

The Unlinked Tree

written by

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FADE IN:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Grey haired musician TOM LEES (55) lies up against the headboard and strums his guitar.

DING.

A POP UP appears from ANCESTRY.COM.

TOM (ASIDE)  
(irksomely)  
What's this now?

He picks up his iPhone and looks at the message.

CU: "You have a new DNA match. Please click the link to review."

TOM (CONT'D)  
Who am I related to this time, the  
Earl of Arundel?

He reluctantly clicks the link.

CU: COLLEEN CLARKE - Unlinked tree. 1st cousin. Matched to Parent Two.

TOM (CONT'D)  
(mumbles)  
Dad's side.

He calls his sibling - JACKIE 59.

INTERCUT: with Jackie:

She cooks at the stove when her phone rings on the dining table. He climbs off the bed.

JACKIE  
(on phone)  
Tommy. What's up?

TOM  
(on phone)  
Alright, Jack. How's things?

JACKIE  
Not bad. Just cooking his majesty's  
dinner.

TOM

What is it tonight - rib eyed steak  
with all the trimmings?

JACKIE

He'll be lucky. Sausage, egg, chips  
and beans.

(chuckles inwardly)

Anyway, what do I owe this  
pleasure? I haven't heard from you  
in weeks.

She carries the phone to the oven and stirs a pot of beans  
with her free hand.

TOM

I just received one of those  
annoying pop ups from Ancestry.

JACKIE

A new match? Ignore them. I get  
them all the time. Apparently we've  
got relatives in Australia, New  
Zealand, Canada and America... even  
India which explains our love of  
curry.

TOM

Yeah, well, according to them,  
we're forty-one percent Irish.  
Twenty-two percent English and the  
rest from all over the place.

JACKIE

Don't forget the one-per-cent  
Indian, Tommy.

TOM

So who's Colleen Clarke, then?  
Who's she?

JACKIE

(knowingly)

Oh.

TOM

Yeah.

JACKIE

I got that one as well. I meant to  
ring you about that.

(sighs)

She looks like me, doesn't she?

TOM

Yeah... that's what I thought. She's linked to dad, and she's not related to anyone else in the family, yet she's a first cousin. How does that work?

JACKIE

I know, I know. I'm going to talk to mum about that tomorrow when I see her. I think he was playing away when we lived at Moreland Court.

TOM

D'you think that's wise? It might upset her. Open a can of worms, you know?

JACKIE

I knew he was a philanderer. I remember every Friday night he'd come home from work and spruce himself up before he went out on the razzle dazzle. We wouldn't see him till Sunday afternoon. He'd only come home for his dinner. On one occasion mum took his dinner to the pub and left it there.

TOM

What about this name Clarke?

JACKIE

Our neighbour was Margery Clarke.

TOM

(aback)  
You're kiddin'!

JACKIE

No I'm not. She was known as the bike of Moreland. He used to pop in while Desi was at work. Desi was her husband. She has a son my age. He was a right little tyke. Always getting into mischief.

TOM

I can't believe she stood for it, mum.

JACKIE

She never had a lot of choice,  
Tommy. When she needed something  
fixing, she'd knock on the door  
wearing just her dressing gown and  
slippers and ask if dad was in.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

A three storey block of maisonettes and a balcony consisting  
of eight flats.

EXT. FIRST FLOOR BALCONY - NIGHT

Blonde bombshell MARGERY early 30s opens her front door and  
peers down the balcony, before she knocks on the Lees front  
door in just a flimsy black negligee and heeled furry  
slippers.

Rough and ready BENNY LEES 30s has a quiff. He opens the door  
and grins knowingly at her.

BENNY

Alright sexy.

MARGERY

(smiles)

My drawer's broken, Len. You  
couldn't screw it in for me, could  
you, only I can't shift it?

BENNY

I'll be right with ya, sexy draws.

She giggles as she scurries back into her flat.

BENNY O.S

*Nora, Margery needs something  
fixing. I won't be long.*

He enters Margery's flat with a screwdriver in hand.

END FLASHBACK

BACK TO SCENE

TOM

So, she's our sister, then?

JACKIE

DNA don't lie, Tommy. She's  
1,677cM's. That's a direct link to  
you and me...

(MORE)

JACKIE (CONT'D)

unless she's our grandmother, or niece. And at her age that's simply not possible.

TOM

(scratches head)

I want to be there when you talk to mum about it.

JACKIE

Of course. I'm going tomorrow. But remember her mind's not how it used to be. She gets all kerfuffled.

TOM

I know.

JACKIE

Her medication causes her to babble on. She goes off on a tangent soon as you mention the past. Anyway, if you visited her more often you'd know that, wouldn't you?

TOM

Has her dementia worsened, then?

JACKIE

Yes, it has. It doesn't get better, Tommy. It gets worse, if anything.

TOM

OK. So what time will you be there, then?

JACKIE

Well, I've got to go to the hairdressers in the morning, but I should be there just after she has her lunch at midday.

TOM

OK. See you there.

JACKIE

OK. But don't say anything to her until I get there. I don't want you upsetting her. She's already disillusioned as to why you don't visit her more often. You've only got one mum.

TOM

I know. It's just so difficult with her being so far away.

JACKIE

I understand. But at least try.

TOM

I will.

END INTERCUT.

INT. CARE HOME - DAY

NORA 82, sits lost in a chair when Tom enters. He clutches a plastic shopping bag filled with goodies.

She looks up at him with a huge grin.

NORA

Tommy, is that you?

TOM

Yes mum, it is.

NORA

Tommy, it's so good to see you. Where've you been? I haven't seen you in ages. It must be at least five years.

TOM

No, it's not been that long, mum. I've just been busy with work and stuff. I'm sorry I haven't been sooner.

NORA

What have you brought me?

TOM

I got you some sweets.

He gives her the bag containing soft sweets and chocolates. She takes them out and attempts to open a packet of jelly babies.

TOM (CONT'D)

Here, let me help.

He opens a bag.

NORA

Aw, jelly babies, my favourite. Ah, you shouldn't have, Tommy. They must have cost you a fortune.

(looks in bag)

Look at all these sweets. Ah, you're so good. Gives us a kiss... You are my son.

TOM

(kisses her cheek)

I know.

A CARER enters the room with clean laundry. She goes directly to the cupboard.

NORA

(proudly)

This is my son, Tommy.

CARER

(smiles)

I know it is, Nora. I saw him last month.

NORA

He's come all this way to see me.

CARER

That's nice.

NORA

And he brought me sweets. He's so good. He's my son.

Carer puts the laundry in the cupboard then exits.

NORA (CONT'D)

(snarls)

I fucking hate it here. I want to go home to my own house. I just want to go back home. I don't even know what I'm doing here, Tommy. I feel like I'm being kept prisoner.

TOM

Haven't you made any friends?

NORA

(tearfully)

No. I don't want to talk to anyone. They all look like death warmed up. I just want to go home.



TOM

But this is your home now, mum. You need proper care. You won't get that at home, will you? And look what happened last time... you fell over and broke your hip. At least you've got twenty-four-seven care, haven't you?

NORA

But I don't like it here, Tommy. I fucking hate it! I just want to go home.

TOM

Oh, it's not that bad, mum. You've got your own room and everything. Anyway, I'm taking you out for tea and cake. I'll go and fetch a wheelchair.

He turns to exit.

NORA

I'd offer you a cuppa tea, but I don't have any money.

TOM

You don't need money here, mum. Everything's paid for.

He exits.

Jackie enters.

JACKIE

(brightly)

Hello. As he gone to find you a wheelchair?

NORA

Yeah. He's taking me out. Are you coming?

JACKIE

Yes. I'm driving.

NORA

Well, I wont be needing a wheelchair then, will I?

JACKIE

It's entirely up to you. Will you be okay on your feet this time, then?

NORA

I can't see why not. It's my brain that's not working, not my feet.

Tom returns without a wheelchair.

TOM

They're just trying to find you one.

JACKIE

She won't be needing it. I'm gonna drive. It's not very nice outside.

TOM

OK. I'll let them know.

He goes off again. Nora gets to her feet and Jackie helps her put her coat on.

EXT/INT. CAFE - DAY

SEAGULLS command the skies as the whoosh of the waves from the sea crash against the rock face.

They sit at a table with a pot of tea and a plate of cream cakes.

JACKIE

Mum, do you remember Margery Clarke? She used to live next door to us at Moreland Court.

NORA

Yeah, I remember her. Slut! Your father was giving her one. Her old man left her for the postman's wife. That's what I heard anyway.

JACKIE

Oh well, I never knew that.

NORA

Well you wouldn't, would you? You were too young. You all were.

TOM

Why didn't you stop him?

NORA

Because while he was banging her,  
he was leaving me alone. I caught  
them at it. She forgot to lock the  
front door one day, and I walked in  
on them. Naked, the pair of 'em.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

A daintier, younger Nora 30s holds a plate of chicken roast  
and baked potatoes.

NORA

(calls out)  
Benny, dinner.

No answer.

LIVING ROOM.

She enters, only to find him not there, so she carries his  
dinner out.

BALCONY

She notices Margery's front door ajar.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Nora quietly opens the door with his roast dinner in hand.

Her POV: Margery writhes naked on top of him.

Nora gasps and chucks the plate of food over them.

NORA (CONT'D)

(appalled)  
You forgot your mains, you dirty  
pair of bastards!

She storms out in tears.

END FLASHBACK.

BACK TO SCENE

TOM

What happened after that?

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

BALCONY

During her rage Nora lobs his suits over the balcony. He bundles them up then drives off.

END FLASHBACK.

TOM

What happened next?

NORA

Well, she just left after that. No one saw hide nor hair of her.

JACKIE

Did you know she was pregnant?

NORA

No, of course I never knew that. How'd you know that? Have you seen her, then?

JACKIE

No. We were contacted by Ancestry.Com. She has a positive DNA match to us, but not you.

NORA

(reflects)

Come to think it, she did tell me she was pregnant. That was before I knew your father was giving it one. I thought it was Desi's. That's what she told me anyway. I even gave her my blessing.

JACKIE

After she left?

NORA

No, before she left.

TOM

Maybe that's why he left her, because he knew it wasn't his.

NORA

No, it wasn't that. They were always fighting and arguing. They were piss heads.

(MORE)

NORA (CONT'D)  
Your father even went in there to  
shut them up one night.

TOM  
(mortified)  
Christ!

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT/INT. MARGERY'S FLAT - NIGHT

Yells and screams can be heard coming from within. Lenny bangs on the front door with a hammer in hand.

DESI 30s short and balding, opens the door and throws a punch. Lenny ducks and smacks the hammer into his thigh.

Desi screams and falls and bangs his head.

Margery appears unsteady on her feet with a black eye and glass of gin in hand. She screams at the sight of her husband lying on the floor with blood dripping from a head wound.

MARGERY  
Benny, what have you done to him?

BENNY  
Stop screaming, you silly cow, and  
get a towel.

MARGERY  
He's bleeding.

BENNY  
He asked for it.

Benny gets up and exits.

END FLASHBACK.

TOM  
Did they call the police?

NORA  
I can't remember. It was too long  
ago.

A protracted silence as they eat and drink.

JACKIE  
Anyway, I thought I'd let you know  
we have a half sister.

NORA  
(dismissively)  
Do what you like. I don't care.  
(drinks)  
He still visits me, you know.

TOM  
Who does?

NORA  
Your father. I was only talking to him last night on the phone. He don't live with her any more though. He's got his own life. I'm not bothered. He never gave me anything when were together, except a black eye. We just have a chat now and then.

JACKIE  
(side eyed)  
Mum, he died ten years ago.

NORA  
(aback)  
Did he?

JACKIE  
Yes mum, he did.

NORA  
Well, no one told me. I never knew. Where was I?

JACKIE  
You were at his funeral. He died of cancer, remember?

NORA  
No. I don't believe you. He phoned me this morning. Told me he was coming over to take me out. He wants to get back with me. I'm not ready for all that again.

Jackie raises a knowing brow at Tom.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT.

Tom lies on his bed staring at Colleen's fair image on his tablet.

He finally makes the call.

INTERCUT: Phone conversation with Colleen and Tom.

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

Colleen sits on a sofa opposite a burning log fire. She has a glass of red in hand as she strokes her fluffy white cat.

Her phone lights up. She grabs it and puts it to ear.

TOM  
(apprehensively)  
Is that Colleen Clarke?

COLLEEN  
(aback)  
Yes. Who's this?

TOM  
You don't know me personally, but I  
received a message from  
Ancestry.com.

COLLEEN  
Are you Tom Lees?

TOM  
That's right.

COLLEEN  
I saw it.

TOM  
What do you know, exactly?

COLLEEN  
I know that you and Jackie are my  
half sister and brother. And that  
your dad is also my dad, according  
to DNA.

TOM  
Look, do you want to meet up and  
have a chat? You don't have to. I  
understand.

COLLEEN  
Sure. But your dad isn't really my  
dad, you know.

TOM  
Biologically, he is.

COLLEEN

Maybe, but my dad was a kind man. I loved my dad, and he loved me more than anything in his world.

TOM

When can we meet?

COLLEEN

Tomorrow?

TOM

OK.

COLLEEN

Just as long as you like dogs.

TOM

I do.

(pauses)

I'm in London.

COLLEEN

I know. Me too.

TOM

How about Victoria Park?

COLLEEN

OK. One O clock?

TOM

OK. See you there.

COLLEEN

Bye.

TOM

Bye.

END INTERCUT.

EXT. VICTORIA PARK BENCH - DAY

They are seated a couple feet from one another. She wears a red coat and woollen hat and scarf and has two poodles on a long leash.

COLLEEN

(dispassionately)

What d'you wanna discuss? There's not a lot we can say really is there?

(MORE)



COLLEEN (CONT'D)

(pauses)

I mean, your dad had an affair with my mum, and I'm the product of a quick fumble behind my dad's back.

TOM

I know. My dad was a waste of space. And by all accounts your dad had already left your mum at the time.

COLLEEN

I wasn't even born.

TOM

I was just a toddler m'self. My sister remembers more about it than me. You should talk to her. She wants to meet you.

COLLEEN

(shakes head)

What for?

TOM

She knows more.

COLLEEN

My mum died twenty-five years ago. I lived with my dad.

TOM

Sorry to hear that.

COLLEEN

She had cancer of the liver. She was an alcoholic. My dad said he left because he couldn't control her drinking habit.

(dispassionately)

Anyway, what made you take a DNA test?

TOM

It was my sister's idea. She bought me a kit for me birthday.

(reflects)

How about you?

COLLEEN

I'm into genealogy.

TOM

How do you feel about finding out  
that your dad wasn't you real dad?

COLLEEN

(angrily)

He was my dad... in my eyes.

(irked)

I'm just glad he never found out.  
It would've broken his heart like  
it has mine.

TOM

I'm sorry... on my dad's behalf.

COLLEEN

I was suicidal when I first found  
out. I spoke to my brother about  
it. He knew that your dad and my  
mum were at it. He wasn't going to  
tell me. But he had no choice when  
I asked him who you were.

TOM

(shocked)

Your brother knew about it?

COLLEEN

Yeah. He's the same age as your  
sister. When I told him about the  
DNA match he put two and two  
together. He reckons my dad found  
out and that's why he left.

TOM

I don't blame him.

COLLEEN

It's all so depressing. Your dad  
broke our hearts.

TOM

I'm in the same boat as you.

COLLEEN

Look, I better go. Don't contact me  
again - ever! It wouldn't be right.  
And I don't want anything bad to  
happen.

She gets to her feet and walks off with her dogs.

Tom sits deflated as he looks up at the rain clouds gathering  
in the sky.

Beat

EMERGENCY SIRENS.

He takes out his phone and makes a call.

LONG BLEEP.

TOM

(on phone)

It's me. When you get this message  
call back and I'll tell you how it  
went. But it wasn't pretty.

He ends the call then gets to his feet.

The blue lights of an AMBULANCE flicker in the distance.

FADE OUT.

THE END