

RENE MATIC: MANY RIVERS, CAPTIONS

00:14

So, I found a photograph in my early teens. It was a picture of me, and it was a black and white picture. And it said on the back, but it was all scribbled out on the back of the photograph, and it read, I find it, it read: This is a little boy called Paul. I haven't looked after him since he was six weeks old.

I'd already had Lulu with Nancy, and I went with Paul's mother, and we move, we move in in a room. We was going to get married. But in the 60s, the priest was prejudice. She was already pregnant and wanted a quick wedding, a quick marriage. In them days, the Irish, they don't believe in register office. The priest turned around and told us, You'll have to come in, you'll have to come in six weeks, six weeks on the trot on Sunday to church before we lift the ban.

I told her, Let's go and get married in register office, she said, No, I'm Catholic, I'm not allowed to.

Anyway, I said, I'm not going to church. Anyway, she changed her mind about register office. I said, No, you're bloody too late now. And that was it. While she was pregnant, she asked me, Will you take the baby for about a few months or more while she sorts herself out?

Then she had the baby, was trying to look after it. Nancy came at my window, and I said, We have to give the baby away.

00:02:44

Well, she said, bring her to Paul, I took Paul one day and she didn't have nowhere to stay. Well, we moved in with her mother for about a week or so, till we got a place by the seaside over a shop. And then she found out they made a mistake.

She went and got the place herself, and then when I moved in with her, they found out they made a mistake. Because I was black.

00:03:23

So they kicked you out.

00:03:25

Well, they didn't kick us out, but we had to leave, we had to leave. Then we moved from Benfleet to Southend, place where Alison was born. We moved from there to, to a hotel where Lulu and Tony. Tony was with us. When I split up with Nancy is when we got here.

00:03:53

She was threatening me with Paul, she never mentioned Lulu or Tony, she was threatening me with Paul.

00:04:01

Because Paul wasn't hers.

00:04:03

If you go, you've got to take Paul with you. So I had to bloody stay, I stayed till we moved here

and we. We moved to a couple of places. At the end, I had to go.

00:04:25

Nancy brought you up for a little while because she was threatening me.

00:04:29

No, she didn't bring me up. Dad, you weren't there, she didn't bring me up. I remember one day I had earache at the barracks. Because I couldn't swallow the pill, she dragged me off the top bunk and smashed me up. And then in Gunthorpe, because I wee'd the bed, she smashed me on all four walls in the bedroom.

You know, I had Afro when I was a kid. I cried because it hurt when she was combing my afro out. And she battered me with a brush. I had to walk to school, Fulby School, from the barracks on my own. I was only five, She battered me all the time.

You ask Tony.

I hated her.

00:05:14

You weren't hers.

00:05:14

You never mentioned she battered you.

00:05:16

Yeah, big time.

00:05:20

When she got married to Roy, she locked me in the bedroom. And Tony went to the wedding and Warren, and, you know.

00:05:29

She locked you in the bedroom.

00:05:33

I hate her.

00:05:34

Well I didn't bloody know anything about it. First time I've heard about it.

00:05:39

Why haven't you told him before?

00:05:45

'Cause I was the cute little black baby, yeah?
That's the only reason she took me on. I was watching this programme on TV and it was about a guy who wanted.. Who just found out his mother wasn't his real mother. And Nancy said to me, What would you do in that situation? Would you want to find your real mother?
And I said, yeah.
And she said, Well I'm not your real mother.
And that shocked me to the core.

00:06:20

I remember right back when we was little, I wasn't in the room, but this is going right back to when we lived at June Cottage's. My mum, I

could always hear my mum shouting at Paul, and she, I did hear her because Paul was a poorly baby. He had bronchitis and all things like that because his mum didn't look after him. And.. am I allowed to say this, edit it, if not? But when Paul was little, because he was such a poorly baby, he did wee the bed sometimes, and because he'd wee'd the bed, my mum, I could hear my mum having a go at him and hitting him upstairs, but I was downstairs. But you could hear it.

See, now we call it a dysfunctional family because of how things rolled. But all the children that were in our house, we don't call them like, because Tony is my mum's, but not my dad's. Paul's my dad's, but not my mum's. But you see, we didn't learn this, obviously, till later on. But we were always to me, and they still are, still my brothers. They're not half this and step this and stuff. You know, they're just my brothers because we've grown up with them, so we do no different.

00:08:18

I think your mother come and see you when you were seven.

00:08:20

Did she?

00:08:21

Your mother come and see you when you was at...

00:08:26

The Barracks?

00:08:28

At the Barr--, yeah. And then she come and see you when you was at..

00:08:32

Gunthorpe,

00:08:34

Gunthorpe.

00:08:34

Really?

00:08:36

I had a letter from my friend Carl in London. And he said, he asked me, he said your mother wanted my address, it was the same place where she been. She come once. He said your mother wanted my address and I asked Nancy. She said, No, don't send it to her. And that was it. I never heard from her again.

00:10:38

All I did was run away from home. I didn't want to be there. I used to, I didn't go to school. A great deal. I took Roy's mopeds one day, he had a moped. So I just went, took it away. What was I 14? 14 years old and got arrested for it. And I just got taken into care. I loved it. The girls were locked up, they were in padded cells. But we, we could do what we wanted. I had a great time. Just not being home.

I was never at home anyway. I used to go around like Reg's and Mark's and just stay, just stay away from where I live. I used to walk out of my

house in Welland Estate. I'd walk to town on my own with my blazer on, yeah? Yeah, and St.

Mary's flats in Peterborough. I used to walk up there, stop, stay at the top of the block of flats all day long. Then come back when school had finished. Just sat there all day long. Didn't want to go to school, hated it. No, I just used to go in, register and walk straight out.

Even in class, I would just say, Excuse me, sir or miss, just I'm going into the toilet. I'll be straight, I'll be gone.

00:12:00

And this is how nasty Roy was. Because we used to sit and watch Giant Haystacks on the telly on a Saturday afternoon, so he'd get us all having wrestling matches. He'd put us in pairs, he'd put us in pairs to fight. But then it used to get nasty because either the big ones are joining or Roy are joining, and he'd start getting nasty. So I used to think, is he just doing it so he can get back at us somehow?

00:12:38

Nancy had three white sons, okay? And then suddenly they all appeared in Mendip Grove. We had a three bedroom house there. there was myself, Tony, Lulu, Alison. Now we've got another three white brothers.

I'd go to bed and Nancy would come up and say, I've got to go. Your brother's been in trouble, meaning Warren, Okay? So he'd stabbed his own girlfriend at the age of 16. Somebody was dancing with his girlfriend at a disco. And he didn't mean to stab his girlfriend, he meant to stab the guy because he came home to Mendip Grove. Got a kitchen knife, went back to the disco and went to stab the chap who was dancing with his girlfriend, but got his girlfriend, Roxanne. He's an inch away from her heart. He got arrested and he went to Bristol, but when he came out. I just looked up to him, I never had anybody, Julian wasn't there. I didn't, you know..

00:13:45

He had the full skinhead clothes. Crombie, high leggers. Everything you can imagine. And I remember going to London Road to watch Peterborough, I can't remember who we were playing. Sat on the wall in front, listen. Back in the day, you know, Black people were abused at football grounds. I got sat. I remember the name of the guys, Chris Hughton, he would be probably about 70 now, Ashley Morris, I can remember their names. I was only nine. And there was fighting at London Road amongst themselves. Yeah, and just giving all that. And I got passed from the wall up everybody up to the back wall, so I wouldn't get hurt, right? I remember being in Peterborough town centre, the Black Marias. I don't know if you remember that well, you wouldn't remember the Black Marias, but they were police vans.

They arrested a load of hooligans in Cathedral Square. And my brother just opened the back door when he could. And all the skinheads. At

Walton School. I wasn't horrible, I bullied the bullies, Okay? But I became, you know, one of those that you don't fuck with me. Ever.

Because of the colour of my skin also, you know, like with Ian, who you're going to meet later. He was a member of the National Front, alright? Proper member.

I would be going off to Skeggie at the age of 18, jumping on the bus. They'd be on the bus with black bin liners with banners in, right. National Front, you know, blacks out and all that kind of stuff, all the skins and I'll be there little me. But, you know, looking back, I couldn't handle them, you know? But he's one of the nicest person you'd ever want to meet. I wasn't in their skinhead gang, I wouldn't, I couldn't be. Could I because I was black. I could with Mitchell. Mitch I could, because I knew him. I could because I knew him from Welland tate. Mitch was nine, I was about ten. Or no, I was eleven. You know, I was skin. I was your worst nightmare because my name was sprayed up in, the toilet block isn't

there anymore on Lincoln Road, but it was me they wanted. Everybody, wanted to fight me, everybody. I wouldn't say I was the hardest, but I just loved fighting.

00:16:16

It was rubbish. It was absolute crap growing up and we had each other. And it was like, you always had to make the best of a bad situation until you moved out. And when I moved out, I flippin' cheered.

I got on that bus and I thought, Where do I go? But my dad had a friend who and I was friends with her son as well. And I thought I'll go to Diane's. But I could only stay there a couple of days because she was on social and everything, and she weren't allowed to have extra people in her house and all that.

But she said, You know, Lulu, she said, I'll never turn you out, she said. There's always a meal for you on the table. So then I just started staying

round other people's houses, and then eventually, eventually me and my sister. We hung about on the square with suitcases until they gave us somewhere to stay.

And I don't know whether it was because I couldn't walk very well. But by the end of the day, they'd found us a little house. It weren't the best house in the world because it was on the worst street.

00:17:37

I left home when I was 15, you know? And I moved from Welland Estate to Julien's, my dad's yeah? And he, he didn't allow me. I was, I had my suitcase. I was like Paddington Bear, yeah? I took, I walked to Bourges Boulevard, you know? And I said, I've got nowhere to live. 15 years old. And he says, Well, you're not bloody well staying here. So I wandered off down the road again. Down Lincoln Road. And his girlfriend came out and she said, I've persuaded your dad to let you stay here. And when I went back, he said to me,

You do your won washing, your own ironing and if you get in trouble with the police, you're out.

When I was 18, I got that flat in Paston. I had to register myself and you have points, okay? You have points back in the day and you'd just keep, keep in touch with the Association, the Housing Association. And then that's when I got a flat, yeah. I took my bed from Julien's, right? And, the mattress, and he came back and got it, took it back.

00:18:59

I was renting my flat in Pilton close, okay. And then one of my friends from school had that bungalow in Ivy Grove. And then, so we swapped, as they do with the Council, things, yeah? The Association. He had my flat, I got that bungalow, yeah.

00:19:43

We only lived a few doors away, but. When I realised, I think the first time was when there

was loads of bottles that probably Alison didn't know about, that ended up in my dustbin. Load, you know, loads of wine bottles, et cetera. And he'd go, and and then he'd bring my dustbin back or bring the rubbish up to mine. Then all of a sudden I'd open the bin and there was loads of bottles in the bin. He's been to Ireland a lot and we think his mum lived there. If she's still alive, bless her. I'll say, bless her because you don't know. Or he may have siblings, they may live there, but I think it was possible. It was then because he couldn't get any answers from dad, but your mum did try to help him a lot. How many times did they go to Ireland looking?

00:21:03

I suppose it was, was it 1990? Around 1990, I think? Don't even know what the year was. Never even thought about that. But I had known of him for quite a long time, I used to see him around Peterborough. He was cool. I used to work at a dental practice on the third floor of Cathedral Square, right in the centre of

Peterborough, and every morning when I was setting up the dental practice, the dental surgery, he went into the Wimpy over the road. So I saw him every morning. And I just thought, Oh, he's so cool and handsome.

And then years later, probably about six or seven years later, maybe longer, I bumped into him in Peterborough and that's kind of how we kicked off, I suppose. Everybody tried to help Paul, there's something about him that makes you want to fix him and want to make it okay. Because to see anybody suffering, let alone someone that you love, suffering like he did, and does you want to do what you can to make it better? And part of his issue was that he didn't know his mother. He felt we'd been abandoned, he felt we'd been abandoned on lots of different levels.

But yeah, you know, we went to Dublin, got the yellow pages, not the yellow pages. The phone book tried to find all the Cahills, but obviously,

you know, it was trying to find a needle in a haystack. And I don't know actually what he would have done if he'd found her, to be honest.

00:22:57

I'd probably ask her why she abandoned me. I started to look for her when I was about 15 or 16. Well I went to, cause I, the social services, I went to them first. And they couldn't find anything. Also, I went in touch with the Salvation Army because I was born out of wedlock. They wouldn't search for her.

Yeah, I tried to commit suicide, yeah. Everything cropped up, you know, and then I got Julien coming around, you know, when I came out of Addenbrooke's. And I just went upstairs. I don't want to see him. I understand why is he around here now? When he'd never been in my life. Goodness sake, you know. Why?