

Welcome to *How to Hold a Grudge*. I'm Sophie Hannah, bestselling crime writer, creator and host of this podcast, and author of the world's first ever book on the specific subject of grudges. Many of us believe it's always wrong and bad for us to hold a grudge – but what if our grudges, when handled correctly, can be positively good for us, and for others? What if grudges are actually great: not a cause for guilt, but exactly what we need to lead a happier, safer, more fulfilled life? If you're intrigued and want to know more, you can listen to a new episode of this podcast every Thursday between now and 27 December. Join me and guests to find out how to use grudges to transform your life for the better, and to make the world a more peaceful and compassionate place.

And now ... Episode Eight: Six Ways a Grudge can Improve Your Life.

I'm very excited in this episode to have a new guest to introduce to you. Well, not entirely new. So, you have heard about my guest today already, because, in episode two, 'A Grudge is Not a Feeling', I read you a poem by one of my favourite living poets, Nic Aubury. And the poem was about those people who send long, elaborate lists of what gifts they want you to buy them for their wedding while at the same time only inviting you to the part of their wedding that starts at 3am and is for definitely the least important guests. That is one of my favourite grudge poems, and Nic is an absolutely brilliant poet, and he's very kindly agreed to come and be a guest on the podcast. So, welcome, Nic.

NIC AUBURY: *Thank you.*

We are gonna talk today about the six ways in which holding a grudge can be good for you. So, I have been talking at length, both on this podcast and in my book, *How to Hold a Grudge*, about my belief that grudges are not merely not bad for us but positively life-enhancing and beneficial, for others as well as for us. And some of you may have been totally convinced the first time I mentioned that. I hope so. But some of you might have thought, 'Not really sure about that. I've heard from quite a few other people that holding a grudge is definitely bad. And how exactly is it supposed to be good?'

And I haven't yet, on this podcast, listed in a very clear and numbered organised way, the many ways in which holding a grudge can be good for you. So, that is what we're gonna do on this episode. And, as a way of leading into this, I'm gonna ask Nic to read one of his poems which very neatly illustrates, I

think, one of the benefits of grudge-holding. And I will explain why once Nic has read the poem. So, over to you, Nic.

NA: *This is a very short poem. It's called 'The Level'.*

*We must have trust and honesty,
So look me squarely in the eye
And be completely straight with me,
Unless it's bad, in which case, lie.*

I love that poem. You know, like so many of Nic's poems, it perfectly encapsulates something that we've all felt and thought. And I'm sure all of us have ... I mean, I certainly have been in situations where I've said, 'No, no, please tell me the truth, tell me the truth,' and then when the truth is not what you want to hear, you kind of go, 'Huh. I'm not very happy. About the fact that you've told me the truth.'

So, I think that poem links directly to one of the reasons why holding a grudge is good for us. And that is: when somebody treats us badly, we don't always want to tell them the truth about how we feel. We don't always want or feel that we can say, 'Hey, that thing you just did. It was not okay with me and, you know, I'd quite like you to apologise. I'd quite like you to say you won't do it again. And if you're not going to apologise and say you won't do it again, then I'm gonna have to amend my behaviour in relation to you.'

Now, I don't know. Many people may feel they can always say that when they want to, but I definitely don't. And so, I think one of the good things about a grudge is that it enables you to do something about the fact that you've been wronged. To take some action, but it's not an action that your grudgee need be affected by. Nic, would you agree with that?

NA: *I would agree with that entirely. Yeah, it's a sort of an alternative to confrontation that means you're not ignoring it and pretending it's never happened – sweeping it under the carpet – but it's potentially less catastrophic.*

Yeah, and I mean, well, confronting people is not always ... I mean, actually, 'confronting' is a kind of aggressive-sounding word. But I actually think that telling people when they've annoyed or upset you is not always the right thing to do. And it's not always a wise thing to do, because it can lead to actual confrontation. It can lead to, you know ... if they've done something to offend you but you don't want to upset them, then if you tell them that they've

offended you then you might be upset. Then they might tell you that you've offended them and you might be upset. You know, it can easily magnify. So, in a way, you could argue that allowing yourself to hold a grudge which commemorates the fact that it was not okay that they did that thing, but that doesn't affect them adversely, and they don't even need to know about it ... You could argue, on that, actually, on that basis, holding a grudge is quite a thoughtful and peace-promoting option to take.

NA: *It's certainly peace-promoting. And also, could you argue that it means that you don't have to get into debate about whether your interpretation of that behaviour was the correct or appropriate interpretation of that behaviour?*

Yes!

NA: *So you can just ... You know how you've interpreted it, and you can just accept that without opening it up for debate with that other person.*

Yeah. No, that's a really good point, because just to let yourself have the grudge without going into that potential debate situation validates the fact that that was your response. You're allowed to have that response. You don't necessarily want or feel obliged to let your grudgee have a say in the matter and then you agree on a version with them.

NA: *Exactly.*

You get to keep your interpretation and have your grudge about it.

NA: *Yeah.*

So, in that sense, your reaction and the importance of the incident to you is validated. Your grudgee is unaffected, and so it seems like a really good way to sort of deal with something in that sense.

So, I would say, Number 1 Good Thing About a Grudge: it enables you to honour the wrong that was done to you and do everything you need to respond to it psychologically, without causing any further trouble in the world and without putting your grudge on the negotiating table for your grudgee to go, 'Oh, well, actually, I don't agree with that bit, and you compromise here and ...'

You know. So, in that sense it's really good, but ... What about ... Could someone say, 'Well, that's a bit hypocritical?' If somebody does something that

upsets you and you don't tell them, is there any way in which somebody might potentially say, 'Well, if they never have a chance to know that they upset you, then how could they ... You know, what if, if they were to know, they would want to apologise, and they don't get that chance if you're not open with them?'

NA: *It depends whether you buy the truth of my poem or not, I suppose. [Sophie laughs] But if you believe the sort of truth that prompted me to write that poem, which is that people are very good at thinking they want to know everything, but actually they just don't. they just don't.*

Yeah.

NA: *And I think it's ... You make a fair point, but I think it's a rare person who, in response to someone saying 'Your behaviour there wasn't acceptable for the following reasons' ... it's a rare person who simply says, 'You're entirely right. I'll make a mental note not to do it again.'*

Well, or even ... Not even if they wouldn't say you're entirely right, they're equally unlikely to say, 'Really, okay, let's discuss it.' They're far more likely to be defensive and decide you're flat out wrong to criticise them in any way.

NA: *Also, it doesn't allow for social cowardice. I'm a great social coward. So, I think, even if, on a technicality, you're being hypocritical, you sometimes just have to accept I'm not brave enough to have that confrontation or to stir up that particular hornet's nest.*

Yeah. And actually, I don't think it's hypocritical. I mean, I was just saying that because that's something that's certainly been said to me by friends and acquaintances who can't quite understand why I'm so okay with having grudges and why I'm so okay with forgiving and hanging out with and continuing relationships with people who I myself define as majorly grudge-worthy. People don't sort of get that.

People often say to me, 'Well, either this grudge about them really matters, in which case why don't you just say to them, "I'm not seeing you anymore," or tell them, you know, what you think of them. Or, if you really like them and want to continue the relationship, forget all about that thing that they did and just never think about it again.' And I find it hard to explain to people why that just doesn't feel like the right way forward for me. What feels right to me is to

pursue the relationship so that it can improve and maybe their behaviour becomes less grudge-worthy, which often happens, actually ...

Which is another reason why I think that holding a grudge and not telling people how they've offended you – holding a sort of private grudge – is actually a way of behaving that is beneficial to relationships. Because a relationship is more likely to approve if people don't constantly tell each other the little things they've done to upset each other. Not everything has to be, you know, mentioned and debated and made a thing of. And I certainly have noticed that in many instances where I have my grudge, no one knows about it but me. I proceed with the relationship, giving it a fair chance, and often then nothing else grudge-worthy will happen, and nobody's been upset and there hasn't been any unpleasant debating about how was right and who was wrong, and it just seems like a far better option than having everything out in a full and frank way.

NA: *And I think if people were honest, they would acknowledge that most close relationships proceed roughly on that basis. I can't think of anyone about whom I care dearly that hasn't at some point done something that's left me in slightly high dudgeon, that I don't particularly care to forget. I think most of them have, but that doesn't mean to say that you can't chorale it off and carry on liking and loving all the things about them that you liked and loved previously. It just means ... Yeah. And surely that's how most people, if they're honest ...*

Yeah. And I think, you know, most happy relationships will involve not telling the person in question everything they do that annoys you. And you might remember it, or you might not remember it, but I don't know. It just seems to me that the first good thing about holding grudges, number one on my list of how grudges can be good for you, is they do seem to occupy a middle-ground compromise position. And the compromise is honouring the fact that you've been mistreated or hurt in a particular way, which you don't want to sort of push out of the way as though it doesn't matter. So, it acknowledges that that matters, but it doesn't lead necessarily to wrangling, discussions, arguments, you risking making things worse by telling the person that you think they've done something wrong.

And actually, minimising open conflict, even of the mildest kind, is a good goal. There's so much argument and kind of controversial conversation and 'you did this' and 'you did that' that if you can possibly avoid it by just quietly having your grudge, but still being open to having a continuing friendly relationship,

that's, I think, a good middle ground there. So, that's Good Thing Number 1 About Grudges.

Good Thing Number 2 About Grudges, and this is possibly the best thing about them, actually. They act as protection. If you have a grudge about someone who's done something seriously wrong to you, and you remember that this person has behaved in this way and might do so again, then you can then amend your behaviour in relation to them in a way that prevents them from having that opportunity again.

And I often find it quite baffling when I encounter people who, time after time, let the same person do the same wrong thing to them by kind of failing to have that grudge that makes them change their behaviour.

NA: *That makes a lot of sense. That's like simple evolutionary biology, isn't it [laughs]? Surely, that's how we evolve, isn't it? We observe things that have gone badly in the past and try to avoid the same thing happening.*

And also try to avoid ... you know, if somebody that you completely trust to look after your basic needs suddenly does something that places you in a terrible position, the first time that happens, you are gonna be shocked and upset and feel betrayed and feel angry and have all those negative feelings. If you have a grudge about someone who's regularly not looked after your basic needs or even once in a big way failed to look after your basic needs in the past, then in your future dealings with that person you hopefully - because of your grudge - won't ever be shocked or surprised when they do that again.

And I certainly find that one of the ways in which my grudges protect me is that when I meet people in my life who I have grudges about, if all those grudges that I've got about that person have the same theme, which they often do ... like, each person who's grudge-worthy in one's life will probably tend to have a particular theme of grudges associated ...

NA: *So, dishonesty, for example.*

Yeah. Dishonesty Grudge is a big theme. So, you might have seven different grudges about one person, all with a strong dishonesty theme. So, when you next meet that person, because you still hang out with them because they're great fun (let's say), if they say to you, 'Hey, guess what! I've been chosen for a special mission to go to Jupiter...'

NA: *Yeah.*

You're not gonna be like, [*gasps*] 'How could she lie to me?' because lying is what she does. That's your grudge, you know that, so you're not expecting honesty, so you can sort of tailor ... You can think, 'Okay. This person is not gonna be honest. What kind of best possible relationship can I have with them where I don't require honesty as a prerequisite?'

NA: *Where the dishonesty isn't going to hurt you afresh each time.*

Exactly. And that's the danger. If you don't hold any grudges, and it's kind of like clean slate every time, as though it never happened ... someone says sorry and then that's it, all traces of the incident have to vanish from your mind, which I think is what some people mean when they say, 'Move on, let it go' ... then you would presumably be shocked afresh, and 'What? He lied to me again!' You know.

NA: *And, in fact, given that, probably, realistically, all traces couldn't vanish from your mind. Even if you decided not to bear a grudge about it, any subsequent acts of dishonesty are worse than the original act of dishonesty if you haven't got your protective grudge in place.*

Yes. Because, probably, part of that worseness is a grain of annoyance against yourself for being shocked again.

NA: *Yes. Yeah.*

You know, that will be mixed in with it.

NA: *Yeah.*

But yeah. And that, actually ... while you were saying that, I was thinking that this is a really interesting feature of that whole discussion ... is ... you know, you were alluding to the impossibility of actually forgetting and like a true clean slate. But all those people who say, 'Oh, I never hold grudges,' and there are a lot of them. Even since my book came out, there are still a lot of them, sadly. What they mean by that ... Presumably, they don't mean, 'I literally forget what has happened.' Because unless they're amnesiacs, they haven't forgotten in that sense, so ...

I'm always interested by, you know, some people can say the same thing but mean very different things by it. So, some people might say, 'I never hold grudges.' What they might mean is, 'I always forgive emotionally.' Whereas someone else might say, 'I never hold grudges' and mean, 'I always forgive emotionally and the thing leaves no trace in my mind so it's like it just never happened.'

NA: *Or alternatively, 'I don't hold grudges. I just cut that person off entirely.' Is that another way of not holding a grudge? Could you ...*

Yes. Well ...

NA: *Could you have a more extreme version? In a way ...*

So, I would say that is holding a grudge. I mean ...

NA: *Yes, okay.*

If you cut someone out of your life, you would not be able to convince me that there wasn't a grudge involved in that.

NA: *Fair. That's fair.*

That is the grudge.

NA: *That's fair.*

But there are absolutely people that say that and I think I've got one of them in my book. Somebody who said something ... I mean, this isn't the quote, but it's something like, 'I never hold grudges. I'll just tell you I never wanna see you again.'

NA: *Right.*

Okay, so that *is* holding a grudge. I think that person's slightly cheating there. But I'm more interested in, you know, the people who say, 'Oh, I just never hold grudges.' Do they mean they vividly remember the incident but they don't still feel angry? Because if that's what they mean, then that absolutely applies to me. Some of my favourite grudges, when I think about them now, all I feel is a sort of jolly amusement. Because they're just great that I still are useful and relevant, but there's just not even a trace of anger or hurt attached to them

anymore. And this is why I'm always so keen to stress that a grudge is not a feeling. And those negative feelings of anger and stuff that you have – yes, you have them at first, but when they pass, you can still have a grudge, or you can not. And that's when I think the grudge story becomes so important, because once those feelings have passed then you're left with the story which is actually good for you in all those ways.

So, we've got as far as Way Number 2 in which a grudge can be good for you, which is protection. The third way in which I think holding a grudge is good for you is that it can provide inspiration.

Sometimes, someone behaves in a way towards you that is so ... you're so shocked by it, because it demonstrates either a belief system or a sort of innate prejudice or something. It demonstrates something that you could not be more against. You know, someone behaves in a really intolerant way, or somebody behaves in a really ungracious way. And that experience inspires you to do the opposite of that, to live in the opposite way.

So, it can be a tiny thing. Like, you know, sometimes if someone steps back to let you walk past and you're thinking about something else, you don't sort of notice, and they go, 'Huh! Don't bother saying thank you,' and you're like, 'What? I mean, literally, I was thinking about X or Y, I wasn't even ... I didn't even notice.' And you might then think, 'I'm never gonna just be rude to a random stranger. It's really important to me to not just sort of hurl random aggression at people I don't know.'

Any little thing like that. I mean, I think, quite often, my grudges have inspired me to live in precisely the opposite way to the grudgee of that particular grudge.

NA: *That's interesting. Is that connected also to the phenomenon of – you might hear a sports person on the telly saying, 'I push myself to achieve whatever I've achieved because at some stage I was told I couldn't.' Is that ... does that fall into that category as well? So ...*

Well, that brings us neatly into Number 4, which is connected but slightly separated. So, I think the differences ... well, Number 3 is a grudge acting as inspiration.

NA: *Okay.*

Number 4 is a grudge acting as motivation.

NA: *Okay.*

And I think the difference is best illustrated with examples. So, I can remember a time when I was invited to a party. And it was, 'Come to this party! Come and stay with us! We'll take you to this great party!' I went. The party wasn't great, actually, but I don't have a grudge about that because you can never guarantee whether a party will be great. But, you know, we went to the party and then about three days later, the person who'd invited me said, 'Oh, you know that party I took you to? You owe me ten quid for the ticket.'

NA: *Wow.*

And, you know, I was absolutely fine about giving – handing over ten ... you know, it wasn't the money. But I just kind of thought, 'Wow, you invite me to a party. You take me as a guest – or at least, that's how I thought it was – and then three days later it's like, "Oh, yeah, you owe me ten quid."' And that immediately inspired me to be different from that and to, you know ... If I say, 'Hey, do you want to come to a thing?' then I will treat you to that thing. I won't suddenly say, you know, 'Oh yeah, you owe me some money.' So, just sort of being generous and not thinking, 'how can I claw back a tenner from my guest?'

You know, so I would say that was an inspiration rather than a motivation.

NA: *I know exactly what you mean.*

Ah, I've just worked out what the difference is. The inspiration thing is when a grudge inspires you to *be* a certain way and live according to certain values. A motivation grudge is one that inspires you to *achieve* a thing.

NA: *Okay.*

So that will be more often like, you know, if you have an English teacher who says, 'God, your writing's awful. You'll never write a decent line in your life. Why don't you go and become a street-sweeper?' That might motivate you to think, 'Actually, I'm gonna become a good writer and win the Pulitzer Prize.'

NA: *So when my wife and I, in response to the sort of wedding invitation that I wrote about in that poem, 'RSVP' [Sophie laughs], when we decided that we*

weren't going to have those sorts of invitations at our wedding and you were either coming to our wedding or you weren't ...

Yeah.

NA: *... there weren't going to be grades of guests. Presumably, that would be a grudge acting as inspiration.*

Inspiration. Inspiration, yeah.

NA: *Got you. I'm sold.*

Yeah. Whereas when my friend Jill, at her school that she went to ... This was years ago. I think she's in her eighties now. So, this was when she was a teenager and she went to a Catholic school, and she was very, very clever. And the nuns disapproved of her for being clever, to the point where they told her off for it. And one of the nuns said to her, when they were angry about a display of cleverness, this nun said something like, 'You've got to remember, Jill. There's no such beatitude as "Blessed are the Clever" ...'

NA: *Wow.*

And Jill describes that as a real kind of motivation, because in that moment, you know, she knew that what she was hearing was not right on some fundamental level; that she was being discouraged from using her very brilliant brain. And she was motivated by that to think, 'I'm gonna use my brain to achieve lots of great intellectual things.' And she did. She became a published writer. She's been shortlisted for the Booker Prize. She's very clever.

And so she sort of took that bad advice given to her by this nun, and used it to motivate her to achieve great things with her brain. So, it's kind of a subtle distinction between the inspiration and the motivation but it is to do with living a certain way that embodies a certain value or set of values, versus being spurred onto achievement by a grudge.

So, that's 3 and 4. Now, the fifth way in which grudges are actively good for you is one that I've had more trouble explaining to people. I think the ones we've covered so far, you know, it's easy to describe them. But the fifth way ... tell me if you think this is too complicated.

NA: *Okay.*

But I think that one of the ways in which a grudge can be good for you is that, by giving yourself permission to think of your grudge as a story rather than a feeling, and then focussing on creating that story and sort of polishing it and looking at it and analysing it and sort of thinking, 'Okay, so what is the story?' ... because the minute you give yourself permission to write your grudge down as a story, or even to think of it as a story, then you get into story-creation mode.

What is the story? It's not necessarily something that you can just take for granted. You have to think, 'Okay. Well, first of all, this happened, then happened.' We often tell our grudges to other people in the form of a story. And the minute you are creating or analysing that story in which you are a character, you are inevitably going to gain a bit of distance from the feelings associated with the grudge-sparking incident.

And I think that distance creation that comes inevitably with thinking of our grudges as stories is really, really useful. It gives you something positive and constructive to focus on, and your energy is then diverted into that. So, you know, if having had this discussion, if, you know, tomorrow, someone does something grudge-worthy to you, because of this discussion, you might think, 'Okay. What's the story of this grudge, then? How would I tell it? If I were telling this as a grudge story to someone else, what would be the key elements? You know, what's the ... you know, what's the tension, what's the conflict? Was I definitely in the right? Was the other person definitely in the wrong?'

And thinking of it as a sort of artefact that has properties immediately gets you out of just feeling, 'That utter bastard! Why did he do that?' So, I think that distance-creation that comes with the freedom to define a grudge as a story and then craft that story is a real bonus of holding a grudge.

NA: *What do you think of this theory? Someone can behave towards you in an outrageous way or a way that you think is outrageous that, at the time, would have sparked anger, but by becoming a story and a story that you ... I told you a story at lunch, for example, about a specific grudge that I won't go into now, but ...*

[Laughs] Well, we can say vaguely what it refers to. It refers to someone behaving not politely when they're socialising with you.

NA: *Correct.*

Yes.

NA: *So, from initial outrage, by becoming a story, I almost enjoy that now. I enjoy that story. I find humour in it. I find it amusing. I think their behaviour was so shocking and appalling that I now just laugh at it. And I guess that's kind of what you're saying.*

Yes.

NA: *I'm not bound up in the emotion of it any more. I'm now the narrator of the story.*

Yeah.

NA: *And thereby ...*

Yeah. It has value to you as a story that – you know – as a story about some absurdly rude behaviour ...

NA: Yes.

... that you enjoy telling, because when you tell it, then people who don't already know the story go, 'What? Really? She did *that*?' And, you know, it's satisfying. You get that reaction that you know and hope you're gonna get. And that reinforces your sense that, actually, that was not okay, that behaviour, but now that it's in the past, it's no longer impinging on you. Everyone can just enjoy this anecdote about absurdly rude behaviour.

NA: *I guess that's a slightly more negative way of thinking about it than your suggestion that you can stand back from it and analyse it as a story and potentially gain a little bit of objectivity from it. If my enjoyment of telling that story is exactly as you say, because it confirms I was right. [both laugh] I was right to be outraged in the first place.*

And there's nothing wrong with that. You know, one of the important roles grudges play is they invalidate our sense that when people are rude to us, or mean to us, or whatever, it matters. It matters not just to us, but it also matters in the world.

I mean, one of the things I say in my book is that ... about historical or public atrocities, people say, 'Never forget.' And you would never say, you know, say if there was some terrible atrocity and someone in relation to that said, 'We must never forget.' Well, you'd never say to them, 'Why not? It's a bit miserable remembering it. I think we should all forget about it and think about *Coronation Street* instead.' [Nic laughs] But no one would ever say that. It would sound crass. But normally, people don't say that about our private atrocities that people do to us that we're expected to just soldier on, moving on, letting go, and being non-grudge-holding.

So, if you keep your grudge story, and if you tell it in a way that doesn't adversely affect your grudgee, and someone does go, 'Oh, wow, really? They did that? That's terrible!' then it does reinforce that sense of, 'Yeah. I deserve to be treated better.' And there's nothing wrong with that. I think we all need that. If we all get from our grudge stories and the reactions to them that sense that the way we were treated matters, we would all be less likely to go absolutely demented with rage when the tiniest thing happens.

I think part of the reason that happens, that people will just snap at relatively minor provocation, is that they've spent their whole lives being brainwashed into thinking that the way people treat them doesn't matter that much. So, the people who say to you, 'Oh, don't hold a grudge, just move on,' it's not that they think you uniquely don't matter; they've probably been taught to think they don't matter either, and that when people treat them badly they should just move on. It's almost this kind of like giant conspiracy where we all pretend that we can all treat each other appallingly and get away with it, when our hearts are screaming, 'No! We can't get away with it! This thing – this all matters. You know, if someone hurts me, it matters. If someone hurts you, it matters.' So, I do think that, you know, you tell it as a story and you get that 'Oh, my God, that's awful,' you think, 'Yeah, it was bloody awful', and then, you know, it just acknowledges the significance of it.

Yeah. So, there's that, which is important. But then, my point about the distance creation is that, if you think of yourself as someone who actively holds grudges in a good way – so every time you have a new grudge, you need to construct the story, analyse it, think about what the right thing to do in the story would have been, what's the right thing to do now, and just look at it from all angles – then you are immediately involved in creating a thing. And that takes you out of the zone of just sitting there at the mercy of negative feelings.

And once you become a practised grudge-holder ... I mean, this is how I can sort of bang on about it in such a convinced way. Because I started to become aware that I now go into that mode straight away, and I almost don't have time to stop and have the negative feelings. Like, I still do obviously get angry and upset. But if something happens and I think, 'That is not okay. This is grudge-worthy,' immediately, I'm like, 'Oh, right. What type of grudge is it? How would I tell the story? Is it a This Kind of Grudge, or is it a That Kind? Is there anything psychologically new and interesting about this grudge that I haven't previously catalogued in my grudge research?'

And I'm immediately engaged in that kind of thinking, and I find that the anger and upset-ness that I feel is much, much weaker and passes much more quickly – because there's always an element where I'm thinking, 'Oh, great. This is gonna do me all kinds of good,' so I'm kinda pleased to have it. Even though obviously I would much rather people didn't treat me badly, but there's always that, 'Okay, another story. What can I learn from this one?'

'Cause there's always new things. You think, 'I'm sure I must have thought of every possible grudge there can be.' But no. I mean, we've talked today about, you know, the Terrible Host Grudge [*both laugh*] and maybe I've thought of other classifications which are similar to that, but I don't think I've got in my list of grudge types that I've come up with so far, I don't think the Terrible Host Grudge is in there. But it's a real, solid, probably quite widespread grudge type. Many of us probably have Terrible Host Grudges. Times when we went to someone's house and were treated badly.

I mean, I can remember one time. This is ... because I sort of feel a bit guilty that we're alluding to your Terrible Host Grudge without giving any details, so I'm gonna give one of mine which is very ... details are different but the essence of it is the same as yours. So, we went to spend the weekend with friends that we hadn't seen for at least two years. And so we arrived at 6 o'clock on the Friday night. Or maybe it was a Saturday night because there was a football match on the TV and it was on all evening. It was one of the ones that went to penalties and then bigger penalties or whatever you have. [*Nlc laughs*] There's a thing after penalties, isn't there?

NA: *Extra time and penalties, I believe is what it is.*

Yeah. And it just went on and on. And our hosts, who were a married couple, had some relatives in the crowd in the football match. So, they themselves were not interested in football.

NA: *Right.*

But, you know, Uncle Ian and Auntie Gina were at this football match. And so, this whole evening from when we arrived to pretty much when we left, the football coverage was on, blaring out in the room where we were ...

NA: *Wow.*

... and their eyes were constantly flitting to the TV, going, 'Is that Uncle Ian? Is that Auntie Gina? Is that – no, that's not them. Is that – no, that's not them.' And they kept saying to us, 'Sorry about this. It's just that, you know, we're trying to see Uncle Ian and Auntie Gina.'

And it's just like, 'We haven't seen you for two years. The best result you're gonna get is that for three seconds you're gonna go, "There's Uncle Ian!" and it will be Uncle Ian.' And, okay, that might be really exciting, but, you know, I was just like, 'This is a Terrible Hosting Grudge.' You don't invite friends round that you've not seen for two years and then try and spot your relatives in a football match crowd for the entire evening when they are not kind of joining in. I mean, if we'd sort of gone, 'Yes! Let's make it our mission this evening to catch a glimpse of your Uncle Ian,' then that would have been different.

NA: *If only you'd known what he looked like, presumably.*

[Laughs] Exactly! Well, quite. We didn't even know. We were not in a position to join in trying to spot these distant relatives because we'd never seen them.

So. Okay. So, how far did we get? So, yes. Grudges as distance-creation. And, actually, that Uncle Ian example is a good one because when that happened, this was before I'd developed my theory about grudges being good for you and so I just sort of happened to have grudges, rather than ... it wasn't like a deliberate choice.

If that same thing happened to me now, the minute I saw that we were gonna be basically having the football on all night in order that this relative-spotting could take place, I would have been like, 'Okay, here we go, into grudge-story-creation mode. What's the theme of the grudge? How would I grade it?' Because I've developed this whole grudge grading system.

NA: *Right.*

Yes. It's a carat-based ... You know, like diamonds?

NA: *Of course it is.*

[Laughs] Carat as in eighty at the end. Not carrot the vegetable.

NA: *Got you. Sure.*

You know how diamonds have their weight measured in carats? It's basically ... I mean, there's a whole sort of theory and it's all in the book; how you would actually go about grading the grudge. But the short version is that a weak and relatively mild grudge would be a one-carat grudge and the most powerful grudge you could possibly have would be a ten-carat grudge.

NA: *Okay.*

So, although it's not always true, generally a ten-carat grudge would be sparked by something where you were pretty sure that there was some level of either malicious intent or at the very least kind of seriously reprehensible thoughtlessness or negligence ...

NA: *Okay.*

... whereas a one-carat grudge ... I mean, the example I give in my book of a one-carat grudge is a situation where the bad behaviour was caused by fear on the part of the person who did the bad behaviour. So, they meant well. They were just so scared of a completely non-scary thing that they couldn't behave as they otherwise might. They were just in the grip of irrational fear, and so there was no element of 'What a bastard' ...

NA: *Yeah.*

... because when you're in the grip of an irrational emotion, you often can't behave any better than you do. So that's ... you know, there's all kinds of other things that go into the carat-based grading system, like how much do you matter to this person and how much do they matter to you?

NA: *Right.*

If someone who is meant to care about you desperately and a lot does something really bad, then that's obviously worse than if the postman behaves as if you're not the main thing in his life. *[Laughs]* You know, there's all these different things that go into it.

NA: *Now, I'm interested. You mentioned going into ... clicking into grudge mode.*

Yes.

NA: *So, you said, if that had happened now, you'd have clicked quicker into grudge mode ...*

Yes. Now I can click like that into grudge mode.

NA: *Which – which ...*

Grudge-creation mode. I have like a little *[Klaxon]* 'Grudgeworthy!' alert in my head.

NA: *Okay. But if that's clicking in while the offending behaviour is still happening ...*

Yes.

NA: *... as opposed to after the offending behaviour has happened, does that mean that you are more alive to and more alert to ...*

Yes.

NA: *... the sort of details you need to remember. So you're sifting ...*

Absolutely, yeah. I'm there like a reporter ...

NA: *Okay.*

... on the front line of grudge-worthy incidents. *[Laughs]*

NA: *Okay, so you ...*

And for other people as well. I mean, I do it ... It's not just things that happen to me. If at any point in my day to day life, something grudge-worthy is going on,

or if I see on the news or on Twitter that there's something – you know, my alert mode is very readily activated.

NA: *Which presumably means that your recollection of grudge-worthy events becomes better?*

Yes. Yeah. And often, in fact, one particular grudge-worthy incident, I ... about ten minutes after it had happened, I actually went to my computer even though it wasn't easy to do so, but I kind of went and made sure I got my computer and opened it up and logged in and just made some notes, because there were quite a few fine details involved, and I thought, 'I wanna get this down while I remember all the details.'

But just thinking about grudges in that way, almost as though you were a kind of investigative reporter on the subject of grudges, for me what it has meant is that I can miss out on so many negative feelings. I just like ... yeah, I might sort of think, 'Yeah, and I am a bit annoyed,' but mainly, 'What's the grudge type classification? What's the grade? What does this grudge tell me about grudges and people that I don't already know?' And so, what it has meant is that when people do do grudge-worthy things, I'm far less badly affected by them and I'm also always regularly affected in a good way by them, because I've got this new thing. And now that I'm interested in grudges and working on them ... I mean, it's kind of a weird way to be happy about people treating you badly. I mean, obviously I would still rather be treated well wherever possible, but it has to me proved that this sort of stepping back, analysing grudges, researching grudges, collecting them, turning them into stories – it does enable you to get a certain amount of distance, analytical objectivity, which just cannot help but take energy away from just sitting there stewing and feeling angry and betrayed and hurt.

NA: *It makes me think of that thing in Harry Potter where memories go. What's it called?*

I must shamefully admit that I've never read *Harry Potter* or watched any of the movies.

NA: *Oh. I'm already feeling a tad for bringing it up. But there's a thing, isn't there? There's a place where memories go.*

Right.

NA: *You can extract a memory from your brain ...*

Okay. Yeah.

NA: *... with a wand. If you can do the same with grudges ...*

Yeah. Exactly. You open up your grudge cabinet and there is your grudge. So, that's the fifth way in which grudges can be good for you. And the sixth way is the grudge as entertainment.

I really think that it helps to take life as lightly as possible. Take yourself as lightly as possible. Everything. You know, the more you can focus on the sort of comic absurdity of everything, the happier you're probably ultimately going to be. Because if you go around thinking every single thing is a big deal and, you know, making a huge production out of everything, then when things go wrong you're gonna take it harder. But if you kind of basically accept that people including oneself are, you know, fairly absurd creatures and can behave in all these absurd ways, and if you know that you can too, then having your grudge stories as almost like a form of entertainment can be really good for you. Because you get to laugh about the bad thing. Like, how bad can it be if you're laughing about it and, you know, telling friends about it and they're laughing about it? If it provides any kind of entertainment, that's immediately a benefit that you can get from it, and it reminds you that you too are capable of being laughed at in someone else's grudge story. All of which, I think, is a very good thing.

NA: *Now, unhelpfully on a podcast, I've nodded along [Sophie laughs] furiously at all of this. But I think I nodded along most furiously at that final one. I absolutely identify with that. I think if you can turn a bad thing that's happened to you into two minutes of domestic stand-up comedy where you're presumably draining so much of the negativity out of it ...*

And it becomes ... You know, if you see all your grudge stories together as little episodes in the overall story of your life, well, just as if you were reading a very long novel, it would be excruciating if there were not regular humorous interludes. That's true of life as well. I mean, imagine. It would actually be awful if you went through life from the minute you were born until the minute you died, and everyone always behaved impeccably towards you. I mean, that would be horrendous.

NA: *Yeah.*

If you could never say, 'Oh my God, you'll never guess what Roy did. He was an absolute lunatic. Listen to this story of his absurd behaviour.' If everyone behaved sensibly and responsibly in your life all the time, that would be horrific.

NA: *I happen to know something about you [Sophie laughs] that the to this podcast might not know which is that you – and I am as well – you are a great fan of Larry David. The work of Larry David.*

Yes!

NA: *Larry David is essentially ...*

Larry David is my hero and in fact I'm pretty sure I've mentioned on a previous episode of this podcast both *Curb Your Enthusiasm* and *Seinfeld* which are Larry David's two great works. But, yeah.

NA: *He's made a career of seeing the entertainment in grudges.*

Yeah. And in *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, which is just the most ingenious show ever and I just love it to within an inch of its life ... what's really interesting about ... actually, and *Seinfeld*. Both of them ... they are not just shows in which other annoying people behave in a grudge-worthy way towards our protagonists, although there is plenty of that. But there's an equal amount ...

NA: *If not more.*

... if not more, of our protagonists behaving in a schmuckish way to poor well-behaved people that they have to deal with. And I think that's really interesting, because it kind of demonstrates – and I would love to know the extent to which Larry David did this deliberately – but it's kind of like, 'This week, I'm a schmuck. Last week, you were a schmuck. We're all schmucks.' You know, and that's the brilliance of it.

NA: *Yeah.*

And also the fact that both *Curb* and *Seinfeld* are not about huge, terrible, devastating acts of rotten behaviour, but tiny, little, annoying, hilarious ones. So, it's like ...

NA: *The wrong the number of shrimp in a takeaway.*

Yeah! [Laughs] Like, 'How can you think that this is an acceptable number of shrimp to put in my takeaway? I should have at least three more.' Or, one of the ones I love is when Larry has a secretary or a PA, who's really annoying and he wants to get rid of her, but he feels too guilty to fire her, so he does what he called the Foist. And he recommends her as being brilliant to Susie, Jeff's wife. And Susie soon realises that she's had the bad secretary foisted on her, and Larry soon realises that he's had the bad secretary foisted on him by someone who pretended she was brilliant.

And it's just little things like that which are so recognisable. Minor grudge-worthy things that most people wouldn't think are deserving of a TV show, but they're just so brilliant. I think there's actually a direct correlation between me being interested in grudges and me loving *Seinfeld* and *Curb Your Enthusiasm*. And you as well.

NA: *I can see that.*

Brilliant. Okay. So, those are the six ways in which grudges can be good for you. I'm gonna actually now ask you, Nic, to read another poem.

NA: *Okay.*

[Laughs] Because we started with one of your poems, I think we should finish with one. You've got a brilliant poem called 'FYI' ...

NA: *Oh, yes.*

... which is, I think ... you can tell me if I'm wrong in this interpretation. But I think it's something that is intended to be ... to resonate with anyone who's ever kind of had annoying workplace-based email communications. Is that broadly correct?

NA: *Exactly so. I get very aggravated by abbreviations on emails of any kind. Yeah, the abbreviation of 'thanks and regards' to 'thx & rgds'. You know, how busy are you that couldn't ...?*

[Laughs] And you've written a poem about that as well! Yes.

NA: *I've written a poem about that. The basis for this poem was that I've found myself getting emails and the entire body copy of the email was 'FYI'.*

Yeah.

NA: *So, an email would be forwarded on to 'FYI'.*

And then with something else attached to it at the bottom.

NA: *With something else attached to it, yeah. And everyone was proceeding on this assumption that we all knew what FYI stood for. [Sophie laughs] And I allowed myself the luxury of imagining that I might not know what FYI stood for and that I could invent various things that FYI could potentially stand for. So, the devilishly clever thing about this poem is that all the lines of the poem comprise in their entirety phrases beginning with the letters F, Y, I. It's called 'FYI, or, E-Mail To An Employer'.*

*For Years I've
Furthered Your Interests,
Flattering Your Investors,
Flogging Your Indemnities,
Filing Your Invoices
For You; It's
Frankly Yawn-Inducing.
Finally, Yesterday I
Flipped, Yelling In
Frustration (Yet Internally,
For Yes-men Invariably
Find Yelling Imprudent):
'Fifteen Years In
Fucking Yacht Insurance!
Fifteen Years! I
Feel Yoked, Imprisoned,
Fettered! Young, Independent
Fellows Yearn Insatiably
For Youthful, Impulsive
Fun, Yet I
Follow Your Instructions
Feebly, Yield Impassively,
Feed You Information
Fawningly! Yuk! I'm*

*Finished Yacht Insuring!
Former Yacht Insurer,
Future Yodelling Impresario;
Flavoured Yoghurt Inventor;
Farm Yard Impersonator;
Freelance Yo-Yo Instructor!’
Following Yesterday’s Incident,
Furthermore (Yikes!) I
Forwarded Your Investors
Foul, Yobbish Improprieties
From Your Inbox.
Finally – YIPPEE! – I’m
Finished Yacht Insuring.
(Freelance Yo-Yo Instructor,
For Your Information.)*

[Laughs] That’s so good. Did you at any point worry that you’d run out of different things beginning with F, Y, and I, before you got to the end of what you wanted to say?

NA: *F and I, no problem at all. Y was...*

Y! [Laughs]

NA: *Y. I don’t think there are many words in the English language beginning with Y that aren’t in that poem.*

It’s just brilliant. I love that poem. And again, it’s – you know – it’s a poem in which someone is expressing anger and indeed saying that he’s forward dodgy stuff to people’s investors. But it’s so empowering, really, isn’t it, for anyone who’s ever had annoying communications from a boss?

NA: *Absolutely, yeah. And it’s sort of a ... it’s a response to very, very trivial provocation, and a sort of deliberately excessive response to very trivial provocation. Because at the same time it’s about silly emails ...*

Yeah. Yeah.

NA: *... and silly abbreviations on emails, but at the same time it’s about being unfulfilled, working for a dreadful person ...*

Yes. Yeah.

NA: ... so it's taking something small and ...

... And using it to tell some pretty universal truths.

NA: Yes.

Brilliant. Okay. Thank you very much for coming on the podcast, Nic. And Nic will be back for Episode Ten, to talk to me about seasonal and festive grudges once we're into the Christmas period.

That's all for this week. Thanks for listening. Please write a review if you'd like to share your thoughts. I won't hold a grudge if you don't because that would be an *invalid grudge*.

If you have a grudge which you'd like me to analyse in the next season of this podcast, please email me – I'm sophie@sophiehannah.com – or tweet me at @grudgesaregreat. Remember, just because I'm currently the only person attempting to be a grudge guru, that doesn't mean I've thought of everything. I'd love to hear your ideas.

If you want to read all of my grudge-related wisdom, as well as my personal top ten grudge stories, all of that is in my book, *How to Hold a Grudge: From Resentment to Contentment – The Power of Grudges to Transform Your Life*.

Thanks again for listening, and I'll talk to you next week, for a Q&A special. I'll be answering all the questions listeners have sent in since I started this podcast. See you then.