

Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness, Katarina Blom, Johan Svenson & Ella Engström

JVN: Meet Jonathan Van Ness. Jonathan is 36 years old, hosts this very podcast, and lives in a house that's slowly being taken over by cats, dogs and designer bags. Jonathan could use some death cleaning. In fact, we could all use some death cleaning. So today we're calling in the Pros. Welcome to Getting Curious, I'm Jonathan Van Ness, and every week I get to sit down for a gorgeous conversation with a brilliant expert or in this case, three, to learn all about some thing that makes me curious. Today, we are going to be learning all about Swedish death cleaning and all three of our guests...actually, two of our guests are joining us from Sweden, but another one is joining us from Cypress, which we'll be getting to that, later. But welcome to the show, Ella Engström is an organizer. Johan Svensson is a designer and Katarina Blom is a psychologist. Together, they're a team of Swedish death cleaners who star in Peacock's fantastic new series, *The Gentle Art of Swedish Death Cleaning*, which by the way you guys is done by Scout Productions who also does *Queer Eye*. So basically today I'm meeting like three of my TV, unscripted first cousins. Like I am so excited that y'all are here. But let's dive in because I think this is one of the most interesting titles of a telly show ever. Like when I first saw the advertisements, I was like, must figure out: what is this about? So interesting. So I think that's the best question to start with: what is Swedish death cleaning and what does it have to do with death?

KATARINA BLOM: Who wants to go?

JOHAN SVENSON: It has a lot to do with death. But also about living here and now. It's a bit of a philosophy in the show about applying Swedish death cleaning, which is a term and it's also doing, but it's also philosophy. So, uh in this show, we meet eight different characters or like the participants who are in crossroads in lives. Uh, some have terminal cancer, someone inherited stuff. Uh, so what we do is that we go into their houses and teach them how to death clean.

JVN: What's Swedish about it? Like what's like the tradition? Like what makes it Swedish?

KATARINA BLOM: I think it's, uh it's a bit weird because not many people in Sweden, we don't always talk about death cleaning. We just do it. My, my mother did death cleaning when she was a kid together with my grandmother. It's just something you do. I...the death clean with my grandmother. Um it's, uh, it's in a, it's in our culture, uh, it's something that we don't just do when we're old, you do it kind of throughout life, especially when you are in this kind of transition. Um, one of your team members said she was just moving and she was like, "I loved watching the show. It helped me so much in like, understanding how I can, like, relate to all my items," because not everything you own is equally important in every day of your life. We need to like, be mindful and reflect upon like, "How does this really serve me today? Am I the same person now as I was two or three years ago?" Uh, and it's the same thing with relationships like um we have elderly that that's passing; what a beautiful way to reconnect with them uh through their possessions and talk about them. What were your life like? What's important to you? What is your legacy that you want me to know so that I can carry this on? There's so many openings into life through death.

JOHAN SVENSON: Also like in a, in a pragmatic way. Uh, what it is about to actually uh take care of your stuff sorted out and don't leave things behind for your relatives, your family, friends to take care of. Uh I mean, that's like the short explanation that uh: don't leave, you know, heaps of stuff behind that uh to have someone else sort out for you. That's very unfair. Uh, but I think what gains attention about this show is not just the death perspective or living here and now; it's also that we live in time and people over consume. So it's also about sustainability; about actually choosing what's uh you know, what's the purpose of this? Do you really need this item? You know, is it sustainable to have all these things?

JVN: I think some of us listening right now are feeling a little attacked darling because some of us like our shit! So, um, so how is Swedish death cleaning gentle?

ELLA ENGSTROM: Yemen actually, it's like a practice that you do over time. So if you start early to do the death cleaning is something you do over time. So then you can be gentle about it and do uh some step now and then and just don't do it like brutal if you, if you save it to, to late to, yeah, so you end up with a lot of stuff, then it's going to be more overwhelming and tougher to do the death cleaning. So take it step by step and do a little now and then

JVN: In terms of like it like culturally, like making sure that you don't get too much stuff that's like... what's, is there like any, um, barometer for what you're like is as far as like Katarina when you were saying earlier, like, are you the same person that you were three years ago when you got something? Like, how do you guys like what's like the vernacular or how do you speak to like if the thing is serving you anymore?

KATARINA BLOM: Uh we jokeishly kind of say that we have three categories: like big stuff, small stuff, important stuff. And it's very like blunt because we're not just like, always joyful or just sad, especially when we're dealing with loss and the transitions in life we're always so many mixed contradictory feelings. So it's more like is this important to me? Does this add value to my life? And I think it's very a gentle process in that aspect, as well as, it's, it's kind of generous. Uh we're really tailoring this process and you can see that in each episode and like, what's your needs right now? How can we be of service to you and what is important to you right now?

ELLA ENGSTROM: I mean I think also you can say that if you're in your garden and you need to prune a tree or something: you need to cut something away to have a space to evolve, as well.

JVN: Okay, it's really interesting that you bring that up because that literally has taken me three gardening seasons to get together, like I could not prune a tomato plant to save my life. So in the series, we, we meet incredible people in need of death cleaning. And I think one thing that really spoke to me, obviously, I have like a little experience in unscripted telly. I was really struck by your um subjects willingness to be vulnerable, you know, in tough situations. It's so hard to like get up in front of so many people and like lay yourself bare. And I felt that their stories, I could feel from where I sat like so much authenticity, it felt really real. Um, so can you share, you know, without spoiler alerting for everyone—because

we want people to watch, it's on Peacock right now—um, can you share some of the stories with us?

KATARINA BLOM: I think um there are two individuals that stand out to me. Uh I was just re-watching actually one of these episodes today. Um it's Godfrey who's this very young shiny soul who lost both of his parents in just 14 months while he was still battling cancer himself. It's such a tough density of life hitting you down like that. And um in his house, it was reflected kind of...his, his living areas were so polished and in order, but down in the basement, he just shoved all of his parents' belongings and he didn't really want to go down there or know what to do with it. And he kept telling us that um, "If I get rid of even this tiny item that used to belong to them, I feel in my heart that I'm getting, getting rid of them." And uh it's uh it's, and I'm also thinking about Doug, another episode. Uh he had a very heavy history with his ex wife who later committed suicide. Uh, they had shared two kids together and, uh, uh he collected all of the paperwork and the divorce papers were down in the basement. And in my conversation with him, he actually says that that when I went through this dark period in my life, I just shoved everything down into my basement, like emotionally. And I think that's so true for how we go about painful chapters in our life. It's so easy that we just shove it down, like away you go painful emotion. And um and it's no wonder that we feel stuck sometimes in life. It's no wonder that we can have like a beautiful surrounding but still feel empty or restless. And I think doing the heavy lifting around the emotional work, it's so gratifying and it's so uh fulfilling, I think, um it was, it's so beautiful to see that. I mean, you've seen that on *Queer Eye* as well. You see the process, you see how this like history repeats itself. It's almost like a method in the end: how people just feel so much more lighter and freer and how they keep saying, "I'm able to breathe again." Um and I think, yeah, it's just so such a good reminder that we need to clear out the dark corners in our house as well as in our emotional body.

JVN: That's so important for us to see because I think that's also something that Scout does really well is that they tell stories that need to be told and need to be seen and they show, you know, the realities of what it is to be a human and to be a human now, which I love, I love their ability to do that.

JOHAN SVENSON: And I think also the therapeutic part of our show is also that, uh, you know, the thing about like talking to a well prepared stranger in a way because you know that we, we come through every participant's house with open hearts and they know it. And I think it's sometimes nice to be able to be spontaneous; laugh with someone who actually sees you for who you are in this very moment. And that's what you can see in the show. Uh because everybody knows that and that's also kind of a huge relief for a lot of the participants that we're there with our love or, you know, gentle also like firmness sometimes, you know, to, you need to, you know, you push it a bit, you need to go on here and sort this out. But I think that's also like a big takeaway of the show, this kind of openness. Uh you know, I know myself, you know, sometimes you had this deep talk with someone in a bar or whatever, you know, that changed your life. And I think that the, the, the series conveys that, in a way.

JVN: I was very struck, like struck by this because I, every episode that I watched, I really felt, I felt things. Um and, and you say in the series that the phrase, like "I'm trying not to

cry," is distinctly American. Um I don't even try not to cry anymore. I just let it out. Um but can you speak to what it feels like to death clean and, you know, you're essentially guiding people through really painful situations for them. So what's it like to, to be in that role of being that kind of leader?

KATARINA BLOM: A lot of people actually long to just give to those tears. And I think one thing that kept resurfacing was people saying, "Oh, it's I feel lighter just by talking to you about this," or, "This, this feels refreshing to me." And it's so paradoxical because in our mind, we think it's going to be horrible. No, I don't dare poking around in what's their loss or their pain because I don't want to make them feel more bad about themselves. But it's actually the opposite. I love how Shana she's um um she's a cancer, stage four breast cancer patient and she knows she's going to die. And she says in the second episode, um, "If I can't talk to my friends about this, then I'm going through it alone," and let's face it like she's already, she has cancer. She knows she's about to die. And the best thing we can do about that is not closing our eyes around it. Uh it's really about talking about it. Like, go up—this is really a thing I want everyone who hears this podcast— like, knock on that door, ask that question that is on the tip of your tongue, but you're at the same time you're afraid of asking this. But do it, do take the step because otherwise we isolate the person who is still, like, locked into so much pain and fear and like ambiguity about their future. And let's share that burden by just like, "Do you want to talk about it? I noticed you've been tired lately. Uh is there anything going on that you want to share," uh, you can just start in a gentle, like corner somewhere and they will set the pace and they will share if they want to share.

JVN: It can be hard to share that space with someone when they are going through something so deep. And especially if you have something going on in like your life, like, how do you guys, um, how do you self care through, through gentle Swedish death cleaning?

JOHAN SVENSON: You know, for me being through a lot of things in my life, going to therapy myself, I think just people felt safe when they were with me. You can get a feeling that you're safe and it goes both ways. So I think more that I was filled with joy, a lot of times when I left, uh, left the participants for the day. I mean, it was very rare that I, you know, that I felt, I mean, it was like more an overall feeling when someone had something really tough going on in their lives. But the, the show is a lot about the joy that we create; the reality of the now, which means that we also, you know, imply a lot of joy and laughter. So, so you were kind of happy as well, you know, going home for what we all achieved together. Uh so, so I think actually that will convey more to the viewer because they will get that kind of dense picture of what's going on. But for us, this is, you know, several days that we do this. So I, I think there were, you know, it was more sad when you heard about them when, you know, in the beginning, when you were introduced to the subject. Uh but when we were there, I mean, I mean, it was just so much fun connections and I mean, we were friends with a lot of the people today, most of them, I think, you know, on Instagram and on, you know, on, on Facebook and there's still this kind of joy and smile when we see each other.

JVN: How can we in our own lives, embrace the emotions that come along with, you know, with confronting these corners; whether that's like letting go of something or letting go of things that like a loved one, you know, has left us or, or as, as we're just cleaning these areas of our lives: how can we embrace those emotions and then still let go of sentimental objects.

ELLA ENGSTROM: I mean, it's about being humble to yourself, I think. And that I said before doing it in different steps, it's like peeling, peeling an onion, you can say in different layers. So just think about that and start with something that are a little more easy for you and then you build up that muscle so you get tougher and tougher and can make those little tougher decisions along the way further on. So you don't run the marathon without doing some jogging and then running, you need to train.

JVN: So like bite off little chunks?

ELLA ENGSTROM: Yes, you take small steps. That's the trick.

JOHAN SVENSON: I think that's also the like interesting part because I mean, if you, if you read in the papers, people have been viewing the shows, they talk about the clutter. But I would say it's not like a de-cluttering show in that sense. If you look at Marie Kondo, when they, you know, it's more about like judging the object from the surface. Do I like a pink sweater still or did I buy three or something? This is more about the philosophy and starting that; igniting that process that you should live there. It's like a, you know, like a life diet in that way. Hopefully you can come back to it. Sometimes you get a bit fat and then you start to exercise again and then it's kind of, you know, you get a new knowledge and no one wants to be on a diet for that. You want to cheat a bit sometimes. And that's totally fine. So this show is not about like tossing things away and judging you and saying that's wrong or that's right is what, what's meaningful to you. So, if you like have 5000 Barbie dolls at home, maybe we could anyway, edit it down. So it doesn't burden you or you know, this. So there's a lot of different layers in, in, in the show, which I think the takeaway is also that the story of this participant really comes in focus uh so weird framework around them. So it's not like, oh I learned how to tidy up my my house now. It's the same thing with my design. It's not that minimalism is not like an aesthetic. It's, it's a result out of that process. It's not that, oh, you should have a minimalistic Scandinavian home now. But no, it's about like having a house that reflects you that you like to be in. And that's what a lot of the participant uh doesn't have, actually.

JVN: I love that.

KATARINA BLOM: And I think this is a process that we saw over and over again in the beginning. They think: this item is so important. But then when they do the emotional work, they realize, "Ah I carry this within me and everything is around me. It's like optional. It's, it's a bonus to keep things that gives purpose and adds value to my life." But it's not a necessity.

JVN: So, let's say someone is just like listening to this part and they're like, "Oh, my gosh, this is really resonating with me. Like, I need to Swedish death clean my life." Like, how do they start? Like, what's like the actual process of Swedish death cleaning?

ELLA ENGSTROM: Yeah, one thing you can really start with is to look after if you have a lot of duplicates of stuff, that's a very easy way to start. Do you need so many of the same function and so on? Just choose the ones that are the best and donate the rest, for example. But as Katarina said before, we look at the big stuff, the small stuff, the important stuff when we are doing the death cleaning. And one way to do it is to use the red dot system and it's to have those stickers and put red dots on the things that are going to leave your house and that could be a donation or trash, for example. So that's one way to do it.

JOHAN SVENSON: And we will set up a workstation because a lot of some of the houses were kind of big, we went to, with a lot of stuff and then we arranged workstations. Like in Godfrey episode, we carried everything out in the backyard to actually like, look at it; sometimes that's the easiest way to just like expose everything in daylight and you can see, you know, what it is, what, what functions, you know, what can you toss away immediately, you know. Uh, so of course, the show has this takeaway about a really pragmatic system that Ella initiates um outside a philosophy, of course, so...

ELLA ENGSTROM: When you put up that sorting station that we call it, you also take one box at a time and look at one item at a time and make a decision about that thing. But of course, that's also one of the mistakes many people do when they are looking and thinking, "Oh, holy shit. I have so much things. Where should I start?" And then you are overwhelmed and you are like, oh my God. But if you do it like that: take one box at a time or make a category like categorize the things and just take one item, decide about that and then take the next and the next. Then you are like those small steps that we talked about. That's the real thing...

JOHAN SVENSON: What you do with the box of old porn that we found, for instance?

JVN: Oh my gosh, honey. Um and what did, what did, did, was that something that was, was that a red dot or...

JOHAN SVENSON: Donated it to a museum!

ELLA ENGSTROM: To the archives...No!

JVN: Ella, is there like is there like is there like a green dot too for like stays?

ELLA ENGSTROM: Yea, there's a green dot too, as well, for the things that stays, especially if you have in boxes then it's yeah, makes sense to put that green dot on the box. So you really know what to save and yeah.

JVN: Is there a yellow too?

ELLA ENGSTROM: Yeah, it's a yellow one as well for the things that you wanna. Yeah, the things that you want to give away like donation or for example, for loved ones; they are just leaving your house. the red and the uh yellow is leaving your house, the green are the ones that are staying

JOHAN SVENSON: We also have the dilemma box. You have to tell, tell Jonathan about the dilemma box.

ELLA ENGSTROM: Yeah, we also have that trick if you have a hard time of letting go of things and you get stuck when you're doing this one touch rule, I call it, just take one item at a time and make the decision. And then if you are getting stuck and you can't decide, then you can make yourself a box that we call like a dilemma box that you take one box and you put that item in that and you set a deadline on that box of uh about a month, I will go back and look.

JVN: Oh I'm feeling attacked again, Ella. It's feeling pressure again, Ella.

ELLA ENGSTROM: You put your things in quarantine, you know.

JVN: My dilemma box is gonna be like 15 years. Now in every episode—which I was obsessed with this y'all so freaking cute—the coffee breaks in the episode; come through, so cute. What's the importance of resting and reflecting as we death clean? Um and I also, so actually, that's the first question. So what is the importance of like resting and reflecting? I'm asking for a friend who has trouble resting.

JOHAN SVENSON: Oh my God, does that friend have really long hair?

ELLA ENGSTROM: That actually is such a big part of it to just take that time and uh just change the environment for a little while and just reflect and then you can come with new eyes again and take uh take new steps

JVN: You have to change environment? Can you stay where you are and just reflect?

ELLA ENGSTROM: You take stay where you are but it's good to also go outside and take some fresh air.

JVN: Oh, like outside! Yea, yea, yea. I thought you meant like a vacation and I'm like shit! You got to like leave town? You can do a staycation.

ELLA ENGSTROM: No, just leave that room, for example. If you are at the sorting station, don't take the coffee break there, go to another place, another room

KATARINA BLOM: On the, on the past like uh it's really, I think it's really important to take those breaks to integrate. Uh because when you do the death cleaning, there's so many new thoughts and and stimuli and images that we really need to step back, as Ella said, in order to to things to integrate, to shift perspective and understand what really resonates with me on the gut level. So uh we highly recommend coffee breaks.

JVN: That is not the first time I've heard that about the integrating part. My therapist literally talks to me about that a lot. She's like, I know that you logically know, but if you don't slow the fuck down to let it process, then it's not gonna stick. And then I'm like, fuck off lady. You don't fucking know me. And then I'm like, wait, you're my therapist, you know, me better than anyone. I hate it when you're right. And then I, you know, it's like, oh my God, it's hard. Um, do you notice any differences between how like Swedish people and like, or like Swedish culture and American culture approach the idea of self care?

KATARINA BLOM: Well, I don't know if this is just my very personal opinion but growing up, uh I watched a lot of American high school movies and the idea of self care for women or young teenagers uh was always the same: like paint your nails, do a facial and like get your

hair done, get new clothes. It's everything about pampering your surface and there's nothing wrong in that. Like that can be wonderful.

JVN: Also Katarina, you forgot about like you're supposed to have like a movie montage while you're doing that as well. Like that's what you know, like it's like, it's like you have like the music has to be in the background while you're doing your facial and your mani and your pedi and like, you should probably be like trying on some clothes as well and like, doing some fun dancing. Um, just, you know. Yes. But, yeah, that's, yeah, I'm really smelling what you're stepping in. Yes, keep going. Yeah.

KATARINA BLOM: And I mean, that can be wonderful and that can be part of your self care routine. But that doesn't work everyone. And I remember the first time I did a facial thing, I was like, wow, I'm going to do it, like, in the movies and I'm like, uh what's happened? Like what, what then, we just rest, we just like what I felt like cheated. And I think as a grown up woman now, I feel um there's so much more to the word self care and also times have been changing. I just entered Instagram and there's like, this is 15 ways you can take care of yourself. Like pet a bunny, take a walk, like take this deep belly breaths. And I love that type of change because in the show at one moment, we were talking a little bit about if we would uh spoil someone with doing those kind of makeover things, but that would be it. Uh then she wouldn't be getting some other things. And I felt like we really want to showcase this other end of the spectrum because the first thing, it's great, it can really work for a lot of people, but it's nice to show variety. And I really think our show does that.

JVN: I always say that too that like, self care is so much more than skin deep. Like self care can be volunteering. It can be like doing something in your community. It can be like learning a new instrument. It can, there's so many things that self care can be. I always think about...it's like if it brings like more joy or presence like into your life, like then it's self care. Like if it's bettering your wellness: it's self care. And that and sometimes that's actually like not doing something physical.

KATARINA BLOM: I love how you say often, like, uh I don't know what your pocket of joy is, but you got to find it. I love that. And when I, I have two small kids and like my time is just non existent. My self care routine is like so tiny and I love how you said, like, there's always like room for that pocket of joy because it's ever present. We can just like dip into it and then we're back again. Uh, so thank you for that, Jonathan.

JVN: Do you feel like Swede or like Swedish culture or like Swedish approach to like um like self care is more just like aligned with like kind of like the death like Swedish death cleaning, like um kind of ethos which is just like, it's like a little like maybe it's just like more like um I don't know, it's like it is, it's like, it's like not short attention span vibes. It's like, it's more like layered in...

JOHAN SVENSON: Culturally, like, uh, like self care in Sweden...I mean, it's in, in, I think it's a bit of a silly word actually. Uh, and, uh, because I'm Swedish, uh, because what, what we've been doing throughout the years is recreational things, like, just doing sports, going for walks in the woods, you know, we never call it self care, you know, in, in, in that sense. So just being out a bit, outdoorsy, you know, some healthy options of moving your body a bit forward. It doesn't have to be, you know, a lot of exercise in that sense. But being

connected to nature. It's a huge country where like, uh, you know, Sweden has a population of, you know, California County, but we have like the land of, you know, it's, it's a vast space. So it's a lot of like, like when I grew up skiing, doing things, you know. So, and what I do like about the show is that, that, even if we have this philosophy, we talk about things, but it's secondary because what we do is also kind of pragmatic by the doing, uh emotions evolve in a way.

JVN: So, okay, so Johan this is another one for you. So I loved it when you said that there should never be a space in your house that you don't like to go into which, wow, like I'm feeling not attacked because I literally love, like there's like, yeah, like when I feel like I did so good because like, I literally love like, oh, I like, like, yeah, like this was like the first test that I passed like, in this and yeah, I'm really excited. So what should, what should our homes feel like once we've death cleaned?

JOHAN SVENSON: Yeah, I think why that is actually a very, like an important sentence is actually because, uh, what I do in the show and what do we all do in the show...but is that the house should be a reflection of you, it should have a purpose and you should understand yourself. It's also like a journey to being authentic and unburden yourself from guilt or what other people think or how do you want to live your life? It's kind of weird to live in a space that you don't want to enter, you know.

JVN: I do have a little bit of guilt about my purses, but now I feel like I don't, I don't fucking like, that's, I really, I get a lot of joy from it and like, it's great and I'll probably just like auction it off and give it to like a gorgeous charity when I'm like 70 or it's already in my estate plan. So it'll be fine.

ELLA ENGSTROM: I mean, also, I think, yeah, one of the things, it's so easy to jump on trends as well when you come to interior as well. It's better to think about the home like is it reflect, is it a reflection on me, instead? The, the main thing is that you feel that this is my space where I can charge my batteries and feel good in my home and don't have all those stacks of guilt.

JVN: And how can we keep our houses tidy and avoid going home blind?

ELLA ENGSTROM: I will say one thing that is a good trick is to let your space be the limit as well; when it's full, it's full. So have those, your space as a guideline, what you can save?

JVN: Well, fuck, I failed that test because I do love a storage unit.

JOHAN SVENSON: I mean, that's, that's what you do. You book death cleaners.

JVN: So let's say you do a storage unit where you're like: when it's summertime, I don't need to be having all my winter clothes and shit because it's all bulky and then it makes me feel overwhelmed. So in the winter, I take my, you know, my summer shit to the storage and then like, you know, I have like, I do like a switch like I do like a semi-annual switch like my hot clothes and then like my cold clothes. You know what I'm saying? Does that mean that I'm like highly functioning hoarder or does that mean that I'm like Swedish death cleaning accidentally? Because I'm, it's like 6% Scandinavian or what?

[CROSSTALK]

JVN: We need to do a crossover episode is what I'm hearing you say like us to, we need a crossover episode. I need you guys to come over like I'm a little bit out of control. That's what I hear your face is saying to me just from how you're reacting right now. Like a little bit like I'm a little bit like borderline, like you guys are a little concerned like we need to. Ok, it's fine. I thought it's fine. I think, I think we all knew going in that I probably did need to be like, I think we knew that I need that. I was ok. It's fine. It's fine. I hear what you're saying. Um, and we are still allowed to buy cute things when we understand why or something.

JOHAN SVENSON: Exactly. I think so. But I think when I look at, when you talk about your clothes, I think it's interesting when, if I look at my grandmother for instance, and also like a French woman, like in the good old days: you bought, you bought two types of suits that you were wearing during one season and you have another type of suit. I mean, I think that's the thing about over consuming that you have varieties of all the trends you like, you have like five of that coat because you thought it fitted so well. So why not have a purple one and why not have a blue one? And I think that's kind of to get to get you to get more of the confidence to maybe limit it.

JVN: Johan, but if it's only fucking pink and green and you need fucking purple for your goddamn outfit, what the fuck are you supposed to do? Just like...

JOHAN SVENSON: You have to get rid of it!

JVN: No, because sometimes you need the selection because you feel very stunted, if you don't have you, it's like a painter without the tool, without my, without the, how am I to do my oil painting without my purple?

JOHAN SVENSON: Exactly, without all the colors. But if you blend them all together...

JVN: So maybe I'm just like exempt from...I think I personally am exempt from that rule because of like my non binary queerness or something. Like there must be some gay LGBTQ thing that like makes me not able to do that or some...No, you're so right. I am over consuming it as I heard myself say that I realized that I am over consuming. You're right, but not coats... it's other things. It's just not, yeah, and like coats are so expensive that like, I actually don't overconsume coats. It's more like other things that are...Ok, fine. I really need to come on season two. Ok, fine. I'll call David Collins. I'll ask maybe I can just like book you guys privately. We can do it for... fine. I hear what you're saying... or, or, or: Rent The Runway. You heard it here first, Rent The Runway; we can do that and then that way you can get your purple jacket and then you just like, send it back because hashtag sustainability. So you're actually not telling me that I can't, you're just saying it's like, find a different model.

KATARINA BLOM: Yes, that's great.

JVN: Why are we like having the crossover of the season?

JOHAN SVENSON: I mean, you can rent, don't you have that in the States? You can rent clothes. There's actually like, there was some shops in Stockholm where you can like rent fancy clothes.

JVN: I think one thing that I've taken from this episode so far is that really Swedish culture does like support death cleaning. Like they're, they're kind of like it makes sense to me culturally like how these principles have come about. So, but how do we see like in like, let's say like sustainability initiatives or like landfill practices, for instance, how do we see like Sweden support death cleaning culture, in other ways?

ELLA ENGSTROM: We actually have a lot of the support there because our landfill areas, they are really set up for people to go there and uh sort their things. Everything is like, yeah, so you can recycle and everything is separated. You have like, so it's really easy to get things...get rid of things. And also you have a lot of charity and so on that you can also donate things to as well. So it's very popular to buy things, second hand things, and go on flea markets and, and so also, so that's really trendy.

JVN: What do you think is possible in communities that embrace death cleaning?

ELLA ENGSTROM: I think it's, it makes space for other things than stuff, actually. It makes you connect more and coming down to the shanan. What do you call it in English? To the core? What is important in life, actually?

JVN: What was that word? Shanana, honey! We learned a gorgeous new Swedish word and concept. Um and I love that it sounds like my best friend Shannon's name but like with different pronunciation. Yes, shanan. So it makes space though Ella, that's a really beautiful way to speak to it. Katarina, what do you think for that question? What's possible in community when, when we embrace Swedish death cleaning?

KATARINA BLOM: Yeah, so whenever we talk about death, it sounds so dramatic. I think death is really just uh an extreme, like it's, it's a part of change. So life is always changing and we need death in order for there to be life. And if we can lean a bit more into acknowledging that we are all born, we're all going to die, then I think we would have much more connection through that transition, the last transition that we're all going to do. And I think it would open up more tolerance towards change in our everyday life as well because we die a little in every moment if you want to. Um I think there's so much to gain from being more okay with death, if that makes sense.

JVN: Absolutely! And it's funny because even when you started saying that I was, like, actually it's so weird because, like, I'm gonna live forever. So it's like, so funny that, like, everyone else is gonna have, like, I'm not, it's like, so interesting. But then it's funny how, like, I think actually a lot of us have that reaction and that's literally why we shy away from talking about it because when someone else is going through it or when someone else has this experience with like, you know, a huge loss or they're coming up against, you know, cancer or, you know, a life changing um illness, it's like: when that realness and when that, when that reality comes into your life and you share that with someone else who maybe is like, well, I'm gonna live forever, that's not gonna happen to me, which is our default, I think it does make it for some people. It feels too real, it feels too like, uh and so if you can just sit with that moment of discomfort, which is literally what I did. Like, I didn't interrupt you. I like, let you finish. And then I was like, wow, that is so true because I was like, I am going to like, we all will die someday. And I think that that does just open up so much more like patience and beauty um for us to like sit with each other and then like, when there is

difficult times, like we don't just abandon someone because we're uncomfortable around, you know, speaking about something that might be hard for us to think about. So, it's really beautiful. Johan, how about you?

JOHAN SVENSON: Uh I think presence is one key thing and being authentic and I think uh what we, as we show in the show as well is that who are you when you don't consume? Because that's a takeaway of thinking about how you repurpose stuff, how you edit the things you have at home, your heritage from someone, uh instead of seeing shopping and consuming as some kind of entertainment industry in your life. So if you fantasize about that and taking that away for a moment, what's left?

JVN: Um like each other! No, each other, like our communities and each other.

JOHAN SVENSON: That's the thing. That's the thing. That's the thing because that is, that is the answer because I think we, um then we get that kind of, we take the coffee break and we, we, we, we reconnect instead of being so uh up, you know, in, in, uh with engagement in all the silliness about objects. Uh uh that doesn't have any meaning for us. And, and that's, I think it's not about taking away joy or anything because we don't do that in the show. We just talk about things for what they are, you know, and if someone likes silly stuff, they like silly stuff and then it has a purpose.

JVN: Um, I love that and I also just love you all so much. So and I, I think I would just say it's completely unrelated and we didn't go there yet, but Sweden: if anyone else from Sweden is listening to this episode, you know, your speed skating program is incredible and it's really unrivaled. And with all of your access to ice and extreme cold, I wish that you would give your figure skaters more attention. Um yes, I'm talking to you. So Sweden, like if we could please just like start like really watching figure skating, like you don't have to over consume some outfits. Johan, I already see your jaw fucking clenching. OK? Like you don't have to get too many fucking competitive dresses. You really can just do like two a season. So just like, please, if you guys could just start cheering on your Swedish figure skaters because they are there and they're great. And um you know, I just want you guys to like cheer on your Swedish figure skaters more because they're, they're great and they deserve your attention just the same as the speed skaters, even though their quads aren't quite as bulging, which is great. They more, like figure skaters have more like great butts and like, I feel like speed skaters more have those like quads and hammies, you know. So anyway, I just had to say it, I'm not trying to come for you at the end of our episode. I don't want to like end on a bad note, but I just am saying Ella, you know Katarina, Johan, like you if you could just like, please like watch, you know your figure skaters like watch nationals request on the television. Ok. Where uh what's next for the Swedish death cleaners? Where can we find you? What's next for y'all? Like what is happening? You're just like trying to like: Johan's sleep training with no blackout blinds...risky. Ella's got her blackout blinds. Like what, like, but also Ella at the beginning, you said you're in Cyprus? Is Cyprus...are you just getting, is that giving like Malta, are you giving like are you giving like Mediterranean princess vibes? Are you wearing your SPF? Is it fun?

ELLA ENGSTROM: Yeah, it's really fun. We have our second home here actually. So I have one in Sweden and one here. So we are here now on vacation. So that's why I look like a tomato.

JVN: Well, no, you, you know, obviously, you know, on my show we're real big on SPF. OK. So please make sure you are integrating that SPF into your uh you know, don't throw that out. OK. And you can't, sometimes you do want two choices, you know, you might want one a little more, a little more hardcore. You might want a little bit. This was more like, you know, soft core just depends, you know, what, what's happening? Um And all three of you are on Instagram, right? Or all three of you were all we we're active on the 'Gram or any of us TikToking...is that, are we into TikToking these days? OK, Johan we're going to put that link. What about the tweet? Are we still, are we still fucking with Elon and Twitter? Are we out of there? What are you on the Twitter? We'll put whatever links.

JOHAN SVENSON: I am as well but I use like a zero as the Os in my name. So it's Johan Svenson with 0's.

JVN: We're going to put all the links. But where, where would you say that you really want people to follow you from this episode? Like where can we get that?

ALL: Instagram!

JVN: Because I think people are going to want to follow. You have to watch figure skaters. Actually, there's so much good figure skating content on Instagram. It's not even funny. My algorithm is very figure skating heavy and then figure skating, gays and hairdressing and travel stuff. That's like what my...

JOHAN SVENSON: I have a lot of pigs as well. I like cute pigs. I would love to have like a pig.

JVN: I love pigs. Yeah, they're so cute but they're so sweet. Um, you guys thank you so much for coming on and for talking to me. I just adore all three of you. Y'all if you have not seen The Gentle Art of Swedish Death Cleaning on peacock, you need to see it yesterday. It is so good. It's incredible. Um I'm hardcore lobbying to book you guys. I need you to come to Austin so we can Swedish death clean my shit. It's I think you guys might be non judgmentally disappointed in me, like in more of like a loving familial way, like we're going to have to do some exploration into my hoarding ass tendencies. So I hope you can take it and I'm excited to meet you guys in real life.

ELLA ENGSTROM: That would be fun. You know, we're coming, we're coming, giving you a big hug and a kick in the butt.

JVN: I can't wait, I can't wait for that Scandinavian sass in real life. Ella, thank you so much. Katarina, thank you so much. Johan, thank you so much and we will see you next time on Getting Curious.

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