

Work Stories: Hospitality

transcript

- Rosie:** So I started working in hospitality when I was sixteen
- Tommy:** In and out of hospitality since I was sixteen, more or less
- Rhys:** Mmm, sixteen, just turned sixteen. So eight years now, eight, nearly nine years
- Leona:** What age am I? Twenty four? [laugh] Seven years
- Rosie:** On and off ever since then, so that's...eight years?
- Tommy:** Yeah so eight years altogether...
- Rosie:** And I finished this year so...
- Tommy:** ...but I've dipped out of it and came back in many times so, eight years
- Rhys:** That makes me a bit sad...
- Tommy:** Sometimes I think it can be hard to, like, pick out individual stories there's a lot of um..repetition
- Leona:** I genuinely don't think I have a best story, I've been thinking about this for the past two days [laugh]
- Rhys:** I was going to say like, it's not exactly a story, I mean it could be a story...
- Tommy:** It was a double date. Older couples, um, they gave off the vibe of, of newly date-ables, newly divorced, newly dating one another...
- Leona:** I think the best stories are when I wasn't getting a break so I'd just disappear for half an hour and sleep on a random pillow I found in a stairwell.
- Tommy:** ...the gentleman had his girlfriend's feet out on the table and was err, I'd like to say massaging them but I think that would be giving him too much credit, it was more like, err, giving them a good scrub, you know, getting off the dead skin cells...
- Rosie:** One of the, one of the most fun nights I can remember was working a New Year's Eve shift in the cocktail bar, and from start to finish, um, the bar staff were just plied with drinks.
- Tommy:** I actually had to ask him to stop, because I could see the expressions on other customers' faces, which was very fair enough because, the feet were rather close to their cocktails.
- Rosie:** I honestly can't remember the last three hours of the shift, and it was...great. That was...[laugh] really really fun.
- Leona:** I hid underneath a table in the restaurant from the function manager and then I could hear him, like, come to look for me, and I'm hiding underneath this, like, draped tablecloth, [laugh] just sitting there like 'please leave me alone for like ten minutes.'
- Rosie:** So I don't know what that says that my favourite memory is the one that I can't remember.
- Tommy:** So yeah, it's just stories like that...
- Leona:** Just, like, the people you meet, like I think all the friends I have in Glasgow are people that I've met in work, in hospitality cause you do have fun. As much as like, you know, sort of miserable, you know, sort of, in it together. It's about, everyone ends up being, like, really good friends.
- Rosie:** There's several things I can remember that were, were pretty awful. A lot of them have to do with customers.
- Tommy:** You're going to get difficult customers...

Rosie: ...the mustard was not mustard-y enough. The water was too diluted with ice...

Tommy: ...moan-y customers...

Rosie: ...like, honestly the complaints were ridiculous. And then by the end of the meal, I brought her a banoffee sundae. And she called me over and complained that the banoffee sundae was still frozen...

Tommy: ...and that's just part of the job, there's no sort of escape from that.

Rosie: Honest to...I took it back to the head chef and he almost threw it in my face...

Rhys: This woman was, like, clutching her chest. I, I thought she was laughing at first...

Rosie: ...I just could not believe what she was complaining about.

Rhys: ...I asked if she was okay, she thought she was having a heart attack. So, I had my mobile in my pocket...

Rosie: My worst experience...um...

Rhys: ...which, we weren't supposed to, but everybody, including the managers, did...

Leona: It's not really just, like, a worst experience, it's just a constant, managers being there and doing nothing.

Rhys: I called the 999 on my phone, got the paramedics to come here, gave her the phone, so that she could tell the symptoms to the paramedic, or the person on the other side of the phone...

Leona: ...and then when you've been somewhere for so long, you feel like you have to take responsibility for it, because you have a responsibility to, sort of, care.

Rhys: ...and once it had all been sorted, I had a meeting with the manager and assistant manager of the restaurant and they gave me a warning, and told me to never have my phone on me again and if it happened again...

Tommy: The worst experience in hospitality, I would say, is just your status as an employee.

Rhys: ...and of course, I was like 'well you could have a dead person on your hands if I didn't'

Rosie: ...em. A guy tried to pull me from behind a bar and, and tell me that he was taking me home to have sex with me once. Yeah...that was...

Tommy: But you have very little protection, even though, there's obviously protections within the law.

Leona: Yeah, just like, things happen like that all the time, like, things that make you feel like you're not actually worth anything to the company.

Rosie: I mean, often, owners can be one of the worst parts of hospitality as well...

Tommy: It's the small things, making you pay for uniforms, not paying you for all your hours, having tip systems, systems in quote, whereby you don't get all your tips...

Leona: Like, it just, it really does, like, it, think it just, like, it, it really gets to you, like, it chops you off a wee bit every single time.

Rosie: They arrive at their bar or their restaurant and they think that they're coming to boost morale or they're coming to sort something out, like actually they just make everything ten million times worse...

Tommy: ...a lack of respect from owners or managers...

Rosie: ...and there was one time...

Tommy: ...due to the expendable nature of your employment.

Rosie: ...an owner of, of a, a very, very well known restaurant in Glasgow came in on a Saturday night. There was a girl carrying a tray of drinks and she was fairly new. Um, she was good at her job but she was obviously a little bit on edge because she was so new. And he pulled her as she was carrying the drinks so all the drinks, kind

of, fell off the tray, and started screaming at her in the middle of the restaurant. And it was awful, people were watching, and this poor girl just ran into the back, started crying, and he didn't apologise, there was nothing done about it. That was it.

Tommy: So it's less one standout experience, and more the, sort of um, nature of the job, which isn't inevitable, it doesn't have to be the case.

Rhys: I used to be a really nice person, not so much anymore...

Tommy: So I think it's definitely made a a more um, more confident person so...

Rhys: I've learned how to adapt to really fast-paced environments where you've got to, you've got so much on your plate and you just got to deal with it.

Leona: It, I just think, I think I'm generally a more open person but you just need to get that first bit of me where I don't want to talk to you [laugh]

Rosie: A lot of the time you're working with a team so, you have to interact with people, and you have to learn how to read people as well, like, you will have so many different personalities around you and you have to understand, not everyone will do everything in the same way so you need to learn to adapt, and to, to be flexible.

Rhys: ...but it's also probably going to give me an early death, from all the stress. Yeah

Rosie: [laugh] um, do I miss it? Um...the short answer is no...

Leona: It's just, it's just easy to work in it, isn't it? I think that's kind of like, the problem, is like, if you leave one place, because you're sick of it, you then work in another, because it's so easy to get into, because you have experience. But it's the same thing, in a different place.

Rhys: So in certain establishments, we all do the same job but because we're different ages, we get paid different money, which I think is unacceptable. We should all be on national living wage, or more.

Rosie: Um, I've been lucky to work in some really nice places, and made some really good friends I think I'll have for life so, in a sense, I do miss that, um...

Tommy: Yeah, I mean, I think it could be great, and I've heard rumours in other countries, it's a great industry to work in, erm, there's no reason why it shouldn't be great but, there needs to be greater legal protections and organisation of the workers within hospitality to make it a better and safer place to work.

Rosie: Would I ever go back to working in hospitality?

Leona: I don't want to sit down at a desk, in a call centre. So at least I'm up and about and I'm moving. So, I don't know...

Rosie: If I can do anything to avoid it, then no [laugh]

Leona: ...but yeah, I wouldn't say there's one specific thing where it's like 'oh, this is why I'm staying' it's more, like, necessity, and the people help but, it's got have, like, and end point at some point. Can be good, but can also make your soul leave your body.