

I Wish I Was An Only Child – Adam & Neil Pearson

[Guitar and flute music]

[Rain sounds]

RACHEL MASON: So the vaccine has completely changed you.

CATHY MASON: I've become nicer.

RACHEL: Yeah. I think you have.

CATHY: Uh, I've become nicer. I've become selfless. I've got –

RACHEL: You've become sexually – you've sexually opened up.

CATHY: We're not putting that! Don't put that.

RACHEL: You – you've been sexually reawakened. Um –

CATHY: I was – I wasn't nervous at all. No, I mean I hated – I had a reaction. Rachel didn't.

RACHEL: No. No, I did a bit. But it – I felt rough for about a day. We shared it –

CATHY: Yeah, no. We split the vial and we shared the needle. It was quite good.

RACHEL: It was fine. They didn't mind. We said we work together, they were like, 'it's fine.' Okay. Are we ready? Welcome to I Wish I Was An Only Child, with me, Rachel Mason.

CATHY: And me, Cathy Mason.

RACHEL: Today we spoke to actor, presenter, and campaigner Adam Pearson.

CATHY: And his identical twin brother, medical library assistant Neil.

[Flute sounds]

RACHEL: So you live together. Are you still in Croydon? Is where you

–

ADAM PEARSON: Oh yeah.

NEIL PEARSON: Yeah, still in Croydon.

RACHEL: Yeah.

ADAM: Yeah.

RACHEL: Yeah, which is where you grew up. In fact I think I recognise some stuff in the background from having watched an interview online. So is that your bedroom, Adam? Your – yeah.

ADAM: It is. It is. This is – this is the less geeky half of the bedroom. If you turn this the other way, you'd see like a big TV, multiple games consoles, numerous Pokémon.

RACHEL: Right, okay. Um – and what about Neil?

CATHY: Neil's given up.

RACHEL: Neil's just like, 'oh, here he goes. Here he goes.'

NEIL: I've got the box room.

RACHEL: I was going to say, who's got the bigger room? You've got the box room.

ADAM: I have.

NEIL: Adam.

ADAM: I spend most of my time in it, though. Because I – Neil has like a proper job where he has to like leave the house and stuff. Whereas I can just sit at home and – and write or record podcasts

and watch wrestling and call it work. It's a fortunate position to be in.

RACHEL: That's quite nice.

CATHY: Neil, what do you do? Do you work – is it library? Or – I forgot if I made that up.

NEIL: Um, yes. I work in a medical library.

CATHY: Nice. I'm a hypochondriac. That's great. And what's your box room like?

NEIL: Um, it's tidier than Adam's room. It's more organised.

ADAM: If you want to move all the board games that we bought together into your room to tidy this up, I'm happy to do that, Neil.

RACHEL: So are they – they're presumably the same bedrooms you had as children?

NEIL: Yeah.

ADAM: Yeah, just a bit different. TV's a bit bigger.

RACHEL: Yeah. Yeah.

ADAM: Technology's evolved.

RACHEL: Oh, that's so lovely. So –

CATHY: Who's the funniest? We always start with that. Who's the funniest?

ADAM: Oh wow. I mean I'm pretending it's a hard question to be polite, because you're sitting right next to me.

NEIL: Yeah, yeah, it's Adam.

ADAM: I – I am the trained – I am – well I’ve done like actual training for – for stand-up comedy.

CATHY: Have you?

RACHEL: Have you?

ADAM: So and I’ve – yeah yeah yeah. I did this charity comedy night. And we did like this crash course in stand-up comedy with a guy called Logan Murray, who’s a wonderful, wonderful comedian and just understands it. And I sort of started out – sort of like a bit of a charity shindig. It’s something I sort of fell in love with a little bit. So I now do – obviously not at the moment because circumstances, but I do, you know, I do open mic nights. I’m always on – on the lookout for things that are funny or make good – good material. And I love comedy. People think it’s this really intelligent, witty art form. And to a degree it is. But a lot of it is just moaning with a microphone.

CATHY: Of course.

ADAM: That’s how John Bishop got started.

CATHY: Totally.

ADAM: He – he got divorced, went to a pub, did an open mic night, and then one night she was in the same pub while he was – while he was making jokes about her and they got back together. I think that’s the story.

RACHEL: That’s amazing. Oh my goodness, okay.

CATHY: A massive microphone’s just appeared.

RACHEL: Yeah. For those that –

ADAM: Yeah, sorry, I’m moving it more –

RACHEL: You're trying to knock your brother out, I'm sure of it.
You're just like –

ADAM: No no, sorry. I'm moving it – it was – it was more equidistant between us, so the sound is like – I was – I was thinking technologically – I'm an audiophile as well, so I have all these things that go on in my head whenever something's happening. And I'm like, 'oh, how can I make this better?'

RACHEL: Make it better.

ADAM: And I get lost in moments. Within moments.

CATHY: That's nice. I wish you'd do that.

RACHEL: Yeah.

ADAM: And – and I'm the worst person to take anywhere. Because I'll just be looking around in this 'Final Destination', 'Saw' kind of way, thinking, 'ooh, what could go wrong here?' And kind fix it of before it – before it does.

RACHEL: Nothing's going to go wrong, Adam. We're confident. We're confident. So do you share a similar sense of humour, Neil?

NEIL: To a certain extent. I'd say that Adam was slightly more edgy than me.

RACHEL: Right.

NEIL: Where the line that I will go to and the line that Adam will go to are miles apart. Adam will take things a lot further than I will.

ADAM: Yeah, a lot further than most people would, Neil. You're not the only one.

CATHY: Did you grow up laughing at the same things?

NEIL: Yeah, I'd say we would. We did.

ADAM: We grew up in like a really British household as far as it came to comedy. So we were raised on 'Only Fools and Horses', 'Dad's Army', 'the British Empire', really early like Harry Enfield and Paul Whitehouse.

CATHY: Yeah.

ADAM: Kind of stuff. The stuff that now you'd have to apologise for, outside the BBC. But at the time – and to a degree still are just quintessentially British and quite funny.

CATHY: And was it a house where there was a lot of laughter in the household?

ADAM: Well we always did sort of laugh a lot. I think humour anyway is a really important part of human existence. And a superb communication tool. Laughter's one of the only things that we do communally as – as a species. If you go to a stand-up show, you'll laugh with everyone else really quickly. If you go home and watch the exact same thing on DVD on your own, you will laugh less. It's just a – a psychological – psychological fact.

NEIL: And even when we were together as a family, there'd be things that we'd laugh at that other people would stare at us, thinking, 'what's the joke?'

ADAM: We have a lot of in jokes in our – in our family. Like, um, our dad just doesn't do directions. So when – when we're going on long car journeys, he was the master of, 'oh, we should've turned left back there.' Like Captain Hindsight. He is – he is the Keir Starmer of passionate driving. And – and so we used to call him Pat Nav.

CATHY: That's funny.

ADAM: Because his name's Patrick, I should explain that bit as well.

CATHY: Yeah.

ADAM: Now – now the joke is complete in its form.

RACHEL: Your partner has absolutely no sense of direction.

CATHY: No, no.

RACHEL: And you said it's something to do with not crawling. What's it –

CATHY: Not crawling as a child. Apparently if you don't crawl as a child you don't have a sense of direction when you're an adult.

RACHEL: There you go.

CATHY: Worth thinking about.

RACHEL: Yeah.

CATHY: So – so when you were kids, did you get on?

ADAM: As much as brothers can do. And I think the fact we're twins –

CATHY: Yeah.

ADAM: Added to that element of, I suppose, we're both quite competitive. I say, 'quite competitive' – I'm very competitive. And Neil just sort of got swept up – swept up in that. Because my best friend, Roxy, she's a twin. And her – her and her sister George get on like gang busters. Whereas we sort of got on – there was a healthy underlying sense of aggression there.

CATHY: Really?

NEIL: Another thing that helped was we, um, got put in separate classes at school, didn't we? At the request of our parents.

ADAM: Mhm.

CATHY: Really?

NEIL: So from a very early age we also got friendly and got into different networks.

ADAM: Yeah. Nothing gets on my nerves more than when people refer to twins as 'the twins.'

CATHY: Yeah.

ADAM: And it's something – I've got a name, my parents picked it, so it is quite a big deal. And I'd be grateful – Neil, they panicked and picked a name because they weren't expecting twins. Whereas me, saw it from the word go.

CATHY: Yeah.

ADAM: And yeah, if you could use my name that would be great.

CATHY: So you had separate sets of friends? You weren't all hanging out with the same people?

ADAM: No. There was crossover for sure.

NEIL: We did have an overlap, didn't we? Particularly at high school.

ADAM: Yeah, and it wasn't like, 'oh, those are Neil's friends. Neil's friends are losers.' Some were, in my defence. Some of mine were as well, in hindsight.

NEIL: Yeah, I can agree with that.

ADAM: A lot of the people that we hung out with in high school, looking back with like 20/20 vision, dickheads.

[Flute sounds]

RACHEL: Adam, you've talked quite openly about being bullied in secondary school, was it predominantly? Mostly?

ADAM: Yeah.

RACHEL: So you two were at the same school. So how did that impact on you, Neil? Knowing that was going on?

NEIL: Um, I kind of took a step back, mainly because I was worried me getting involved would perpetuate the situation rather than resolving it. Also he's a confident person, he can fight his own battles. So I just decided to get on with my issues I had there.

ADAM: I also didn't want you kind of getting – getting involved. I think kind of those are my things to deal with, and dragging you into it or you injecting yourself into it, would've just made things even – even messier.

CATHY: That's a very mature response for a child.

ADAM: Well, uh, I – in some ways I was mature. In other ways I wasn't. and I – I was this like teenage guy with a passion for comedy who was a lot smarter and a lot wittier than most of the people calling him names and bullying him. So I'd just keep blowing people up left, right, and centre in – in the playground. And always being able to take it from like a three on the Richter scale to an eight, nine, ten. In like half a sentence.

CATHY: Absolutely. Absolutely.

RACHEL: So who got in trouble more, then?

CATHY: I think I know the answer to that.

RACHEL: Yeah. Adam?

ADAM: Oh, me. By – by a long way. I reckon they had my mum's number plate at the school gate by the end of the – end of those five years.

NEIL: Yeah, I'd believe that.

RACHEL: But Neil, did you get up to anything?

NEIL: I think in the earlier years I was slightly more problematic.

ADAM: You knew your way around a computer though, didn't you? You knew – you knew what you knew what to do with a computer to cause –

NEIL: Oh, I knew how to do stuff like that, yeah.

RACHEL: Some major GCHQ hacking?

CATHY: I was just going to say, he's bring down GCHQ.

RACHEL: Yeah, exactly.

NEIL: In my first year of high school we were all give usernames and passwords. And everybody rather stupidly used to write it down in block capitals at the front of their record book.

CATHY: Oh, no.

NEIL: Meaning that at a very, very early stage in our first year at high school, I'd found three record books and so had memorised three different usernames and three different passwords other than my own.

RACHEL: Yeah.

CATHY: And what did you do with them?

ADAM: I don't know why you said you weren't hacking.

CATHY: Exactly.

ADAM: I know, you said you weren't hacking and then went on to describe hacking.

CATHY: Like, 'I hacked.'

NEIL: Yeah.

CATHY: Exactly. So what did you do with this? With that stuff? Did you hack?

ADAM: I – as your lawyer I advise you to say no.

NEIL: No, no. I didn't do any hacking or anything like that but I had them on record.

CATHY: Okay.

RACHEL: Good. That was a – that was enough.

CATHY: Interesting. Can you describe each other? Neil, can you describe Adam?

NEIL: Um –

ADAM: Ooh, have that swearing button ready. Queue it.

NEIL: Yeah. I was going to say, this is before the watershed, isn't it? So –

CATHY: You can say anything you want.

RACHEL: No, you can.

CATHY: Anything.

NEIL: Um, he's unique and he's – if I had to describe his character, I'd say he was the Marmite of characters. That you're either going to love him or you're going to hate him. There's no middle ground, because he's a very in your face and loud person.

CATHY: And always was?

NEIL: Yeah. Always was and probably always will be.

RACHEL: Yeah.

ADAM: That might be the nicest thing you've ever said to me.

CATHY: Adam, describe Neil.

ADAM: Um, Neil is my twin brother, my partner in crime, my – my raison d'être. Because again, competitive. And he's done good. I'm glad he's around. I'd be – I'd be worse without him than I – than I am – than I am with him. And hopefully when the pubs and cafes open up again, we can go on adventures, play board games, and drink pretentious craft beers and ales. Because that's who I am.

CATHY: So are you the first person the other will turn to if you're upset or struggling with something?

ADAM: That's a case by case thing. I think I'm – I think I'm a lot more emotional about things than – than Neil. Neil's, um, and maybe it's because you work in a library and – and have worked in libraries. You're – you're quite factual. Whereas I – I'm more analytical and things stay in my head a bit more. And maybe sometimes I need someone with a bit more, uh, what's the correct term? I suppose emotional intelligence.

RACHEL: Yeah.

CATHY: Yeah.

ADAM: To talk me down. Whereas with you or Mum, if I came to you and went, 'I'm a bit sad because this, this, and this.'

NEIL: We'd be like, 'yeah, suck it up.'

ADAM: Yeah, you'd be like, 'oh, that's fucking' –

CATHY: Aw, Neil.

ADAM: Literally – no, he would. He'd look at me and be, 'oh, that's fucking stupid. Grow up. And that – and that would be the chat. Like you'd be the worst counsellor ever.

NEIL: Yeah. Like Adam says, because of my profession I'm more looking at the facts, look at what relates to it, and – whereas Adam's got a lot more passion and looks at things like feelings.

CATHY: Yeah, I'm with – I'm the same as Adam. And does that – Neil, are you embarrassed by him? Because Rachel's embarrassed by me being quite emotional and quite passionate.

RACHEL: Yeah, because she's quite loud about it.

NEIL: Again, it's on a case by case scenario. Like sometimes I can understand why he's passionate and the things he's passionate about. And then there's other times where I can't understand where the passion comes from. Like Pokémon collection from Build A Bear is absolutely ridiculous, you know? What made him, after he bought Pikachu, decide to go and buy five more? In fact six more, pardon me –

ADAM: I was going to say, six more.

NEIL: Six more, is beyond me. In the case of two, he even bought an accompanying outfit.

CATHY: What?

ADAM: I think – I think Psyduck's got a –

NEIL: Yeah, Psyduck's got an anorak and waterproof hat on. That is ridiculous.

ADAM: He's – Psyduck's great. Don't talk shit about Psyduck.

CATHY: So as children did you fight a lot? Did you ever hate each other?

RACHEL: Because Adam, you are – you are clearly very competitive. So that must've kicked off some situations.

ADAM: Oh yeah, it still does. I'm worse now I'm a grown-up. I'm passionate and competitive. So if anyone kind of, uh, actually I've – I've been like – I have to leave restaurants because the disabled toilet has been up some stairs. And I've mentioned it rather forthrightly to – not only the manager but anyone that will listen.

CATHY: Yeah.

ADAM: That's the kind of guy I – I am. We used to go and play tennis on a, um, on a Saturday down the local park. And Neil was verifiably better at tennis than me. And that wound me up a little bit.

NEIL: I remember that vaguely. We were like – ten.

ADAM: Yeah.

NEIL: Or was it 11?

ADAM: Ten, about there. About there. Still not over it, by the way. 25 years.

NEIL: I know. I know you're not. But – and another thing that I was better at than him was pool. Snooker.

ADAM: Mhm.

CATHY: Adam looks furious.

RACHEL: Who's better – who's better now? Who's better at tennis, who's better at pool now?

NEIL: Um, we've not played tennis for years so we couldn't –

ADAM: No, because it's probably still you.

NEIL: Yeah.

ADAM: It's not a circumstances thing. It's a deliberate manipulation of our lives on my part.

NEIL: And pool it's me. What Adam and I did once rather cruelly, was we were in a pub and he and I were having a game of pool and someone else came up, who we know, he's a friend of ours. Put a pound on the table and just went, 'right, I'm playing the winner.' So when he had this – this guy had his back turned, we spoke and we said that I would play badly for the whole game but we'd fix it so that I would win. And to make it look realistic I played right-handed for the rest of the game, because I'm a left-hander.

CATHY: Yeah.

NEIL: And this guy came on, I went straight to left-handed and about 45 minutes later, four games, he came up to you, didn't he, Adam? And what was it he said?

ADAM: He got – he got very angry at me because I – I let it happen. His words, not – not mine. And he – he came up to me, um, and was like, 'your brother is an evil, nasty bitch.' And he's wonderfully camp, Steven. And he just rattled off this sort of like 'RuPaul's Drag Race' diatribe about his displeasure with you at that very moment.

NEIL: I was a snake or something like that.

ADAM: Yeah.

[Flute sounds]

CATHY: What do you least understand about each other?

ADAM: Is it the geeky shit?

NEIL: No, it's the loudness and the in your face and the fact that it's there all the time. It's – but for somebody that was so much more quiet and low-key in our younger years, in terms of you were the less problematic person, now you don't seem to have volume control, I would describe it.

ADAM: I – I'm just – I'm just forthright. And – and know what I like. And I absolutely know how to get it. Occasionally you've got to kind of make an omelette and break a few eggs, which I'm remarkably fine doing.

NEIL: And how someone as loud as you managed to get a Saturday job in a public library I will never know.

CATHY: You didn't. How did that work out? What happened?

ADAM: Yeah.

CATHY: Did you shout?

ADAM: It was – it was quite possibly the worst summer of my life.

NEIL: Because we were actually in the same library and we had a shift overlap. For a short period of time we were colleagues.

CATHY: Oh, no, and how did that work out?

ADAM: 'Hey you, loud teenager, would you like to stand in complete silence for four hours at a time?'

CATHY: Oh, no.

ADAM: 'Yeah, go on then, I'll do that.' I very much jumped before I was pushed as well.

CATHY: Yeah.

RACHEL: Yeah, of course. But so Neil, are you saying you don't really understand where that came from, because he was – as a younger child he was quiet. He had volume control.

NEIL: Yeah, he was – I'd say in our primary school years you were the more low-key of the two of us, weren't you?

CATHY: And what were you like, Neil? Were you louder?

NEIL: I was – I think people used to describe me as the naughty one in primary school.

ADAM: You were absolutely the naughty child.

CATHY: Really?

RACHEL: So what changed? What – why the role reversal?

NEIL: I don't know.

ADAM: I – I reckon I just became really deviant. I – I did the angsty teenager thing with complete style. I was – I'm was, 'I'm going to go all in on this angry emo kid thing.' Because it looks fun. I reckon you were still quite naughty, but comparatively –

CM: Yeah.

ADAM: You were cool.

NEIL: Good.

ADAM: That's like saying gonorrhoea's better than chlamydia. Both aren't great. Both still come with their challenges, or so I hear.

CATHY: Or so you hear. But hang on, Adam, so what do you not understand about Neil?

NEIL: Go on.

ADAM: I don't – it's not that I – I – you have like any character flaws or – or anything – anything like that. And to say there are things about you that I don't understand, I think would be – would be a bit, um, a bit catastrophic or – or grandiose. But there are certain things that you – your obsession with Gordon Ramsay, 'Kitchen Nightmares' or – or like 'Court Cam.' Or when it's so quiet you love watching conflict on the telly. And not like actual conflict, like boxing or wrestling or MMA, you like watching like – like shitty conflict like angry chefs.

CATHY: Really?

ADAM: Or the police yelling at poor people. And I don't understand it.

NEIL: Yeah, so 'Kitchen Nightmares', 'Traffic Cops.' There's a programme –

CATHY: Why? Why do you like that, Neil? What's going on there?

NEIL: I just found them weirdly entertaining, but I've never been able to pinpoint why.

ADAM: There is an element of something like the macabre about it, isn't there? There's something like – there's an element of almost vaudevillian voyeurism. Where you are – even I catch myself now and again, when you're watching it in your room, like listening to Judge Judy going at a girl because bought a car and didn't pay for it

as has got no idea why she's in court. Thinking, 'this is weird.' Every part – every part of my soul hates this. But there's a little devil on my shoulder going, 'you should totally Google this.'

CATHY: Really?

RACHEL: I see that. I see that.

CATHY: Oh, I don't. Is there anything you two will not – any areas you will not touch on with each other?

ADAM: Uh, no. I – I'm an open book. And I also think anything's up for reasonable public discourse. I won't go into, uh, a conversation all guns blazing in an – in an uneducated way, but I think, no, you should be able to talk about anything with anyone and have a reasonable conversation. And have a, I suppose, a mutually respectful exchange of – of ideas.

CATHY: Yeah.

ADAM: What about you?

NEIL: I'd say that I was the same when it came to talking to you. The only thing that I'd say I'd sometimes avoid would be talking about people with you.

ADAM: Mhm.

RACHEL: Why?

CATHY: What do you mean? What do you mean? In what way?

NEIL: Um, like if there's –

ADAM: He finds some of my friends quite difficult, don't you?

NEIL: Yeah. Like he's got some friends that he gets on with, that he likes, that –

ADAM: You don't.

NEIL: I don't necessarily hate them, but they're not the first person who I'd choose to be with.

ADAM: Me either, for the record. If I wake up one morning and I'm stretched and I want a quiet day and a peaceful day, I'm not calling her. I know exactly who you're talking about. You're talking about –

CATHY: Right. Oh, so it's when they're loud and overwhelming, you mean, Neil? That's – that's what you mean?

NEIL: Or – no, there's different ways. Like some of them are loud, some of them just – if complaining was a job they'd be the CEO.

CATHY: Right, right. Yeah.

RACHEL: They're just not your kind of people.

NEIL: You know?

CATHY: But Adam, you're cool with it.

ADAM: You just let them get on with it, don't you? I mean there are times when she's running at me, and I'm not in – I'm in the room but I'm not in the room, if that makes sense. I'm like plating the casserole or something.

RACHEL: You can zone it out. You can zone it out.

ADAM: Yeah, yeah. And you make – you make the right noise at the right time, which is a skill I've very much finessed.

CATHY: Do you like Neil's friends, Adam?

ADAM: Uh, yeah, I think so. I think they're – and they're nice to Neil. So if you're nice to Neil, you get my vote. Simple answer. And if

you're not nice to Neil, then strap yourself in because things are going to get rocky.

CATHY: You have a faith, don't you, Adam?

ADAM: I do.

CATHY: Do you, Neil? Do you share that?

ADAM: I'd – I'd say you're agnostic.

NEIL: Agnostic to a certain extent. I believe there's something there. But I don't feel as committed to it or as devoted to it as Adam is. Would you say that was a fair way – summary? Summarising?

ADAM: I'd say that's a fair statement. I'd say that's accurate. Yeah yeah. You're not like a militant atheist.

CATHY: And that doesn't cause problems between you? You don't find it frustrating, Adam, that he doesn't believe, or –

ADAM: No, I think people are entitled to believe whatever they want to believe. And again it's something that if people want to have a discussion about it –

CATHY: Yeah, yeah.

ADAM: More – more than willing to have – have the chat and – and be – be willing to give an explanation for the beliefs I have. And – and give other people the same – the same respect. And people – people come as they are. And I think – I don't know when we stopped giving people the freedom to come as they are. Of course there are exceptions.

CATHY: Yeah yeah yeah.

ADAM: But I think everyone's different, and I think we need to give people that level of respect. And I think – I think now more than ever, maybe because we've all been cooped up inside for a year, everyone's just at each other's throats all the time and like, 'oh, you're an idiot. Why would you believe in vaccines?' And all – all these people that became like immunologists and doctors in a year.

CATHY: How has the pandemic affected you two? You two being trapped in the house.

NEIL: I'd say it affected Adam more than it affected me. Because I work in a medical library, I've not been out of work. I've just been working remotely.

CATHY: Yeah. Yeah.

NEIL: And in a different way. Whereas Adam lost quite a lot of contract work, didn't you?

ADAM: Yeah. Yeah. Work kind of – we can't film anything or do anything so everything kind of ground to a halt. Things that were being commissioned then weren't – weren't commissioned. And commissioning's hard enough anyway.

CATHY: Yeah.

ADAM: But how – what – 'how do I feel this morning? Great. That's what we want today.'

CATHY: Yeah.

ADAM: That's how commissioning in TV works now. There are no actual – actual programme makers. It's just a bunch of people in suits. Same in the film industry, you know? There's a – there's a thin layer of people in the – in the media industry whose sole job it is is to not take a risk. And that layer right at the top, unfortunately.

CATHY: It's very frustrating.

ADAM: It's why everything's kind of going online or going – going live. And people are just bored of being, I don't know, dictated to by idiots. And so yeah, that's – that's my – that's my frustration there. But also I've just missed people. I've missed my mates, I've missed sort of like like-minded people or people that I can kind of, you know, if I want to go and get a coffee and play a board game, I miss having that circle where I can like crack out like a giant behemoth of a board game with loads of moving pieces and everyone follow it. Because also, like, you're into board games. You're a bit of a – a basic kind of guy, aren't you?

NEIL: Yeah.

CATHY: 'A basic kind of guy?'

ADAM: Something like, chess.

NEIL: I'm not into the –

ADAM: I'm a –

NEIL: Adam's into the more complex, 'Dungeons and Dragons' style board games.

CATHY: Yeah. Yeah.

NEIL: Whereas I'm more of a traditional board game person, like Scrabble, Ludo –

CATHY: Monopoly.

[Flute sounds]

RACHEL: Do you like the same kind of music?

NEIL: No. We've got contrasting tastes in music to the point where, um, we've actually set up a verbal agreement that when we go to concerts or live gigs, we have to alternate who chooses the performer.

RACHEL: What was the last one and whose choice is next?

NEIL: The last one – we went to see Madness live at the Brixton Academy. And that was my choice.

RACHEL: Next up?

ADAM: I – I don't know. I might make it a comedy show. There's – there's a little devil on my shoulder that wants to take him to something he's absolutely going to hate.

CATHY: Like what?

ADAM: Just go all in and be like –

NEIL: What, like Rammstein, or –

ADAM: Yeah, we're – we're going to Slipknot. Because it's too –

CATHY: I'll come with you. I'll come to that, Adam. I'll come with you to that.

ADAM: Yeah.

CATHY: I love that.

ADAM: We're going to see Slipknot because it's clearly 2005 again. Or, uh, or I'd love to see Killswitch Engage. That would be amazing.

RACHEL: Killswitch Engage. Neil, you would hate that, I'm presuming.

NEIL: I've never heard of them.

ADAM: Have you not?

RACHEL: You haven't heard it booming through the bedroom wall at night?

NEIL: I've heard some stuff booming through the bedroom wall in Adam's room.

CATHY: Ooh, come on.

NEIL: Normally him snoring.

CATHY: Oh, okay.

ADAM: I was so scared then. I was like, 'what is it?'

CATHY: So was I.

ADAM: Did I – did I forget to put my headphones in, or – or forget to put a sock in my mouth, or – or something. I'm joking. You can't do that to me. It nearly – just the tip.

RACHEL: So I – where do I go from here? Right, Adam, will you be going back to doing stand-up?

ADAM: Hopefully. Hopefully. It's on – it's on the – on the to do list. There's like so many things that I'm – I'm hoping – hoping to do. So there's that, the amount of people that are like, 'oh, you should write a book.' Um, and you've got to be like, 'mate, I'm 36. I've done nothing and I've nothing good to say on – on anything.' 'Oh, but I think it would be really inspirational.' It really wouldn't. It would be a list of things that make me angry and very, very petty reasons why they make me angry.

CATHY: Neil, do you think he should write a book?

NEIL: I think he's got the ability to. It's just whether or not he wants to do it. The way he rants and the way he complains all the time, I think he could be the male version of 'Bridget Jones's Diary'.

CATHY: Hm.

RACHEL: Maybe you could write a book together.

ADAM: Hm, could I work with Neil Thomas Pearson? It's a big question there. Do I want to put myself in a situation that could wind up with a 13-part Netflix drama about the end result? And the ongoing court case that would no doubt – no, I'd kill him. I would absolutely wind up killing him.

CATHY: What is it about him that you couldn't write a book with him?

NEIL: Yeah, what is it about me?

ADAM: Because you have a lot of – you're not – you're goal orientated, not solution orientated. And you'd be like, 'oh, I don't like that idea.' And I'd be like, 'fine, Neil. I respect that. What idea do you like?' And you'd be like, 'um, I don't know.'

NEIL: Yeah.

ADAM: What would we write about?

NEIL: I think it would be interesting to do something twins orientated, if we were to do fiction.

ADAM: Okay. I – I am very much a non-fiction writer. I can't handle fiction books. They're all the same.

NEIL: Non-fiction. I don't know what direction to go in there. What would you do?

ADAM: I – I don't know, because I think about this a lot. And at – at varying levels of sobriety. Would you like to hear the worst book idea I've ever thought of?

CATHY: Yes please.

NEIL: Go on.

ADAM: It was going through the original 151 Pokémon and saying what celebrity they're most like and why.

CATHY: That's quite good.

RACHEL: Really?

CATHY: I'd read that.

ADAM: It got really rude really quickly.

NEIL: I couldn't imagine you doing that. Or a book on the concept of Room 101 saying what would be in our Room 101 and why.

CATHY: What would be in it?

ADAM: What would be in your Room 101, since you've opened this Pandora's box of hatred?

NEIL: Um, well Pokémon for a start.

RACHEL: You'd do that to your brother?

CATHY: Adam, what would be in yours?

ADAM: Everything Neil likes and cares for.

RACHEL: Okay, well as – as publishers, I'm not sure we're – I'm not sure we're going to go for it, okay? I think –

CATHY: Not going to accept that, exactly.

[Flute sounds]

RACHEL: Who's the happiest?

ADAM: Ooh, that's a – that's a loaded one. Probably like – it's got to be you.

NEIL: What, purely on the grounds that you're miserable?

ADAM: Purely on the grounds that I've always got something to moan about. You wake up in the morning like a – like an infantile puppy. And the whole universe hits you in the face and you're like, 'life is amazing.' Um, and I – I'm – I wake up like a twelve-year-old cat, just thinking, 'oh, here we go again. Another day of being tormented by dangly things that jingle.'

CATHY: Neil, do you agree?

NEIL: Um, yeah. He normally does have something – at least one thing to complain about. Whereas I can just get up and look on, to some extent, the brighter side to things. Adam's just more of a realist, that if there is something wrong, he's the first, second, and third person to point it out.

ADAM: Yeah, I – I get wound up a lot easier than you. And I think that's because I'm – I'm online more than you.

CATHY: Yeah, that's definitely why.

ADAM: In – in the pandemic I've become quite the doomscroller.

CATHY: Right. Is it safe to say you two are absolute polar opposites?

NEIL: The fact that we're so close means there has to be some common ground there. But we've also got such different characteristics about us that we can go in our own ways as well, can't we?

ADAM: Yeah. Yeah yeah yeah. We're – we can cope without the other being – if you died I'd miss you. But for example if I've got to go away for like three or four weeks, we'd both cope.

NEIL: Yeah.

CATHY: Can you imagine living apart, though? How does that feel?

ADAM: I mean I did it for what, six years. I was – I was at uni and lived in Brighton for a few years afterwards. So it does – it does work. But then you – you do miss people.

CATHY: Yeah.

ADAM: And so, yeah. And I – I haven't changed quite – quite initially. I get used to it. But I don't like it. It feels like a massive uprooting and – and all. But no, I – I reckon I'd miss him. But I reckon if we lived apart, I – I'd cope.

CATHY: Neil, did you miss him when he wasn't there?

NEIL: Um, the thing was we actually went to the same university, it's just he chose to move down to Brighton whereas I chose to commute.

CATHY: Right.

NEIL: So –

ADAM: I'm not hearing – I'm not hearing a yes. Go on.

CATHY: Neil, real answer.

NEIL: So in the – in my last year at college, when he was down there, I did miss him. It was just – the house was uncomfortably quiet, there was no one to draw attention away from my negative characteristics.

CATHY: But you haven't got the negative characteristics. Adam said you haven't. you're very positive.

ADAM: He's also quite lazy.

CATHY: Oh. Oh.

ADAM: And without me there to sort of like distract a bit, all of his glaring character flaws as a land mammal, front and centre.

NEIL: Yeah, whereas when you're at home and you come home drunk on Sunday morning at 3:00 in the morning, suddenly –

ADAM: Haven't done that for a while.

RACHEL: Is there anything that you've – want to say to each other that you've never said before? We always close with this question. So Neil?

NEIL: Um, just that I think he's a great brother and thanks for all the support you've given me, particularly since starting full-time work.

ADAM: You are very much welcome. I've been buying you soya diet lattes for a few years and I haven't told you.

CATHY: Aw. What's a soya diet – diet latte?

RACHEL: Soya diet latte?

CATHY: So what's a diet one?

NEIL: He's been buying me – it's dairy free.

CATHY: Oh.

ADAM: So it's dairy free and with – and with the sugar free syrup.

RACHEL: So Neil, are you shocked?

NEIL: I'm not shocked, I'm just disappointed. But it's the sort of thing that Adam would do.

ADAM: 'Oh. Oh, my clothes fit and my skin's better. God damn you, twin brother of mine.' We'll do the emotional – the emotional thing. Uh, I love you, I respect you, and I'm glad that you're around. And even though Mum cried when she found out that she was having twins, true story, I'm glad she did.

[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.

CATHY: Why would you kill him?