

I Wish I Was An Only Child – Emma & Beth Kilcoyne

[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: In this podcast we speak to other siblings about the dynamic of their relationship to see where we're going wrong.

CATHY: This week we spoke to twins Emma and Beth Kilcoyne.

RACHEL: Writers of many TV series, uh, including 'Roger & Val' with Dawn French. I've loved their TV show 'Dogtown' for a long time. I've always wanted to chat to them.

CATHY: And I never watched it because Rachel kept banging on about it, which just made me not watch it. And then for this I watched it and I thought it was brilliant. So, um, yeah. And they were everything we wanted and more.

RACHEL: I have been obsessed with these two for a long time. We were also told that we'd get on really well with them, which helps. So I insisted we had to have them on.

CATHY: Oh yeah, no. I just – well we fell in love with them. They were just – Rachel just said she didn't want to say they were kindred spirits. They were kindred spirits, Rach. Deal with it.

[Flute sounds]

RACHEL: So should we just dive in?

CATHY: Should we dive in?

RACHEL: Let's just go for it. You're going to start.

CATHY: Who's the funniest?

BETH KILCOYNE: Emma.

EMMA KILCOYNE: Me. I used to do comedy. That's how we kind of got our first TV series. And, um, I don't know. I had a – a salient moment a couple of months ago, you know, where there does come a point if you've spent a long time doing comedy, where you really have to remind yourself that not everything in life is funny.

BETH: I totally agree.

EMMA: And it can become a – I can remember – I can remember, I mean, I shocked myself a couple of months ago. Because I thought, 'do you know what, Emma, if you don't watch this you are going to end up like a woman I once witnessed who has a tendency to find everything funny.'

CATHY: Yeah.

EMMA: Possibly because she is a very very tall woman. And I think it's been kind of a problem to her all her life. Well I don't know if that's the reason. But I imagine it might be. And I went to her mother's funeral. And as she came down the aisle of the church behind the coffin at the end, she kind of like, you know, smirked and sort of winked in embarrassment. Terrible embarrassment.

And I – and I thought, ‘if I don’t watch myself, I’m going to end up like that.’ Because there is a – there is a point where you do have to just – I just find with comedy, maybe it’s the dark introspection of comedians, but you do have to remind yourself that that – that could be the end result. Mercifully I think I’ve just stopped myself in time.

RACHEL: You just caught yourself.

CATHY: How did you stop yourself?

EMMA: Um, how did I stop myself? I got a big shock on a job. If somebody says to me, ‘can you have more fun with a character?’ I will go a bundle even if it’s a film and you will know what that character might have for breakfast on a Wednesday in a very funny way. Whereas people don’t want to know that.

RACHEL: Right.

EMMA: About a very minor character, do you see what I mean?

CATHY: Yeah yeah yeah. Totally.

EMMA: And so you have to just kind of every once in a while remind yourself of that. But Beth is – Beth is the person that has to write all the proper feeling.

RACHEL: So that’s how – can we rewind a bit? In terms of – ‘Dogtown’ I would – I thought was incredible.

BETH: Thank you!

CATHY: She – when we first started agenting – when we first started agenting –

BETH: Yeah.

CATHY: She banged on about this fucking programme for such a long time.

RACHEL: And all the new –

CATHY: And kept saying, ‘we’ve got to sign’ –

RACHEL: I’d – I’d buy the DVD for like newcomers. I’d be like, ‘you need to watch this.’

CATHY: She’d make everyone watch it.

RACHEL: ‘You need to think about this.’

CATHY: And she absolutely – she was going to sign you whether you were signed or not.

BETH: Aw, thank you!

RACHEL: Yeah, and I – we Googled you and then we realised you were with Big Cheeses. We were like, ‘oh no. Okay. That’s fine, that’s fine.’

BETH: Oh my god!

RACHEL: But – but no, it was – it’s a brilliant – I’ve got to stop shouting.

CATHY: Yeah, you have.

RACHEL: I've got so excited. I've got to be very calm. Um, and I re-watched it to – to talk to you. I mean it's just – it's a brilliant –

CATHY: No, and I watched it. It's amazing.

RACHEL: I can't – I'm not going to –

BETH: Thank you!

CATHY: It's amazing.

RACHEL: I could spend –

BETH: Do you know? I think it kind of – it was just behind the curve, really, you know? It was women –

RACHEL: Yes.

BETH: Dressing as men –

RACHEL: Yes.

BETH: But they were playing them straight. It had some real kind of, um, drama in it as well, you know?

RACHEL: Yeah yeah.

BETH: And I think that it – it got put on, um, uh, BBC3 very late at night.

RACHEL: Yeah.

BETH: And, um, I think that, you know, a lot of – it was just quite – it's quite a surprising show.

RACHEL: Yeah.

BETH: I'll tell you who described it I thought quite well. You know the producer Jeff Posner?

CATHY: Yes.

RACHEL: Yes.

BETH: Well he – he had us in after 'Dogtown' on the strength of it, and he said, 'I think it's a very young person's show. You throw everything you've got at the camera. Um, and I would just like to help you try and a little bit calm it down.' You know he said that. I don't know – he's an older man and I thought that was –

CATHY: Yeah, I was going to say.

BETH: I can see how you would think that as – as like a – I think women, French and Victoria Wood, obviously absolute heroines. But I think other than that sometimes men find it quite hard when woman are silly and also then change a mood and – but I'm really glad to see that that is really changing now.

RACHEL: Yeah.

CATHY: Yeah, totally.

BETH: I think it's fantastic.

CATHY: But hang on, Beth.

BETH: Yeah.

CATHY: Talking about the older, elderly men. Me and you both ended up with elderly men.

BETH: Yes, comedians.

CATHY: Comedians. So how do you explain that?

BETH: We did, we did. Well I'll tell you what is interesting to me. Actually it's a lovely story, do you want to know it?

CATHY: Yeah.

RACHEL: Yes.

BETH: Okay. So I was at Edinburgh before we got 'Dogtown'.

CATHY: Yeah.

BETH: And I'd written a, uh, short called 'The Ghost of Auntie Pat', which led to our big break because when it came back to London, Paul McCartney came to see it.

CATHY: Yeah, I read that.

RACHEL: Yeah.

BETH: And – and kind of like loved it, which is why any agent at all took any notice.

CATHY: Yeah.

EMMA: They didn't before.

CATHY: Exactly.

BETH: So – hang on. So I was – I was in Edinburgh. Previous to Edinburgh, Emma and I had watched a screenplay of – it's Arthur Smith, my partner. Um, of his called 'My Summer with Des', which had Rachel Weisz and Neil Morrissey in it. And it was about Euro 96. But it was the most beautiful screenplay. And, um, at the end Emma said to me, 'Arthur Smith. That can't be that cockney comedian. He could never write like this.' And then when we went to Edinburgh, he was in the Players bar. And I went up to him and quoted a line from the screenplay. I just thought, 'oh, he'll be very, you know, grand and very kind of, um, intellectual and poetic.' So I said, 'oh please excuse me Mr. Smith, I live in the pagoda in Battersea Park.'

EMMA: Well, that was the line.

BETH: And he looked at me and said, 'oh, I wasn't happy with that screenplay at all. I thought they messed it up.' And then I said, 'oh, well we loved it. We loved it.' And then he went, 'yeah, you are gorgeous. What are my chances of getting off with you?' Right? So then I got off with him obviously. Because he was a writer. And I thought, 'kick off having, uh' –

CATHY: Sex with a writer.

BETH: Yeah. Yes. Yeah, to be blunt. With a playwright. With a playwright.

CATHY: Playwright. Playwright.

BETH: I think that was on my list at the time.

RACHEL: Right.

BETH: And then I ignored him totally, right? Done that, not interested. But then the next year I bumped into him again. And, um, after Edinburgh Catherine Tate rang me and said, 'have you seen The Stage today? Have you seen Arthur Smith's column? Run out and get it.' So I went out and bought The Stage and he'd written this column and it said, 'my search continues for Beth, the gifted' –

CATHY: No!

BETH: Oh my god, wait. Wait, it's so beautiful. 'The gifted, jawdy goddess who seems to exist only at the Edinburgh festival. Who is the bewitching sprite? Is she malignant or benign? Should she have Lady Mac in front of her name? A million pounds to anyone who can point me in her direction. Hello Autumn.'

CATHY: You've memorised the speech.

EMMA: Obviously.

RACHEL: Yeah.

BETH: Yes, it's the most romantic thing.

CATHY: That's insane.

RACHEL: That's incredible.

BETH: That's ever happened to me in my life. And it was just there in the –

RACHEL: So that's that.

BETH: Oh my god.

CATHY: And then what happened after that?

BETH: Yeah.

CATHY: How did you get together after that? Did you – did you find –

BETH: Yeah, uh, Catherine – actually I was at the time temping on reception at Price Waterhouse, okay? Uh, yes. Dreadful.

CATHY: Yeah.

BETH: You know how you have to do –

CATHY: Dreadful.

RACHEL: Yeah. Yeah.

BETH: It's good for you to do all these things.

CATHY: It's good. It's good.

BETH: I think. Very good thing to do.

RACHEL: Yeah. Yeah.

BETH: And, um, uh, one day my phone just rang with this number. And it was him. And he said –

CATHY: Oh, I love this!

RACHEL: That is so lovely.

BETH: He said, you know, I can't do his voice as well as Emma can, but he said, 'bloody hell, it's hard work tracking you down. I'm standing outside your front door right now.' But he wasn't. Obviously it was a gag. And what I like about him is, the first night I got off with him, had sex with him, as Cathy might say.

CATHY: Sorry. Sorry!

BETH: What? Who cares, Emma. Listen, I'm going to tell the truth –

EMMA: It's me and you.

CATHY: It's me. It's us.

RACHEL: She says it all. I'm like, 'stop it.'

CATHY: I would say everything. She'd get really upset.

RACHEL: Yeah, I'm like, 'stop. Stop.' Yeah.

BETH: He said – I honestly did think – I don't know if you're with me here, Cathy, but there's an aura to men in comedy and I thought, 'oh, I bet he's really sexist.'

CATHY: Yeah.

BETH: 'I bet he's one of those sexist male comedians.'

CATHY: Exactly what I thought.

BETH: 'Who think that women aren't funny.'

CATHY: Yeah.

BETH: That's what I thought he would be like.

CATHY: Yeah.

BETH: And actually when I got to talk to him, he said, uh, 'oh, tell me – tell me one of the – the things about your show,' and he started laughing. And he wasn't in the slightest bit sexist. And it really – I was surprised.

CATHY: Yeah.

BETH: Which is kind of prejudiced of mine, that I thought he would've been like that.

EMMA: Well no, that's born of doing comedy as women at the Edinburgh festival or anywhere at – 20 years ago, whenever it was.

CATHY: Ugh, awful.

EMMA: Because –

BETH: Yeah. Yeah.

EMMA: Because we – you used to get, you know, lines of men and whatnot determined not to laugh. Not that I ever gave a fuck. I just used to think, ‘fuck off.’ To quote my comedy partner – oh, Beth’s just blowing her nose. Just that – no.

RACHEL: Yeah, to quote your comedy partner.

EMMA: She used to, you know, just stick two fingers up and go, ‘laugh, we are funny people.’

RACHEL: Yeah.

EMMA: Which wasn’t always what – ooh, sorry. Was that very loud? Um –

BETH: Yeah.

EMMA: But um – but that’s what that’s born of, Beth. It’s not not born of experience.

BETH: But that’s why was – I’m so glad now that women are so much more owning comedy.

RACHEL: Yeah.

BETH: And are in the space in every way. It’s really fantastic to see. Because it didn’t used to be like that at all.

RACHEL: And that’s what I’m saying.

BETH: Yeah.

RACHEL: 'Dogtown' was ahead of its time. It was amazing.

EMMA: Thank you so much.

CATHY: It's amazing.

RACHEL: She's watching it, but I'm ahead. I'm the one. So Emma, what –

EMMA: Rachel is the 'Dogtown' fan.

RACHEL: Absolutely. Emma, so – and then did you not perform after that?

EMMA: Yeah, well what happened was, because I had, um, a baby. And did 'Dogtown' and 'Dogtown' didn't get a second series.

RACHEL: Yeah.

EMMA: Possibly partly because the thought it was suitable to go on at 11:25 pm on a Wednesday night on BBC3.

RACHEL: Yeah.

CATHY: That's awful. Yeah, because you're girls.

EMMA: I had such plans for Jeff and Sue's marriage.

RACHEL: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

EMMA: Or you know like, uh, divorce after six days and getting back together again.

RACHEL: Yeah. Oh gosh, yeah.

BETH: Yeah.

EMMA: Oh my god, can you imagine?

BETH: Totally.

RACHEL: It would've been amazing. But – so – sorry, I mean I would do four hours on 'Dogtown', but I'm not allowed to.

EMMA: Yeah.

BETH: Thanks. Thanks, Rachel.

EMMA: Thank you.

RACHEL: So obviously we've got a whole list of – we've worked really – we've worked hard on these questions, we're going to use them. So no, but Emma –

BETH: If you're listening to this, a cancelled show –

EMMA: Beth, is your name –

BETH: Sorry.

EMMA: Is your name Emma? No it's not.

BETH: No.

EMMA: It's my question.

RACHEL: No – but Emma, you were –

EMMA: Yeah.

RACHEL: Amazing in that.

EMMA: Aw, thanks.

RACHEL: And that's all I'm saying. I just – then you sort of –

EMMA: Yes, I do – I do regret giving it up. Because, um, Dawn French saw 'Dogtown' and said, 'oh, can you write something for me?' And I'd got a baby.

RACHEL: Yeah.

EMMA: And it was just easier to just do the writing.

RACHEL: Yeah.

EMMA: But just as I started writing 'Roger & Val', I got offered a part in a BBC3 comedy. And I was on that what they call – what actors call 'the list.'

RACHEL: Yeah.

EMMA: Where you get auditions for things like that. And I do – I do regret, um, not – you know, I have to now conserve it to doing pointless funny voices to my next door neighbour.

RACHEL: Yeah.

EMMA: When I – when I go out of my house. Because as I’m writing it, I mean, god knows what she makes of it but she seems to find it funny. The – it’s helpful in writing in that I can do accents and things.

RACHEL: Yeah.

EMMA: So we’re doing an adaptation at the moment, you know, and it’s obviously – involves people from Dublin.

RACHEL: Yeah.

EMMA: And so it’s no problem to me to sort of get the lingo. Stuff like that is helpful about it.

RACHEL: It’s helpful but you’re not out there doing it. You’re doing it to the neighbour, you know, which is a bit of a shame.

EMMA: Yeah. Yeah, maybe I can’t – maybe I can’t – maybe – maybe. I don’t know. I kind of like look at these comedy shows and think, ‘why –why haven’t I gone to America and become a –’

CATHY: Because you had a kid. It fucks your life up. We’ll both tell you that.

BETH: Yes, that’s exactly right.

CATHY: Fucks your life up.

RACHEL: Yeah.

EMMA: Well it – it’s – I find wonderful for your life but bad for – bad for –

RACHEL: Yeah, I think –

EMMA: Sorry. Bad for your career, obviously.

RACHEL: If we just break that down, you don't mean that it fucks your life up entirely. Exactly.

CATHY: No, not your actual life. But it fucks your career up, are you kidding?

RACHEL: It's amazing.

EMMA: Yeah yeah yeah. It's difficult.

CATHY: Me and Rachel could've been big cheeses but we had kids.

EMMA: Yeah.

BETH: You are big cheeses though.

EMMA: You are big cheeses.

CATHY: We're not.

BETH: You are.

RACHEL: So – so working – so obviously we work together.

EMMA: Yeah.

RACHEL: Working together, um, has – because one thing we were thinking about is we laugh – do you laugh – I can't even word my question, Cath. You're going to have to jump in.

CATHY: I don't know what –

RACHEL: I can't do it.

CATHY: The question is.

RACHEL: This is so hilarious. But my question is do you laugh – so professional.

CATHY: Again that's what we're working from.

RACHEL: Do you laugh less or more now you work together? But you've worked together for years so that doesn't work.

CATHY: That took you that amount of time to work out.

RACHEL: Yeah, and it doesn't work because you've worked together forever. So –

BETH: I – Emma always makes me laugh. So like yesterday I was – I've been up all night the night before last writing this scene structure for an episode, you know. And there was one bit and I thought, 'I'm not even going to attempt to do what the overreacher in debt would say at the side of a hospital bed. I'm going to get Emma to do that speech.' So I just sent out a directive going, 'Emma, do a speech for this.' And then she comes back and it's always, um –

EMMA: Yeah, but in that – in that sense, Beth, as we've now discovered.

BETH: Yeah.

EMMA: Controlled by you, it's – it works. Whereas when I'm given any hat with structure on it, it kind of derails the thing.

CATHY: You freak out. Yeah.

EMMA: Yeah.

CATHY: Totally. Totally.

RACHEL: Yeah.

EMMA: Because I will just go off on a laugh. Or I used to. I wouldn't now. But that's only in the last couple of months.

[Flute sounds]

CATHY: So what – what was your family set-up?

BETH: Uh, well there's just me and Emma and Mum and Dad. And actually, you know, if you've watched 'Roger & Val', um, my dad's political leanings really can be seen in Rover Stevenson.

EMMA: Yeah.

CATHY: Oh.

BETH: And my mum's, um, way of telling a story afterwards but the reflection and not actually –

EMMA: That pulls your ear off with interest. Even if it's –

BETH: My mum – both my mum and my grandma were – well my mum is the most fantastic storyteller. Even about nothing, right? So she can get your heart racing with – you think something terrible's going to happen, you know? She said to me once about buying a sewing box. It's in this voice, right? 'I went into Dutton's for buttons. And I said, "do you have any sewing boxes?" And they said, "yes, we do have sewing boxes. Why?" And I said, "well, I would like to buy one for my daughter.'" And, um, she said, 'oh, and I had a look and I said, "just a minute, there's nothing in this box.'" She said, "no, there isn't. But if you look around the shop, you can buy things to go'" – and my heart was in my mouth.

EMMA: Like it was –

BETH: All it was was she'd gone in and bought a sewing box and sewing boxes come empty. But she'd built up this sort of –

RACHEL: Yeah.

BETH: Trail of drama and tension. Where I –

CATHY: But what's that like to grow up with?

EMMA: Brilliant.

BETH: Great.

CATHY: Oh really? Okay.

BETH: Yeah, but the thing about –

EMMA: Yeah, brilliant. Brilliant. She's a teacher. Do you know what she does? What she did, she's retired now. She was a primary school teacher all her life. And she used to – every year, um, when they read 'The Lion, The Witch & The Wardrobe', she would always buy a big box of Turkish Delight for the children to eat when they got to the wicked queen tempting Edmund with Turkish Delight.

CATHY: Oh, that's brilliant. I love that.

EMMA: And once she worked at a Jewish school, um, and Jewish people can't eat Turkish Delight because there's gelatine in it. So she went all around the houses trying to kind of find one of the Jewish mums who could make kosher Turkish Delight. And they did. They did it but she didn't want to do the story without the children being able to eat the –

RACHEL: Without it.

CATHY: Aw, that's amazing.

EMMA: So she's that kind of teacher.

RACHEL: So, which obviously for you two growing up, with that storytelling, you're now –

EMMA: Yeah, brilliant.

RACHEL: You're writers, so that's fantastic.

EMMA: Yes. Yes.

RACHEL: So were you close as kids?

EMMA: We're quite different. We're quite different.

BETH: Well as twins, you're – you do everything at the same age and you're in the same class. And what that means is that, you know, you can get blamed for things the other person does that are nothing to do with you. So once Em – no, I had – hadn't I, Emma? Written a tabloid front page about Jesus. I went to a comprehensive but it was Catholic. And I'd done like – they'd said, 'write – write Jesus as if he's in a tabloid.'

RACHEL: Yeah.

BETH: Which I had taken literally and done, okay? And Emma – I was off – I won't go into it, but you can imagine. And Emma – I was off the day the teacher marked it and she hauled Emma out to the front of the class and told Emma off.

EMMA: 'I know it's not you. I know it's your sister, but' – and then I got the full telling off. So stuff like that.

BETH: Awful.

EMMA: But I – Beth was, uh, far more – Beth's interested in, um, ideas and – and thoughts and, um, from an academic perspective. And I never really was. I just wanted to – to kind of be a – be a performer and, um, and write funny stuff. So that's the basic difference between us.

RACHEL: Yeah.

CATHY: Can you describe each other?

BETH: Um...

EMMA: Yes, but how – that's a – that's a loaded question.

CATHY: Be honest. If you – if you can.

EMMA: Because how honest do you want people to –

BETH: No, don't be.

CATHY: 100%. 100% honest.

RACHEL: Yeah.

CATHY: We've been 100% honest. Go for it.

RACHEL: Yeah.

BETH: I would say Emma has an enormous heart, she's very funny, but, uh, sometimes that can – she really really wants people – she's very shy.

EMMA: Yeah, I am.

BETH: That's the key to Emma. She's painfully shy.

EMMA: Yeah. I realise that's like saying, 'where's your peroxide blonde hair?' But I actually am.

CATHY: No, I can see that. Yeah.

BETH: So she really really wants to – so if there would – often if there's like a –

EMMA: Alright, now should I do you, Beth?

CATHY: No, keep going.

EMMA: Needs to be like short, whereas I would say Beth is like – has determination like Tungsten that I do not have. An ability to absolutely focus. If you put her in the middle of the blasted heath King Lear, she would still be able to come up with a script in it. Somehow she just would. It wouldn't stop her doing it. And she is deeply kind and basically five minutes older than me, so my big sister.

RACHEL: Right.

EMMA: So –

BETH: Which is oldest between you two? Because I can't tell. You both look – how many years between you two?

CATHY: Mentally or physically? Mentally Rachel by about 50 years.

RACHEL: Yeah.

EMMA: Yes.

CATHY: But I'm the elder one.

RACHEL: Yeah.

CATHY: But very much not.

RACHEL: Yeah, and it's 18 months between us. So yeah.

BETH: Right, I get that. Yes. So you – it's not that – that big of a difference, is it?

RACHEL: No.

CATHY: No. No, not at all.

RACHEL: No, and that's the thing.

BETH: Yeah.

RACHEL: I was thinking, you know, who's the leader? Who's the follower? Definitely Cath is the leader, I am the follower.

BETH: Yeah. Yeah.

RACHEL: So –

CATHY: But it was interesting because watching you –

BETH: I don't know.

CATHY: What, really?

BETH: I don't know because – because, um, you kind of like sometimes say, 'oh, don't go too far.' So that's –

RACHEL: That's – that's true.

CATHY: But that's what I was just going to say about Emma. Emma, you didn't like being described, did you? You sort of went –

EMMA: No.

CATHY: 'No, let's end that.' That's what she's like.

RACHEL: Yeah.

CATHY: And you're thinking, 'Beth's going to say something that I can't cope with.'

EMMA: Yeah, yeah.

RACHEL: Yeah.

CATHY: It's exactly the same as us. I don't give a shit.

RACHEL: Cath has – Cath has no filter.

CATHY: I have no filter.

RACHEL: Yeah, but you did want to swear less in the podcast, so –

CATHY: I'm going to swear less in the podcast.

RACHEL: Yeah I didn't want to do that.

CATHY: No more swearing. But – and I say that in you, Emma. You wanted to close it and then turn it onto Beth.

BETH: Yeah, she did.

RACHEL: So are you ever embarrassed by – which one of you is more embarrassing? Or do you ever embarrass each other? Because Cath and –

EMMA: Oh, I think my whole life.

BETH: Yes we do, we do.

EMMA: I don't know whether it's being a writer, but I – I don't know. Am I in fact turning into the now legendary woman behind the coffin?

CATHY: I hope so.

[All laugh]

EMMA: But – but I don't know if other writers do this or if it is just maybe something I should go to the doctor about. But I tend to – I tend to say out loud just, 'oh god, Emma. Oh god.'

BETH: Oh no, I think a lot of people –

EMMA: 'Oh god.' Yeah, 'oh my god.' Go over and over deeply embarrassing things from like 25 years ago that nobody else could possibly remember.

RACHEL: Yeah.

EMMA: 'God, do you remember when that Emma Kilcoyne said that embarrassing thing?' Because – because I had to – obviously coming from Sunderland and – and whatnot, you have to scabble to get into showbiz. It's not like somebody goes, 'oh, it's this way,

Emma. Come this way.’ And they’ll – they’ll show you how to do it, you know? Like you have to kind of find it – find it yourself. So it’s tough to get into. And so that makes you kind of battle to get into it.

RACHEL: Yeah.

EMMA: And sometimes I look back on that and think, ‘god, you were absolutely awful in your 20s. So things – things like that, I think I just possibly have been a long streak of embarrassment. On the other hand, I’ve probably given –

CATHY: But to yourself, not to Beth.

EMMA: I don’t know. I’ve given other people a laugh through it. But whether that’s enough, who knows.

RACHEL: Beth, do you have a comment on that?

BETH: I think that I – like so I’m embarrassing in the way that I will take things like really really really intensely. Um, you know, kind of like – I can get in a terrible like – you know that snake that eats itself?

EMMA: Yes.

BETH: I can get like that. Like really, uh, fixated on something. And like take it really – and other people are just like, ‘how –’. When I look back I see that other people were just kind of like, ‘eh, yeah that happened.’

EMMA: No, I don’t think you are embarrassing, Beth.

BETH: Whereas I'm like 'oh my god oh my god oh my god.' Yeah, I am.

EMMA: I don't think you are embarrassing.

BETH: Do you know how I am a bit embarrassing?

EMMA: You're not, because determination quashes embarrassment.

CATHY: I agree with that. Totally.

EMMA: It really does. And all people see when they look at you is a really determined person. Nobody gives a fuck if in the end you're the person with the more determined will. They – where you go wrong as an embarrassed person, said Emma speaking from experience, is if you – if you kind of allow the crushing feeling of shyness and embarrassment to do that Eleanor Roosevelt thing that she said not to do. Not to let other people make you feel inferior. And I – I used to do a lot of that. Because I think that's common to shy people. I don't know if you find that, Rachel. If you're the shier one.

RACHEL: Yeah. Yeah.

EMMA: Yeah.

RACHEL: I – definitely. I think you're absolutely right. But Cath does bring me out of myself. So working together has –

EMMA: Yeah yeah yeah.

RACHEL: Been good for me. I worked in finance and Cath was like, 'you've got to get out of there. It's so dry.' You know, and I wasn't happy. And then she'd – I mean literally just dragged me around.

CATHY: Because she hasn't got the balls to go ahead and do stuff.

RACHEL: No.

CATHY: So I'm like, 'no, fuck that.'

RACHEL: I've got more of a fear of authority. I don't have –

EMMA: Yeah.

RACHEL: Did you swear?

CATHY: Oh, sorry.

RACHEL: Yeah.

BETH: That's okay.

RACHEL: I don't – I don't have that – I don't have the attitude, you know? I'm very sensible. And it's really frustrating.

EMMA: Yeah.

RACHEL: I'm –

CATHY: Oh my god, it's awful. But Beth, you are not at all embarrassed by Emma, are you? Because all of Emma saying that –

BETH: No, not now. Not now.

CATHY: Oh, so did you used to be?

BETH: No.

EMMA: Um, no. I mean it, Cathy. I'm not – I'm not –

BETH: No.

CATHY: Yeah.

EMMA: I might be shy but I am telling you honestly like a writer I was an embarrassing twat for most of my life. I've only just really kind of –

BETH: Oh Emma, stop it.

EMMA: I was.

CATHY: I can't – I can't imagine that.

RACHEL: Well can we get Beth's – can we get Beth's view on that?

CATHY: In what way?

EMMA: For me.

CATHY: Yeah. Yeah.

RACHEL: Yeah.

EMMA: For other people it's funny. Probably not for Beth.

RACHEL: Yeah.

CATHY: But I get that.

RACHEL: Beth, I want to hear –

BETH: I'll tell you what I find. I'll tell you what I find sometimes – so let me just kind of have a think. What do I mean? Yeah. The only thing – it's not embarrassing, but it really irritates me, is sometimes in a meeting if there's a silence, Emma will like – oh god, pipe up with honestly if you listen to what she's saying, it's about nothing and it's just to fill the silence up.

EMMA: Yeah.

BETH: 'Uh, yeah. Uh, I really think that the thing is –' And then she'll go, wait for this, to a really serious woman who – with whom I was nearly doing a show, okay? She said, 'oh Beth, I've done that Zoom on my own.' And I went, 'what?' 'Yeah, I couldn't reach you so I did it on my own.' And then I listened to the recording and heard Emma kick off with – what?

EMMA: Oh, Beth.

BETH: What? I'm being honest.

EMMA: Fair enough.

BETH: I listened to the recording and I heard Emma go, 'so, um, can I just ask? You know, have me and Beth got this job?'

[All laugh]

EMMA: I did, yeah.

BETH: So I find things – but it wasn't that she was actually asking that.

EMMA: I don't think that's – I don't think that's why we didn't get it. But –

BETH: But maybe it was. I don't know.

EMMA: Sorry, Beth.

BETH: So I find – no, you're fine. But I – I –

EMMA: I didn't want that job.

BETH: No, you're fine. Icy voice.

EMMA: Want that job –

BETH: Do that again, Emma. Do – do 'sorry Beth' and I'll try, 'no, you're fine' in a different voice.

EMMA: Okay. Sorry, Beth.

BETH: Oh, you're fine.

EMMA: Yeah, it's not like that.

BETH: Yeah. It's just –

EMMA: Sot it's a bit – it's – that can be – but that's just because she will babble on.

BETH: Alright.

CATHY: Same as me, yeah.

BETH: But when you brought it up – I never said any of this.

CATHY: Emma, I'm exactly the – I'm exactly the same. And I realise now looking back –

RACHEL: Verbal diarrhea.

CATHY: But if I look back –

EMMA: Yeah.

CATHY: I realise it was sort of – I was so desperate to be liked, I would act silly.

BETH: Yeah. Yeah. Yes.

CATHY: I would act thick, very thick, because people laughed at that.

EMMA: Yes.

BETH: Yes. Yes. Yes.

CATHY: It meant I got attention. And that – and Rachel was always mortified by me.

RACHEL: Yeah.

CATHY: And it's only as I've got older I'm just like, 'no, I'm not going to play this stupid fucking clown because it makes you laugh.'

BETH: Yeah.

EMMA: Yeah. Yeah.

CATHY: Because you're laughing at me as well as with me.

BETH: Yeah.

RACHEL: And that was hard when working together because I could see people laughing at my sister, you know? It's –

CATHY: Yeah yeah. Rachel was mortified by me. Mortified.

RACHEL: You know, it's – it is horrible.

CATHY: It's horrible.

RACHEL: It's upsetting.

CATHY: That got quite serious.

RACHEL: That did get serious.

EMMA: Yeah. And it's weird the way all four of us kind of feel the same.

CATHY: Totally.

EMMA: Felt the same emotions slicing down.

CATHY: Absolutely.

EMMA: Each pair of sisters, with me and Cathy on one side and Rachel and Beth on the other.

RACHEL: Unbelievable.

CATHY: It's awful though, isn't it?

RACHEL: Yeah.

CATHY: It's awful.

[Flute sounds]

[Music playing, singing 'here to judge. Here to judge.']

PRIYA HALL: Hello.

ROBIN MORGAN: Hi!

LEILA NAVABI: Hey, Priya!

PRIYA: [laughs] Okay, I see how it is.

[All laugh]

PRIYA: Here to Judge is the new weekly podcast from Little Wander, where we dismantle predicaments posted online.

LEILA: Featuring fruity dilemmas from Am I The Asshole on Reddit.

ROBIN: To Am I Being Unreasonable quandaries on Mumsnet.

PRIYA: Join me, Priya Hall.

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ROBIN: Wherever.

LEILA: Go on. Give me –

ROBIN: I was just being like your hype man.

LEILA: Beatbox a bit.

ROBIN: [beatboxes]

LEILA: New episode every Friday. There must be something we can use. [laughs]

[Flute sounds]

CATHY: Is there anything you don't understand about the other? That just doesn't make sense? You can't fathom?

BETH: No.

EMMA: No. No.

CATHY: Okay.

BETH: I don't think that happens if you're twins because you've been together at every stage throughout, uh, growing up. So you would just know somebody very very well to know –

CATHY: So is there nothing you don't – you hide from each other? Is there no areas you won't talk about? Anything at all?

BETH: No.

EMMA: No.

CATHY: Gosh.

BETH: And I – and I do know when Emma is – is really upset. Uh, I can't be happy. And Emma's the same about me, yeah.

EMMA: I'm the same about Beth. If I get – I know if I'm not getting texts if it's because she's busy or if it's because she can't – she's too kind of sad to send us a text.

RACHEL: Yeah.

EMMA: Which is a funny feeling. And then I'll send a desperate wavering little text going, 'hiya, are you okay?'

BETH: Yeah yeah. And –

EMMA: Trying to get a reply.

BETH: On a morning if I don't have a text from Emma, I'll be like really worried that, 'oh my god, how's Emma? Is she alright? And because I just – I think that –'

EMMA: That's just because I was ill for a bit so – so, um, for a few years I had an illness that I'm fully recovered from now, but obviously that altered the dynamic quite significantly.

RACHEL: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

BETH: Yeah yeah.

EMMA: And I mean I will say, did ruin a few jobs. But mercifully we're over that now.

RACHEL: Yeah. Yeah. You are incredibly close. How is that for your partners?

BETH: Uh, well it's quite strange, you know? Because, uh, Emma's partner is – has interests and, um, kind of is quite like me I think. And –

EMMA: He has interests like Beth, and –

BETH: My partner –

EMMA: Brian has –

BETH: Arthur – Arthur's real name is Brian.

EMMA: Yeah.

BETH: We should just – it's not two partners.

CATHY: Oh yeah.

BETH: Um, he has – he really understands and gets on with Emma. And he will sometimes behave in a way that I think, 'oh, that's what Emma would do. That's exactly how Emma acts.'

CATHY: That's interesting.

BETH: You know? There's a kind of – I think that –

EMMA: He's glad when I come to stay because Beth's the kind of person that – she will just send you on a – 'so and so so and so, the – the such and such economist now on Newsnight', as if like you know like you should like put it on and watch it.

RACHEL: Yeah, well you should.

EMMA: And I'm like –

RACHEL: Yeah. We do that. Yeah.

EMMA: Obviously you've worked in finance, Rachel, so you understand it.

RACHEL: Yeah, that's true. Yeah.

EMMA: Yeah.

BETH: Where – whereas Emma and Arthur like to put on, you know, like that Japanese news channel.

EMMA: Japanese male cheerleaders.

BETH: Because there's always like –

EMMA: In their coloured outfits and things.

BETH: So – but they get on really well.

RACHEL: Yeah.

BETH: So I think it's fine.

RACHEL: Yeah.

BETH: I think it's – you know, I think it is.

RACHEL: It's quite intense. I've said this before in interviews.

BETH: Yeah.

RACHEL: We are so close.

BETH: Yeah.

RACHEL: And we work together and we have that constant – we're constantly in touch. I don't know how – I think it's sometimes hard on our partners.

EMMA: Yeah.

RACHEL: Um, is there – is there anything you envy in the other?

BETH: Yes. Emma's got a child and I haven't. I don't envy it. I love it, but I just kind of, um, you know, I think it must be so wonderful to have that. And I don't have it. So that – I kind of envy like when she's being able to go out on a big walk with the dog and that – I envy the lifestyle. I don't envy in a bad way, I just kind of –

RACHEL: Yeah.

EMMA: Yeah, and also being the – your mum's twin sister, naturally translates to a – a really close relationship with my daughter that is not typical of an aunt and a niece.

RACHEL: Yeah.

EMMA: And is far more typical of a – of a – like a second mother type relationship.

RACHEL: Yeah.

EMMA: Which maybe is – is common to twins more than other siblings.

RACHEL: Yeah.

CATHY: But do you only have one child, Emma?

EMMA: Yes. Yes.

CATHY: Because we both only have one child and does that – are you worried about her not having the – a sibling. Because we worry about that. I left it too late, that's why I have one.

RACHEL: So did I.

CATHY: And Rachel struggled a lot to have one.

RACHEL: Yeah.

CATHY: Uh, and I think we both feel very guilty that we haven't given our kid the – the relationship we have.

RACHEL: Yeah.

EMMA: Yeah, no, I don't really think about that. Because, um, she's grown up in a huge group of friends.

CATHY: Right.

EMMA: And in and out of each other's houses. And in a – in a strange way because both me and my husband work from home most of the time, it means that actually there's never no one there. There's never – there's never an occasion where you come in and you might be lonely or you might be on your own. So – and because Beth's her auntie and not her mum, and because she's kind of – will always therefore be cooler than me –

CATHY: Yeah, of course.

EMMA: Then – then that's kind of more like a sort of almost big sister relationship.

CATHY: Yeah, yeah.

EMMA: In a way.

CATHY: I can see that.

EMMA: So no, I feel I've escaped – I've escaped that. I think you can dwell too much on worrying about things like that.

RACHEL: I think you do.

CATHY: Yeah, I do.

BETH: Yeah, I think you can, Emma. I think you can.

EMMA: It's not really about that, life. It's really short and precious and fragile.

RACHEL: Yeah.

EMMA: And so therefore you – you have to kind of take the – the glory of it and the good of it.

CATHY: Yeah, no, of course.

RACHEL: Yeah.

EMMA: Plus it's common to loads of people these days.

CATHY: Of course.

EMMA: Especially working women.

RACHEL: Yeah. Absolutely. And our aim is to get our two sons, you know, as close as possible.

EMMA: They will be.

RACHEL: Yeah. And we – yeah.

BETH: Yeah, they will be. They're lucky have each other.

EMMA: They will be. Because of your relationship. So I think – I wouldn't worry about that if I were you two at all.

RACHEL: Yeah, exactly.

BETH: No, I wouldn't. I'd enjoy it.

RACHEL: Yeah yeah yeah.

CATHY: But I keep thinking about you being in York and you being in London. How – I mean I can't bear the thought of Rachel being more than half an hour away. How do you cope with that?

BETH: Very well. Especially after we've had a row. So very well indeed. We're – it's good because, you know, it is only two hours away.

CATHY: Yeah.

BETH: So you can just kind of leap on the train and get up there and – and have a kind of – I like to go to York and they come here a lot. So it's not – actually it's –

EMMA: I have to come to London for work so I do see – so we get like loads of –

BETH: Yeah.

EMMA: Good bits like that normally. Normally.

RACHEL: Yeah.

CATHY: Have you ever hated each other?

BETH: Yeah.

EMMA: Yes.

CATHY: Okay. I am so happy to hear that.

RACHEL: Yeah.

CATHY: Because nobody has answered with a yes.

RACHEL: No, yeah.

BETH: Yes.

CATHY: Go for it. Tell us why. What happened?

BETH: Yes. Well during – during rows. During rows about, you know, scripts. It can get really intense on a Skype.

CATHY: Yeah.

BETH: And then it kind of descends into, um, a terrible nuke – actually, a twin row is quite like a nuclear – because you know it’s like a –

EMMA: Like have you see the Bros – have you seen the Bros documentary?

RACHEL: Yeah. Yeah. Right.

EMMA: There are rows which kind of simmer in a nuclear fashion. And every – everyone around is both terrified by but also irrelevant to. Until the – the horrific kind of twin row comes to like a peaceful thing that it only comes to on its own. So watching that I thought, ‘oh, that’s so interesting. Look, all those people don’t know what to do because it’s a twin row’ –

CATHY: Yes.

RACHEL: Yeah.

EMMA: Which is a [explosion sound] like that. Hits – hits the opposite of love. It doesn’t – isn’t it? It’s – it’s not that awful indifference thing.

RACHEL: Yeah.

CATHY: But most people that we talked to – and as I keep saying, we don’t tend to get people – everybody who’s come on so far, it’s very calm and very together. And I think when we ask that question, they’re just like, ‘what? That’s awful.’ And I feel terrible. Because we –

BETH: No, vicious.

CATHY: I mean I have times when I don't want ever to see her again. I want her out of my life.

BETH: Yeah.

EMMA: Yeah. Yeah. Well –

CATHY: And people don't understand that. But is it work that sets you off or is it everything?

BETH: Yes.

CATHY: Oh, it's just work.

EMMA: No, it's work.

BETH: It's work.

EMMA: It's a script.

RACHEL: Okay.

CATHY: Right. Okay

EMMA: I have sent text message saying, 'don't contact me ever again.' Stuff like that.

CATHY: Oh.

EMMA: And then she comes back at, 'well, sorry. I received an instruction not to contact you.'

[All laugh]

CATHY: Oh, that's brilliant.

BETH: Really – you know what's really funny? You know what's really funny about Emma in rows, is that she – when she'd send like these fire off of emails, and – but they're all worded quite formally because it's a row.

EMMA: Yeah, even the –

BETH: 'I realise – I realise biologically you are my sister about which I can do nothing. However please –'

EMMA: Shut up, Beth. I didn't say that. I didn't! I've never said that.

BETH: Okay.

EMMA: She's – and anyway, to – if you're going to read one, read an actual one because they're much funnier read in a situation when it's not a row.

BETH: Yes.

CATHY: Exactly.

EMMA: They're hilarious then. But not during the actual row, I think.

CATHY: But you're not trying to be funny. You're genuinely feeling hatred.

EMMA: I mean every word of it, that's why it's funny.

CATHY: Yeah, that's how I feel. But you don't feel like that.

RACHEL: No, I don't feel like that.

BETH: I – I just –

EMMA: Beth, you liar. You do feel –

BETH: I'm not a liar. I don't – I don't. That actually – that really irritates me, when Emma thinks that –

EMMA: Oh yeah.

BETH: I feel the same as her, and I don't.

CATHY: The same as me, Emma. Emma, we should get married.

EMMA: You know like – we – we're the sisters, Cathy.

CATHY: We are.

EMMA: And Rachel and Beth are just nothing to do with us.

BETH: It really irritates me when she does that. 'You liar, you feel the same as me.'

EMMA: Oh, I do mean that. Cut that bit out. Yeah. Can you?

BETH: Right.

RACHEL: So how do you – how do you then resolve the arguments? Well literally how – with a text message?

CATHY: They've got no choice. They've got to get a script in.

RACHEL: How – no, of course. So do you apologise?

BETH: There's no choice.

RACHEL: Or do you just forget it? How do you come back together?

BETH: It depends. It depends. Normally I send something trying to coax Emma back. 'Hi Emma, I think it would be a really good thing if you could just –'

CATHY: Emma, high five me. You sulk.

[All laugh]

BETH: Cover yourself in glory in the podcast.

CATHY: Exactly.

BETH: Jesus.

RACHEL: I'm with you, Beth. That's exactly what I do. We – we are.

BETH: Yeah.

CATHY: They have to run around for us, Emma.

RACHEL: Yeah.

CATHY: They have to prove how much they love us.

RACHEL: That's what it feels like for me, definitely.

BETH: Yeah, I think – I think – yeah. Are you the person that – yeah, that's what it's like in rows.

RACHEL: Yes.

BETH: One could happen quite soon, I think, between me and Emma. I think that like –

RACHEL: Yeah, that – I'm nervous.

CATHY: Oh, let's all have a four-way massive kick-off and end the podcast with I don't know what. I'll say something really really fucking terrible.

RACHEL: But we have had – I mean –

CATHY: What's the most offensive thing you've said to each other?

RACHEL: Okay, that's – Cath, that's probably not where we want to go.

CATHY: No, I think we should. Go for it.

RACHEL: No.

CATHY: I'm trying to think of the most offensive thing.

EMMA: I mean I don't – things like – it depends. If you've written a script and it's like got rejected, and someone says to you, 'what are you talking about? You sent them an email saying, 'I know this is a fantastic script.' That's what you said.

BETH: Which Emma does.

EMMA: Which – yeah, alright, I did make. But just because I'm wracked with terrible insecurity. And I'm a writer, leave me alone.

RACHEL: Yeah. Yeah.

EMMA: I didn't mean it. See I – because I'm shy so I say things I don't mean. I often say that about something that isn't a good script at all. And then I bitterly regret it. But then thoughtful people who are calm –

CATHY: Ugh.

EMMA: And can plan what they say and really mean it, they're like –

BETH: Like me. Like me. Like me. Like me.

EMMA: 'Hold on, did you not mean that?' Did you – yeah, like Beth. Like, 'did you not mean that?' And I go, 'well no, I don't even remember what I said.'

CATHY: That's exactly the same.

[All laugh]

CATHY: That's exactly.

EMMA: It's these – these people who take life seriously and weigh every word that comes out of their mouth. That's not me, yeah.

CATHY: That's exactly the same as us.

RACHEL: Exactly the same. We've – Jack has described it – when we row, he said it's like an ice age. And he said –

EMMA: Yeah. Yeah.

RACHEL: Since I've been with him there have been a couple of ice ages where – yeah, that I don't –

EMMA: Yeah.

RACHEL: Think actually we could go into.

CATHY: No. Terrible.

RACHEL: But – yeah.

EMMA: First of all I don't want you two to have an ice age.

RACHEL: Yeah, we won't – well –

EMMA: I want you to be like you are.

CATHY: We will.

RACHEL: Yeah, but you said that you think – you think we'd never have another ice age.

CATHY: I sort of think we'll never have a – yeah, but I get over shit like Emma does. You don't.

BETH: Yeah, like, what?

RACHEL: Yeah. Yeah. Whereas I don't. I – yeah, no, but she will. She'll be like, 'what – that – oh.' And I'm like, 'that's completely crucified me.'

CATHY: So I could have said something horrific and then six weeks later go, 'well, it's fine.'

RACHEL: Well – yeah.

CATHY: It was a row.

RACHEL: Yeah. But – yeah.

EMMA: 'I didn't actually mean it.'

CATHY: I mean I split with my partner about six times a year. And it really hurts him.

EMMA: Yeah. Yeah.

CATHY: I just get over it. I –

BETH: Actually – actually I do that with my partner –

CATHY: Yeah.

BETH: Much more than I would with Emma.

CATHY: Oh.

BETH: So – and he’s so loving and lovely, you know? And I’ll say things like, ‘right, that’s it.’ He goes, ‘oh, please don’t walk out of the house in the dark. Please please please.’ And he’s sort of like, you know, because he’s not like that. He’s not like that at all.

CATHY: Yeah. It’s –

BETH: He’s just, uh, if I get like furious with him, you know, uh, he – he would like – he doesn’t employ tricks.

CATHY: Yeah.

BETH: So if I slam out of the house –

CATHY: Yeah.

BETH: There will be a phone message from him saying, ‘please come back,’ you know? It doesn’t –

EMMA: Yeah and also, Beth, I don’t do – also, Beth, I don’t do that with anyone other than you.

BETH: Other than me, yeah. It’s right. It’s right.

EMMA: Whereas you have been known to – for example, Beth has fantastic tactics as a rower up her sleeve that she’ll like – you know – she’ll write –

CATHY: Oh, tell me some.

EMMA: Writes messages on the kitchen floor in tomato ketchup and stuff.

CATHY: No.

BETH: Once. I once did that.

EMMA: Yeah.

RACHEL: What was the message?

CATHY: What did it say?

BETH: Because – well I'll tell you what it was about, okay? Arthur is incredibly untidy. Uh, partly because he's dyspraxic but also, you know, just really – he just is, okay? And I had cleaned the house but I hadn't got it fully done. I'd got to the bathroom and he'd kind of like fallen in from a gig saying, 'oh, can I – can I go in the bath now?' But you know, just at the wrong time. And when I went downstairs there was – and he won't have seen it. People think that it must be deliberate. It's not. He had, you know, trailed mud in all over the kitchen floor. He's taken – what he does when he comes in –

EMMA: Anyway, it was messy.

BETH: Emma! Hey! How dare you!

EMMA: Oh, sorry. Sorry.

BETH: They can edit this, Emma. I'm just trying to explain. Do you see now, that's horrible. I think that's a horrible thing to do.

CATHY: Keep going, Beth. Keep going. I'm with you. I'm with you.

BETH: Right, sorry. Um –

RACHEL: They are going to have a row.

BETH: Um, so I'd come down and he'd like really really untidied everything. And I just wrote in tomato ketchup on the kitchen floor, 'help me. What is the point of this?' But like all over the floor. A big message. 'What is the point of this?' And then I left like the tomato ketchup bottle, um, like it was almost like a dead body. But it wasn't, it was just a bottle of tomato ketchup. And put on my coat and slammed out of the house. And it was about 12 in the morning.

EMMA: Yeah.

BETH: Yeah.

RACHEL: That is brilliant. I'm quite OCD about cleaning. I'm going to be using that one.

BETH: Yeah. Yeah.

EMMA: And I thought an excellent use of the word 'just'. 'I just wrote on the floor in tomato ketchup' –

CATHY: Exactly.

RACHEL: Yeah.

BETH: Yeah.

EMMA: Yeah, fair enough.

[Flute sounds]

RACHEL: Who's –

CATHY: Who's happier?

RACHEL: Oh, I was going to say that.

CATHY: Sorry.

RACHEL: Yeah.

CATHY: Oh, who's happier?

BETH: Emma.

EMMA: I'm a happier, calmer person.

CATHY: Oh.

EMMA: Because I don't think as much, probably.

RACHEL: Yeah, because –

EMMA: There is nothing good or bad but thinking makes it –

RACHEL: Of course you're happier, Emma, because you see the comedy in everything. You are the woman –

BETH: You are the woman.

RACHEL: Behind the – the casket, right? Smiling.

EMMA: Yeah, I am.

CATHY: I was not expecting that for the answer.

EMMA: Well –

RACHEL: You're not because you're going to stop yourself.

BETH: Emma, do it. Emma, do it. Do the wink.

[All laugh]

EMMA: Which I think walking behind your mother's coffin is a bad look.

BETH: Oh my god.

RACHEL: Yeah, I agree.

CATHY: Oh no.

EMMA: You know like it means that you don't take yourself in any way seriously.

BETH: It's heartbreaking.

RACHEL: Yeah.

CATHY: Yeah.

EMMA: Heartbreaking, Beth, yeah. I must use it in a script at some point.

RACHEL: Yes.

CATHY: But it's a nervous thing. It's a nervous thing.

RACHEL: Yeah, of course. Of course.

CATHY: That's really sad.

RACHEL: Um, do you both love music?

BETH: Yes.

EMMA: Well I'm married to a musician.

CATHY: Oh.

RACHEL: Oh.

EMMA: I'm married to a musical director, yeah.

RACHEL: Oh, right.

EMMA: Yeah, so –

RACHEL: Okay. You could still hate music. Unlikely, but –

EMMA: Yeah, I don't.

BETH: And we love the same kind of music. Don't we, Emma?

EMMA: Yeah. That's why – we were quite unpopular at school because like when we were 15, when everyone else was listening to Wham! and Bros and everything, Beth and me discovered Sondheim.

CATHY: Oh.

EMMA: So as you can imagine – yeah.

BETH: Yeah.

EMMA: We would like lay on the sitting room floor putting on 'Cleo Sings Sondheim'. And I kind of –

BETH: It's not cool, is it? At 15.

EMMA: No.

BETH: That's what we used to do. And show songs, you know?

EMMA: Yeah.

BETH: Other people just, 'god, those twins.'

EMMA: 'Those twins.'

CATHY: Was that from your parents?

BETH: No.

EMMA: No.

CATHY: Really?

BETH: It was honestly both of us, um, together. Furiously, deeply interested in it. And it was only when we both got into the National Youth Theatre that we met –

EMMA: We met other people like us.

BETH: Other people. You know what? Actually there are like – there's our friends, like our close friends from there, are – I'd never met people before that were interested in the same thing as we are. And – and they – they all were. So that's another close bond we've got. And Sam Battersea –

RACHEL: Yeah.

BETH: Who is in 'Dogtown.'

CATHY: Who's brilliant.

BETH: Yeah, brilliant.

EMMA: Wonderful actress.

CATHY: What's happened to – what's happened to her?

BETH: She – she's still acting and she's in – um, what – um, 'Class Dismissed' at the minute on CBeebies.

RACHEL: Right.

CATHY: Right.

BETH: Brilliant in that. She's done a lot of very good comedy roles, but she – she is fantastic.

CATHY: She's brilliant.

RACHEL: Yeah.

EMMA: Yeah, she is.

BETH: I – I just – I would love to write something else for Sam, because I think she's – she's just got such a – a kind of bewitching air surrounding her.

CATHY: I absolutely agree. That's exactly what –

EMMA: And a wonderful voice. A really wonderful voice.

CATHY: Yeah.

BETH: Yes, Emma. She can play anything. There are certain characters I write and I think, 'god, Sam would be wonderful in that.' You know she's just so good.

RACHEL: So you have lots of mutual friends. You share lots of friends.

EMMA: Yes. Yes.

BETH: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

RACHEL: Yeah, okay.

BETH: Yeah.

RACHEL: So your lives could not be more entwined. Friends shared, work together, it's the same as us.

CATHY: They're the same as us.

BETH: There – there are different bits.

EMMA: Yeah.

CATHY: Go on.

BETH: But yeah.

CATHY: What are the different bits?

BETH: Funnily enough Sam said to me – this is typical Sam – said to me when I first met her – Emma was – is very close with Sam. And – and I then came into write for them. That's how we got started. And she said to me, 'I don't know why you think I know you, Beth. Because I know Emma. So why do you think you know me as well as –' And that's a really interesting thing about twins. Because Emma knew Sam really well, I just kind of acted like I knew Sam really well and I'd never met her before.

EMMA: Um, and – and Beth was unaware that Sam at the time referred to Beth as 'Emma's sister, Beth.'

BETH: Which is a nickname that stuck.

EMMA: And that's now a nickname that actually Dawn uses as well sometimes.

BETH: Yeah.

EMMA: When I say something that's not kind of in – in their kind of humour things, she'll go, 'go weigh in with sister Beth.' Like that. So she now uses that as well.

[Flute sounds]

RACHEL: Do you have heavy chats? As in we never hug each other, we're never physical with each other.

BETH: That's exactly what we – we are exactly the same.

CATHY: That's weird.

BETH: I would never like –

CATHY: Weird.

EMMA: We are the same, I can tell.

BETH: Actually to be honest if I –

CATHY: I know.

EMMA: We're the same.

BETH: If I did something like really sweet and affectionate to Emma she'd be like, 'get off!'

CATHY: Oh, I'd throw up. I'd go mental if Rachel touched me.

BETH: Doing it – doing it, it’s kind of like being affectionate to yourself almost I think, you know?

RACHEL: Yeah.

EMMA: Yeah.

CATHY: Have you ever said I love you to each other? Because I would never say that to Rach.

EMMA: Yeah.

BETH: I wrote it.

CATHY: Oh.

RACHEL: Okay.

BETH: Oh yeah, no, I –

EMMA: No, you do say that.

RACHEL: Yeah.

BETH: I have – but again because of what happened and everything.

RACHEL: Right, okay. Yeah.

BETH: So –

RACHEL: Yeah, but it’s that thing of – we are not affectionate.

CATHY: Yeah.

RACHEL: But there's no one we want to be with more, you know?
And that we're closer to.

CATHY: But also when I was thinking about this last night, I was thinking all of the male siblings that I can think about that have worked together have fallen out. So the classics. So the Gallagher brothers, the Davises from the Kinks, the Everly brothers. It's endless. I struggled to find women, sisters, who worked together and then fell out. Which I thought was really interesting.

RACHEL: Yeah.

EMMA: Yeah.

BETH: Yes. Well, although you've lost out the big one.

CATHY: Oh no.

RACHEL: Go on.

EMMA: Oh –

BETH: The Brontes hated each other.

CATHY: Oh. Uh, I – did they?

BETH: But that's because I think – well, I think that what – well, their own brother –

EMMA: How do you know that, Beth?

CATHY: I was going to say –

BETH: Because. Because I'm quite interested in writing something about them. I'll tell you why. Three women all having PMT in a small parsonage at the same time. Imagine that. And they're writers.

RACHEL: Yeah.

BETH: Yes, look at what happened to their brother. An alcoholic who in fact painted himself out of the family portrait.

RACHEL: Yeah. Yes.

BETH: In black, fury – just got black paint.

CATHY: My fury is that they –

EMMA: Fascinating.

CATHY: They – I mean they're fascinating. But I don't get the impression that they hated each other. But they got on because they didn't have kids and they didn't fuck men.

RACHEL: You mean they got on with their career, is what you mean.

BETH: I think – Charlotte did. Charlotte did. And I think –

CATHY: No, she stalked me. She stalked men.

BETH: Yeah, but she got married.

RACHEL: Yes.

CATHY: She did.

BETH: She got married.

CATHY: Yeah, she did. No, she did.

BETH: So – so that's not true.

RACHEL: Yeah.

BETH: I think Emily –

EMMA: See Beth went to Cambridge, Cathy.

RACHEL: Yeah.

CATHY: I know she's clever. I know –

RACHEL: She knows it all.

EMMA: If you had – you know Charlotte Bronte got married as well.

BETH: No, it isn't that. It's that –

CATHY: I'm the Daily Express version of the Brontes. You're the posh one.

BETH: Charlotte was – was – she did actually get out there and go to Belgium and teach and marry. Whereas Emily I just think wisened up in that vicarage, you know?

RACHEL: Yeah.

CATHY: Oh it's fascinating.

BETH: Imagine – imagine being a virgin and writing 'Wuthering Heights'.

CATHY: Oh god.

RACHEL: Yeah.

BETH: That is some frustration.

RACHEL: Yeah.

BETH: And it's amazing. So that's why I think they're interesting.

RACHEL: Yeah. They are. We're being –

CATHY: We're being bothered by the producer for talking about not siblings.

RACHEL: The producer, to get back – yeah.

BETH: Oh, sorry.

CATHY: We have to get straight back to siblings.

BETH: Okay.

RACHEL: Even though they are siblings. Uh, oh gosh.

CATHY: But I could talk for hours about that.

BETH: Yeah yeah yeah. I could.

CATHY: And we will. We will.

BETH: Yeah yeah yeah. I think I could.

RACHEL: Um, oh I don't – I think we've run – literally run out of questions.

CATHY: I think we've done everything.

RACHEL: I think having – yeah. I think –

CATHY: You ask the last question because you –

RACHEL: I don't have a last one.

CATHY: You do. You know the last question.

RACHEL: Oh, is there anything you want to say to each other that you've never said before?

BETH: No.

EMMA: No. No. No.

RACHEL: Exactly.

BETH: Because I probably – that is how open our relationship is, so no, I don't think so.

EMMA: No, there isn't.

RACHEL: Perfect. The perfect flat ending to one of my favourite podcasts that we've ever done.

[All laugh]

EMMA: Shall I try and think of something that I've never said to Beth?

CATHY: Yes, yes.

RACHEL: Yeah, it could be really –

EMMA: For like a dramatic ending?

CATHY: Definitely. Go mental.

RACHEL: But it could be really, really funny.

EMMA: Really really dramatic that she doesn't know.

CATHY: Exactly.

RACHEL: Right, ready? Is there any – is there anything you want to say to each other that you've never said before?

EMMA: Yeah.

[All laugh]

BETH: Do it, Emma. Like – yeah. Do –

EMMA: Beth.

BETH: Yeah.

EMMA: I want to make up something dramatic so that people go, 'god, those writers. They could think up that really dramatic thing I've never forgotten.'

CATHY: 'We need – we need to employ them.'

RACHEL: 'Who's their agent? Who's their agent?'

EMMA: Except I can't think of it.

RACHEL: Oh, okay.

CATHY: That's terrible, isn't it?

BETH: Oh no, I know. It would be something like, um, you know, um, Rachel, Cathy, Emma isn't in York at all. She's like next door – you know like the 'I kept you' kind of like –

CATHY: She's in the attic upstairs.

BETH: We haven't touched it – or I keep her in the attic and –

EMMA: Oh, I've got one, Beth.

CATHY: Go for it.

BETH: Okay, go on. Go on.

EMMA: Beth isn't my sister. She's my mother.

CATHY: Oh! That's good.

BETH: That's more dramatic, isn't it? That's a good one.

CATHY: That's good.

RACHEL: Perfect.

EMMA: Yeah. Yeah.

CATHY: We're going to –

RACHEL: Brilliant.

BETH: All really fantastic.

[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.

RACHEL: Right, so –

CATHY: So Rachel's going to ask a really stupid question now to lighten it up.

RACHEL: No, go on. Go on. You go. No, I'm not.