

The Unlinked Tree

written by

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FADE IN:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

TOM LEES 55 lies on his bed reading messages on his iPhone as he listens to music from his tablet. A POP UP appears from ANCESTRY.COM.

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

He clicks the link.

CU: COLLEEN CLARKE 52 Blonde and blue eyed - unlinked tree. 1st cousin. Matched to Parent two.

TOM -  
That's dad's side.

He calls his elder sibling JACKIE 59.

INTERCUT:

Tom & Jackie. She's cooking at the stove when her phone rings on the table.

She moves to grab her phone.

JACKIE  
Hello Tommy. You alright?

TOM  
Alright Jack.

JACKIE  
I'm fine. Just cooking His Majesty's dinner.

TOM  
What is it tonight, then, Rib eyed eyed steak and mushrooms?

JACKIE  
He'll be lucky. It's sausage, egg, chips and beans.  
(chuckles inwardly)  
Anyway what do I owe this pleasure?

She carries the phone back to the frying pan and turns over the lightly sizzled sausages.

TOM

I just got an email from  
Ancestry. Com.

JACKIE

You have a new match? I get them  
all the time. Apparently we've  
got relatives in Australia, New  
Zealand, Canada and America, and  
even India.

TOM

Well, apparently I'm forty-three  
percent Irish. Twenty-seven  
percent English and the rest  
Northern Europe.

JACKIE

I could've told ya that.

TOM

Did you know about a Colleen  
Clarke, then?

JACKIE

I did. I got it last week. She's  
stunning.

(flushes eyelashes)

Looks a a bit like me, doesn't  
she?

TOM

That's what I thought. She's  
linked to dad, and she's not even  
related to anyone else in the  
family, yet she's a first cousin.

JACKIE

I know. I'm going to talk to mum  
about that tomorrow.

TOM

D' you think you should? It might  
upset her. Open a can of worms.

JACKIE

I always knew he was a  
philandering bastard, but never  
thought he would be the father of  
someone else's child.

TOM

What about the name Clarke,  
where's that come from, d'you  
think?

JACKIE

Iris. Our next door neighbour was  
Iris Rutherford. But her married  
name was Clarke.

TOM

You're fucking kiddin' me!

JACKIE

No, I'm not. She was a bike. He  
used to pop in there while her  
husband was at work. She had a  
son called Des. He was a right  
little fucker - excuse my bad  
language. He was named after him.

TOM

I can't believe mum stood for  
that?

JACKIE

She never had a lot of choice,  
Tommy. You know what he could be  
like when he had a bee in his  
bonnet. She always needed  
something fixing and would always  
knock on the door and ask for dad  
in her dressing gown.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

A long balcony consisting of eight flats.

EXT. BALCONY - NIGHT

Blonde bombshell IRIS opens her front door and looks down the  
balcony, before she knocks on the Lees front door in just a  
flimsy black negligee and heeled furry slippers.

LENNY LEES 30's opens the door bearing a huge grin and a  
brylcreem quiff.

IRIS

My cupboard drawer's broken. You  
couldn't screw it back in for me  
could you, Len?

LENNY

Certainly. No job too small,  
Iris. I'll be right with you sexy  
legs.

She giggles as she scurries back inside. He closes the door  
shut.

LENNY O.S

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

Door opens and he enters the flat next door clutching a  
screwdriver.

END FLASHBACK.

BACK TO SCENE

TOM

So she's our illegitimate sister,  
then?

JACKIE

DNA don't lie, Tommy. She's  
1,677cM's. That's a direct link,  
unless she's our grandmother or  
niece. And that's just not  
possible, is it?

TOM

No.

(scratches head)

Can I be there when you talk to  
her?

JACKIE

Of course. I'm going to see her  
tomorrow actually. But remember,  
her mind's not how it used to be.  
She's not as sharp any more. Her  
medication causes her to babble a  
lot. She goes off on a tangent  
soon as you mention the past.

TOM

Has her dementia got worse?

JACKIE

It has. It doesn't get better,  
Tommy.

TOM

OK. What time are you going to the care home, then?

JACKIE

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

TOM

I'll see you there.

JACKIE

Don't say anything until I get there.

TOM

I won't.

END INTERCUT.

INT. NORA'S ROOM - DAY

Irish dementia sufferer NORA 82, sits lost in a chair when her son Tom enters clutching a plastic shopping bag.

NORA

(delighted)

Tommy, is that you?

TOM

Yes, mum.

NORA

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

TOM

It's not been that long, mum. I've been really busy at work... with one thing after another. I'm sorry I couldn't come to see you sooner.

NORA

Did you bring any sweets?

TOM

As a matter of fact I did.

He gives her the bag containing soft sweets and chocolates.  
She takes them out.

TOM /

Here, let me open them for you.

He opens the bag of sweets.

NORA

(salivates)

Aw, marshmallows, my favourite.  
And jelly babies. Ah, you  
shouldn't have, Tommy. They must  
have cost you a bomb - look at  
all these sweets. Ah, you're so  
good to me.

TOM

Don't be silly. It's nothing.

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

NORA

(proudly)

This is my son.

CARER

(smiles at her)

I know it is, Nora.

NORA

He's come to see me.

CARER

That's nice.

NORA

And he brought me sweets. He's so  
generous.

She puts the laundry in the cupboard then exits.

NORA

(chewing)

So how's work? They keeping you  
busy, Tommy?

TOM

You can say that again. What about you? Are they keeping your brain active? Bingo and all that.

NORA

(snarls)

No. I hate it here. I want to go home. I want to go back to my house. I don't even know what I'm doing here, Tommy. I feel like a prisoner.

TOM

Haven't you made friends yet?

NORA

(upset)

No. I don't talk to nobody. They all look like death warmed up. I just want to go home, back to my house.

TOM

But this is your home now, mum. You need proper care, and you won't get that at home. Look what happened last time you fell and broke your hip, because there was nobody there to catch you when you fell. At least here you'll be looked after, twenty-four-seven.

NORA

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

TOM

Oh, it's not that bad, mum. You've got your own room and everything you want here. Anyway enough about that, I'm taking you out for a nice cup of tea and cake. I'll go and get you 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 is accounted for.

He exits, before Jackie enters.

JACKIE

Hi mum. As he gone to get you a  
wheelchair?

NORA

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

JACKIE

Yes. I'm driving.

NORA

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

JACKIE

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

NORA

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

Tom returns without a wheelchair.

TOM

They're just trying to find you  
one.

JACKIE

She wont be needing it now,  
Tommy. I'm gonna drive us there.  
The weather's not very nice.

TOM

I'll let them know.

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

EXT. 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 cakes.

JACKIE

Mum, do you remember Iris Clarke?  
She used to live next door to us  
in Shoreditch.

NORA

Yeah. She was a tart. Your father  
used to go in there when her old  
man left her for the postman's  
wife.

JACKIE

Oh, I didn't know that.

NORA

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

TOM

Why didn't you stop him, mum?

NORA

She was easy. I caught them at  
it. She forgot to lock the front  
door. I was calling him for his  
dinner.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

A prettier, younger Nora stands holding a plate of cooked  
food.

NORA

Lenny, your dinner's ready.

No answer so she takes it to the-

LIVING ROOM.

He's not there so she takes it to the-

BALCONY

She notices Iris's front door ajar, so she enters-

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Nora quietly opens the door with the plate of food in hand.  
Her POV: Iris writhes naked on Lenny as he squeezes her tits.  
Aghast she throws the plate of food over them.

NORA /  
You forgot your mains, you  
bastard!

She storms out in a fury.

END FLASHBACK.

BACK TO SCENE

TOM  
What did you do, mum?

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

During her rage Nora lobbs his clothes over the balcony.

NORA  
If you want her, she can cook and  
clean your filthy underwear.

END FLASHBACK.

BACK TO SCENE

TOM  
What did she do?

NORA  
She left. I never saw hide nor  
hair of her after that.

JACKIE  
Did you know she was pregnant  
with his baby?

NORA  
No! I never knew that. How'd you  
know that?

JACKIE  
Tommy and I were contacted by  
Ancestry. She has a positive DNA  
match to us, but not you.

NORA

Come to think it, she did tell me she was pregnant. That was before I knew your father was giving her one. I thought it was Des's. That's what she told me.

TOM

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

NORA

No, it wasn't. They were always fighting and arguing. They were a couple of piss heads. Your father even went in there with a saw in his hand.

TOM

(mortified)

Christ! Why'd he do that?

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT/INT. IRIS'S FLAT - NIGHT

Yells and screams can be heard as Lenny bangs on the front door with a SAW.

Des opens the door and throws a punch at him. Lenny ducks then slides the saw into his thigh.

Des screams and falls to the floor with blood pouring out of his thigh.

Iris appears with a black eye and glass of gin in hand. She screams at the sight of all the blood spatter.

LENNY

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

IRIS

What did you do to him, Lenny? There's blood everywhere.

LENNY

He asked for it. I'll call an ambulance.

He disappears inside his flat.

END FLASHBACK.

BACK TO SCENE

TOM

(mortified)

What a mess.

JACKIE

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

NORA

Do what you like. I don't care.

(drinks)

He still visits me you know.

TOM

Who does?

NORA

Your father. I was talking him last night. He don't live with me anymore though. He's got his own life now. I'm not bothered anyway. He never gave me anything when were together. I can live without him.

JACKIE

Mum, he died ten years ago.

NORA

Did he?

JACKIE

Yes mum.

NORA

No one told me. I never knew. Where was I?

JACKIE

You were at his funeral. He died of cancer.

NORA

No. I don't believe you. He phoned me this morning. Told me he was coming over for a chat.

A protracted silence among them. Jackie raises her eyebrows at Tom as she finishes her cake.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT.

Tom lies on his bed staring a photograph of Colleen.

He finally makes the call and connects with her.

INTERCUT:

She sits by a burning log fire at home.

TOM

(apprehensively)

Hi. Is that Colleen?

COLLEEN

Yes. Who is this?

TOM

You don't know me personally, but I received a message on Ancestry saying we're connected.

COLLEEN

Are you Tom Lees?

TOM

Yes.

COLLEEN

I know. I saw it too.

TOM

What do you know exactly?

COLLEEN

I know that you and Jackie, your sister are my half sister and brother.

TOM

Look, do you want to meet up and talk about it?

COLLEEN

Sure. But your dad wasn't my dad.

TOM

Biologically he was.

COLLEEN

My dad was a kind man. I loved him, and he loved me.

TOM

Look, when can we meet?

COLLEEN

Tomorrow, if you like. I'm not doing anything.

TOM

I know you're in London. I'm in East London.

COLLEEN

Me too.

TOM

What about Victoria Park?

COLLEEN

Yeah. OK. One O clock?

TOM

Yeah. 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.

TOM

So-?

COLLEEN

(dispassionately)

What d'you wanna discuss? There's not a lot we can say really is there? I mean, your dad and my mum had an affair and I was the product of that.

TOM

My dad was a shit. And by all accounts your dad had left your mum at the time it all happened.

COLLEEN

I had no idea. I wasn't even born.

TOM

Well, I was just a toddler to be honest. My sister remembers more about it. You should meet her.

COLLEEN

(shakes head)

What for?

TOM

Well-

COLLEEN

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

TOM

What did she die of?

COLLEEN

Cancer of the liver. She was an alcoholic. My dad said he couldn't control her.

(dispassionate pause)

Anyway, what made you take a DNA test?

TOM

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

(reflects)

What about you?

COLLEEN

I'm into genealogy. I'm interested in family tree's and all that.

TOM

How do you feel knowing your dad wasn't your dad?



COLLEEN

(angrily)

He was, in my eyes.

(irked)

I'm just happy he never found out  
I wasn't really his daughter. It  
would've broken him in two.

TOM

I'm sorry.

COLLEEN

I was suicidal when I found out  
from my brother that your dad and  
my mum had an affair.

TOM

Your brother knew?

COLLEEN

Yeah. When I told him about the  
DNA match he put two and two  
together. He reckons dad found  
out and that's why he left us  
with her.

TOM

How did he take it when you told  
him about us?

COLLEEN

Not good. He's upset.

TOM

I'm so sorry.

COLLEEN

You don't understand. He blames  
you.

TOM

(aback)

Blames me? Why?

COLLEEN

Because you're his son, I  
suppose.

TOM

Well, I can't help that.

COLLEEN

I know. It's all so depressing.  
But your dad broke our hearts.

TOM

I don't understand. I'm in the  
same boat as you.

COLLEEN

Look, I better go. Don't contact  
me again - ever!

She gets to her feet and walks off. Tom sits deflated as he  
looks up at the rain clouds gathering in the sky.

Beat.

EMERGENCY SIRENS.

He pulls out his phone and calls Jackie. He listens then  
speaks.

TOM

(sighs)

Alright Jack. It's me. When you  
get this message gives us a call  
back and I'll tell you how it all  
went. But it wasn't what I  
expected at all. Bye.

(ends call)

Shit!

He gets up and takes a slow stroll back towards his car.

His POV: A BODY floating face down in the lake. TWO PEOPLE in  
green and yellow high viz drag it towards the bank.

He looks on in deep shock as they try to resuscitate her when  
they attempt to pump the water from her lungs and give her  
mouth to mouth.

He turns away in horror when he realises it's Colleen  
confirmed dead by the PARAMEDIC who leans over her and shakes  
his head.

FADE OUT.

THE END

