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A Brother Born

by

Dan Weatherer

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

CEDRIC: *The father; late-fifties*

FRANCIS: *His oldest son; mid-thirties*

SAUL: *Late-twenties*

ANTHONY: *Late-teens*

SETTING

SCENE 1: A Pub house

SCENE 2: Anthony's home

SCENE 3: Cedric's hospital room

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SCENE 1

SETTING: *A Public House.*

AT RISE: *SAUL, dressed in a tracksuit and wearing a beanie hat, is seated at a small table. There are several empty pint glasses littering the table. He finishes his drink, belches, and places his empty glass with the others.*

ENTER CEDRIC in a denim jacket, T-shirt and dirty jeans. He is carrying two pints of lager.

There you go lad. CEDRIC

CEDRIC passes one of the pints to SAUL and takes a seat next to him.

Get that down yer Gregory Peck. CEDRIC

SAUL lifts his glass to meet CEDRIC's.

Cheers dad. I'll get the next round in. SAUL

Don't worry about that lad, I know how hard up you are. It's only money. CEDRIC

CEDRIC takes a sip of his pint. SAUL nods.

Besides which, I hate drinking on my own. CEDRIC

*SAUL takes a sip of his lager.
CEDRIC checks his watch.*

CEDRIC

Late as bloody usual. Never anytime for his family that one. It's always work, work, work with him.

SAUL

Yeah. He's always had it made has Francis. Coasting from one job into the next just because he went to university. He's got no idea how hard it is out there.

CEDRIC

You had much luck on the job front?

SAUL

No. Not really. I went for my review at the dole office this week though.

CEDRIC

Oh? How did it go?

SAUL

Shit. Same as ever. They wanted me to apply for a forklift job in Nuneaton. Said I could bus it there no problem. I'd have to bloody leave the house at five thirty every morning to get there for the half eight start!

CEDRIC

Bloody scandalous that! A man needs his kip!

SAUL

I said I ain't even got my forklift license, and I've no experience doing factory work. They made me apply anyway. I'd get sanctioned otherwise.

CEDRIC

I tell you, I don't know what's happened to this country of ours?

SAUL

I do. It's all them immigrants...

CEDRIC

(Interrupting)

Oh don't get me started on them again! I came out for a quiet drink. You know how talking about that gets my heckles up.

SAUL

Sorry Dad. Just a bloody waste of time is all.

SAUL

(Beat; reluctant)
I should never have come out.

CEDRIC places his arm on his son's shoulder.

CEDRIC

Now son, you weren't cut out for war, most men aren't, there's no shame in admitting that. Just because I served, and my father before, and his father before him...you've not discredited the family name. Them lads sounded like a right bunch of tossers. I don't want no son of mine taking a bullet for shits like that. You're better off out lad.

CEDRIC pats his son on the back and gives the back of his neck a playful squeeze.

CEDRIC

I don't want you overseas fighting a bunch of rag-heads anyway. Ain't no fight of ours! Better of out of it lad.

Enter FRANCIS carrying a solitary glass of wine. FRANCIS is well dressed/groomed.

SAUL

Oh aye, here he is! The Probable son.

FRANCIS takes a seat next to CEDRIC.

FRANCIS

You mean prodigal.

CEDRIC points to his watch.

CEDRIC

And what bloody time do you call this? We've been sat here ages!

FRANCIS looks at the empty glasses on the table.

FRANCIS

I can see that.

CEDRIC

You keep your punters waiting like this? I'd bloody hope not!

FRANCIS

(Sighing)

No dad.

SAUL

So what's your excuse today?

FRANCIS

I couldn't find the place, I've not been here before—

SAUL

That fancy car of yours not got sat-nav.

CEDRIC

(To SAUL)

Wouldn't surprise me if he had a bloke sat next to him directing from a bloody atlas, the amount he paid for that thing!

SAUL and CEDRIC laugh.

FRANCIS

I'm here now.

FRANCIS sits and takes a sip of his wine.

SAUL

So how's life in the justice system?

FRANCIS

I've told you before, I'm not that kind of solicitor.

SAUL

You go to court don't you?

FRANCIS

Sometimes.

SAUL

So what's the difference?

FRANCIS

(Sighing)

Well there's the Crown court—

CEDRIC

(Interrupting)

Enough shop talk. How are those grandkids of mine?

FRANCIS

They're good. Freddie is doing well at nursery and Eva is excelling at school.

CEDRIC

Good. Good.

FRANCIS

Of course, you could always make the effort to stop by and see them yourself?

CEDRIC

I will, I will. Y'know how it is and all? Time get away from you.

FRANCIS

Bookies keeping you busy then?

CEDRIC mock punches FRANCIS on the arm.

CEDRIC

Cheeky! *(To SAUL)* Always had a tongue on him, this one!

SAUL

Yeah. *(To FRANCIS)* Anyway, dads had a couple of big wins. *(To CEDRIC)* Haven't you?

CEDRIC

(Reluctantly)

I've done OK...nothing major.

FRANCIS

(To CEDRIC)

Don't worry yourself. I'm not about to ask for that money back. I said at the time, just as and when.

CEDRIC

I know, I know—and I will pay you back. It's just I've been off work a while and money has been tight.

FRANCIS
Why? What's the matter?

SAUL
Chest pains.

CEDRIC
(To SAUL)
Now lad, I told you not to burden him!

FRANCIS
(To CEDRIC)
Have you been to the doctors?

CEDRIC
Aye.

FRANCIS
(Beat; Impatient)
And what did they say?

CEDRIC
(Sighing)
Same as always, son. Slow it down, eat better and stay away from the geegees...and I will.

FRANCIS
When?

CEDRIC
Oh, come on now. You are starting to sound like your mother!

FRANCIS
Yeah, well you never took any notice then and look where that's gotten you.

SAUL
It wasn't his fault mam left him—

FRANCIS
He was having an affair! Of course it was his bloody fault!

CEDRIC
Well, if she didn't nag all the time then—

SAUL

(Interrupting)

See! She drove him away!

FRANCIS

You don't know what you are on about, you were just a kid. You didn't see what he put her through.

CEDRIC

Past is past boys, better to leave it be.

FRANCIS

I've heard that before.

SAUL

He said leave it be.

FRANCIS

(Beat)

So, when are you going to take the doctor's advice?

CEDRIC

Soon.

FRANCIS

When?

SAUL

Dammit Francis, he said soon!

FRANCIS

(To SAUL)

I wasn't asking you.

CEDRIC

(Angry)

Soon! Alright? Soon. I man has needs. You think it's fun living on my own at my age? I need a release now and then. Keep me sane. Keep me away from the grave.

SAUL

(Beat; softly)

Don't talk like that dad.

CEDRIC

It's true! Wait and see. When you get to my age, you gotta take the wins wherever you find them. Mark my words.

A brief moment of silence while all three take sips from their drinks and search for something to say.

FRANCIS

So...I take it I'm here because you finally told Saul? Can't think why else you'd request my company at such short notice?

SAUL

Told me what?

FRANCIS

(To CEDRIC)

Or you are going to?

SAUL

(Impatient)

Going to tell me what?

CEDRIC

(Annoyed; to SAUL)

Nothing lad. I just fancied a catch up with my boys, that's all.

FRANCIS

You said you'd speak to him about all of this.

CEDRIC

I did, yes, but now's not the time.

FRANCIS

There isn't ever going to be a time dad. You dropped this on me and frankly I'm tired of keeping it to myself. I've got questions, Saul will have questions. It's only fair you answer them yourself. You can forget leaving this mess for me to clear up after you pop your clogs!

CEDRIC

I wasn't gonna keep it that long—

SAUL

(Angry)

Tell me what? I'm sat right here! You always treat me like this, like I don't matter or I'm too stupid to be involved! I hate it...I always have!

CEDRIC

(Beat; calm)

Of course you matter Saul, but we don't need to go into this now.

FRANCIS

I think we do. I need too.

SAUL

Just spit it out dad, are you ill?

CEDRIC

(To FRANCIS)

You pushed this, Francis, remember that. I wanted to leave it until—

FRANCIS

You wanted to leave it like you left him you mean?

SAUL

Him?

CEDRIC turns towards SAUL. He appears weary and reluctant to speak.

CEDRIC

(Sighing)

I didn't want it to come out like this...but...You've got a brother son, another one. Younger. I'm not sure how old-

FRANCIS

(Interrupting)

He's seventeen.

CEDRIC turns towards FRANCIS.

CEDRIC

And how do you know how old he is?

FRANCIS

His name is Anthony, dad. It wouldn't kill you to use it.

CEDRIC

You've spoken to him, haven't you? I told you—

FRANCIS

(Angry)

You told me I have a brother out there and you expect me to just carry on as though nothing has changed?

CEDRIC

I told you not to look him up! I told you that some things were better left be.

FRANCIS

And why was that? Scared of what truths I'd uncover about you? I hate to shatter any illusions you may hold with regards to yourself, but I saw through you a long time ago. You've your faults as much as any of us have. Perhaps it's time you face up to them.

SAUL

(Beat)

Why are you telling me this now? Today? Why not before?

CEDRIC turns to SAUL. FRANCIS continues with his drink.

CEDRIC

Because it was my business son—

FRANCIS

(Interrupting)

Bullshit! It's all of our business if it's blood.

CEDRIC

And you were too young to understand.

SAUL

(Motioning towards FRANCIS)

How long has he known?

CEDRIC

Not long—

FRANCIS

A while. A year, perhaps.

SAUL

(To FRANCIS)

And you kept this from me all that time?

FRANCIS

He told me to, plus I needed time to get my head around it. I wanted to tell you, but not knowing how I felt about it all...I wasn't sure I could be there to support you. I was angry. I still am.

SAUL

(Beat)
Have you met him?

FRANCIS

No. Not yet.

SAUL

(To CEDRIC)
Have you? I mean like...did you ever take him out when he was little? Did you ever do the things you told us you were too busy to do...is that why you couldn't, because you were with him?

CEDRIC

No son.

FRANCIS

He's never met him. At least Anthony can't remember doing so.

Beat. SAUL stands.

SAUL

I need a drink.

*FRANCIS motions towards SAUL's
pint glass.*

FRANCIS

You've already got one.

SAUL

I need a real drink.

FRANCIS

Then I'll come with you.

FRANCIS motions to stand.

SAUL

I'll be OK, I'll bring you one back, if you want?

FRANCIS

No, I'm OK. I'm driving.

SAUL

Suit yourself.

EXIT SAUL.

CEDRIC

See what you've done now?

FRANCIS

What I've done? This was your secret. He had a right to know.

CEDRIC

I asked you for time, and you couldn't even give me that!

FRANCIS

I've given you plenty. You think this has been easy for me? I couldn't bury it like you did. I needed to know how he was doing. If he had a decent childhood. I needed to know he was OK without us.

CEDRIC

I didn't bury him.

FRANCIS

Looks to me like you did.

CEDRIC taps his head.

CEDRIC

Well you can't see in here can you lad? I thought about him every damn day. Sometimes only briefly, wondering what he was doing, if he was safe. Hoping he had someone in his life to give him what I couldn't. It eats you up if you let it. So I didn't.

CEDRIC

(Beat)

Did he ask after me?

FRANCIS

A little. He wanted to know where you were living. He's been trying to find you.

CEDRIC

(Panicked)

You didn't you tell him?

FRANCIS

(Annoyed)

No. Just that you were local. He wanted to know what you'd done with your life. So I told him.

A short conversation then? CEDRIC

Yeah. FRANCIS

(Beat) CEDRIC
How is Suzanna? She doing OK?

(Reluctant) FRANCIS
I...She passed away dad. I'm sorry, I assumed you knew?

(Sombre) CEDRIC
No. I didn't. I'd not kept tabs on her. When?

A few years ago. Cancer. FRANCIS

Oh. CEDRIC

(Beat) CEDRIC
So, he's with his step dad?

FRANCIS
No. She never married. He lives with her parents now.

I see. CEDRIC

(Beat) CEDRIC
Good that he has family though.

*FRANCIS glares at CEDRIC.
ENTER SAUL with a fresh drink.*

You OK? FRANCIS

SAUL nods.

SAUL
Is he?

CEDRIC
Yeah, don't worry about me, lad. Just remembering, that's all.

FRANCIS
You should have told us sooner.

SAUL
Yeah, you shoulda.

SAUL takes a large sip of his drink.

SAUL
You shoulda trusted us to work things out. Francis, I'm pissed at you too.

FRANCIS
I know. I'm sorry. I just needed to think it all through. Get my head around it all.

SAUL
And have you?

FRANCIS
No. Not yet. That's why I'm going to see him.

CEDRIC
You are?

SAUL
Do you think that's a good idea?

FRANCIS
I do, yes. If you want to see him, I'll give you his details.

SAUL
I don't. Not yet. I don't know him...it'd be weird.

FRANCIS
OK. I understand.

SAUL
But tell him about me, yeah?

FRANCIS
I will.

FRANCIS looks at CEDRIC.

FRANCIS

And you?

CEDRIC

I...I couldn't. It's been too long. I'm sure he's doing fine without me.

FRANCIS

Probably, but at least think about it.

CEDRIC finishes his drink and stands.

CEDRIC

I made my choice, rightly or wrongly, seventeen years ago. You are my family, you are my boys. Call me when it's all done with. Let me know he's doing OK.

CEDRIC pats SAUL on the shoulder.

CEDRIC

Oh, and regardless of what you think of me, your mother was always the one I loved. We just lost our way. People do sometimes. That's all.

FRANCIS

And Suzanna?

CEDRIC

Suzanna was a remarkable woman, God rest. See you around.

CEDRIC nods at FRANCIS and pats SAUL on the shoulder. EXIT CEDRIC.

FRANCIS

You OK?

SAUL

I dunno. It's a lot to take in.

FRANCIS

Yes. It is. Why do you think I didn't rush to tell you? I still don't know what to make of it all.

SAUL

Is that why you are going to see him?

FRANCIS

Anthony? Perhaps. I don't know. I feel somebody ought to, even if it's just to acknowledge his existence. Seems like the right thing to do.

SAUL

I suppose. I just can't yet. I will though, one day.

FRANCIS

I know.

SAUL

Is he really OK?

FRANCIS

Who dad? He will be. I just told him that Anthony's mum had passed. I thought he already knew. Regardless of what I think of the man, he obviously felt something for her once. I saw it in his face. She wasn't a one night stand or anything like that. Likely he had his own reasons for doing what he did.

SAUL

Do you think he chose us over them?

FRANCIS

I don't know. I don't think it's ever that simple. At least I hope it wouldn't be. Only he knows for sure. I'm not sure now is the best time to ask.

SAUL

OK.

SAUL

(Beat)

You know, I always thought it was just us two, brothers against the world. And now it's not.

FRANCIS

No.

SAUL

D'ya think he'll look like us?

FRANCIS

For his sake, I hope not.

SAUL laughs. FRANCIS finishes his drink and stands.

FRANCIS

Come on, I'll give you a lift home.

SAUL stands.

SAUL

You still shoulda told me. I'd have been OK.

FRANCIS

I know. Come here.

SAUL and FRANCIS hug.

FRANCIS

Promise me if you need to talk, you know where I am right? None of this macho "I'm going it alone" bullshit OK?

SAUL

OK.

FRANCIS and SAUL walk towards the exit.

SAUL

I do hope he's doing OK, Anthony, I mean. None of this is his fault. I kinda feel bad for him.

FRANCIS

I know. Me too. He's still just a kid really.

SAUL

Say Hi for me, yeah?

FRANCIS

I will, and I'm sure he's doing great. I'll let you know.

EXIT SAUL and FRANCIS.

BLACK OUT.

SCENE 2

SETTING: *The sparsely furnished living room in ANTHONY's home. Magazines, etc. litter the sofa. A photo sits on a table next to the sofa.*

AT RISE: *ENTER ANTHONY followed by FRANCIS. ANTHONY clears the sofa.*

ANTHONY

Grab a seat. You wanna drink or something?

FRANCIS takes a seat.

FRANCIS

No. Thank you, I'm good.

ANTHONY sits in the armchair. FRANCIS looks around at his surroundings.

FRANCIS

Nice place you have here.

ANTHONY

Thanks. My Nan is always on my case to keep it tidy. I do what I can y'know, but she'll always find something I missed.

FRANCIS picks up a picture from the table by the side of the sofa.

FRANCIS

Is this your mum?

ANTHONY

Yeah. When she was well.

FRANCIS

She's pretty.

FRANCIS places the photograph back onto the table. Beat.

FRANCIS, *Continued*

So, I'm guessing you have questions?

ANTHONY

Some. I dunno. I had a list, but I threw it away. Seemed kinda stupid at the time.

FRANCIS

You can ask anything, no matter how stupid you think it is.

ANTHONY

(Beat)

What's he like? Was he a good dad? Did he take you to watch football or anything like that?

FRANCIS

Well, that's not an easy question to answer. He hated football. He used to go as a youngster purely to get into fights. When they clamped down on that and made supporters actually watch the game, he quickly lost interest. So no, he didn't take us to see football.

ANTHONY

That's a shame. That's what I wanna do with my kid.

FRANCIS

You have a child?

ANTHONY

No. I meant when I'm older. I've got university to sort first, that and getting a girlfriend. I can't really be bothered with all of that at the moment though. Figure I'll have time for that later.

FRANCIS

You've your head screwed on. *(Joking)* You sure Cedric's your dad?

ANTHONY

(Matter of fact)

Yes. I'm sure.

FRANCIS

(Beat)

So, what do you want to study at University?

ANTHONY

Art. Hopefully, if my grades will get me in.

FRANCIS

Is that what you want to do? Be an artist?

ANTHONY

I dunno. Perhaps. I think there's too much pressure put on people my age to decide though. Who knows what they want to do with the rest of their lives at seventeen? Most of us don't even know what to do with the rest of the day!

FRANCIS smiles.

FRANCIS

True.

ANTHONY

(Beat)

So, tell me about him.

FRANCIS

I'm not sure what to say to be honest. He's old-fashioned, stubborn...his heart is in the right place—

ANTHONY

You think?

FRANCIS

Sorry. That must be hard to hear after what he did.

ANTHONY

It is.

ANTHONY

(Beat)

He could have looked us up y'know? Mum talked about him from time to time. I got the feeling they never sorted things properly. People are kinda stupid like that.

FRANCIS

He said he thought about you every day.

ANTHONY

That doesn't help.

FRANCIS

(Beat)

Saul say's hi.

ANTHONY

He's younger than you, right?

FRANCIS

Yeah, by four years. He'll want to meet you...he just needs a bit of time to get used to it all.

ANTHONY

OK. I get that.

FRANCIS

You'll like Saul. He's a bit of a loose cannon sometimes, but he's a good man.

ANTHONY

(Beat)

Crazy to think I've two half-brothers. Since mum died I've felt so alone.

FRANCIS

So, you've no one else? No other brothers or sisters?

ANTHONY

Not that I know of! Have I?

FRANCIS

No. Just Saul and I.

FRANCIS

(Beat)

So, is that why you tried to find your dad?

ANTHONY

I dunno. Maybe. It's not like I needed him or anything. My grandparents are great. I just...I just needed to find out where I came from, so that I could adjust. Sounds kinda stupid to you, I'm guessing. But for so many years it was just me and mum. Now that she's gone, I need to find my place in the world. I think it's important to know where you come from. I'd have looked to find him at some point. I guess this just hurried things along.

FRANCIS

I understand. As best I can anyway. I'll do what I can to support you. You are family.

ANTHONY

Thanks.

FRANCIS

My kids will want to meet their new uncle too.

ANTHONY

I'm an uncle?

FRANCIS

Yes, you are. To two of Hell's finest!

ANTHONY

I'll bet they aren't that bad!

FRANCIS

No, you're right. They aren't.

ANTHONY

I'd like that, to meet them I mean. Just not yet. That OK?

FRANCIS

Yeah, of course.

FRANCIS

(Beat)

There's something I need to inform you of.

ANTHONY

OK, may as well as the revelations keep on coming!

FRANCIS

Cedric...he's not well. He is in the hospital. Massive heart attack. We aren't sure how long he's got.

ANTHONY

Oh.

FRANCIS

It's why I insisted on seeing you so soon. I wouldn't be much of a man if I wasn't straight with you. I know this won't be easy, but if there's anything you want to know from him, you'll need to see him soon.

ANTHONY

OK. I-I don't know. I always thought I'd have time.

FRANCIS

We always think that we do, but we can never be certain of how much.

ANTHONY

(Beat)

I'll talk to my grandparents.

FRANCIS

OK. You've got my number. If you want to visit him, and you don't have to...I'm just telling you the situation as it is...then give me a call.

ANTHONY nods.

ANTHONY

OK.

FRANCIS stands.

FRANCIS

I'll get out of your way. You gonna be OK?

ANTHONY stands.

ANTHONY

Yeah. Yeah, I'll be OK.

ANTHONY leads FRANCIS towards the exit.

ANTHONY

I'll be in touch. Just let me talk it out with Nan, yeah?

FRANCIS

Of course.

The two share an awkward embrace.

FRANCIS

Remember, I'm only a phone call away, brother.

ANTHONY smiles.

ANTHONY

I will. Thanks.

*EXIT FRANCIS. ANTHONY returns to his seat and places his face into his hands. **BLACK OUT.***

SCENE 3

SETTING: *CEDRIC's hospital room.*

AT RISE: *CEDRIC is lying in the bed attached to an ECG watching television. The room is sparse. There are no cards or flowers. The steady rhythm of the ECG is audible throughout.*

ENTER ANTHONY.

CEDRIC

I think you've got the wrong room, fella.

ANTHONY approaches CEDRIC's bed and tentatively stands by his side. CEDRIC looks closely at the boy.

CEDRIC, *Continued*

You have your mother's eyes.

CEDRIC clicks off the television.

ANTHONY

She used to say I had your nose. I don't see it.

CEDRIC

No, well you wouldn't, I guess. *(Beat)* Pull up a chair—you are making me nervous hovering like that. Not sure if you are gonna hug me or smother me.

ANTHONY sits.

ANTHONY

I'm not gonna do either.

CEDRIC

OK. I'll rest easy then.

CEDRIC

(Beat)

Did Francis tell you I was here?

ANTHONY

Yeah, he did.

CEDRIC

Is he here? I could do with having a word with him. Dropping a surprise like this on a sick man.

ANTHONY

I came on my own.

CEDRIC

Oh. *(Beat)* Francis said you'd been looking for me?

ANTHONY

I had been, yes.

CEDRIC

Looks like you found me.

ANTHONY

Looks like it. You know, I had an idea, growing up, as to what you'd be like in my head. I think I needed that...to give you a face, a job, a personality...and now...

CEDRIC

I'm guessing this wasn't what you pictured?

ANTHONY

No. You had more hair.

They both smile.

CEDRIC

I don't know what to tell you kid.

ANTHONY

I don't know what to ask.

CEDRIC

(Beat)

Tell me about your mum, did she have a good run? Was she happy?

ANTHONY

She was. I think so anyway. She had a few men come and go. None really stuck around for long. Probably because she had me.

CEDRIC

They treat you OK? Did you ever want for anything?

ANTHONY

I never really got to know any of them. If you mean did we have money, we got by. You could have helped, but she never wanted to bother you about it. I hated that.

CEDRIC

What do you mean?

ANTHONY

She scraped together everything she could so that she could provide for me. She worked two jobs and some days I'd not see her. I wanted to help but I couldn't. The other dads at school, even if they weren't at home, they still helped out. Most of them anyway. You didn't.

CEDRIC

No. I didn't.

ANTHONY

I want to know why?

CEDRIC

I couldn't. Didn't seem right somehow. You weren't mine.

ANTHONY

I'm your son!

This is Not the End of the Play
Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes