

## EGSM 21 – Holiday Traditions

### Content Warnings

- Innuendo
- Explicit Language
- Discussions of: alcohol & consumption, food
- Mentions of: kidnapping, rot, decapitation

### ELIZABETH

... it's a pumpkin so it will be like a pumpkin. Cut through it and only goes in for like an inch and then the rest is hollow, Helen. It's hollow inside!

### MIKE

Yeah.

### ELIZABETH

And I was like what is this nonsense. Where is my pumpkin? I was going to eat some of this. I have been short changed!

**(laughter)**

**[Intro theme tune]**

### HELEN

Hello friends and fans and welcome to Enthusiasm. The show where we talk about a few of our favourite things. I am your host, Helen Gould, one of the best Rusty Quillers and today we're talking about holiday traditions.

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**MIKE**

Holiday traditions baby! Wooh!

**HELEN**

[Laughing]

**MIKE**

I'm ready!

**HELEN**

Yep.

**MIKE**

Let's go!

**HELEN**

Yep, Mike's here! Good to know that Mike is here!

**ELIZABETH**

I mean he's got the best Christmas jumper out of us all.

**MIKE**

Before this recording started we were all like 'let's maybe not talk about just Christmas.' And I'm sat here in a Christmas jumper with tinsel coming out of my ass and a Christmas tree in the background.

**HELEN**

Right. Well ... as you are now very aware, we're going to talk about the holidays. And I am going to have everybody introduce themselves. And we're going to do it alphabetically as always. So, Annie, please can I get your name, your pronouns and what you do.

**ANNIE**

Hi everybody. My name is Annie Fitch, I use she/her pronouns. I'm an audio editor at Rusty Quill and I'm the voice of Akteraks on Stellar Firma.

**HELEN**

Huzzah. And Elizabeth.

**ELIZABETH**

Hi, my name is Elizabeth. I am also another editor for Rusty Quill and I use she/her pronouns. That's about it, I think. (laughs)

**HELEN**

And...Mike.

**MIKE**

Hi everyone, I'm Mike, I'm the head of video for Rusty Quill and the voice of Tim Stoker from Magnus Archives. And I use he/him pronouns.

**HELEN**

Wonderful. Somehow I always forget that you're Tim.

**MIKE**

It's weird. There's like a dichotomy in Rusty Quill where people call me Tim...

**(Laughter)**

**MIKE**

And I run for you now. It's literally ... it's now got to the point where I just accept that people give me that name. And then there's people who are like 'oh yeah, yeah, season 3, yeah'. And I'm like, 'yeah, it's a long time ago, hey!'.

**(Laughter)**

**HELEN**

Ok. Alright. Let's get into it. Because we are recording in December, I do want to talk a little bit about the festive season. Would anyone like to tell me what you tend to do at this time of year in your house? Is anyone up for starting?

**MIKE**

Most of what I do at this time of year involves cardigans. Like comfortable jumpers, Baileys, probably a few gins and maybe some wine. Usually excessive amounts of turkey and in between all of that, lots of squirty cream. Usually on some kind of cake or alternatively on some kind of like fruit related product. Or fruit adjacent product, if it's like, you know glaze cherries. I still don't know what they're made of. Does anyone know what they actually are?

**HELEN**

Ok, so I have found out. So Glaze cherries are maraschino cherries specifically with the stones removed and they are cooked in like a sugar syrup.

**MIKE**

Mmhmm.

**HELEN**

And that's why they have that texture and that taste. That's why they're so sweet.

**ELIZABETH**

That's what they're trying to tell you, but really they come from another planet. Clearly they've been described to that planet as this is one of the items that we eat. And that planet, scientists on that planet have come up with what they think that is and then they're selling it. So ... it's a conspiracy. It's how they're getting their brain worms into us. It's via glacier cherries...

**ANNIE**

Something that Jay said to that, it's seasonal so I guess it could play into what some people consider holiday. Did you know that pumpkin spice lattes have no pumpkin in them! They're called pumpkin spice lattes because it's the spices that you would normally cook a pumpkin pie with.

**MIKE**

What?!

**ELIZABETH**

I mean I wouldn't be shocked if there was no coffee in Starbucks coffee...

**(Laughter)**

**ANNIE**

No, it's just like cinnamon and cloves and another couple of things in it. No pumpkin!

**ELIZABETH**

I mean it would be quite weird if there was like floating like fibrous pumpkin...

**ANNIE**

Well sure.

**(Laughter)**

**ELIZABETH**

But I think this is something we should investigate. I think we should investigate can we make a drink with pumpkin in it, like a coffee drink where it's just blended pumpkin coffee, cream, glaze cherries obviously, just...

**MIKE**

Look, you have to dare to believe!

**HELEN**

But Mike, so we've heard what you like to do around this time of the year. Liz what about you. What do you ... what are your plans usually around December?

**ELIZABETH**

Well, Helen, the most important thing about this time of year for me is; Christmas pudding. Christmas pudding must be served. Otherwise Christmas has not occurred. Christmas pudding ... I do not care so much about whether it's got brandy sauce, but it must be heated with ice cream or cream. And if you're going to do it super traditional, it has to have coins stuffed in it.

**MIKE**

Yes, of course!

**ELIZABETH**

Like, you know ... if you haven't, with your mouth, taken small bites of a pudding and then like carefully checked whether or not there was a bit of metal in there, you haven't lived.

**(Laughter)**

**ELIZABETH**

This is a tradition that just brings such nostalgia to me. So, yeah, Christmas pudding is very important. Mince pies are also, important. Peas, with mint sauce...

**MIKE**

Oh no!

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**ELIZABETH**

It's the only time that you ever have mint sauce.

**MIKE**

No, no, no, no. You've lost me now.

**ELIZABETH**

But peas and mint sauce.

**HELEN**

Ah, oh, ah, oh.

**MIKE**

Checking out with peas with mint sauce, no, no.

**(Laughter)**

**MIKE**

You have...

**HELEN**

Minted peas are great!

**MIKE**

No.

**ELIZABETH**

And you've got to have your roast. But for me being vegetarian, obviously it's a bit different than it used to be. But when I was young actually it was probably lamb or mutton and it may be I think chicken or turkey. God, it's been so long ago. There would always be like two meats basically. It was the day of two meats. Now it's probably gone to the day of one meat and one vegetarian.

**(Laughter)**

**ANNIE**

Might be overly American, but it's always honey baked ham instead of roast in my house. Honey baked hams are my absolute favourite. And you basically don't get them except in the holidays.

**ELIZABETH**

We used to have hams. I do remember growing up with ham because it would be put in the cold store. There was a bit of the kitchen that stuck out with the thing ... a door on it, and then you ... and the ham would sit there wrapped in a tea towel, you know for the days afterwards which would be sliced into sandwiches for the next two weeks.

**ANNIE**

Yes, exactly.

**ELIZABETH**

So there was, there was always ham and then something else.

**ANNIE**

Yeah, my family we always get ... so we always get honey baked ham which is just a whole ham with like an inch thick crust of honey on it before it's cooked so it's crystallised on the outside. It's delicious. And then obviously, it's a big old thing so there's no way we're going to eat all of it and so we would put it in ... we would carve it up and put it in a big case basically in the fridge. And then that was lunch for like most of January.

**ELIZABETH**

Yes. You just got so sick of ham. I just remember just being so sick of it...

**ANNIE**

Yeah right.

**(Laughter)**

**HELEN**

I suspect that this is something that we all share which is inexplicably cooking so much more food than you actually are going to need.

**MIKE**

Yes.

**HELEN**

And you ... but you do it every year.

**MIKE**

Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

**HELEN**

Even though you should really know better.

**MIKE**

So we used to ... obviously like, you know, pre-this, we used to go and see like some relatives up in the north of England and basically the whole point was on that side of the family, they all get together around Christmas time, it's usually just before or just after, and everyone will cook one part of the big Christmas meal and then everyone comes together and you share everything. You share drink and you share food and you share like stories and play games and like people bring like table top games that we can play and things like that. Like it's really, really cool. But you are quite right. What that means is, because everyone is cooking their own element of the meal, they make like a family size portion of that element. Meaning that there is so much food by the time it comes to actually getting there. Ah man! You've got to love it though.

**HELEN**

Annie, other than the ham. Any other traditions that you do?

**ANNIE**

Well, I was first going to say as the only American here I feel like I should bring up Thanksgiving for the sort of fall winter holidays. Thanksgiving is a holiday that I don't think I appreciated very much as a kid, because I was picky eater. So to me it was just all my family's around and I'm eating I guess some food but I'm not ... I didn't get into the massive dinner portion of it as a kid and really it was just an excuse to have some time off school. But as an adult now, I love Thanksgiving. I love getting to have people come around who I don't

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really get to see that much during the year. And I love all the food. I love all the like the pot luck element of it, of everybody bringing their own dish and then also on Thanksgiving morning every year I play a massive like football game with my friends that's very, very competitive.

**HELEN**

Aww.

**ANNIE**

And so we go back to...

**MIKE**

Cool.

**ANNIE**

...like people who have now spread out all over the country and you know, we started this game when we were like 17 and now like I turn 30 in about a month and so like seeing as everyone progresses through life and then every year we still come back to the home town to the same field that we all grew up playing sports on.

**MIKE**

No!

**ANNIE**

And have a game. It's so...it's so...yeah. It's hard to compare it to anything else...

**MIKE**

That's so cool!

**ANNIE**

It's amazing. Yeah. And so just I think that's what it is for me about the fall winter holiday season here, because very much in the States it's kind of everything is spread out through the year and then you hit Halloween and it's like bam, bam, bam, through Valentine's Day and then you're out the other side. But like the way that it brings ... all ... people together the way that you get to see people that you don't see all the time, both family and friends and that element of it is something that ... I don't know that I appreciated it as a kid but I definitely really, really enjoy as an adult, so.

**HELEN**

It's interesting for me thinking about it, because my Christmases have changed a lot, like we started off I think going to my ... going to nanny's, like my grandma's place. Because she used to when she was younger she used to host us all. So, that would be me, my dad, my mum, my auntie and her four sons and one daughter...

**MIKE**

Oh wow!

**HELEN**

...and then my uncle and his wife.

**MIKE**

That must have been a handful!

**HELEN**

Yeah, they would often fight over the roast potatoes!

**MIKE**

Of course. Of course. It's the best bit of the meal.

**HELEN**

Mum, he's got one more than me!

**(Laughter)**

**HELEN**

Oh, his potatoes are bigger than mine!

**(Laughter)**

**HELEN**

They're all like proper strapping guys as well.

**MIKE**

Got you!

**HELEN**

They're all like so tall. Anyway! So when I was very young we were doing that. We were going over to my grandma's. And then as I got older we stayed at home and it was just me and my mum and my dad and as I got a little bit older than that, my dad would start building all these traditions with me. We would go and get the tree together, he'd have me pick it, like a real tree. A few days before Christmas he would start hiding little chocolate bars in the tree...

**ELIZABETH**

Aww.

**HELEN**

And then ... he would come to me at various points of the day and say 'oh, there's something in the tree' and I would go and like look in the tree for it.

**MIKE**

No!

**HELEN**

Put up all the decorations together. I am about to open a very controversial topic though. Which is about presents.

**MIKE**

Oh yeah, here we go. Right, let's crack this can wide open!

**HELEN**

Ok. So for me the minute I woke up, stocking is open, I go into parents' room and wake them up at whatever unholy time of night it was...

**(Laughter)**

**HELEN**

...and I'd open it all with them in the stocking. And then I'm not allowed to touch the presents under the tree until after lunch.

**MIKE**

Oh! Interesting.

**HELEN**

Because I've had my first set of presents. And the second set of presents is for a little later in the day.

**ELIZABETH**

Well the first set there, that's your Santa sack right? So that's you're what Santa brought.

**HELEN**

Yes.

**ELIZABETH**

Yeah, we used to have a pillowcase because we had such classy items as pillowcases for our stuff in for us. But I'm like you, I think I ... I think the parents insisted that we either had breakfast or it got to just before lunch. I think it depended on whether we were going over to someone else's place for lunch or whether ... but what would happen is you would have to get the presents from your parents and you opened them and then if you travelled,

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then you would be bringing the presents for the other people and then there would be that exchange of gifts. I'll be honest, I'm so glad that our family just doesn't really do gifts like that anymore. We have them for the kids only and we do not bother with one another. And it's just a load of stress that you don't have to have any more. It's brilliant.

**HELEN**

Yeah. I mean I will do one thing which is every so often, we'd be off to the Gambia to be with my mum's family. And I'd have to leave all the presents behind.

**ELIZABETH**

Oh no!

**MIKE**

Nooo!

**HELEN**

And I'd have no presents on Christmas!

**MIKE**

No! No! That is gutting!

**(Laughter)**

**MIKE**

No you can't leave them behind. Oh my goodness!

**ELIZABETH**

Oh that is awful.

**MIKE**

This is distressing.

**ELIZABETH**

That is the cruellest thing. That's the cruellest thing that has ever been brought up.

**MIKE**

I thought you waiting until have lunch was hard but good Lord!

**HELEN**

And that would also be the ok, we're going to the midnight like Church service as well.

**MIKE**

Oh of course, yeah.

**HELEN**

And often we'd be staying until New Year's too.

**MIKE**

So you didn't ... wait, hold on ... back up a second. So you didn't get to open your presents until the New Year?

**HELEN**

That's how I remember it. I could be mistaken.

**(Laughter)**

**HELEN**

But I certainly remember being, you know, like fairly old teenager, 15 or 16 and not having any presents on Christmas Day.

**MIKE**

Damn! Helen! God, I'm going to send you something this year and you better flipping well open it on the 25<sup>th</sup>!

**(laughter)**

**HELEN**

On that note, I think we're going to take a little break and we'll be back in just a second.

**[BREAK]**

**HELEN**

And welcome back. So, I'm going to take a hard left turn. I'm going to ask if anyone has any traditions around Halloween? Because Halloween is very important to me, but I don't know if it is to other people and I'd be interested to know if anyone else celebrates Halloween in similar ways that I do.

**ANNIE**

I love Halloween.

**HELEN**

Yeah?

**ANNIE**

Halloween is definitely my favourite holiday. It's interesting because when you're ... I don't know about elsewhere, but certainly where I'm at in the States and everything, adults at Halloween, particularly folks in their 20's party really hard on Halloween, like throw absolute rages around Halloween. Which I love, don't get me wrong. But I like ... I think that the ... a lot of people miss the element and don't necessarily admit it all the time of like the dressing up, the giving out candy, watching scary movies and the vibe. Actually enjoying the vibe, the spooky vibe of Halloween.

**HELEN**

Yeah.

**ANNIE**

But yeah, I adore Halloween. I adore doing costumes. I enjoy carving pumpkins when I get the opportunity to and I don't get to do it often because Halloween is a big day at my day job at a theme park, Halloween event at this time of the year. But, when I have the opportunity on Halloween itself I like to be in, I like to give out candy because I love seeing the costumes that kids wear. Like going trick or treating with my kids when I have the chance and staying in and watching scary movies, the whole night. I love Halloween.

**HELEN**

Anyone else? Mike, what do you do?

**MIKE**

Nothing. I have to be honest with you...

**(Laughter)**

**HELEN**

That's ok!

**MIKE**

So my family has never really been a big one for Halloween. And to be honest with you, I've never really known why. I mean it's widely known that I don't get along with horror particularly well...

**(Laughter)**

**MIKE**

...so I don't like ... I don't like ... I don't sit and watch scary movies very often and all that kind of stuff. But when I was younger ... like I always ... in a load of movies that you watch, like you see loads of people going out and doing trick or treating and meeting up with people and blah, blah, blah. And so when I was younger I always used to ask my mum if we could go trick or treating and we never went.

**HELEN**

Ahh.

**MIKE**

She never really told me why. And then as I grew older she explained it was to do with like safety concerns and she was worried about like me and sister and you know us getting like kidnapped or something like that and so eventually, like you know, the truth will out. But that meant that I never really celebrated Halloween. I got to University and at that point I would go to, as Annie quite rightly put it, the ragers that would happen in peoples' houses. Like I remember being in these clubs in Derby where you know basically it was just dance until you can't dance any more, like 3, 4, 5 in the morning kind of stuff and that would be Halloween. But I'd only really go there because my mates would go there. So we'd get dressed up and like you know we'd go and have a good time. And then the moment I left University, I mean like, it's rare that I can even find someone to come and carve pumpkins with me. So like you know, I just rarely celebrate Halloween. It's usually a day where I get a little ... a few more ranks in my apex legends characters.

**(Laughter)**

**HELEN**

What about you Liz?

**ELIZABETH**

It's definitely something that I came across really as an adult coming to the UK. Because we don't really ... well, when I grew up we didn't really do trick or treating. I think we, I mean it's not like we didn't know what Halloween was, but it was more the ... it would only be if someone had a Halloween themed party. So similarly Universities or something like that. But you didn't really have kids walking around the streets. I don't know what it's like today. I have been away for like 10 years or so. But talking about pumpkins and carving them, I carved my first ever pumpkin not that long ago. I decided to the Howie the Milkman logo. And I was I'll like do that...

**MIKE**

No way!

**HELEN**

Oh wow!

**ELIZABETH**

I was trying to think of a theme. I don't think I've ever been so shocked as when I cut through. Because I got these pumpkins, which I'm like it's a pumpkin so it will be like a pumpkin. Cut through it and only goes in for like an inch and then the rest is hollow, Helen. It's hollow inside!

**MIKE**

Yeah.

**HELEN**

Yeah.

**ELIZABETH**

And I was like what is this nonsense. Where is my pumpkin? I was going to eat some of this.

**(Laughter)**

**ELIZABETH**

I have been short changed!

**(Laughter)**

**ELIZABETH**

I mean it explains how it was lighter than expected but I ... yeah. I didn't even ... all these years, I just thought there was a massive amount of pumpkin. And that's why of course, you have pumpkin pie because you have all that pumpkin left over stuff, you know, for Thanksgiving right. You've got all the pumpkin left overs. Because that comes after Halloween. I figured that was because you know, Halloween comes, you've got loads of pumpkin then you do ... yeah, anyway. No.

**MIKE**

But you've still got stuff left over to put in the lattes!

**ELIZABETH**

Well, exactly!

**(Laughter)**

**ELIZABETH**

No, it's all air. You've just bought an entire empty gourd. Which was a shock.

**(Laughter)**

**HELEN**

Yeah. And it's really hard because it's so stringy, it's so hard to actually get it out and clean properly. I have done a pumpkin once, and I can't be bothered to do it again. It's so much effort.

**ELIZABETH**

Apparently my mate did it. You get a hand mixer, a hand beater or the electric beaters, you put that in and you do that around when it's been opened up.

**MIKE**

Oh man!

**ELIZABETH**

Speed it up and it pulls out most of the threads.

**MIKE**

Wow.

**ELIZABETH**

But those things as well. The moment you get them, you're like it must be outside because this thing will decay at a rate faster than anything else you've ever owned. Like I had one ...

**(Laughter)**

**ELIZABETH**

...it was like the next day and I'm like oh, God.

**(Laughter)**

**ELIZABETH**

The face is now like mould. So that's something else I learned. Decay rate on a Halloween pumpkins, extremely high.

**HELEN**

Useful information.

**ANNIE**

Yeah, you're supposed to carve them like three days before Halloween.

**ELIZABETH**

Yep. Not like a week and a half. Nope!

**ANNIE**

Yeah

**HELEN**

I obviously, I'm a massive horror fan so I will do one of two things for Halloween. I will either be at a Halloween party, as I was this year, the theme was games.

**MIKE**

Nice.

**HELEN**

Ideally sort of table top and traditional games.

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**MIKE**

Oh man!

**HELEN**

So I went as the Queen from Chess.

**ALL**

Ah!

**MIKE**

Ah interesting.

**HELEN**

I got myself a crown and like a velvet dress and some accessories and off I went. And I really love ... I love being on the Tube in costume on Halloween.

**ELIZABETH**

Yeah.

**HELEN**

It's an...and seeing other people just sitting also calmly, scrolling their phone, just dressed as a carrot or something.

**ELIZABETH**

So I remember that outfit Helen and I remember you saying what it was and I now have to admit that, that when you had said that I thought you mean Chess

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the musical and was like what, what I don't know a character which was the Queen. Yeah. I'm very slow!

**HELEN**

No, it was meant to be game themed. So yeah, I went to a little party this year. So before, I think I just watched loads of horror movies and I have done that several times. I watched a film called Mother.

**ELIZABETH**

Oh yes.

**HELEN**

Which is basically gas lighting the film. I started it, fell asleep, woke up and it was absolute pandemonium. I was like what has...you know how sometimes most horror films, you're like, ok, I can see where this is going. Mother. Just slaps you around the face several times in different directions.

**ELIZABETH**

Was that the Darren Aronofsky one?

**HELEN**

I think so, yeah. With Jennifer Lawrence.

**ELIZABETH**

Yeah, yeah. No, I love that film. I took ... actually this year I took your advice and I watched all the hauntings of Hill House related films.

**ANNIE**

I am near the end of Hill House.

**HELEN**

Oh interesting, what did you think?

**ELIZABETH**

Well, I mean like when Owen Wilson gets his head knocked off ... what a prime piece...

**(Laughter)**

**ELIZABETH**

...of film cinema.

**(Laughter)**

**ELIZABETH**

History. But actually...

**HELEN**

I've got to re-watch that.

**ELIZABETH**

Yeah, so I watched a Vincent Price one I think. That one and then the one that you had recommended which was the 1960...oh...

**HELEN**

63 I think.

**ELIZABETH**

Yep, yep. And then went and actually re-watched the TV series that had come out a couple of years ago right on Netflix and you saw all the references they make all the way through it and you're like oh it's all very clear and it's all tied in.

**HELEN**

It is yeah.

**ELIZABETH**

So that was my Halloween as well film tradition for this year. You'll have to give me another series to watch for next year Helen.

**(Laughter)**

**HELEN**

Yeah. Since I've been an adult I've not really ... I've not really done sweets for the kids, apart from a couple of places when I was renting in London but, where I am now, I'm in flat where like ... where you have to have a special fob to get into the building, so we don't really have kids...

**ANNIE**

Right. Right.

**HELEN**

...wandering around the corridors.

**ANNIE**

Well, so this year I was actually like ... I ... since Halloween was on a weekend this year, I was working so I didn't get to hand out anything. But like for the last few years I haven't really because also like the last few years, even before COVID, I lived at this house on top of a very steep hill at the top of a remarkably steep driveway. Like you're nearly climbing instead of walking, steep driveway. And so no kids ever came up to trick or treat where we live because they're not going to...

**HELEN**

No. No one came down my street either.

**ANNIE**

Simply not worth the effort there. But you know, I grew up on these sort of stereotypical gridlock suburban streets of you know, that you see in any number of American like sitcom TV shows. You like see the neighbourhood laid out in a perfect grid, that is exactly where I grew up. So like you know...

**MIKE**

Nice.

**ANNIE**

Halloween was a time ... trick or treating was a time of like you would map out. You knew which houses on which streets tended to buy the king size...

**(Laughter)**

**ANNIE**

So you'd have a route that would pass through all of them and you'd hit every house on the way. Nobody ... like it would be maybe one in every 40 houses that wouldn't have candy. Even if they weren't home, people would leave their porch light on with a bowl on the porch and you'd come take some. You just didn't ... it was a thing you didn't do, not buying candy. So you'd just make this whole route for about 3 hours where you'd hit all the big stops. Such a blast.

**HELEN**

I now want to ask, in a more general fashion, if anyone has any sort of favourite holiday memories from ... like things we all like 'ah, yeah, that was a nice ... that was a nice Christmas or that was a nice New Year's thing' or anything like that. Because ... I would just like to know, for the content of this show ...

**(Laughter)**

**MIKE**

That is an excellent point to make.

**(Laughter)**

**HELEN**

Your favourite holiday memories.

**ELIZABETH**

I think growing up we were ... because it was summer time right, you'd have Christmas and then you'd go away often with your parents to somewhere nice and so for us it was up to Nelson which is like a beach town with more importantly; hydro slides which were just like the highlight of going...

**MIKE**

Oh man!

**ELIZABETH**

...on holiday. But also it just, as an adult when you go there, it's got beautiful walks and national parks so I really just have fond memories...

**MIKE**

And hydro slides!

**ELIZABETH**

And hydro slides. Oh, and natural hydro slides as well. Because there's one ... there's an area that you can kayak to where they've got in the sort of short cliff face, they've got like a natural slide that happens. So...

**MIKE**

No! That's sick...

**ELIZABETH**

You know, it's just a giant playground.

**MIKE**

Yeah!

**HELEN**

That's lovely.

**ELIZABETH**

So having those summer holiday breaks, you know it was always like such a nice time of year because you'd have Christmas and then you'd go into the summer holidays and then it would rain but there would be some sunny moments and then you'd get sun burned. But yeah, it was great. And you didn't have to go to school which was the important part right.

**HELEN**

That is the important part. [Laughter]. Annie, how about you?

**ANNIE**

I'm trying to think of a specific. I have such a good time at Christmas in general. Ok. I don't know my absolute favourite but this is something that sticks out to me. My sister's husband, once they got married, we started ... we sort of added an extra tradition onto our sort of family list of things which is my whole family go over to his family's Christmas Eve dinner, which is a big part of how the making the glögg started coming around, they started to do it there to serve to this massive family gathering of people we knew and didn't and but then I just remember one particular year, five or six years ago probably now, we started the tradition that after dinner was done, as people were having drinks and easing into the night, some kids would leave or be off to bed or whatever and then we started gathering around the dinner tables and playing board games but it would specifically be ... it would just get really raucous for no apparent reason other than I guess that everyone was drunk...

**(Laughter)**

**ANNIE**

...but it would be ... like there's a trivia game called Jack Ass that we now play every year because it's just hysterical. Its very much one of these games where you like can end up sabotaging each other and putting each other like, you know, like pushing someone else's progress back in order to move yourself like, one of those sorts of games. So it goes like that, like sorry and everything that would just have us all up and yelling at each other and laughing...

**MIKE**

Nice. Yeah, nice.

**ANNIE**

... till our stomachs hurt. So much fun, yeah.

**HELEN**

Excellent. Mike what about you? What's a favourite holiday moment for you. Any holiday.

**MIKE**

Man. Umm. One memory that stands out was when ... so I had always in my mind had this grand idea. You know the whole ... you know the song, Driving Home For Christmas?

**HELEN**

Yeah.

**MIKE**

Right, so I'm a big petrol head and I have always loved cars and I've always loved driving. But I've never, ever, ever had the opportunity to drive home for Christmas. Every year, like I've said, I've lived away from home since I was 17, every year I will take the train or I mean one year I took the National Express, and that was an adventure...

**(Laughter)**

**MIKE**

...but like ... there was one year where I remember I had a car and I was living in London. I was living in Anerley in South London and I was like right, ok, it came around to the Christmas period and I knew that I was going to go home and see my family, so I packed up my car and I, you know, started heading out of London. But it was only when I hit ... there's an off ramp after you get just out of London off of the M25 onto the M1 ... exciting stuff!

**(Laughter)**

**MIKE**

No, when you...

**HELEN**

No, I'm thrilled!

**MIKE**

When you just come off of the Leigham Court Road and you realise that you're changing from like a suburban urban London street into motorway, I saw a sign for the service station there and it was at that point that I clocked ... I was like oh shit, I'm doing it right now. And so I like pulled over into the service station,

Rusty Quill - Enthusiasm – Holiday Traditions

swiped through my Spotify playlist and I was like I've got to find this song. And I listened to Driving Home For Christmas for a good 20 miles!

**(Laughter)**

**MIKE**

Because I was like I'm doing it! I had like a box of cookies next to me that I was sort of munching on while I was driving and I was like yeah this is great!

**HELEN**

Aww.

**MIKE**

And there was no traffic around me so I was like pretending there was traffic and I was ooh look, you know. And waving and looking over to the guy to the left of me, looking to the guy at the right.

**(Laughter)**

**MIKE**

I'm doing it! Oh shit! I need to keep my eye on the road. But like it's more difficult when you're not stationary. I'll tell you that for free. Drive responsibly people.

**HELEN**

Thanks for that. Thanks for that.

**MIKE**

You're welcome. But like yeah, that's a memory that stands out in particular because I remember being so excited. It's sort of in tandem with the year that I thought that, as a mini addition, there was a year that I thought genuinely – this was a big thing for me – that I thought that I couldn't actually go home and see my family one Christmas because I was way too busy and also like there had been a load of storms and like the trains just like weren't running and all of that kind of stuff. It was a few years ago now and I'd had to have the conversation with my mum and basically say look, I'm really sorry, but I actually don't think I'm going to make it this year, so you know, I'll send you presents by the way and you know, I'll come up and see you when I can. But then, like ... I can't remember exactly what happened, but the situation changed and I was able to find a seat on a coach that would take me home. This was the year that I took the National Express. I was able to find a seat on a coach that would take me back home and I didn't tell my mum and I turned up on the doorstep...

**HELEN**

Aww.

**MIKE**

...on the night of the 24<sup>th</sup> with my bags in hand and I was like you alright mum? And she gave me a big old hug and invited me in and you know we had a big cup of tea and chat and it was really lovely. I think she was really chuffed that I had managed to surprise her that I was actually coming home for Christmas.

**HELEN**

That's really sweet.

**ANNIE**

Very sweet.

**HELEN**

If I was to pick a memory it would ... I have a friend who throws very good parties. Every party of his I've been to I have had really funny and interesting conversations with interesting and clever people. About all kinds of things. And one of my favourite memories, one of those New Year's Eve parties is inventing ... getting drunk, obviously ... and it's the one night of the year that I allow myself to get really drunk [laughing] and so I got myself tipsy and then I invented another cocktail from the bits and pieces that were strewn around the kitchen and we called it blueballs.

**MIKE**

Nice.

**HELEN**

Because, if I remember correctly, in fact, bear with me I think it might still be in my notes app.

**MIKE**

Wow! Fantastic!

**HELEN**

I think I wrote it down there.

**MIKE**

This just in, Helen's blueballs recipe stored in phone!

Rusty Quill - Enthusiasm – Holiday Traditions

**HELEN**

Yeah! So they had for some reason bubble gum flavoured pop.

**ELIZABETH**

Oh my God!

**HELEN**

That was bright blue.

**MIKE**

Love it.

**HELEN**

So I had that.

**MIKE**

Nice.

**HELEN**

Mixed it with vodka and a little bit of tonic and a little bit of lemon and drank it disturbingly easily.

**(Laughter)**

**MIKE**

So basically what you made was a WKD Blue!

**(Laughter)**

**HELEN**

Oh my God! That's what I did! I did a WKD blue! And that's one of my favourite!

**(Laughter)**

**MIKE**

Oh my God! Oh Helen, you absolute champion.

**(Laughter)**

**ELIZABETH**

I mean you're going to have to watch out that their IP people don't come along and tell you where to go! Secrets!

**MIKE**

I hear there's this new thing on the street. They called it blueballs.

**ELIZABETH**

Bootleg!

**HELEN**

Yeah. And another favourite memory I have is one of my favourite presents I have got for Christmas which was that sand that you could mould, as long as it was under water.

**ANNIE**

Kinetic sand?

**MIKE**

Oh yeah!

**HELEN**

But if you took it out of the water it turned back into sand.

**ANNIE**

Yeah, Kinetic sand isn't it? Kinetic sand, is that what it's called?

**HELEN**

Yes, I think so. I loved that. I loved that so much.

**ELIZABETH**

Must be completely toxic though surely because you know anything that fun has to be like filled with stuff. Really bad for you!

**(Laughter)**

**HELEN**

It was the 90's.

**(Laughter)**

**ELIZABETH**

Do they still sell it? No. Probably toxic.

**(Laughter)**

**HELEN**

Alright. We have run over, although audience you will not know this because we will have cut out so much stuff, but I want to end us on a quick little, not whirlpool, quick fire. I don't know why my brain said whirlpool. So whirlpool questions.

**MIKE**

Whirlpool questions, let's go with it. Hopefully the Whirlpool people from Whirlpool won't come in and...

**HELEN**

Yeah, you're in the whirlpool, you've got to grab your answers out there... Any way. The question is to round off on, in an ideal world, what is a perfect like Christmas and New Year's holiday to you. Like what would you do if there was no expenses to worry about and you could have anyone you wanted there and there was no issue with time or other commitments?

**MIKE**

I have an answer.

**HELEN**

Oh. Go on.

**MIKE**

Right. Triple threat. Christmas. Three parts. Part one – family. Do stuff at home. Sofa, Baileys, possible mulled wine, presents, gift giving. Day 2 – friends Christmas ...

**HELEN**

Aww.

**MIKE**

...go down to wherever my friends are, rent out a big old fucking house and have a huge party with hot tubs and champagne and various other things as well and obviously, non-alcoholic options for the non-alcoholics. Got you...

**ANNIE**

(laughing) Thank you!

**MIKE**

Triple threat. New Year. Do it all again baby! But this time you party into the night.

**(Laughter)**

**MIKE**

All the way through into the morning. With more champagne and black jack possibly. Who knows! But yeah, that would be it for me. It would be having a segment where I can spend some time with my family and then a segment where I can spend it with all of my mates. Just in a really cool venue where we can just do ... we can just cut loose and do whatever it is we want to do.

**HELEN**

Aww, that does sound perfect. I think for me ... it would simply be a day in which I did whatever I liked. And was able to just achieve that. It would be a few days where I'd be like today I am going to stay in bed. And nobody is going to disturb me. And I just do whatever I like. I would have a day just to read things. I would have a day just to eat things. I would [laughter] have a day to go round and see all of my friends. And be very silly. Like I would just ... ah, no, do you know what. I'm saying that like for me holidays are freedom.

**MIKE**

That's what you're saying. That's what you're saying, yeah it sounds great man! It sounds great!

**HELEN**

Very heart felt I'm sure.

**MIKE**

Damn. I love it. You're right. You're absolutely right. That's what it's about. Freedom! I love it!

**HELEN**

Liz, what about you? What do you think?

**ELIZABETH**

Well, I think the perfect Christmas would be you know ... normally I've had my friends' Christmas earlier, that occurs because normally I'm not around my friends around Christmas time. So it would be family. Be in the newest, you know 16 room mansion estate that I've been given as a gift by maybe one of the Royals, something like that.

**MIKE**

Of course, yeah!

**ELIZABETH**

With a nice bit of land. There would be lovely Christmas lunch, roast. Christmas pudding, obviously, like...

**MIKE**

Obviously.

**ELIZABETH**

100% that has to be there.

**MIKE**

That's made entirely out of coins this time!

**ELIZABETH**

Yeah, just coins.

**(Laughter)**

**ELIZABETH**

And then I'd open my one gift which had been carefully wrapped which was the one thing that I've only ever truly wanted ... a pony ...

**HELEN**

Argh.

**ELIZABETH**

So I would have my pony finally...

**ANNIE**

Classic!

**ELIZABETH**

I mean a lot of milder parties when I was younger, but now as an adult I feel like I should be able to just stick one up to actual pony. And then...

**MIKE**

My Little Pony does prepare you for that!

**ELIZABETH**

Yeah, yeah. Like I've got ... I literally have two herds worth. I think there was about 16 or 17 by the time that portion ended. All in pretty good condition because I was not going to mess their hair up, or pull it out or do anything like

that. All the little cutie macs are all there. I think they now call them kiddie macs.

**MIKE**

Nice.

**ELIZABETH**

And then fly for New Year's.... You know fly to the pacific. Not the fly for anything... but if no climate change or anything, fly to the pacific, be on a tropical beach, maybe do some hiking. Bring my friends of course as well, family, whatever.

**MIKE**

Nice.

**ELIZABETH**

Do some swimming. Just go back to having a like a summer, kind of Christmas, New Year's where I feel that nice warm heat and it's not like freezing. Just because I've never done that really in, in... I've done that I think once in the last two years. So it would be nice to just have a big like warm Christmas.

**MIKE**

Ah.

**HELEN**

And finally, Annie. What about you?

**ANNIE**

Well, so mine is also kind of d'aw answer which is like ... so at least for Christmas, my perfect Christmas would basically be ... kind of the ones I have every year. They, they like... I don't know that I would change anything about the way my family does Christmas. Normally we speaking, throughout my family, we get up in the morning before breakfast. We do Santa gifts. Big family breakfast, you know, homemade waffles, bacon, cinnamon rolls. You do gifts with the immediate family after breakfast. Go to my parents' house. It kind of alternated in a way but it was generally speaking we do lunchtime gifts at my parents' house with my dad's side of the family and then we'd all go up to my aunt's house or they would all come down for dinner and gifts with my mom's side of the family. And just having spreading throughout the day with different family groups and just like sort of progressing through it in that way. Good food, family and conversations, presents. How it's always been. I just ... I think keeping it that way, having my kids around for it and all that.

**MIKE**

Aww.

**ANNIE**

You know I watch them opening their presents and that's the perfect Christmas.

**MIKE**

Aww.

**ANNIE**

Perfect New Year's I've had a couple of times. It's basically being able to go over to, you know, some of my best friends' house. Not necessarily party so much as just really have, you know, just really have like have a kick back. Sit around people with drinks, people with food, whatever and just watch ... play games, watch the countdown, all the usual stuff and...

**MIKE**

Nice.

**ANNIE**

...kind of hang. You know what I mean?

**MIKE**

Yeah, yeah.

**HELEN**

Yeah.

**ANNIE**

I like a low key New Year's in that way. I don't like to rage on New Year's.

**MIKE**

That sounds awesome.

**ANNIE**

Feels like work to me because I'm an audio tech. I've worked a few Christmas's where I'm mixing sound. So if I go to a big party, I feel like I'm working. I'd rather be at home!

**(Laughter)**

**HELEN**

Aww, well, on that really sweet, lovely note. I'm going to say we're ending the episode there. Thank you so, so much to all of you for coming on and talking about holidays with me. It's been lovely.

**ANNIE**

Yes, thank you Helen.

**MIKE**

Thank you Helen, yeah.

**HELEN**

Genuinely been such a laugh. And thank you listeners for listening and thank you for listening throughout this whole season. Which of course, I know you have done. You wouldn't possibly have missed any of the episodes.

**(Laughter)**

**MIKE**

Of course you came to watch gaming and giving as well, right?

**(Laughter)**

**MIKE**

Our holiday Christmas tradition that we do every year.

**(Laughter)**

**HELEN**

But yes. Thank you. Thank you very much and whatever you're doing as we enter sort of the winter break period that most of the western world does. I hope you have a very, very lovely time and you take care of yourself and your family and your friends and I wish you all the best. But for now, for the yeah ... the last time in 2021 I guess...

**MIKE**

Yeah man!

**HELEN**

It's goodbye from me. Goodbye. And it's goodbye from all my guests. Everyone say goodbye.

**EVERYONE**

Bye. (in various voices) Bye, see ya, bye!

**MIKE**

Last episode baby! We did it!!! Party. Pop the corks! Let's go!

**(laughter)**

**HELEN**

Stop! Stop recording!!

**MIKE**

Someone turn that music up!

**[Show Theme - Outro]**

**HELEN**

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**[Show Theme – Outro Ends]**

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