podcast.

RACHEL: Rosie – we will have a row, but we won't start with a row. Um –

CATHY: I'm going to start with – no –

RACHEL: So I –

CATHY: Go on.

RACHEL: I read somewhere you said that you come from quite a funny family. And you've always used comedy to bring you closer. Can you tell us more about that?

ROSIE JONES: Um, basically, so there's me, Ollie, and Mum and Dad. And out of the four of us, we're in two groups: a funny group and an unfunny group.

[All laugh]

ROSIE: And I am in the unfunny group.

CATHY: How does that –

RACHEL: Oh –

OLLIE JONES: I'd say so.

ROSIE: Because I was going to say I'm the least funniest member of our family, but actually no. Our dad has no sense of humour.

CATHY: Really?

ROSIE: But then – but then Ollie and our mum are the ones always cracking jokes and really it's my role at the dinner table to sit there quietly and laugh. Like they are much funnier than I will ever be.

CATHY: Ollie, do you agree with that?

OLLIE: I think that – I think it's a weird thing to say. But I know what you mean. I think you're – you're the one – you just – you're famous for your laugh. You always laugh. That's like kind of why I

think you're so funny, is because people love to laugh with you. And, uh, I don't know. No, but that doesn't mean you're not funny. You've always been funny and you've always made like funny comments and stuff. You've always been pretty quick and witty.

ROSIE: Yeah, I think in the outside world I am funny. But it's – I was thinking literally today, people think I'm the loud one and the extrovert, but I do think I turn that on when I need to. I think I'm my most happiest and I'm the most relaxed when there's other people there willing to be the funny one. Because I would much rather sit back and just enjoy them.

CATHY: So why are you doing what you're doing?

RACHEL: Well it's the only way she can have a voice. Because everyone's really funny at home, so she's like, 'I need to take it on as a career.'

CATHY: Yeah.

ROSIE: Um, that's such an interesting question. I think I do it because – maybe because people don't expect me to be funny. And as a job I do love it. I do love the ability to make people laugh. Because people don't expect me to be funny, so I do really love my job. But that said, it feels like a job for me.

CATHY: Right.

ROSIE: So when I'm at home relaxed with the people I love, I'm not the joker. I'm the one eating – eating my lasagne.

CATHY: Yeah.

ROSIE: Really quietly and just enjoying everyone around me.

RACHEL: So – so it's Ollie.

OLLIE: Yeah.

RACHEL: It's you and your mum that are the funnies. You're the funny pair.

OLLIE: Well, yeah. I guess we're the ones that crack the jokes.

RACHEL: Right.

OLLIE: But I don't know. It's – it's kind of funny, like dinner at our house is kind of, uh, it's usually me and my mum making like quick – quick one-liners at each other. And then Rosie and Dad kind of laughing along with it and stuff. And then occasionally Rosie will say something really, really dark.

[All laugh]

OLLIE: Like she'll make a joke but it'll be like a totally new kind of joke. I'm trying to think of an example.

CATHY: So do you think, Rosie, it's about rebellion for you? Because it sounds like you're doing – you're being quite bloody minded, you know? You say, 'people don't expect me to be funny. I'm a woman, people are definitely not going to –'

ROSIE: Yeah.

CATHY: 'Don't think women are funny.' Uh, so do you think it's like a rebellion?

ROSIE: Um, I don't know, really. Because comedy has always been important to me growing up. So I wouldn't say I'm rebelling.

CATHY: Yeah.

ROSIE: I'm definitely doing what I want to do. But, yeah, it's weird. I think I do it because I know what joy I get –

CATHY: Yeah, exactly. Yeah.

ROSIE: From laughing. So I want to give it to other people.

CATHY: That's interesting.

RACHEL: So there was obviously, when you were kids, a lot of laughter. So you two got on really well?

ROSIE: Yeah. Yeah. Really well.

OLLIE: Pretty well, yeah.

ROSIE: I hate to be –

CATHY: Yeah, oh no.

ROSIE: That pair of siblings. But yeah.

CATHY: It's no good for the podcast, Rosie. Come on.

ROSIE: We'll have an argument later on.

OLLIE: Yeah, we've – we've organised it.

CATHY: Great. Good.

RACHEL: Good.

OLLIE: We've written one down.

CATHY: Good.

ROSIE: But yeah, I would say – so there's five years between us –

CATHY: Yeah.

ROSIE: So I remember quite clearly Ollie being born. And I remember feeling so lonely.

CATHY: Oh.

ROSIE: Before Ollie came along. And really I don't want to get down and boring, but my mum and dad, um, I think always wanted loads of children.

CATHY: Oh.

ROSIE: And then I was born and there were quite clearly a lot of problems and a lot of complications.

OLLIE: Yeah.

ROSIE: And for a long time they didn't know how disabled I would be. So they waited a good few years –

CATHY: Oh, right.

ROSIE: Um, and when I was four they were like, 'right, I think we can have another child.' And so I – I remember that being such a big deal. And I remember just wanting a little brother or a sister so much. And my mum would say to me, 'who are we having this baby for?' And I'd go, 'me!'

CATHY: That's brilliant. Aw.

RACHEL: Aw.

ROSIE: And yeah, I remember everything.

OLLIE: Everything.

ROSIE: I remember –

OLLIE: How much do you remember?

ROSIE: Yeah, everything. Everything. I remember going to the hospital and holding him and just feeling so happy.

CATHY: That's brilliant.

ROSIE: And then so many childhood videos of Ollie frankly looking in pain because I was – I was –

OLLIE: Yeah, yeah.

ROSIE: Hugging him so much and yeah, and annoyingly that hasn't stopped. Like he's one of my best friends.

[Flute sounds]

CATHY: So never a bone of jealousy?

ROSIE: No.

CATHY: That he appeared.

RACHEL: When he came – when he appeared? No?

CATHY: Not one day –

ROSIE: No.

CATHY: Wow.

ROSIE: No.

CATHY: That is – I've never heard of that.

ROSIE: No.

RACHEL: There's also an age gap where –

CATHY: I wonder if it's the age gap.

RACHEL: That the more people that we're talking to with the big age gap, you're ready. You're like, 'I'm ready to have a sibling,' you know?

ROSIE: Yeah. Yeah.

CATHY: Yeah.

RACHEL: You want another little friend.

ROSIE: Yeah.

RACHEL: So –

ROSIE: Actually for me it was the opposite. And looking back now it's quite dark. Because I was only five years old –

RACHEL: Yeah.

ROSIE: But I remember going, 'right, Mummy's got to look after the baby so she can't be there for me anymore.'

RACHEL: Right.

ROSIE: 'But that's okay, I'm ready to live independently. Woohoo!'

OLLIE: Independently. Yeah.

CATHY: Rosie, are you – are you literally Buddha?

OLLIE: Exactly.

CATHY: This girl is – I've never heard anything like it.

OLLIE: Yeah.

CATHY: You shouldn't think like that at five. You should be fighting and – that's amazing, isn't it? That's evolved.

ROSIE: Yeah, I was an incredibly intelligent little girl.

RACHEL: Do you remember her as that, Ollie?

OLLIE: Well it's like – I remember – I definitely relate you to kind of like the – the super smart like braniac who can't move and doesn't have any motor function. But like has this immense brain power. Who you can – because like you can just write. You're like an amazing writer. So you can, you know, you're – some of your stories and some of the stuff that you've written in the past has been really impressive. And it's probably because you don't make up for it in like, 'oh, I'll just walk over to the shop' or whatever. 'I'll just run to New Zealand.' Like I would do. Instead, you're like –

CATHY: Oh, so you're the physical one. Yeah.

OLLIE: Yeah.

CATHY: Yeah yeah.

OLLIE: I think that's probably something I took from our relationship and home life. It's kind of like everywhere that I've been or, you know, even gigs and concerts and stuff, and I remember thinking like, you know, 'how could Rosie be where I am right now?' Like or I'm walking up a mountain and like there's a bit – there's like a nice little viewpoint or whatever, but to get to that viewpoint I have to go over this massive landslide bit that I know you would never be able to get over. So every single one of those moments I think like, 'what would Rosie do?' in that – in that moment, you know?

CATHY: She'd write a novel.

OLLIE: Exactly.

ROSIE: Yeah.

OLLIE: She'd sit at the bottom writing about it.

ROSIE: It sounds so sad and I mean this, but I am perfectly happy at home in Yorkshire writing. Because I know that you're in New Zealand seeing –

OLLIE: Not in New Zealand.

ROSIE: Those –

CATHY: Oh dear. You're not that close. Where is he?

OLLIE: I'm in Durham now.

ROSIE: Durham.

CATHY: Oh.

ROSIE: No, when you were in New Zealand.

OLLIE: Yeah yeah yeah.

ROSIE: I know that you're seeing those views and you can come back and tell me all about it. Like –

OLLIE: Yeah.

ROSIE: I've always been quite practical of – I know I can't do that so I will do something else that brings me as much joy.

RACHEL: Yeah.

OLLIE: Yeah, and all that said, you – you still have done lots of things. And like especially since your career has blown up, you've done so many amazing things. Like riding on a plane and all this stuff that like I couldn't do. And it's not a thing about physical ability at that point. It's like –

ROSIE: Yeah.

OLLIE: It's – it's about your brain. And I guess because you've been gifted in your brain, you're able to be like, 'alright, physically somebody can put me on the top of this plane. Physically I can stand there,' you know?

ROSIE: Yeah.

OLLIE: So it's just –

ROSIE: Yeah.

CATHY: But – so – but when – sorry.

OLLIE: You can simplify everything, I guess.

ROSIE: Yeah. Yeah.

CATHY: But – but Ollie, so when you were kids, were you jealous of Rosie being so bright? Because I think that is stressful. When you've got a sibling who's really bright, you feel – like Rachel was definitely the bright one. You went to the good school.

RACHEL: I went to the grammar school.

CATHY: And I – and it – I felt like the – thicker. So how –

OLLIE: Yeah.

CATHY: How did you feel?

OLLIE: I don't know. Well compared to Rosie – I never really compared myself to Rosie. But, uh, I obviously noticed that she was more academic than me. Like for sure. She was always the academic one. But I feel like that's the way that the DNA works, you know?

CATHY: Yeah, exactly.

OLLIE: You get – you get a bit of your – of your parents', um, intelligence. And then you get a bit of your parents' kind of, I guess, I don't know what – like wanderlust almost. What is it? Like, um –

CATHY: Yeah. Yeah.

OLLIE: Our grandpa, right? I guess I share more in common with my dad's dad than my mum or my dad.

ROSIE: Yeah.

CATHY: Right.

OLLIE: Yeah.

ROSIE: Yeah.

CATHY: Right.

OLLIE: And so therefore I think I have more similarities with my dad. And whereas Rosie's more similar to Mum in the same respect that they're quite good thinkers.

CATHY: Yeah. Yeah.

OLLIE: Like Mum probably won't say she is, but she's – she's pretty smart.

ROSIE: Yeah. Yeah. I think we have never had a problem between us. Our – our big problem growing up was other people. Because if I put it down on paper, I am older, um, in terms of school I was more intelligent and I was the only disabled person at the school. So literally everyone at school and in the town knew me.

CATHY: Right.

ROSIE: And what I hated growing up was sometimes Ollie would just be Rosie's sister.

CATHY: Right.

ROSIE: Rosie's brother.

OLLIE: Yeah.

ROSIE: Um, and that – that happened when he got a shit teacher going to him, 'why aren't you more like your sister?'

OLLIE: Yeah. Yeah, right.

ROSIE: And, um –

OLLIE: It happened as well.

ROSIE: Yeah.

OLLIE: The person who – will remain nameless, but that person was potentially the – a head teacher of a primary school that I went to. Yeah.

RACHEL: Oh boy.

CATHY: That is outrageous.

ROSIE: Yeah.

RACHEL: Yeah.

CATHY: But the problem is Rosie, you're now going fame route, which again is going to be – Ollie, you're now the brother of –

ROSIE: Yeah.

CATHY: Right.

OLLIE: Yeah.

ROSIE: Yeah. Yeah.

CATHY: It's endless. It's endless.

OLLIE: It's true, it's true.

ROSIE: Um, yeah. And from my point of view – and I don't know if I've ever expressed that – this, but I feel a form of guilt about that.

CATHY: Yeah.

ROSIE: Because we are two separate people. And I hate that people in our lives will see him as my brother before they see him as an amazing, incredible, intelligent, funny person in his own right.

CATHY: How do you feel about that, Ollie? Just being in the shadow of –

RACHEL: Rosie's brother.

CATHY: Being – you're Rosie's brother.

OLLIE: No actually it – in school it was more, 'oh, you're Mrs. Jones's son.'

CATHY: Really?

OLLIE: 'Oh, does she give you detentions? Does she give you detentions at home?' Like –

ROSIE: Yeah because our mum was a deputy head teacher.

CATHY: Oh wow.

RACHEL: Okay.

OLLIE: My mum's reputation in the school and I think that – because she was a teacher. And for kids teachers are like –

CATHY: Yeah.

OLLIE: You know, god or the devil.

RACHEL: Yeah.

CATHY: Yeah totally.

OLLIE: So –

CATHY: Yeah. Yes.

OLLIE: And like, you know, like my mum was quite respected in – our mum was quite respected in school. So everything revolved around my mum in school. Like, you know, whether or not kids decided to bully me depended on whether or not they liked my mum. So it was like –

CATHY: Really?

OLLIE: It was more about that. And then it was like, 'oh, also, you know, that – that really slow sixth former is your sister.' Like –

CATHY: Really?

RACHEL: Did – did you get bullied, Ollie?

OLLIE: Um, when I was in year 10 I got – I had some year 8 try to bully – try to bully me. Have I ever told you that story?

ROSIE: No.

OLLIE: Another person who shall remain nameless that used to come up to me and say like, 'oh' –

CATHY: Oh no, go on.

RACHEL: No, go on.

OLLIE: He said – he would come up to me and be like, 'oh, you're gay, aren't you? You're gay. You're gay.' Over and over again. And so I used to just walk past him like, 'yes, I'm gay,' or, 'no, I'm not gay.' Or say whatever was on my mind. But, um, I don't – I wouldn't ever class it bullying. I never really got bullied in school.

ROSIE: See, this is a thing with Ollie as well. Because he's not gay, but I hope you don't mind me saying you are quite effeminate. And –

OLLIE: Yeah.

ROSIE: Growing up in our little Yorkshire town, a lot of people would say, 'oh, you're gay.' But honestly nothing ever phases Ollie. And I remember he had a really tiny BMX bike. And when he was 11, someone said to him, 'oh, Ollie you're bike's gay.' And he would get –

CATHY: What?

ROSIE: Yeah. Yeah. Like it wouldn't affect him at all.

RACHEL: That's –

OLLIE: It's probably – it's only because people who are sure of their sexuality aren't bothered when people call them gay.

CATHY: Yeah yeah yeah, exactly.

OLLIE: Because they know that they're not or they know that they are. The only person who has a problem with it is the one that's in school like every day, every hour saying –

CATHY: Yeah.

OLLIE: 'You're gay because of this, you're gay because of this.' Like, 'no, I think you're the gay one.'

CATHY: Yeah yeah yeah.

RACHEL: Yeah.

CATHY: But so was your childhood – tell us more about your childhood. Was it – I mean it sounds like you've got quite – was it sort of progressive parents? They – because you're both very open emotionally and sort of –

RACHEL: Close.

CATHY: Close and –

OLLIE: For sure.

CATHY: And at peace with yourselves?

OLLIE: I think in our family, I think that's one thing that we have that's really really good is how close we are emotionally to each other.

CATHY: Yeah.

OLLIE: Like me and my mum are hyper-sensitive people.

CATHY: Yeah.

OLLIE: We share that together. Rosie's sensitive and Rosie's understanding. So is my dad. But they're both definitely a few levels behind me and my mum.

CATHY: Yeah. Yeah.

OLLIE: Like me and my mum foresee, uh, situations. And I think it's probably because, you know, my mum was an only child, uh, and then – well she still is, I guess.

CATHY: Yeah.

[All laugh]

OLLIE: Is that how it works?

CATHY: Yeah, that's how it works. It never changes.

OLLIE: Yeah, so she – yeah. Unless –

CATHY: Unless?

OLLIE: No, um – but yeah, no. She grew up as an only child. So I think maybe since having Rosie anyway, she became obviously as a mother protective because she's had a child. But then more so because her child was like disabled. So it's like, 'oh, I need to really look after this child.' So I think she became – and obviously she must've had a lot of depression, you know? Both of them. It must've been sad for them both afterwards.

ROSIE: Yeah.

OLLIE: Like you can't just be –

ROSIE: Yeah.

OLLIE: You can't be nonchalant about something like that.

CATHY: Yeah. Yeah.

OLLIE: So – but anyway, my point is, uh, probably after recovering from that darkness and realising that everything is okay, that would've made them more of a sensitive person.

ROSIE: Yeah.

OLLIE: And I think definitely my relationship growing up with you, I've just learned so much about, uh, empathy in general. And it's something that is priceless. And it's something that I could never – I would never be able to change.

ROSIE: Yeah.

OLLIE: It's – it's also something that's stunting, because, you know, maybe there are – I have a lot of trust issues with humanity

just in general. Like, you know, the concept of somebody needing help and, you know, nobody helping them. I find that really really strange.

CATHY: Yeah.

[Flute sounds]

ROSIE: I mean I don't want to make it all about me, I do –

CATHY: [laughs] Yes, exactly.

OLLIE: 'Although it is about me.'

ROSIE: I – I think there's something really powerful about having a disabled person in your family. Because it changes dynamics and it means you've got to really trust everyone. And since Ollie can remember, even though I'm the older sister, he's had to care for me and look after me. And I was thinking earlier, there's no one out in the world who has grown up with me so I was never disabled to him. I was just Rosie.

CATHY: Yeah. Big sister.

RACHEL: Yeah.

ROSIE: And growing up, I spoke worse than I speak now. And when I get tired it gets even worse. And there were days that sometimes even my mum and dad couldn't quite get certain words. But Ollie had always, always understood me. And I mean, it'll make Ollie feel uncomfortable –

OLLIE: Here we go.

ROSIE: But –

OLLIE: What are you going to say?

ROSIE: Sorry. But what – what is incredible with Ollie is he doesn't judge anybody. And he can literally spend an evening with a millionaire smoking cigars and then he can go outside and sit all night chatting to a homeless person. And he doesn't do that for a point, he does that because he wants to speak to everyone and get to know them. And I do think on some level that is growing up with me and seeing people judge me and patronise me and don't give me the time of day. So now he just empathises with everyone.

CATHY: Which – which is amazing. Because Ollie, it's not – has it made you angry? You don't feel angry?

OLLIE: No, no.

RACHEL: At the world.

CATHY: At the injustice – no, at the world.

RACHEL: Yeah.

CATHY: At the injustice of that? No, because that's how I think a lot of people would react.

OLLIE: Oh, do you know what? I've just – yeah, no. For sure. I get angry. And I've got – I've got angry before in the past where, you know, some – someone will be – they'll just steam past Rosie with a briefcase in hand.

CATHY: Yeah.

OLLIE: And they'll send her flying and they won't even look back. And that's the kind of stuff that I get really mad at. But it –

CATHY: Right.

OLLIE: Only because it's another person who's fallen down. It's not even because she's my sister. It's because I automatically see that it's not the – it's not the right thing to do. And I think that is because I've grown up with Rosie. It's like obviously you don't knock into a disabled person. Because they're going to go flying. Because they don't have the same kind of control as we do. Whereas people in my town, like some people in my town – and I guess some people – people all over the world, generally they don't know about what it's like to be like Rosie. And to have everything so slow.

CATHY: Well people are afraid of the other.

OLLIE: Yeah.

CATHY: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah. Totally.

OLLIE: Like imagine – imagine being so –

CATHY: If it's –

OLLIE: Being so reliant on, you know, catching yourself with your hands. But maybe you're not quick enough to put your hands down, so then you just hit your face on the floor. Like it's – it's easier to really injure yourself as a person like Rosie, or as a

person with a physical disability. So they just – they just require more looking after for that reason. It's like quite simple.

CATHY: But your childhood sounds amazing. You both look on it as an incredibly happy time. So how did that impact on having friendships outside? Because I think if I had that relationship with Rachel when we were growing up, I wouldn't want any friends. I'd struggle with – because I would just –

RACHEL: But they've both got loads of friends.

CATHY: Have you both got loads of friends? Or when you were children – when you were children, did you have loads of friends?

OLLIE: Yeah, we had big – both big groups of friends.

CATHY: Oh, interesting.

OLLIE: Yeah.

ROSIE: Yeah. Yeah. And again maybe that is our age difference.

CATHY: Yes.

RACHEL: Yeah.

CATHY: That's right.

ROSIE: So that when – even when I was 16, I loved chatting to Ollie and we were still close at home. But if anything we could talk more because when we did go to school and weekends with – I had my 16-year-old mates and he had his 11-year-old boys.

CATHY: Yeah.

RACHEL: Yeah.

ROSIE: So – and actually I think growing up now in hindsight, my school friends, they were all a little bit shit.

CATHY: Oh really?

ROSIE: And – yeah. I'm not close to my school friends anymore. In hindsight, they did quite bully me. Um, I've definitely found my friends and my people in London and at uni. But Ollie had such a great, strong group of friends. And you're all still friends now.

OLLIE: Yeah. Well I've been living with, uh –

CATHY: That's amazing.

OLLIE: A friend of mine, Hamish. I've been living with him in Italy while – because he's – he's an English teacher there. Well, actually he's director of studies, uh, at an English school. Yeah.

CATHY: Nice. Nice. Nice.

RACHEL: Nice.

OLLIE: It's a little bit better than an English teacher. But, um, yeah. So he's been – he's been a friend for years. And then even before him I've had, um, some old school childhood friends, Albert and Will, and they were – they, um, they're living together now in Brighton. So we're all – if we're not together, we're all in our own separate groups together still.

RACHEL: Yeah.

OLLIE: Uh, and very much in contact still, so – we have had a very strong friend group. And I guess we differ from Rosie’s friends because Rosie’s friends were obviously nice, they weren’t like evil. But they – like all children, if you see an opportunity you’re probably going to take it.

RACHEL: Yeah.

OLLIE: So like having a disabled friend has a lot of benefits for them as well.

CATHY: Yeah. Yeah.

OLLIE: It’s like, you know, ‘oh, they disabled girl. She’s your friend.’ You know? You were definitely popular in school.

ROSIE: Yeah.

OLLIE: And it was not only because of your humour.

ROSIE: Yeah I feel like definitely at school in Yorkshire in the 90s, I felt like I was popular but like a phase, a fad. Like everyone loved being my best friend because you didn’t need to play out everyday, you got to the front of the queue at dinnertime.

OLLIE: Mainly that one.

ROSIE: It was amazing, but I think I went through a best friend every two years.

CATHY: Yeah.

ROSIE: Because you get bored of that and – and also on a personal level, I love comedy, I was secretly gay, like I never felt like I fit in.

CATHY: Yeah.

ROSIE: In our little seaside town. And I was never sad growing up. I never thought, ‘oh no, I haven’t found my people.’ And I think that’s because I had such a great family life.

RACHEL: Yeah.

CATHY: Yeah, totally.

ROSIE: That it didn’t matter, really, at school. Um, but definitely I’m in a much happier place now as an adult because I’m allowed to be the person I always was.

CATHY: Exactly. And – and Ollie, what do you do?

OLLIE: Well as of this morning I’m an English teacher again.

CATHY: Nice.

RACHEL: Ah.

ROSIE: Are you?

CATHY: Nice!

OLLIE: Yeah. Yeah.

CATHY: Hot off the press.

OLLIE: Yeah, so as – as easily as I’ve picked up that job again, I’ve, uh, I tend to lose them. So my careers are pretty random. Like – but mainly by skill I’m an editor. So I do lots of video editing and graphic design. Uh, and I’ve been getting back into illustration. Uh, I’m doing a little bit of photography. So it’s just kind of hobby-style stuff that I’m into.

RACHEL: Right, so you said you get them and lose them. Why – what do you mean?

OLLIE: Well, as in – so for example I went to New Zealand and I worked there for a bit. And I had this really cool job there in a – in a kind of hot springs, uh resort.

RACHEL: Lovely.

OLLIE: Uh, which was really fun, yeah. And I was just like pool attendant. So I had like the little – the little pool outfit on. And, uh, I’d be like running around and like stopping kids from drowning and stuff.

RACHEL: Yeah.

OLLIE: As you do.

RACHEL: Yeah.

OLLIE: But it was – it was really easy, really fun. Uh, I got to learn a little bit about, uh, plumbing, I guess, which is always interesting.

RACHEL: Right. Random, yeah.

OLLIE: And, um, also in a place like New Zealand which is cool because they have, uh, natural mineral water.

RACHEL: Right.

OLLIE: All over the place.

RACHEL: Yeah.

OLLIE: So.

RACHEL: Yeah, lovely.

OLLIE: So it's very nice.

CATHY: He's got great skin.

RACHEL: No, so you – you'd go where the adventure is, is the point. So –

OLLIE: That's – yeah. Basically yeah.

RACHEL: Yeah, that's – that's your priority.

ROSIE: So basically if weren't in Covid times, I really doubt Ollie would be in the UK right now. He's always travelling, different place, different job. And I think that is also our parents, who always told us we could be anything we wanted to be.

OLLIE: Yeah.

ROSIE: And that has made a comedian –

CATHY: Yeah.

ROSIE: And a traveller.

CATHY: But what –

RACHEL: So how do you – how do you keep – do you keep in touch a lot when you're travelling? Do you talk a lot on Facetime and –

OLLIE: Yeah, actually to be fair, not so much. I'm sure – not as much as – as they'd like. But, uh –

ROSIE: Yeah.

OLLIE: I get really caught up, uh, in wherever I go. And I kind of – I've never really been obsessed with my phone. I definitely use it a lot.

RACHEL: Yeah.

OLLIE: But, um –

CATHY: Ollie, you're a hippy.

OLLIE: I don't use it to –

RACHEL: Yeah.

OLLIE: To scroll or anything.

CATHY: You're a hippy.

ROSIE: Yeah.

OLLIE: Probably, yeah.

RACHEL: Yeah.

OLLIE: I'm a bit of a – bit of a modern day hippy, right?

CATHY: Exactly.

OLLIE: I like to play – I'm – I like to play computer games.

CATHY: Oh, okay. A nerdy hippy. A nerdy hippy.

RACHEL: A nerdy hippy, yeah.

OLLIE: A nerdy hippy, yeah. I'm a total nerd hippy.

RACHEL: So what – so as brilliantly as you got on as kids, there must've been a couple of rows. Come on.

CATHY: Come on.

RACHEL: They don't have to be really dark, but can you just –

CATHY: Just make one up.

RACHEL: Even if they're funny.

OLLIE: Give us the juice.

CATHY: Yeah.

RACHEL: Even if they're funny. Can you – do you not have any?

OLLIE: Just – well, definitely we – we used to have physical fights.

CATHY: Oh.

ROSIE: Yeah. Yeah.

OLLIE: Like we used to physically fight. I recall, um, rough like tumbling around with Rosie, like trying to like grab her.

ROSIE: Yeah.

OLLIE: And like –

ROSIE: Yeah.

OLLIE: Rosie would obviously win. Like when we were children, because I was a really small kid. Uh, and Rosie was obviously always a bit bigger than me. Uh, and until like – I guess she turned 18.

RACHEL: Right.

OLLIE: Uh, but yeah. We used to have physical fights.

CATHY: Over what?

OLLIE: Like not really violent ones, but – where I used to – we used to like push each other. We used to wrestle and stuff. Do you ever remember that, Rosie?

ROSIE: Yeah. Yeah. I – I was thinking this because I know a lot of people with like one brother. And I don't think we have a brother-sister relationship. I think we're more like two brothers in that if we argued, it would be over something like a remote control or the last bag of Mini Cheddars. And we would be quite practical about that and go, 'right, we both want that, so let's wrestle.'

CATHY: That's really weird.

OLLIE: Yeah, that is really strange.

ROSIE: And whoever can pin the person down first gets a bags of Cheddars. And – and like someone would win and the loser would go, 'fair enough.'

OLLIE: Yeah, survival of the fittest.

ROSIE: There you go.

CATHY: That's – but that's perfect.

RACHEL: That's perfect, yeah.

CATHY: Because as sisters, ours are just all emotional and sulky.

RACHEL: Yeah. Yeah.

CATHY: And it's – you know, it's like you need dogs.

RACHEL: They last years, yeah.

ROSIE: Yeah.

CATHY: They last years. Whereas you two are like dogs. You just scrap it out and move on.

RACHEL: Yeah. Get it done.

ROSIE: That's it. I think we – we would argue a lot more. We would argue several times a day but those arguments would last 30 seconds.

CATHY: Yeah.

OLLIE: Yeah.

RACHEL: Yeah.

ROSIE: We'd fight it out and then we would be alright again.

CATHY: God, that's amazing.

RACHEL: That's brilliant. Um, did – did you – can you, Ollie –

OLLIE: Yeah.

RACHEL: Can you remember any weird childhood obsessions that Rosie had?

OLLIE: Childhood obsessions?

RACHEL: Weird habits? Or weird habits?

OLLIE: Weird habits. Oh god, let me think. Probably –

RACHEL: And Rosie, you can start thinking because we're going to ask you in a minute, so –

OLLIE: Oh god, I bet you've got more than I've got. Weird habits. I don't know, I guess everything you did was pretty weird.

CATHY: Like what?

OLLIE: Now you loved your computer games as a kid, and I found that quite weird for you. Because I remember thinking, 'how can she hit the mouse quick enough?'

ROSIE: Oh, I can.

OLLIE: I know. It's not – it's not fast enough. You could never play World of Warcraft.

ROSIE: Yeah but I'll play Candy Crush. I can do that.

CATHY: I actually don't know what that is.

OLLIE: Actually something that Rosie – something that Rosie's really good at, and probably because she practiced it, uh, everyday for hours since you were probably 18, since you went to uni, and that's typing on the keyboard. Have you ever seen Rosie type on the keyboard?

RACHEL: No.

CATHY: No.

OLLIE: It's a phenomenon. It's honestly amazing.

RACHEL: Really.

OLLIE: So she –

CATHY: Like playing the piano.

RACHEL: Superhuman.

OLLIE: We like – you know how we go like this and we hit the –

RACHEL: Yeah.

OLLIE: We hit the letters with our fingertips.

CATHY: Yeah.

OLLIE: Rosie goes like that, she goes like that –

CATHY: She strokes them?

OLLIE: Sorry, I'll – I'll explain it verbally.

ROSIE: Yeah.

CATHY: Yeah, explain it. Yeah.

OLLIE: She strokes – she strokes the keyboard rather than tapping the keys. And by stroking the keyboard she applies pressure on her – on your finger. On the letter.

ROSIE: Yeah.

OLLIE: It's really really weird.

ROSIE: So I stroke it but –

CATHY: That's really pervy.

OLLIE: Yeah, it's really pervy. It's a pervy way to type on the keyboard, yeah.

CATHY: It's really weird.

RACHEL: Yeah.

CATHY: Whatever gets you off is what I say.

ROSIE: Oh, oh it does.

CATHY: Blimey, what are you typing?

[All laugh]

ROSIE: You don't want to know.

CATHY: Erotic fiction.

ROSIE: Yeah.

CATHY: Rachel used to write pornography, so –

RACHEL: Yeah. That was –

CATHY: She's the one –

OLLIE: Oh wow.

RACHEL: Way back, yeah. A long time ago.

CATHY: Sorry, Rach.

RACHEL: Um –

CATHY: Sorry.

RACHEL: So – no, it's fine.

ROSIE: Oh my god.

RACHEL: So, um, so what about Ollie? Did he have any weird obsessions or bad habits?

ROSIE: No, um, he didn't have any weird obsessions. But Ollie's always played the piano, and like my dad and my granddad, music has always been so important to them. So you were obsessed with a different musical instrument –

CATHY: Oh really?

ROSIE: Every week.

OLLIE: Yeah, I –

RACHEL: And you stuck with the piano, Ollie?

OLLIE: Yeah.

RACHEL: Is that –

OLLIE: Well that's the problem.

RACHEL: Okay.

OLLIE: The problem is I don't really – I don't have a piano where I am. And when I – well, whenever I've lived independently I've never really had a piano. So I've – I have some portable instruments, like I've got my ukelele, I've got – I've got a banjo.

CATHY: Aw. Aw.

RACHEL: Right.

OLLIE: I've got a guitar.

RACHEL: What did your grandfather – Ollie, you said you were very much like your grandfather. What did he do? Just quickly, sorry. Want to know more about him.

OLLIE: He was – he was a – a teacher as well for a lot of his life. And also he was a tour guide in Marrakesh.

RACHEL: Yeah. Yeah.

CATHY: Oh, so you are – yeah.

OLLIE: Uh, so somehow he knew – somehow he knew Marrakesh.

CATHY: Yeah.

OLLIE: As well as a tour guide should.

ROSIE: Yeah like –

OLLIE: So –

ROSIE: He – on paper he was a teacher.

CATHY: Yeah.

RACHEL: Right.

ROSIE: But like Ollie he did something new every single year.

RACHEL: Yeah.

ROSIE: And he would live in Marrakesh, he will be best friends with Peter O’Toole, like his friends were artists, musicians, actors. He was, I mean, looking back now he was a ranging drunk.

CATHY: Exciting, yeah.

ROSIE: But every – yeah –

OLLIE: Yeah.

ROSIE: Everyone wanted to be his friend.

RACHEL: Yeah.

ROSIE: And he was the life and soul of every party. And Ollie is exactly like him.

[Flute sounds]

CATHY: So did you share music tastes and telly tastes? And did you like the same things as kids?

ROSIE: Well I remember – so basically growing up, my mum told us a lot of lies. A lot of lies. And we believed every single one of them.

CATHY: Like what?

ROSIE: So from as long as I can remember, the rule was you cannot wake Mum up before 11 am.

CATHY: That's terrible.

ROSIE: 11 am!

RACHEL: Oh hold on, I was waiting for a reason. No? It – that was just –

ROSIE: No.

RACHEL: Oh.

ROSIE: No. No no. We just took that as fact.

RACHEL: Yeah.

ROSIE: So, um, when Ollie was about two, so he was walking, he – he would get out of bed but it would be before 11. And you can't wake Mum up –

CATHY: Oh no.

ROSIE: Before 11. So he would always come into my bed and, um, our thing at the weekend was we would go downstairs on our own, make a tent in front of the TV –

RACHEL: Oh, lovely.

ROSIE: And we always watched the same TV show. And what did I always say, Ollie?

OLLIE: ‘Can we watch something we both like?’

ROSIE: ‘Can we watch something – ‘

OLLIE: Yeah.

CATHY: Aw. And what was it? And what was it?

RACHEL: What was it?

OLLIE: It was usually Anastasia.

RACHEL: Okay. We don’t know that.

CATHY: What’s that? I don’t know what that is.

RACHEL: Is that – we don’t even know.

OLLIE: It’s like a Disney film that’s not actually a Disney film.

RACHEL: Ah okay.

CATHY: Oh yeah, so not comedy.

OLLIE: No, no.

ROSIE: No. No.

OLLIE: Serious –

ROSIE: No.

RACHEL: I mean they're kids.

CATHY: I know, but they could've like – they could've liked comedy when they were kids.

RACHEL: Kids comedy? Like what – what would they have been watching? Like Top –

CATHY: I don't know, the Chuckle Brothers?

RACHEL: Yeah, the Chuckle Brothers.

CATHY: Top Gear? I don't know.

OLLIE: Top Gear? Yeah.

[All laugh]

[Flute sounds]

CATHY: Wow.

RACHEL: Ollie, do you think you'll ever settle down?

OLLIE: Uh, I am kind of settling a bit. No, it's not really permanent settling at the moment.

CATHY: No.

OLLIE: I'm living with Arian, my girlfriend, uh, in Durham.

CATHY: Yeah.

OLLIE: Because she's – she's doing a PhD here, so I decided to come back from Italy and spend some time with her. And, you know, live – live with her and see – see how that goes. And it's just been really nice so far. I've been – I've been really enjoying it. So we're probably going to do this for a little while longer, and whatever the future holds I'm not sure. But, uh –

CATHY: He's a free spirit.

OLLIE: Yeah.

RACHEL: Yeah.

OLLIE: Part of her – part of her job, because she's – she's a – she's doing a PhD in – in volcanology, uh, in – in gas and magmatic bubbles. Um –

CATHY: Oh wow.

OLLIE: Yeah. So she – she gets to travel to places like New Zealand and Indonesia and all these amazing places. Vanoise too, you know? Places that I'd love to go and see. So here I get an opportunity to go.

RACHEL: So you've met the right – she's the one.

OLLIE: Yeah. 100%.

ROSIE: But – but that is something about you and I really love Arian. And you've gone out for four or five years, but neither of you are scared of travelling on your own. And you've had periods where you don't see each other for nearly a year.

CATHY: Wow.

ROSIE: Because she understands that you're doing your thing in New Zealand, I'm doing my thing in Japan, we'll meet in the summer in India.

CATHY: Wow.

ROSIE: And I find that whole concept so bizarre.

CATHY: Yeah, I do.

ROSIE: But for you it works.

OLLIE: Yeah, because it's – it's – yeah, it's just – I enjoy this way of life. Well that way of life. Before Covid.

RACHEL: Yeah.

OLLIE: And obviously – also taking more of proactive stand in terms of air travel.

CATHY: Yeah. Yeah.

OLLIE: Because its, uh, like there's – there's a lot of options like, you know, we can go to France and you don't need a plane to go to France.

RACHEL: Yeah.

OLLIE: And from France you can go all the way to, I don't know, India if you worked it out. So I think that – my next travel will – will be something based loosely on trying not to take the plane.

RACHEL: Yeah.

CATHY: Yeah.

OLLIE: Just to see what else is –

CATHY: Yeah yeah yeah.

RACHEL: Amazing.

OLLIE: Just to see how else I can travel.

RACHEL: Amazing.

OLLIE: But, um, yeah. I don't know. It's just a – it's just a fun pastime, really. And it's something to – something to be interested in and –

RACHEL: Yeah, but it's living.

CATHY: It's living.

OLLIE: Yeah.

RACHEL: Yeah. It – you – yeah. Ah, I think that's amazing. Right, final question.

CATHY: Final question. Over to you, Rachel Mason.

RACHEL: Is there anything you want to say to each other that you've never said before? Ollie?

OLLIE: Okay. Something that I've wanted to say to Rosie that I've never said before. I've probably only told her this once before, and that is that I admire a lot how she can brush things off, you know? Like it's like – I think we share opposite traits in terms of, you can brush something off like it's nothing, you know? It could be somebody stealing £1,000, it could be someone pushing you over purposely in the street. It could be anything and you'd be able to get over it. Whereas I'm the opposite. I – I could never –

CATHY: Yeah.

OLLIE: I could never let go of it.

RACHEL: Yeah.

CATHY: But Rosie would've moved on, yeah.

ROSIE: Yeah.

RACHEL: Yeah.

ROSIE: And I think – thank you. And I think I just need to be like that. It's a need so much for me because if I dwelled on every

time I'm patronised, every time someone laughs at me, every time someone underestimates me, I would never leave the house.

CATHY: Exactly.

ROSIE: I'd be a seething ball of rage. And I've got no time to be angry.

OLLIE: Yeah.

ROSIE: Like I've got shit to do. So yeah, I think – yeah, we'd be walking down the street and someone yells at me about my disability, and, um, Ollie is ready to punch him. And I'm like, 'no, don't.' Because it will ruin our day.

CATHY: Yeah.

RACHEL: Yeah.

ROSIE: What I want to do is just go, have a donut, have a hot chocolate, and remember that lovely day with my brother.

OLLIE: Yeah.

ROSIE: Instead of an awful day in the police station because Ollie's assaulted a little twat.

OLLIE: Or I've been assaulted.

CATHY: Yeah, exactly. Rosie, you are Buddha. You're Buddha, it's extraordinary.

RACHEL: Yeah, you are.

CATHY: I can't get my head around it.

OLLIE: That's something that I – that's something I'd bet my life on, for sure.

RACHEL: You are zen.

CATHY: I know.

OLLIE: But also – I still believe that –

RACHEL: Amazing.

OLLIE: Like I – I could not be happy if that happened. Like I couldn't be – I couldn't – I have to say something for the wellness of myself. It's like I have to release the – the energy.

CATHY: Yeah, I'd be the same. Yeah, yeah.

ROSIE: No, because it'll only make you feel worse.

RACHEL: Yeah.

CATHY: Yeah. That's true. It's true. Unbelievable. Um, Rosie, what do you want to say to Ollie?

ROSIE: Um, I mean I feel that you two will hate me because I want to make it more negative and –

CATHY: Love negative, Rosie. Come on.

ROSIE: A bit – no, no. Annoyingly, what I do want to say is, you’re my favourite person. Like I – I think I’m okay not walking up a mountain or swimming in the sea in Bali. I’m fine with that because I know that you are living that part of my life that I will never live. And I – I just admire the fact that you can pick up a backpack and just go halfway around the world and just fit in anywhere and talk to anyone. Because even though I’m a professional talker, I could not do that. And just your positivity and your need to go out there and see the world I find inspiring.

CATHY: Yeah.

ROSIE: And I love you so much and you are literally the only person in the world that I would kill someone for.

CATHY: Aw.

RACHEL: Aw.

ROSIE: So there you go.

CATHY: That’s lovely.

RACHEL: That’s teared me up. That’s teared me up.

CATHY: Oh guys, that’s teared me up.

RACHEL: Right, thanks for that.

CATHY: Oh no.

[Rosie laughs]

[Guitar and flute music]

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.