

Queer as friends

**Brilliant conversations on
the beauty of friendship**

with Tanith Ilesley & Dr. Katie Hall



Welcome to Queer as Friends, brilliant conversations on the beauty of friendship with Tanith Ilesley and Dr. Katie Hall.

Tan

Welcome to the podcast. This is so exciting to have you. We're here with James Robert Moore and Alex Pritchett. And we're going to ask you, in our customary fashion, to introduce each other, please.

Alex

James Robert Moore is a theatre creative and author, originally from Essex and now living in south London. He trained as an actor at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in New York, before moving back over the pond to start his life here. His recent credits include associate direction on *The Hunger Games on Stage*, *Shirley Valentine* starring Sheridan Smith, and *2:22 A Ghost Story*. He directed a version of the *Take That* musical *Greatest Days*, which can currently be seen on P&O cruises. I've seen it, it's very good, and his debut novel, *Not Good Enough*, was published by Muswell Press in July 2025, and he's currently working on book number two.

James

Thanks, Alex. Alex hails from the Midlands and moved to London in 2007 to attend drama school Mountview, where he studied for three years. After six years of acting for the stage, he fell out of love with the industry and took an opportunity to work in China and to travel. On his return to London, he tried many different careers, including wedding planning, recruitment, fitness instructing and wedding singing, but couldn't stay away from the theater for too long. Having worked with young people in theatre throughout his adult life, he took the leap to move into professional directing two years ago and has enjoyed a varied career so far, working with new writers, developing projects, and as associate to some great directors in the West End and across the country. He currently lives in south west London with his husband Ross, but together they're about to move to Sheffield, which I'm very excited, but we're not going to talk about that too much because I'm also quite sad about it, but I'm so happy for them too. There you go, That's Alex.

Tan

Well, I mean, you wouldn't be the first to have a little cry on the podcast. Don't feel bad about that. I was the first to have a little podcast when Katie and I recorded our own.

Katie

This is true.

Tan:

So tell us why your friends.

Oh my goodness. Why we're friends. That's like a two fold question because I'm like, why we're friends is in why we met. But actually why we're friends is a deeper question.

James

Should I do why we met?

Alex

Yeah.

James

So, when was it, like, ten, ten years ago now. Basically, I was working on a show in town at the time, and we'd been given our notice to close a bit earlier than we thought, and I just wanted to try something new and had a bit of a kind of itch to travel. And as it so happened two of my friends, one friend who had worked with on on a show had or were just about to go to China to teach musical theater over there. And so as the show got its notice, I heard from them quite a lot. And how much of a nice time they were having. And it started to make me go, oh, maybe that's what I want to go and do. Once they're finished, there might be a place for me. And subsequently, I'd met Alex like a few months before at those friends' leaving do to go to China. And we just got chatting. And then suddenly when I was then going to go, they kind of put us back in touch together because Alex had actually been to China before them. So we were sort of in this little chain. We must have like met up and chatted about or I called you just to talk about, like advice of going to China. And Alex is just really brilliant. And anyway, I went and did it for six months. And then when I came back, we just became really good friends. It just sort of happened, didn't it?

Alex

Yeah. We started hanging out with the two friends that had like connected us, who had also been to China. And then they're a couple, by the way. So then the four of us were hanging out and then we just started hanging out more, didn't we?

James

Yeah, I don't really I don't even know how it happened. And I guess in answer to like, why are we friends? I think I feel like we just we operate on a very similar level in a lot of respects. Like we're both very organised people.

We're both very thoughtful people. And I think we both really not just about each other, but kind of our wider group of friends, separate or mutual. We just really care and look out for them. And I think, I don't know, I think I just saw something in Alex that I think I sort of in terms of like having a queer male friend. I don't think I'd really had anybody in my life that was sort of as, I don't know, that understood me quite like he did. And I can't sort of put that into words any more than that, really.

Alex

Yeah. It's like, it's so funny that it is that I like both of us. The majority of our friends are, are female or had been or like historically female, just as is quite usual with gay men.

James

Yeah. At school.

Alex

Yeah. Being very general and then. Yeah, I think it was just like a similar time in our lives where, where things were changing and stuff was going on. And we were both

James

We were both single. I think that helps.

Alex

I think it does. Yeah. And so and because the friends that we were hanging around a lot with their in a couple. So it just made it our time is more free. And also like James said, we're just yeah, we we operate in very similar ways. So we care about each other in a very similar way and value that. And so there just wasn't any there was no trying to it was there.

James

No, I don't think so and I think, you saying about single made me think of when we went the one and only time I've been speed dating was with Alex and we first of all, we like we misunderstood. So we knew we were going to get a drink and we got there. But we slightly misunderstood. Well, not. No, we didn't misunderstand. We were nervous. And so we had a pint or two beforehand, and then we got there, we were given a drink, and then we didn't know there was going to be like an interval, if you like, halfway through where you could get another drink some of the time. It got to like what I mean, any sort of dating. I at one point spilled my entire glass of red wine all over the table, which took up an entire date because you only get two minutes. And the person when I spilled it was like the only person in there who I thought was attractive in any way, shape or form. And also really annoyingly, we'd said to each other. Oh, hopefully we'll be put together for like our day halfway through so we can debrief. And what happened? We were the first date. Yeah. So we had to sit there for two minutes being like, okay, I got nothing to say to you because I was been with you for 45 minutes. Apart from, like, who do you like the look of?

Alex

But can I just say. Well, this whole evening was called 28 Gays Later. Oh, yeah.

James

I'd forgotten that Yeah. Which was really, I think there was 29 of us, which I found. Really. That really annoyed me.

But yeah, I think it was it was we did things like that. I guess that just it's those little moments, isn't it, where you kind of start to have a shared history and then it just sort of spiralled from there? I think, spiralled in a good way.

Alex

Yes, yes.

Tan

Why do you think it's unusual for gay men to have friendships with each other or like those close sort of friendships?

James

I guess it's I mean, my experience is sort of, you know, the gay world can be quite a complicated one in terms of the different styles and types of relationships and monogamy and non-monogamy and stuff. And I've sort of historically been very single the entire time, not the entire time, but the interesting time that we've been friends. And Alex has very much been in very committed relationships. And I don't know, I wonder if that's also got something to do with it. I don't know what you think.

Alex

I think I feel like I'm going to jump on your point.

James

No. Please jump. Please.

Alex

I think a lot of talk from our own experience, but I think when you're growing up and boys have this funny thing at school where you're trying to, we develop a stupid rate that's slower than everything else. And so it's all this kind of like masculine stuff that's going on. And so at school you're trying to work that out. And if you're if you're attracted to the same sex and you're trying to work that out at the same time, it's really difficult to work out. Hold on. How do I navigate a relationship with somebody that is that feels the same way as me? So are we attracted to each other? No we're not. Are we like, what's going on here basically. And I think in those moments and I think also, again, boys, when we're younger, we like I say we mature at a much slower rate, whereas girls around are much more mature and much better at going. Like for me, like I know at school, whenever I was picked on or spoken to, there was always a strong girl there, just basically went, yeah, fuck off. Like, do this, come over here, stop being a dick. And they were the ones that spoke up. And so I was like, okay, this is like my tribe. And then you're coming to terms with it yourself as well. So as you get older, I mean, and I went in and out of the closet, like, as I, as I got older and then finally. Yeah, then it's like going, oh, how do I now establish these relationships? And it's it actually, I found it easier to be friends with like, heterosexual guys than I did with homosexual guys, just because it was just really, I think for me, I couldn't establish was sorry, should we should we fuck each other or what? Like, I don't know what we should do here.

And it took a while for that to happen. And I think that's another thing for us. I think we, certainly for me, like, we met each other at a time where I certainly was much more comfortable in my sexuality. And so therefore it was easy to go, oh, I love you in this, like, wonderful way. And we don't have to be confused or panicked about it. Or do you know what I mean? Or start to work out what's going on?

James

It was certainly the first time that I very much felt like that. Like I remember saying one time with Alex and our other two pals that I remember getting quite emotional, like a dinner we had once and going, I've never had a group of gay friends like this. Like I just sort of hadn't had that support, and it was so exciting to be like, you know, it was our like version of sex and the city, if you like. It's like that was kind of what I sort of had probably always wanted without maybe even realizing it. And suddenly it was there. And that was that was just really exciting.

Alex

Yeah. Yeah, absolutely.

Tan

And so, like, what does your friendship maintenance kind of look like, you know, when do you spend a lot of time together? Do you? I mean, this may segue into the, into the sad of moving to Sheffield, but yeah. Do you see a lot of each other? Do you speak a lot? You know, kind of. What does that look like?

Alex

We speak every day.

James
Yeah we do.

Alex
Yeah. We voice note every day or we speak to each other or we text. It's very rare that it goes a day without us being in contact. And that's just again, like, it's quite natural as well. It's like just we can voice it for a minute, like, and I mean like podcast each other about just stuff that's going on. So we always know what's, what's going on with each other.

James
And always apologise if it's like eight minutes long. If I see an eight minute voice note from Alex morning, I'm like, yes, I've got something to listen to on the way to the train station, but it will always be like, I'm so sorry, and I'll do the same. And I know that he enjoys it, but I too will go at the end, right? So you've had to listen to a podcast, but blah blah blah, blah blah. I mean, sometimes the voice notes we send, they don't even make any real sense. It's like just absolute what's coming out of my mind.

Tan
Stream of consciousness.

James
It's just... sometimes is so pointless. But Alex is one of the only people that like several times I've got a voice note from Alex where he said something stupid and then be like, I'm not going to do it and start again because you want appreciate that I've just done or said that or whatever, but no. Yeah. Every day and we see each other fairly regularly. We're pretty good at, you know, organising a theater trip or just we've we've now sort of amalgamated a lovely group of friends as well, which means that there's birthdays and weddings and Hen dos and stuff that we kind of get to share together as well. But, yeah, it feels really organic, doesn't it?

Alex
If we had to put like a time on it, we definitely see each other every couple of weeks and then there'll be a week where we see each other three times. And so it's like, we'll know if it's the only time we don't really is if job wise one of us is working away or we're not around, or it's like you're just, I know you're going to be in work for the next couple of weeks because you're in tech or whatever.

And then but then we'll always we always make time. We'll always find the time. And we're both quite we're quite good at just also doing stuff on the fly. It's like, oh, you're there, I can come and let's just grab 30 minutes. Whereas rather than making it a big thing like so we'll just do that. And we would literally like walk for half an hour together and then go, okay, like say see by like that's it. So and again, that's because we both we our brains work in the same way we like. So it's not like, you know, I've got some friends that I know that I'll voice note them and they won't listen to it for ten days, which is completely fine. Whereas I know that you but also I would go if I want to see if I'm like, he's not gonna listen to act, he's busy. I'll just text and go, hey, I'm here. Are you around? And actually now, which is only happened in the last few weeks, but James is the only person that I share my location with.

James
Oh, yeah. Yeah. How many years ago? I requested a couple of years ago. And then was like, I'm not gonna make a big deal out of it. You can see where I am. I can't see where he is. That's fine. That's his. I'm not a stalker.

Alex

I'm not a techie person at all, so I didn't.

James

Why did you suddenly share it with me? Did you speak to me about it? You. You said, oh, hold on. And then I was like, I don't even know how I look for that. And then you went showed me and I went, oh, you can see my location if you want. And then because you're like, If I'm around and I know that you're around, that I can go.

James

That's why I like it. And also it's just nice. And it's been like, oh, Alex is at home. I was like, Where's Alex?

Alex

Like, me and my husband don't share it, okay? Like, he will be where he will be.

James

No, I love it. Just like knowing where you are. It's nice.

Tan

So, Alex moving to Sheffield. Do you think think that's going to change a lot of things?

James

I actually don't think so. I think it's a couple of things. I think when Alex had first said about him and his husband moving away. Of course, my initial thing was like, oh, no, like, that's really sad to sort of have a greater distance, but I don't think it will. Look, it's a physical distance, but I, I, I don't think it's going to change anything really in terms of our friendships. I can be practical about it too. You know, it's obviously going to be a little bit more tricky. We can't just do an on the fly. But I think your work is going to bring you down every so often.

It's not that far away. But I guess there's a, there's a safety right in going. He's just down the road. And ironically, I haven't been living in London for a couple of years, and I'm now literally moving back this this week. And, and Alex will probably in the next few months then go. And I'm not going to be that far away from where they sort of currently live now.

So we've just I'm like, oh no, we've done that the wrong way round. Yeah. Never mind. Because we used to live very, very close to each other, like sort of one alley way away from each other. But I guess even then did we see each other more than we do now?

Alex

I don't think so. It's just it was.

James

It was more convenient.

Alex

Yeah, exactly. And then it would be like if I was at home and you were at home, I'm like, oh, we could actually just meet up for a bit, but we're both really busy as well. So that's what I mean. That's another thing, is that we just go, well, I don't think it'll I personally don't think it we're like, yeah, of course we're not going to we don't physically see each other as much.

But we've had times in our friendship where we've been away on work for months and probably not seeing each other for a couple of months, and actually still know exactly

everything that's going on day to day in each other's lives and then gone, like had a FaceTime or whatever. Or it just, I just, I know what I just know what you're doing every day.

So I think that I don't think that'll change.

James

Alex is going through the surrogacy process at the moment with his husband, which is so gorgeous and so exciting. I guess maybe the same. My head, that's like, obviously then things will be very different just in terms of like our at the minute, we sort of have accidentally like done like big life things.

Alex

Yeah.

James

At the same time. And but that's going to be a very, you know, that's a very I'm not in that place. I, you know, that will that will change stuff. But I also think I know the types of people we are. So I don't think it will be something that will mean I'll never hear from you for months and months. Like, I know that won't be the case at all. And my God, I'm so excited for him. Like beyond excited. But I get yeah, maybe that's a it's that thing isn't it? When you know you. I always think when you were at school, you know, you had all of these big milestones together of like you do your GCSEs, then you're going to do your A-levels, then you're going to go to university, then you're going to, you know, it was everything was kind of set out for you.

And then you learn pretty quickly when you come out. Oh, everyone's in completely different places. I've just bought my first house. Some friends have been in their house they bought for ten, 11, 12 years. Some of them have like near on teenagers in a way. Do you know what I mean? It's it's and I think that's more about me than you of like, it's it's my brain realizing that we're going to be in totally different worlds in a way.

Alex

Yeah. No, I mean, that's that's again their inevitable life things. And like, if when we have a child, it's going to be like, I'm going to be sleep deprived, I'm going to be, you know, all that sort of stuff. But I still don't. I think it's that thing as well as going like as again, as particularly as queer people. Again, I can only speak from my own experience, but it's that family thing that's. Yeah, we've got we have our, our blood relatives and the people that brought us up. But it's actually it's like my family and my friends, it extends beyond that. And they are so like the most important thing to me.

And, and so we don't have a sibling relationship, James and I at all in that, in that like typical sibling way. But he is my brother. Like he is like we will do the rest of life together as family. And so therefore all those things and yeah, there'll be times. But I also know that we're like like we are already with work and with everything else.

You're sensitive to what the other person is going through. We never have ever and not. And I understand sometimes when friends, but we've never put any pressure on each other and you know, and there's been times, I mean, I message you about something the day that I was like he'd said to me something and then I like two days later when I didn't fucking reply to that thing.

And I was like, and that's the massive thing that you did. But I was like, and I know that as well. And I know that it's not like I wasn't like panicking and worried about. I was like, oh

God, I because I answered it in my head and then not answered it out loud. But it's just like, I mean, there's no pressure or anything, so I know that it'll be.

And then also like Uncle James, then like with like a baby that's like, you know, and you're going to be going to be it all the time, I think. Absolutely. Please do. Oh. So you just I don't think we've ever had a fight, have we?

Tan
We've never had a fight.

Katie
You're the gay men version of of us.

Tan
Yeah, yeah, but the more I sit here, the more the similarity identifying because I have a child. But Katie doesn't have any kids. And like, I'm married and Katie I married anymore.

Katie
Yeah. And, like, I wanted to give some reassurance. We've not lived in the same city for the majority of our nearly 30 year friendship.

Tan
And met at uni and we lived together for two years at uni, and we've never lived close to each other ever again.

Katie
And it has zero impact on. It's probably healthier in some ways.

Tan
Yeah, I thought it was interesting when you were talking about first like the moving away, but also then when you used to live very close to each other, how like neither of the, you know, just when you live close to each other, you didn't it didn't mean you're in each other's pockets or you'd think, yeah, you'd think that like the status quo of how you how your relationship is kind of stays the same when you were really living so close together.

And also, we'll probably say the same when you're living further apart. And I think that's like really reassuring. Yeah. To think that actually, you know, even though you do different geographical locations actually not not much changes.

Katie
No. And also a child coming along, not much really has changed practically. You know, our our friends. In fact, by coincidence, none of my close friends have children.

Tan
And, you know, as a result, my daughter has these sort of particularly maybe 3 or 4, you know, aunties and uncles who are family. Yeah. As you say, you know, their family. It's unquestioning. I mean, she knows them as well as she knows my own real siblings and yeah, loves them all for all different reasons and is always so excited to when they come to visit.

And again, don't live close to any of them. You know, they're all at least two hours away, if not further. So yeah, just reassuringly

James

that is really that is really sweet. It's very.

Tan Yeah. Similar to kind of what you two are going into as friends that resonates with you when you say the status, the status quo,

Alex the relationships it's established and it and it has been the same since the beginning.

And so therefore, yeah, it just doesn't I'm not there's not a part of me that's worried like, yeah, of course there will be times where you want to see each other more or whatever, but it's like like I think we've got our relationship is strong enough that I actually if I, if you need me, if I need you, that we can either pick up the phone or say, yeah, it's like a train ride away.

Tan

Yeah. So I mean, you've sort of segued into different lived experiences or cultural touchpoints that, you know, might have affected one one of you, but not the other, and how that sort of feeds into your friendship. I'm interested to touch on your talking about your group of friends and the way that it feeds into your book, James, that I have read. Imagine my surprise when I found out how intensely it was about friendship, specifically queer friendship. And did you did you take elements of your own friendship group and put it into the book?

James

Yeah, completely.

Tan

I don't know how sort of biographical, autobiographical it is.

James

No, there's there's a lot of, a lot of kind of moments that are and there's, there's nobody like in the book that is Alex, but there's, there's out of sort of a bunch of friends, there's like a real mix or in my head I could like, look at one of them and sort of like see a friend. But they weren't sort of as in, like, that's who I was imagining when I was writing them, but I wasn't imagining their entire personality in that person. But there's a bit in the book where the group of friends go to a cabin in Wales, and that's what we used to do. And so that is based on that cabin in Wales.

Lots of things happen there that we didn't do with the cabin. And I'll just say, caveat I'm just for my mum. But, but yeah, a lot of it was inspired by the people that I love and I love spending time with, and it was really important to me to do that because I wanted to write it in the first place, to write about something that I couldn't see reflected.

And, you know, I know you love reading tan. And and I went through a period. I think it's different now. But when I first started writing the first draft, like nine years ago now, I didn't really see any stories like that on the shelves. And now I know there were a couple, but they were really sort of hidden away.

And there are a lot more now, which is brilliant. But yeah, I just wanted to write something that felt like, yeah, I could just see myself and my group of friends reflected, and I hadn't really seen that before. Yeah.

Tan

And is your second book a similar kind of genre or what you departing?

James

Well, really weirdly, it's actually about surrogacy, but I weirdly I had the idea for it and started tinkering about with ideas before I think you'd even said that you were doing it, or maybe you'd mused about doing it.

But I've got another pair of friends who have had a child through surrogacy who's, now three and, and they just sort of said again, they when they've been going through the process, they hadn't been able to read anything about it, either sort of fictional or otherwise. So, yeah, I started doing that and I've done a couple of drafts and Alex hasn't read it yet, but I will force it upon him at some point, because now you're going to be an expert.

Alex

It's not forcing.

James

But yeah, you're in the in the process of it. Obviously I've just had to do research and interview them.

Alex

But but it's interesting as well as the friends that James is talking about who aren't necessarily like our friends of mine and Ross and my husband's friends. But we've met them through James, and actually, you would have been privy to a lot of like they'd gone through this process that we're going through a couple of years before us looking at all the different ways that you could have kids in a, in a queer relationship.

And so we're really great with us. Get like advice and giving us reading materials. And they were so generous and so kind and you would like that was again, we met them through James and it would only have been at that, like you would have been privy to all of that as well, that whole process.

James

Yeah, yeah. And again, it's I just I'm so interested in going if there is something that people can't see or is missing, then call. I'd love to. If I feel able to, then I want to write about those things.

Tan

That feels quite theatrical in its concept, because obviously when we make theater, we're looking to portray things so that people recognize themselves in the work. So that kind of tracks with I think, yeah, the way that you work as a director, maybe. Yeah, yeah, I think so. Now that you're both directing, how's that? Does that was there anything in your friendship that made that, like, sticky any time or Do you advise each other? Do you talk much about work even?

James Yeah, all the time. I was really happy when. Because you. I don't want to speak for you, but just from what I had sort of seen a few years ago. Was Alex, like, worked so hard with, like, multiple different jobs and, like, I kind of love that.

I have sort of I've been to Alex's spin classes before that. He's taught I've been to events where he's been doing wedding singing. I've sort of been to the shop that he works in, like all of these different, like, little things. And now it's so nice that in amongst all of that, I now go to see the shows that he works on.

And going back to my point, a couple of years ago, I can remember you never sort of said you were unhappy with what you were doing, but I could certainly feel there was a I want

more out of this situation and I want to be creative. And you were always so brilliantly supportive when I was like, I'm doing this and I'm doing that, and I'm doing this.

And, yeah, when you first sort of said, oh, now I think I'm ready to start doing it, we definitely chatted and I gave some advice and stuff, but I, I'm not the sort of I've worked with many people who keep the door closed. And I just, I hate it because I'm like, there's room for all of us in so many different ways.

And I'm sure, I mean, I've not been in like a room with Alex and worked together, but I suspect we are very similar in our like approaches and kind of our styles, although we do go and see shows together and I'd be like, I love that. And Alex, that was dreadful. So I think we are slightly different

Alex

and we go to the theater together and we only watch things that we are rubbish. It's like we go, oh, let's go to the theater. Then we sit there and go, nah, I'm not. I'm like, we're leaving. This is not fair. We did. Sorry.

James

But no, I never, I'm delighted that that this is now Alex's career, too, because it makes me feel a little bit less alone and actually really like this week, I've just started a little WhatsApp group of, like, associate directors because it feels like quite a lonely job sometimes.

And I just was craving having sort of a bunch of voices to be able to be like, this has happened. Is this right? Or I can't do this. Do you want to kind of have a look and that sort of thing? But I'm I'm chuffed that Alex is doing it now. I could it's what you always wanted to do.

Alex

Yeah. But also James is so incredibly generous and kind and so like I think yes, it's what I wanted to do for a long time for certain reasons. You know, it's so difficult to break in, especially when you've taken some time out and you always like, what is always great is that you were never going, like, we just need to take the you need to take the leap.

You know, it was just always like you were like like what you're doing is great. Like keep going and then going, maybe look at this avenue and look at these things and you should sign up to that and do that. And so gently along you were like coaching me along the way with, without, without it being that word.

And then, you know, as always, then an opportunity comes up and you take it and then things go from there. But you've always been a great champion of not just me at other people as well, and such a great sounding board. And it's also like, why would you like absolutely want the best for him as well as I want it for myself and we're at different points in our career.

But so, I mean, I have to say, I'm not sure how much I can help you at the moment, but James, you know, will. Absolutely. And we can, but we can introduce each other to people and just keep that network kind of open because that's what it should be about. And so actually, thank God we do the same thing because talking it's just a much easier way.

Again, we can talk about it really openly in a way that, you know, sometimes when you're talking to someone not in the same industry or the same job, you kind of go, oh, I can give you let me, let me, let me say this in a way that's understandable. Not too much detail, but you'll get kind of the gist of it and then we'll see where we go from there.

Whereas you and I can talk straight up and go X, Y, and z. This is happening. Or be really excited about something and go, don't know if it's going to come to anything, but like I like it's good to let you know because then we can get excited or you can let me know and we can get excited together about it.

James

I think you were the first person I told about when I got my publishing offer.

Alex

Well, I remember just so many parts of that journey that I remember. So like vividly, I said, when the the publisher, I remember exactly where we where I was when you called me and because again the book we James very well very kindly gave it to us to read a long time ago.

James

use every kindly. I was like, I very much felt like I was like, everyone, you got to read this like, if you're my friends, then here you go. Here's a 300 page book. Off you go. You did? I mean, that's just me talking like I felt.

Alex

Yes, but that's you. Like. Yeah, sure. Get over it. We wanted to read it and we loved it. Like, fine. So, Yeah, it's good. And it's good to because I'm the same. Like, we always, whenever we tell each other, we're like, hey, look, nothing will come of it.

But just so you know, I've got this email or somebody asked me about this or that, and then we just do that, and then we're very good at being the other, being the person that can celebrate that for each other. Then go, hey, that's that's like amazing. Even if it doesn't like just the fact that that's being spoken about.

And then and then also go if it doesn't work out, hey, that's shit. Oh, absolutely. Celebrate it when it does happen.

James

Cool. You were in the room where that thing might have happened, and that one day it will happen. Yeah, yeah. Which is really nice and I think.

That's why it is nice that we do do the same job because there are other people and I don't necessarily mean friends at all, but other people that I know I wouldn't have those conversations with because I wouldn't actually trust that they wouldn't sort of go around their own route to try and sort of get themselves in the room and in the mix for that thing to do, you know what I mean?

Whereas I actually feel like if ever we were up for the same job, I actually genuinely I'm not just saying this, I don't really think I would care because I feel like I'd be like, no matter what happened, I'd be like, well, I have to come to press night if you get it. And vice versa. Like, you have to take me along somehow, but I genuinely don't think I would be that bothered.

Alex

It's a mindset thing, right as well. Is that life's too short to be like negative on people that I mean especially. And it's like you're my best friend. I'm like, if, if, if we were up for the same thing, I'd be like, if I don't get it, I want you to get it. Do I mean, like, it's like, that's that's what I want, rather than if I'm miserable?

You've got to know that's true.

Tan

I love all of that. Like allyship as well. You know, when you're saying, oh, I've been like this just like always showing up, show whatever it is. Yeah. Just the kind of allyship element of it, is really sweet.

Katie

Well, I agree actually. Well, what have been any, like, significant moments in your friendship in particular, whether it's allyship or other things that you've enjoyed together or have kind of crystallized, joined or endured? Jordan. That's a good one.

James

Definitely. For for me. When Alex got married a few years ago, he asked me to be sort of like master of ceremonies, not like it was master ceremony.

And I just felt so just really touched to be a part of someone's day, in, in that way. And I guess there was there was definitely, there was a bit in the back of my head, like, I hope I have something to do at this, but I again, I wouldn't have been. I would have just been so happy and delighted to be there and celebrate their love for each other.

But that felt really, really special. I mean, look, it was an excuse to I'm gobby enough to be given a microphone and tell everyone what to do all day.

Alex

Oh, you were like a comedian throughout the day.

James

Yeah. Did. Particularly as the evening wore on. It was pretty light. Right. Let's take it off of him now.

Alex

I was like, we need to let you to keep people going here. So off you go. Thank you.

James

Yeah, I do remember at one point, when it all finished, someone was still sort of dancing and wouldn't leave. And I was like, it has finished now. it's time to go. Come on. Because you'd already.

Alex

He was 16 and absolutely loving everything.

James

He was having a great time. But no, that was a really that felt really, really special. And then kind of at the other end of the spectrum. But I lost my grandad last year and Alex was just really brilliant and came to the funeral. I didn't even ask, just you just said you were going to be there.

And that was just really it was more important than I think I'd realized. Just sort of know on the day that someone was going to be there, I, you know, I had family and stuff too, but just someone that was just there for me. Yeah. In a in a day where everybody's trying to be there for each other, I just knew that I had Alex there, and I had my lovely friend Cheryl there, too, to sort of be there for me when I needed to. And I did the whole service, which I and I say that because I did, I didn't really think about what that was in my head. It was like just the unity. And then I thought, oh no, no one's saying anything apart from me.

And Alex was so brilliant at being like, I will be sitting and watching. And if the second you can't continue, I will be there. And actually knowing that, I think, is what made me get through it, because I knew that if I did have to stop, it would be fine. And yeah, it just I just couldn't I just felt so lucky, I think, to just knowing that I had a friend like you that was going to turn up at things like that.

Yeah. Again, without me even having to ask. I think that's the sign of real friendship.

Tan

Yes. It's something about that implicit knowledge that someone will show up and not having to ask, you know, because I think especially when it comes to like grieving and the grief process, a lot of people say, oh, let me, you know, if I can do anything to help or let me know what I can do or do, and you're just not in a place sometimes to answer questions like that.

So just somebody. Yeah. Turning up, being on your doorstep, being there just for you is. Yeah. Like you say. I think that's a mark of kind of like a shorthand of friendship that only comes with kind of being really selfless about.

James

Yeah. And those offers are really gorgeous. And, you know, I've certainly said those things to people too, but it's that knowing that when you kind of when, when people are going, you know, tell me what you need.

I always am like, well, I don't really want to bother anybody, really, because I don't know if I know what I need. And Alex, just you just think I said, I think I said to you, just. Can you send me the details for your, like, grenades funeral? Just like that?

Alex

Was it because I was like, I'm not going to put the question out there?

Yeah, I'm going to come even if I, like, get the train turn up and we just say a quick hello and then I go and just again, so, you know, and then because yeah, it's that thing of going, it's just knowing that that the person that you want to support knows that you're there. Yeah.

Tan Yeah. It's like makes it so not about you and all about them when you.

Yeah. You'd have no expectations of how they're going to be or what they're going to say. You're just like, I'll be here.

Alex

It's just like, that's like with that, it's like a representation of like us and like the love and that kind of and again, the family of it all is like going like, how amazing for everyone that's come to this wedding, like families beyond and whatever to get to like no you in that way as well which is amazing and go like how proud I am of my, my friends and like what this day can be as well.

Tan

Did you Alex, did you meet your husband before or after you met James?

Alex

After.

Tan

So right from the beginning, your friendship preexisting the relationship?

Alex Oh, yeah. We we went through a lot of, a lot of dating stories before. Before I met my husband.

James

Yeah, I met, I've met actually no, not not that many, but a few.

Tan

What was it like then? When the one came along? And was it obvious that.

James

Oh, it was obvious to me. We basically the night I. Well, I think you'd said to me like you'd gone on this date and it had gone really well, and now you sort of couldn't get enough of each other and you're going to see each other again.

And I was like, that's lovely. That's so nice. And then, we went to the festival. Mighty Hoopla. And Alex was like, I'm going to bring Ross. And it was so lovely.

And he was like, completely charming. And so just like, ingratiate himself really well. We were there with a couple of Alex's other wonderful friends and then, yeah, I just sort of didn't really chat to Alex all day because they were just kissing the entire day. And like

Alex

Everyone loves telling this story

James

Because it was so because it was joyful, but it was really joyful.

Like, like each other's glitter on each other's faces. I grew at one point, like me and Alex's friends, who now so joyfully are my friends too, which is what I love. Nicky and Maddie. it was lovely. It was. So it was it was gorgeous to see Alex happy and with somebody who, I don't know, I just. You were pretty like, I love him. It's, you know, it's it's from the beginning it was going so well I just I just felt I didn't feel sort of any. Not that I ever felt worried for you with other people that I met.

Alex

Yeah, I think, I think, well, I'd been, I'd been single for about three and a half years.

Just to just caveat I'm not like bang, relationship, relationship. And then there were some but there were definitely some where you go, I'm trying to stick a square peg in a round hole here. Yeah, yeah, yeah. But yeah, it just felt it felt very different. And also but again, like, it's so important that again, my friends are such a big part of my life.

And so meeting who I think is my like, forever partner that they do get on very well. And those two like what's amazing is like pretty much from the get go, like I'd we James would be with us or with more people and him and Ross get on like a house on fire. They're like a double act.

James

And so and I've employed him a couple of times now genuinely as an actor have.

Alex

Yeah. He has worked together. So like that's that. Yeah. That's that's an important thing. James Well, so you just.

James

Alex just made me think. Just. I'm riffing on relationships now, and, I had a relationship end last year, and there was a really, there was this sort of moment where I really wanted to tell Alex something that had happened, and I didn't want to because I was I was a bit scared of what his reaction would be. And then when I eventually did tell him, I was actually more upset about the fact that I had kept that from him than I was about the actual thing happening, and that actually is really stuck. I don't know if you remember that. That's like really stuck in my head of I was like, I, I just felt so sad, sort of in the moment that stuff was going on, I was like, oh, I really want to talk, Alex.

And I can't tell him. And now I'm going to have this secret from him. And I don't have any secrets from Alex. So I it felt so alien. And I think I remember telling you and just like sobbing and it was more it was the relief of being like, oh, I finally told you, rather than it being about the, the thing.

And, and I remember once kind of the relationship but finished, I sort of said to, you know, me being me in a bit nosy was like, I want to ask you like what? You know, what did you actually really think of him? And Alex just being so beautiful as ever was like, all I'm going to say is you weren't the best version of yourself when you were with him.

And that was so lovely. You know, the gossip side of me was like, oh, I want more than that. Tell me something else. But actually it was the that's that's why I love him, because it was the like, that's exactly what he should have said and nothing else does really matter. But that, again, has been like really instrumental in what I'm going to look for in a relationship going forward to be like, am I the best version of myself with this person?

Alex

It's also to talk like you saying like that as well. It's something that I find with I'm, I'm quite bad at. I keep everything in. I'm like, I control everything. I can do it, I can, I'm like, it takes me a lot to go, oh, I'm actually a bit weak here because then I'm like, no, no, no, I can't be too. Hey, we've had a couple of therapists. We try to work it out. It's it's a process. But actually I like with you, I feel so comfortable just going. I'm just actually finding this really difficult and knowing that I always know with you that the response that comes back is never going to be a solution to fix it or anything.

It's just it's just an ear to listen and go like a no, exactly. To go, what you need to hear is, yeah, I get why that shit. And then just leave it there. And it's like, actually half of it is just saying it out. Do you know, I mean, because I have a, I have a problem with like, you hear someone give you a suggestion, it's probably the best suggestion in the world.

But I'm like, don't tell me, don't tell me, don't tell me.

But but like, you never do that. You sit and go and then and also you'll always go, hey, look like I'm here to talk to you, but you're I think you're going to work it out. And then it's like, actually, that just makes me relax and go. And then also go. Actually, can we talk about this because I need to chat this out or go, you know what? Actually, I realise this is this is what it is.

James

And actually, you saying that made me realise that that is one of the things that is very different about us, because I will immediately be like, this has happened and I feel like this and blah, blah, blah. I don't know what it is. I've just I've always just said exactly what's going on, which is sometimes really useful and other times is is really not.

But you're very good at also managing that, because that's quite a lot when someone's telling you loads of things. I feel like sometimes I'm on a voice note being like, this has happened, that's happened, this has happened and that's happened. It's not a big thing.

Alex

No, no, it's not at all. Because it's never it's not again. You need like it's it's about what you need, right. And about understanding what that person needs. And I'm like, you need to vent and and then and I never see ever as a as a as a burden. And also quite often you just need to vent and I'm like okay.

James

And then and then you go put at one point put it at 1.5.

Alex

Only the second time I know. But it's like it's I think it's, it's just understanding that about each other isn't it. And it's like, I want you to vent to me. I want you to offload because it's like going, you need to get that out because that's what you need. And I like I wish I was more like it. I'm just not. But I don't have it like, I, I love it. It's you. That's who you are.

And so I'm not saying you. I don't think you do it. It's like, no, no it's fine. No, sorry. I'm now thinking, you know, there was a time to go where the.

Tan Hilarious. Yeah, Katie and I have a thing, in fact, called texting Into the Void. Which is where we'll send a text and just be like, this is into the void. Like this has happened, which is code for I don't need it fixed. I don't even need a response. It's just I need to put it out there in the world that I've said it. I love the idea. That's great. So yeah, like often it'll be like, yeah. Prefixed with this is into the void. That's so nice. That just shows. That's a nice like respect and boundaries for each other. Just because from what you were saying about like, oh, isn't it ever a lot or whatever, it's like sometimes, yeah, you just need to put it out there space into open space. And then the other person's like, okay.

And then, you know, if you come back around to it, of course, then you might discuss it or, you know, chat about it.

Katie

We also used to have haven't used it for a long time. But I'm sending you this because I can't send it to the person I need to send it to. Yeah, we've done that. Yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah.

James

It's quite where you go like that. Can you send it to me. Don't sell it to them. Yeah, yeah.

Katie

But like the drunk dial alternative. Yeah. The drunk dial alternative. I think that's that's what it is. It's really important.

James

I've done lots of like, just like I really want to text this person. So I'm telling you, not even saying what I would want to say to that person, but just. I have an urge to text this person. It's not going to be a good idea. And Alex just be like, it's not a good idea. You don't need to like and that's it. Bye.

Tan

I feel validated.

James

You're right, I knew I was right. Yeah. And then if the message gets sent afterwards, anyway, the next day will go, okay, I'm aware of it. Yeah. That's okay. Next time. Where?

Tan

I was aware it was a mistake before I did it but I did it anyway. Yeah, you told me. Not now. We need to dissect that happens next.

James

Then. Then it's that's that's my bad. Then if I've got if I've done it anyway.

Tan

Yeah. And also we have like 911 don't we. Which is this. Drop everything I need I need to talk to you right now. So if either of us text 911, it's like call me as soon as you see this.

James

That's really sweet. So again, so that, you know, something's, like, legitimately important or just like a panic attack or you freak out about something that might pass in a minute

Katie

Because otherwise you get, like, you can get left with that. Like I've tried to call you, but, like, just because I had a spare half an hour or I tried to call you because I needed something. And at least with the 911, we're like, oh, yeah, you know, we know when it was. Yeah. Yeah.

Tan

Like yes. Go. Yeah.

Alex

That's like it's efficiency isn't it. It's like if we missed a call I'd be like everything okay. Yeah yeah yeah. Just to chat or no can you call me. But I think that's quite efficient like that is that is a 911.

Katie

I think we're at the motto strapline.

Tan

So would you say your friendship has a motto, a strap line, like if you could distill it down to something. But only because it puts both in a cultural reference that we both share. Okay. And then just how it's like, so I'm going to go for Below Deck or under the skin or under the surface, like where you can like so Below deck because we absolutely love Below Deck. So we talk about it every time this season.

Yeah, James always watches it on time. Up to date I'm always about three episodes behind and so I have to go. No, no, no, you have to wait. You have to wait wait, wait. What's

interesting is Alex watched it first and then introduced it to me. And now I've like overtaken in terms of like my love for it.

Tan

And do you have a song or a theme tune for your friendship?

James

Oh my God, a song.

For quite a while. I don't know why I used to. I actually don't know why I'm going to say this now, but I used to have something about did you used to be like, years and years? Yeah, yeah. I always think of whenever I hear years and years.

James

We used to watch Drag Race together quite a lot as well, so, like, anything. But again, this feels like that's like in the past stuff. So we just haven't really been out partying together for a very long time. Have we know we should change that. Yeah.

James

Oh can I tell you my favorite? So I'm just coming up with things. Embarrass Alex here, and you've been so kind to me. You've got plenty in the arsenal, but

Tan

I think plenty in the Arsenal.

James

Yeah, that's. Maybe that's because, actually, you really do. I'm allowed to tell this story.

Alex

Oh please do.

James

There's, there was just my last, like one of the last times we went out was, to heaven and I'm talking. This was like, this was pre Ross. Yeah. So how many years ago was that?

Alex

Over seven years ago. Yeah. Yeah.

James

I just remember what two things had happened. One, I had been annoyed with one of our other friends for no real reason at all.

Alex

That is a James Moore trait as well. You would go get sort of post 1 a.m. maybe like, oh, he's just going to get annoyed for no reason.

James

I just want, I was like, I just want to get to heaven. And then we happened to walk past Ian McKellen outside of a theatre, just been doing a show, and our friends loved him, and I was annoyed that he wanted to stop and see Ian McKellen because I wanted to get to heaven. So I was frustrated. And so we got there, and because I was there in a funk, I was like, well, I'm not having a nice time.

And then I remembered that I actually had a nice little cupcake in my bag. So when I was then feeling sad when. No, listen, when I was then feeling sad, I was like, I'm. I'm not enjoying myself and I just remember there's a cupcake in my bag, so I'm going to go back in the queue. It'd been like five minutes. We've been in the club. I'm going to go back and get my bag and go and all I remember in amongst this cloud of me being stupid and prissy was that as I turned to leave to say goodbye to Alex, he was just sitting in the middle of heaven dancefloor smoking a cigarette. Just. And I was like, yeah, and it's time for me to go home.

Alex

It really should have been me time to go home.

James

But I just left you there, you're having a nice time.

Alex

I used to be notorious in heaven. We used to go in and then I would go and sit in like one of the little, like, archways things and just fall asleep and then come and collect me on the way out because I'd be like, really?

I've had too much to drink. I need to sleep this off, and I bet. Please come and get me before you leave. We don't do that anymore.

Tan

Oh my goodness.

Katie

I think we're down to the last bit. Yeah. Which is if you want to plug your pals passion. So if you've got anything that you would like to share, promote, could be a project, could be an organisation or a cause, it's your to do that. And if you want to do it for on behalf of each other, you're also welcome to do that.

James

I can do yours. Okay. So Alex is directing has directed a brilliant show that's going into the Edinburgh Fringe this year called remember remember and actually Terrible Friend. I actually haven't seen it yet. I'm going in a couple of weeks to do like a little fringe preview. But he's worked incredibly, incredibly hard on it. And his brilliant husband, Ross, is one of the company members in it, and a group of them all created created it together. And it's at the Pleasance in Edinburgh for the whole month. What time are you on

Alex

5.15pm at the Queen dome.

James

5.15pm in the Queen dome. And it just as someone that, like, I'm not actually that well, probably qualified to speak about it because I have not seen it yet. But from what you've told me, just the sort of like, eccentrically queer fun nature of it sounds like it's a perfect Edinburgh show.

So I will plug that for you and just say, I'm really proud of you, that you've directed a Edinburgh show. That one is won an award already. And yeah, it's just been wonderful to kind of here, Alex, talk about it and see the sort of stages that it's gone through. So I'll plug that for you because everyone should go and see it. it's called remember remember

Alex

I'm just going to plug and I think it's incredible that, I don't know anyone that has a busy, successful career as a director and then writes a novel. And so James is debut novel, *Not Good Enough*, which is an incredible celebration of queer friendship and actually just joy. And I think I said it when I first read it, and I'm actually reading it again at the moment because it feels like having a friend with you. And it's a really nice thing to read as you go around, especially especially if you live in London, but also beyond.

So not good enough is out. Please buy it.

Tan Thank you so much. Thanks for having us. And so lovely talking to you. It's been great. And I've loved like, watching you like this tactic with each other.

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