

I Wish I Was An Only Child – Keith and Frank Skinner

[Guitar and flute music]

[Birds chirping]

RACHEL MASON: Welcome to I Wish I Was An Only Child, with me, Rachel –

CATHY MASON: And me, Cathy.

RACHEL: And this week our guests are Frank Skinner and his brother, Keith.

CATHY: Frank's my partner and the father – [laughs] my baby daddy.

RACHEL: We recorded this in person, not during lockdown. So don't be alarmed. We were all sat together, which was – I can't believe I was going to say, 'which was nice!'

CATHY: [laughs] I was absolutely terrified. It was the first one we'd done – I have never been so frightened. We got biscuits.

RACHEL: An empty pub.

CATHY: It was lovely, though. Because it was all snowy outside and Keith is so lovely.

RACHEL: Can I just say it wasn't snowing.

CATHY: It was! It definitely was. I'll bet you a million pounds. Ask Frank.

RACHEL: Okay.

CATHY: We always have a bust-up before. Because Rachel has – we have a list of questions we’ll do, and Rachel – always says they’re shit, and she’ll come in with some really naff questions and say, ‘can we change it do, “do you have a piano?”’ And I’m like, ‘how’s that going to bring anything out of them?’ And that’s how Rachel rolls.

RACHEL: So this is the last episode of the first series, and we’ll be back in March for series two.

CATHY: Oh!

RACHEL: Yes.

[Flute sounds]

CATHY: We’re the Mason sisters, um, two sisters. I’m the eldest sister. This is the youngest one, Rachel.

RACHEL: I’m the youngest sister.

CATHY: And we are in the Robin Pub in Cape Hill in the Black Country. Which is a very typical, uh, pub of the Black Country, I believe. It’s um... we’re in the back room. There is a microwave box on the floor for some reason. There’s lots of plastic, uh, covers on the tables. And we are sitting here waiting to talk to Frank Skinner and his brother Keith.

RACHEL: Who are actually in the background. They’re the only two customers in the pub at the moment. Um, but they’re going

to be coming through to talk to us, um, about their relationship. Because we – Cath and I have worked together for a number of years. We used to work at Channel 4 and then we were comedy agents for many years. And we – people always ask us what it's like working together. How do we do it? Some people say, 'oh, I could never work with my sibling, bla bla bla.' And we just want to explore other siblings' relationships and see how – how it works and feels for them. So it's an area we're really interested in and we hope you might be interested in it. So, uh –

CATHY: And I think they're just on their way in now.

RACHEL: Yep, so good luck to us. It's our first podcast. Here we go!

FRANK SKINNER: Birmingham, not the song. Anyway, are we – what are we feeling?

RACHEL: Are we – can we start?

CATHY: Should we do it?

RACHEL: Yeah.

CATHY: Right.

RACHEL: Let's go.

CATHY: So, um, I'm going to start with, who's the funniest?

KEITH: [laughs] Well, he gets paid for it.

FRANK: Yes.

KEITH: I'm definitely the funniest but he gets paid for it. That's why I'm funny. Because I'm stupid because I ain't getting paid for it.

FRANK: Keith – Keith is a very, uh, is a very funny man, I think. And um, I think if I'd been the oldest brother and had gone off and become a professional comedian, then Keith would've probably followed in my footsteps. But um –

CATHY: Really?

FRANK: Yeah. But he'd already committed to a life of gambling and drink by that stage.

KEITH: Yeah, I couldn't travel, you see, because I don't drive. Because when I was young, on the television all the time, you got, 'don't drink and drive.' And I thought you had to do one or the other. So I thought, 'well, yeah, I'll – I'll drink then.'

FRANK: To be fair to you, you've stuck to that.

KEITH: I certainly have, I'll tell you that now.

FRANK: Yeah, but I do think that. I think, uh, Keith was always, uh, the funny one, I think. When I was a kid. He was the one who used to make my dad laugh a lot and stuff like that.

CATHY: So do you think that you were trying to make him laugh? Because he was your big brother who was funny?

FRANK: I think that, um, me and Keith are probably the most similar of – there are four of us. We've got an older sister called Nora, and then an older brother called Terry.

RACHEL: And there are seven years between you.

FRANK: Seven years between me and Keith.

RACHEL: Yeah.

FRANK: And five years between the others. So there's quite big gaps, you know, in our family. I think – I don't know quite why that happened.

KEITH: I think – is the television man – the television detective – I know he'd come around every five years I think.

FRANK: Yeah so he'd turn the telly off every summer. Um, so um, although we – we were – it's a big gap, isn't it? Seven years.

KEITH: I think that's why you don't get any sibling rivalry. Because you're trying to develop when you're younger, in your adolescence and when you're a teenager. But we were in different groups. Because when I was seventeen he was ten. So we weren't mixing in the same groups. I couldn't take a ten year old to the pub even around here.

CATHY: But weren't you sharing a bed with him?

KEITH: Yeah, actually.

CATHY: How does that – how did –

KEITH: Uh, we only got – we only got three bedrooms.

CATHY: I know, but as if he was five and you were – I can't do the maths – twelve?

RACHEL: Twelve.

CATHY: That's a nightmare.

FRANK: Well, because I mean this was normal procedure. You had a three bedroom council house and people usually had, you know, a few kids. So the chance you got boys and girls would be quite high. And so the girls had one room and the boys had the other. In our – because we were 3:1 to the boys, we started off in the same – in a double bed, didn't we? And then we got promoted to bunks I remember, me and Keith.

KEITH: Yeah.

FRANK: And Terry, who was our oldest one, he had his own bed in the same room.

RACHEL: Until what age?

FRANK: Well I'll tell you they were definitely of drinking age. Because I remember, um...

KEITH: Bucket in the bedroom?

FRANK: Well you – yeah, we always had the bucket in the bedroom. Because we had an outside toilet.

CATHY: Obviously I think that's the most disgusting thing I've ever heard.

FRANK: Yeah, well, stick around. We're early on in the podcast at this stage.

CATHY: Nice.

FRANK: Um, Keith came in, um, drunk. And um, was sick in the bucket, I think. And I think Terry might have also been sick in the bucket. And I was – this – the atmosphere from all of this, the spores in the air, I was then sick as well. And there was certainly – they were different times. Everybody drank as soon as they got to about fifteen or sixteen. But I think that's generally true everywhere, isn't it? The three of us as brothers, because five years between Terry and Keith and seven years between me and Keith, I don't remember us ever going anywhere, really, as a trio.

KEITH: Really until we were in our 20s. That's when like we started mixing in the same company, weren't it really? Because I was 27, he was 20. Like, you know. So it seems a lot closer.

RACHEL: You, Frank, would ask Keith for advice. I know you asked him about Annette?

FRANK: I told him that I was, uh, in love with this girl at school. I mean I was literally like six. And I said, 'I think I've fallen in love with this girl, Annette.' And um, I think you just laughed at me. Told me not to talk so stupid. So thanks for that.

RACHEL: So you weren't really the advice, on the older brother advice.

FRANK: Yeah. Yeah. Bad news for Annette. She could be living the life that I live now.

[Flute sounds]

KEITH: I dare say if we'd been rich, we'd have been termed as eccentric. Because we were poor we were termed as weird.

FRANK: Yes.

CATHY: Really?

KEITH: My mother once, uh, every Saturday she used to go up to West Bromwich, shopping. And my dad said, 'you're catching the bus up there and you're catching it back. Why don't you get a return ticket?' So my mum says, 'well, why's that?' 'Because it's cheaper.' So anyway, she always used to be back about 1:00. So about half past one, my dad's going, 'where has she gone to?' Here comes 2:00 and Mum comes in. He said, 'where have you been to?' She said, 'don't you start. That blinking return ticket. I had to wait an extra $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour for that driver to come back.'

CATHY: Oh no!

KEITH: Yeah. And when she – same as when she had her bus pass. And she'd never been in a photo booth before. And she stood up.

FRANK: Oh, yeah.

KEITH: And she only had that much. And they're like, no head. Just – her head was cut off so she only had her chest area and whatnot.

CATHY: Oh no.

FRANK: It was a picture of her mac.

KEITH: Yeah. And Dad says, uh... Dad says, 'you can't use that. The driver's got to recognise you.' She said, 'sure, I'll just wear the same coat.'

CATHY: Oh no.

FRANK: That was something I remember about our childhood. Is that people did always wear the same clothes. You didn't use to say, 'you know, Dave, he's that tall bloke with the blonde hair.' You'd say, 'you know Dave, brown leather jacket with a –' Because people wore – they wore the same stuff until it fell apart.

[Flute sounds]

FRANK: We were, I suppose, officially poor.

KEITH: Yeah.

FRANK: But I never really had a sense of missing out massively.

KEITH: No.

FRANK: Because I didn't know anyone who wasn't like we were.

KEITH: Well, I did. I used to go to school with someone and their father owned an engineering business. He drove a DB5 car and everything else. And he said, 'what did you have for Christmas?' I said, 'well, I had a Scalextrix, I had a Dundee space station, I had a –' and I went through this list. I said, 'what did you have?' He said, 'a dinky toy.' So you see, because we were poor, we sort of put the emphasis on Christmas and so we had loads of stuff. It might take 12 months to buy for it, but we used to have a lot of stuff.

FRANK: Yeah, we had a – do you remember Mr. Butler?

KEITH: Oh yeah.

FRANK: We had a moneylender bloke, who honestly was like – he always got paid, Butler, no matter what.

KEITH: Yeah, yeah.

FRANK: Because I – he was this sort of – you could imagine – he was quite a menacing figure. And I don't know what his interest rates were because I didn't know what interest rates were then. But my mum used to borrow money from him. I think for Christmas. And then pay it off across the year. But he did look like a bloke that if you didn't pay him, other men might turn up and do damage.

KEITH: Yeah.

FRANK: What I sort of want to say, but it's so corny, is that we had, um, a lot of love.

KEITH: Yeah.

FRANK: And that was, um, why it didn't really matter about the – the money so much.

CATHY: But did – did Frank feel like an irritating – I mean, from – from the book, he seemed to be a kind of out of control, irritating prankster. And you – it felt like you were a bit calmer and a bit more mature.

KEITH: No, it didn't really work like that, did it? It was – it was –

FRANK: You see Keith was always a sort of an alternative character. The bands that Keith was into when he was a teenager were people like Blodwyn Pig and The Pretty Things.

CATHY: So you're cool?

FRANK: And then it got weird. Really weird stuff. And I remember Keith was one of the first blokes to have long hair in our road. And when I got confirmed, because for a Catholic family, when you did Confirmation, which is this thing that says you're sort of a mature Catholic, when you're about 10 or 11, you had to have a sponsor. So an adult goes up to the altar with you. And so a lot of people have their brothers and that. And Keith had got like this suit on that was like a sort of, uh, Victorian gentleman suit. He'd got hair down on his shoulders. And at school the following week, everyone was saying to me, 'guys, is he – is he a pop star, your brother? Was he in –'

CATHY: So he was a really cool older brother.

FRANK: You were in a band for a bit, weren't you?

KEITH: I was, yeah. The Rocking –

FRANK: Was it called – was it the Rocking – Swinging Blues?

KEITH: Rocking Blues.

FRANK: The Rocking Blues.

KEITH: Yeah.

FRANK: Not the most generic pop group name.

KEITH: Well, we had used to sing, uh, the Rocking Blues and the Swinging Blues. Those songs – that's what it was.

FRANK: Okay.

CATHY: But you – you love weird music. And – and you – I'm guessing got your Elvis obsession from Keith.

FRANK: No, I got my Elvis obsession from my older brother.

CATHY: Ah.

FRANK: With Keith it was weird, long hair – Keith had posters on his wall of bands who had so much hair on them, facially and on their head, that you couldn't tell where one band member stopped and the next one started. They were just people looking through a wall of hair.

CATHY: Yeah, but you still really like that weird shit.

RACHEL: Keith was a strong influence in terms of –

FRANK: Well, Keith was certainly the most alternative. Keith had a – see, I'm talking about you like you're not here –

KEITH: No, it's alright. Don't worry. I'm learning a lot about myself.

FRANK: This'll work out well as a memorial.

KEITH: Yeah.

FRANK: On Keith's wall – I don't know if you remember this – he had a big piece of wallpaper. Massive piece of wallpaper that reversed around. And he'd painted on it a massive nuclear –

KEITH: Mushroom cloud.

FRANK: And painted 'Ban the Bomb'. And the rest of the family, I think, were relatively straight in their tastes and interests. But Keith, you know, was into CND and –

CATHY: But did they – did the rest of the family embrace you? Or did they –

KEITH: Yeah, not far from it. I've been a trade unionist all my life. I think now – just about 50 years this year as a shop steward in everywhere I've worked. And my dad was like a working class Tory.

FRANK: Tory, yeah.

KEITH: His idea was you can't beg off the beggars. But he didn't realise we were beggars because the Tories were holding onto everything.

FRANK: That's what he'd say. That was his thing. If you beg off a beggar, you'll never be rich. And that was his excuse.

KEITH: And so we used to get in some political arguments, like you know, or debates more than arguments.

FRANK: No, arguments.

KEITH: But I've always – I mean, I've always been a socialist and always been politically more –

CATHY: So where was Terry? Was Terry sort of with the family or was he with you?

KEITH: Well, Terry got married and he said –

FRANK: Yeah, Terry got – Terry got married. I mean we all got married quite young, looking back. But um, yeah. I don't remember Terry having any political views. Um, Keith certainly did. I can still remember Keith on the telly. Literally – and this is what I always think of industrial action in the 70s – Keith was standing on one of those braziers saying, 'the man has gone too far, brought this on themselves' and all that sort of stuff.

KEITH: It was actually – it was barricades as well. We'd got British Leyland and we'd actually got scaffolding poles and barbed wire. And that stopped – they were building the new area of Leyland. And we'd go and dispute. So we'd stop the building workers going in. And the television and – had all of this, you know, stopping the building workers, stopping blokes working and that.

But they didn't realise that the building union – the blokes that were working on it – had dropped us these scaffolding poles and the barbed wire off in the morning. Because it was about four inches and if they'd had gone in, they would've been on wet time, half of their money and they'd gotten sent home. But by not loosening them in, they got full money.

RACHEL: Was that when you got – you got arrested?

KEITH: I got kicked over once on a – on a CND protest. But uh –

FRANK: But in a less political way. It was a headline in the paper, which was ‘youths swarm like locusts.’ And Keith was halfway up a lamppost pointing directions about where the others – where, you know, where to attack next. And a bloke grabbed his leg, and you kicked out and kicked the bloke in the head. The head had got a helmet on it. But you know, that is not representative of who Keith is.

CATHY: Was he like a hero to you?

FRANK: Do you know what? I don’t – I think the older brother, Terry, was the one who I remember seeing as this heroic figure. Because he was a bit more distant. Me and Keith were just about close enough to have the odd falling out.

KEITH: Yeah.

FRANK: But now when I look back, I think Keith’s influence was a lot more. Certainly in that sort of alternative view of life.

CATHY: Terry was much more conventional. Went down the conventional route.

FRANK: Yeah, I mean Terry’s an interesting man. But um, like I said, Terry was out more. Although we had this seven year gap, it meant at least he – Keith was around more for my youth. And um, when we got a bit older, then we hung around – me and Keith were the two that hung around quite a lot.

RACHEL: There must have been some alcoholic adventures.

FRANK: I remember walking into the café at the top of – where the new shops were, at the top of our road.

KEITH: Yeah.

FRANK: And Keith had got a herringbone overcoat on. And I said, uh, I was just meeting him for a cup of tea. And I said, uh, 'oh, I like that.' He said, 'oh, here you are.' Took it off and gave it to me.

CATHY: Aw.

FRANK: And Keith – the thing that my dad always said about Keith is that Keith would give you his last ha'penny. And he's still like that now. When I think – when I look back at my childhood, the programmes I remember watching, like 'The Prisoner' and 'Monty Python', and that, um, Anthony Newley thing about that world of Gurney Slade

KEITH: Yeah.

FRANK: I was a kid watching weird, strange alternative telly. And, uh, you know, you sort of think the working class is a quite straight – and the middle class is doing all the things. And I think Keith brought a lot of interesting ideas in – into the home. For example, your shampoo was a – was a revelation.

KEITH: Oh, that – do you know what? That was out of, uh, I think it was the Mirabel, I think it was called. It was a magazine at the time for – all about pop. And Brian Jones, uh, apparently washed his hair in 1001 carpet shampoo.

CATHY: Oh no.

KEITH: And I always thought, 'that looks good, that does.' So I washed my hair in 1001 carpet shampoo.

FRANK: For years.

KEITH: For years.

RACHEL: For years? Really?

KEITH: Yeah. And I still got nearly all my hair, so.

FRANK: It's true. It's a great advert for – um, I don't think it exists anymore, does it? 1001.

KEITH: I don't think so.

FRANK: You could tell how old it was. The – the advert used to say, '1001 cleans a big, big carpet for less than half a crown.'

KEITH: 'Half a crown.' That was it. And I'll tell you what, I got a few hair washes out of that.

[Flute sounds]

FRANK: We were a bit slack on all that stuff.

CATHY: You were filthy.

FRANK: Well we didn't like – this idea of people bathing everyday was a bizarre –

KEITH: It was – I mean, we'd got a weird set-up in, uh, in this council house, really. Because it was such that the bathroom didn't really exist. It was just –

FRANK: We had a bath, but it was in the same room as the – as the cooker.

KEITH: So you could have breakfast – breakfast in bath, you know, or breakfast in bed.

FRANK: And the room was lit by a gas pipe, which was a pipe that stuck out from the wall. And you lit it and there was just a [blowing sound] big flying – shot out the end of it. And that's how we lit the room. So it was like a – being lit by, uh, a Bunsen burner, you know, turned up to maximum.

CATHY: And obviously you had very flammable hair.

KEITH: No, actually there weren't many carpets catching fire with 1001.

CATHY: Maybe it was, yeah.

FRANK: He had quite a thick pile in those days, if you'll pardon the expression.

CATHY: Okay.

FRANK: Because we didn't have central heating, you had to put a coal fire on to – to get the water hot.

KEITH: Yeah.

FRANK: But you don't want a coal fire on in the summer, so we didn't bathe at all in the summer, I don't think.

CATHY: Which is the time you need to bathe.

KEITH: We used to go out in the rain in the summer. That was the only way.

FRANK: There was a lot of stuff in the bath as well. Newspapers and clothes and stuff. We used the bath, but we used it for storage.

CATHY: Did you two fight? Or were you jealous of each other?

FRANK: I remember I threw a brick at, uh, you. You were with your girlfriend and I threw a brick at you.

KEITH: Yeah.

FRANK: And Keith chased me. And he – I ran up the garden. But I jumped over the fence, and Keith jumped over. Luckily next-door's garden had not seen any sort of gardening attention in all its existence. The grass next door was what, three feet high?

KEITH: Yeah, I mean you was always worried what kind of wild animal might come after you.

FRANK: Literally, so you could – my dad was a meticulous – our dad was a meticulous gardener. So we jumped – we jumped, basically, from a garden into a wilderness. But I remember Keith caught me and sort of held me on the ground. And then he didn't do anything. So I don't think he had the heart to actually slap me or anything.

[Flute sounds]

[Music playing, singing 'Here to judge. Here to judge.']

PRIYA HALL: Hello! Here to Judge is a new weekly podcast from Little Wander where we dismantle predicaments posted online.

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PRIYA: I'm an adult. And I'm reading this aloud. Join me, Priya Hall.

ROBIN: Me, Robin Morgan.

LEILA: And me, Leila Navabi. Subscribe to Here to Judge now on Apple, Spotify, or wherever you get your podcasts.

[Music stops]

LEILA: I love this podcast so much.

[Flute sounds]

FRANK: Our mum was a very mild mannered, very very loving, caring person. I mean, her life was her kids. Everything went into that. And my dad was also loving, but he was loving in a – in a tough love kind of a way.

KEITH: Yeah.

FRANK: And he was an extremely colourful character. Drinker, singer. He liked comedy as well. He used to always mess about. But, um, how would we describe him? Volatile?

KEITH: No, I'd call him extremely volatile.

[All laugh]

RACHEL: Because I was interested in the two – your different perspectives on your mum and dad.

FRANK: Well, I think we'd probably agree on Mum.

KEITH: Yeah.

FRANK: Mum had got a dry sense of humour that you didn't always see.

KEITH: And Mum would – Mum would give anything away.

FRANK: A friend of mine, his Mum had got herself into terrible debt. And Mum loaned her, I think it was £40 to get out of it. £40 then!

RACHEL: That's a lot.

FRANK: And I had no idea where Mum had got the money. I think she might have borrowed it or whatever. But she loaned it to this person, and that's what she was like. When I hold our child's hand, Cath, I always think of when I held my mum's hand. When my mum was dying, I kissed her one last time. And the feel of her

soft face against mine – I – summed up for me love, security, feeling safe. That feeling. I mean, that totally. Now our dad was like a rock.

KEITH: Yeah.

FRANK: You felt safe because if anyone challenged us he's likely to break their necks.

KEITH: I remember once he – somebody stopped and asked him if he'd got a light on the way back from the pub. 'Mate, have you got a light?' And he hit him and knocked him over the blinking fence.

CATHY: No.

KEITH: He said, 'that's the way they mug you,' he said. 'Both of you have got your hands in your pockets.'

FRANK: I remember him coming with his hands all bashed up. And he said, uh, yeah, he said, uh, 'I'm not falling for that one.' He said, 'that's how they have your bait.' He said, 'when we worked down the pit they used to nick your bait on the way' – your lunch. I said, 'yeah, that was 50 years ago in a different part of the country.' But the bloke might have been, you know. We don't know. He – he could be, um, he was capable of, uh, violence. Very, very rarely against us.

KEITH: Oh no, no, you might get a slap for misbehaving.

FRANK: You might get a slap. But people do get slapped.

RACHEL: But you always felt safe. You felt safe.

FRANK: Well, he had an argument with a neighbour once. My dad was fixing a shed and the neighbour came out. I think this might have been after you left home. And he said, uh, 'oh, what are you doing banging about on a Sunday?' The neighbour said. And I thought, 'oh, please. Please don't say anything.'

So my dad jumped off the roof of the shed into the bloke's garden. And said to the bloke, 'what about your dog? Your dog's barking every day of the week. I don't come around and complain about it.' And the bloke said, 'yeah, well if you did you'd go back quicker than you came.' And I thought, 'please, please don't say that.' And he said, 'the next time I hear that dog bark', he said, 'I'll grab his front legs and pull him apart till its head bursts.' And I thought, 'woh, this is like Shakespeare.' And you know, he was – yeah, he was – he was a very, um, violent man in that respect.

RACHEL: You had dogs? You always had dogs, didn't you?

KEITH: Yeah.

RACHEL: Did you always have dogs in the house?

FRANK: Yeah, we had a three legged cat as well, do you remember that?

KEITH: Well, that was actually next door's cat which sort of adopted us.

FRANK: Oh, was he?

KEITH: This cat had gone out on a winter's night within reason, because he'd been very cold, really. And he'd gotten frostbite in

his leg. And its leg came off. You know, through frostbite. So they got a peg. You know the peg you put on the line? The old dolly pegs, they used to call them, because they've got a slit in the middle.

FRANK: A wooden clothes peg.

KEITH: Yeah, that tied around it so the cat had got a wooden leg.

CATHY: Aw, that's really sweet.

FRANK: It literally had a peg leg.

RACHEL: A peg leg.

CATHY: That's really sweet.

KEITH: But you could always tell. Because you had to change it every now and then because the cat would start going a bit lopsided and he'd start walking in the gutters so the other leg matched. But uh, yeah, and they used to replace the leg.

FRANK: Oh, that was next-door's cat, was it? I just remember –

KEITH: Yeah.

RACHEL: You thought it was yours?

KEITH: Mrs. Weston's.

FRANK: Well, he was in our garden so much, I – I didn't –

KEITH: Well, he was scared to go in their garden, as we just said. It was like going into the fucking jungles.

FRANK: Yeah, exactly.

CATHY: Was that the neighbour who had the frozen poo in the pans?

FRANK: Yeah, Ernie. Ernie next door.

KEITH: He didn't throw – he threw his long johns out the window. And they were frozen on the lawn. I mean, it was – it's very hard. When I talk – I don't know if you get this, but when I talk to people about our childhood, they think we're from the 19th century. The funny part is that's what it was around here. It was just like that. Everybody was the same. You can try and put on airs and graces, you know. A bit like Mrs. Bouquet. But it don't matter. Everybody else knew that you'd got a grey coat on the top of your bed in winter and things like that.

FRANK: But like I said, I didn't get a sense of – there used to be periods when Dad was out of work. Usually because obviously, he'd had an argument with some – one of the bosses. And I remember us living on tomato ketchup sandwiches for a few weeks when – no, but there was –

RACHEL: Do you remember that?

KEITH: That was few and far between when you had that. I'll give the example like – because we did have some luxuries sometimes. Every Saturday, my dad would have a piece of steak. Now these pieces of steak, you know, would've been about four inches square. I don't what that is in – but about four inches square. And

he'd give everybody a bit of it. All the kids a bit of his steak, because that's the only time he was eating steak, was on a Saturday. He'd go barmy at my mum if ever she gave him cheese sandwiches to take to work. That was 'bungal' as he called it. 'Don't give me that bungal, we've got now money we're living on. Giving me cheese sandwiches.' Now when you look at the reverse now. Cheese is dearer than steak.

CATHY: Exactly.

FRANK: Yeah.

KEITH: You know, it's, uh – so the world has changed a lot.

CATHY: Who have you both taken after in your parents? I think Frank's like his dad. But that – obviously I'm making a guess because I never met your dad.

KEITH: Well, the latter always said I was like my dad.

CATHY: Oh, okay.

KEITH: Because... he was a bit, uh, it was like, we seem to be on different sides politically, you know.

CATHY: Yeah.

KEITH: You know, and I was very passionate. But he could understand a lot of it, sometimes. Like – because he worked at British Leyland. Well, he worked at the Rover at one time. And he knew some of the things that went on there that weren't very fair. And he could understand my point of view from there. But I think that's what he was like.

FRANK: He had stood up at work at few times.

KEITH: He had, yeah.

FRANK: In front of the bullies. He worked in, um, do you remember he worked in that old people's home and he thought there was stuff going on there and he stood up?

KEITH: Yeah, yeah. He would do.

FRANK: We'll put it this way, he'd argue about anything. So, you know, if he got in the right thing he'd be a great fighter for a social crusade. Or he's out because he's just hit some bloke in a car park. Any kind of conflicts.

KEITH: And yet he was very religious. He was very very religious.

RACHEL: Are you religious? Are you religious?

KEITH: I am, but I think that my dad used to moan at me like anything about it. Because church like used to be Sunday. But also I'd fish a lot. And fishing – all the contests were always on a Sunday. So we had a bit of a conflict there, you know. But uh, I'm still a great believer.

[Flute sounds]

CATHY: Do you remember it being a really loving household?

KEITH: Oh, yeah.

CATHY: Because it obviously sounds a bit scary.

KEITH: No, no, it was really really loving. And I mean, these things only happened on very very rare occasions.

FRANK: And like I said, our dad was one of those. You know there's that saying that, 'I'd rather have this bloke in the tent' – I don't know, are we allowed to swear?

CATHY: You can say, 'pissing.'

FRANK: Yeah, 'we'd rather have him in the tent pissing out than outside the tent pissing in.' I mean, the main thing is our dad was – could be a violent, aggressive man. But he was also a very very loving family man.

KEITH: He was, yeah.

FRANK: He'd sit and read you bedtime stories and do – he'd sing and dance to make the kids laugh.

KEITH: He used to argue and – if Mum and Dad ever had an argument, you know, suddenly my dad would go, [sings] 'remember when school days were over.' You know? And he'd sing to her.

CATHY: Yeah.

KEITH: And then suddenly it's all over.

CATHY: Are you a big singer? Because Frank sings obsessively. It drives me berserk.

KEITH: Oh, I'll sing around the house. Because there's nobody there to criticise me, let's get it right.

FRANK: Well my dad – I mean, he never really stopped singing. My mum and dad I would say argued every day of their life.

KEITH: Yeah, pretty well.

FRANK: I mean, they were – that was how they communicated. Sometimes they were heavy rows. And a lot of the time they were just sparring.

CATHY: But you felt that they loved each other? You did.

KEITH: Oh, definitely.

FRANK: I was with my mum later on in her life. I remember she fell over in the hallway. And she called out my dad's name. My dad was at work. But that was who she saw as her rock and support. That was – like if our child falls over, he calls – he calls for Cath. He doesn't call for me, even if Cath's out and I'm there.

CATHY: Because I know where the plasters are.

FRANK: Well, it's because there are certain – there's always one person in your life who you think of as your, you know, your protector.

CATHY: But were either of you favourites? Do you think because Frank was the youngest, he was –

KEITH: No, I don't – I didn't – they worked to avoid that more than anything, didn't they? They sort of tried not to have favourites,

didn't they? It was sort of a conscious decision. Little things creep in here and there, but like they did really try not to make –

FRANK: In order to know the answer to that, you have to know my mum. And if anyone – I believe if any one of us had gone to my mum and said, 'I need 10 grand and I need you to come with me to Central America tonight,' she would've worked it out. And she would've done – she was always putting like a pound in people's hand and stuff like that. She was, you know.

KEITH: I remember – I remember once she gave away the Sunday joint because someone up the road – the lady up the road hadn't got – and they'd got kids. And she gave away the Sunday joint. And, 'oh, what have you done that for?' Dad says. Because we always kept chickens. 'We'd got chickens, we'd got potatoes. We can always have chips. They've got nothing up there.'

FRANK: I think her family was everything. Absolutely everything to her. And uh, I think that was – it was more common then. Because I think feminism hadn't touched Oldbury, where we lived. I don't think. I know there was some –

KEITH: I don't think it has yet, to be honest.

CATHY: I'm looking out the window. I don't think it has.

FRANK: There was sort of – yeah, there were formidable women in the area. And obviously it was a very, you know, maternal place in lots of ways. But that was her great love and her great passion. And she worked full-time most of her life. She worked full-time until she was 65. But yeah, the family was always, always the priority.

KEITH: And nine times out of ten she'd work somewhere where it would benefit the kids, you know. Chocolate factories and –

FRANK: Oh god, she worked in a fish and chip shop.

KEITH: Yeah.

FRANK: Cake factory.

KEITH: Toy factory.

FRANK: Toy factory. And a chocolate factory.

CATHY: Aw, that's amazing.

FRANK: So yeah, there was always – there was always a bit of secondary –

KEITH: Yeah.

FRANK: She used to bring – I don't know about you, but –

KEITH: There were like solid blocks, do you remember them? You know when you got a block of gold, and it's – there used to be solid chocolate like that. But they used to melt down and put in cakes and biscuits and things like that. She could buy them cheap or something.

FRANK: I don't know if she bought –

KEITH: Look, I'm trying to cleanly sort of – I don't how the rules and statutes go on with chocolate theft.

[All laugh]

FRANK: I don't think so.

KEITH: I'll tell you what, you couldn't get through – you had to get a hammer and chisel to start breaking it or scraping it.

CATHY: Yeah.

[Flute sounds]

CATHY: You know, and we have jealousies and we have anger and fury.

RACHEL: I don't have jealousies. You may.

CATHY: Well, I do. Lots. But you two, it – did you not have jealousies?

FRANK: Keith was just going to go to the big school. So he just got his school uniform. And he got all dressed up. And you were quite – how can I put it – you were a big lad in those days.

KEITH: Yeah, I was. I mean I was 14 stone at 14. Like I used to play rugby. And we didn't play football at our school. We only played rugby and cricket.

FRANK: So when he was ten or eleven, he was still a bit, uh – what we would have said in those days – a bit of a bunter.

KEITH: I was, yeah.

FRANK: Yeah, so he'd come up – I was in the garden, and my dad had this thing that collected rainwater. And if you collect rainwater and it's left there for ages, you get dirty water at the bottom. You get black gunk. So Keith came up and, um, he'd got his brand new uniform and his tie and blazer and all that. And he was sent up to show it to me as well. Because it was quite a big thing, that school uniform arriving. So I had a bucket of this black mud in my hand when he arrived. I always think it was the moment when I decided that comedy was going to be the way forward for me.

KEITH: More slapstick than anything.

FRANK: So I – I tipped it over Keith's head. Um, and you know, it was – it was quite, um, dramatic. The change.

CATHY: That's horrendous.

FRANK: It was stinking black slime. So Keith started crying, understandably. And then I looked and I saw – I was probably as frightened as I've ever been – I saw my dad. And my dad looked at – Keith was walking towards him, crying, covered in this. I had a bucket in my hand, dribbling slime.

And my dad came up the garden and that thing – I couldn't run, I couldn't move my legs. My dad was purple and coming up the road. I had no defence. He was completely in the right. Um, and I stood there trembling. I can remember the feeling of just seeing him get bigger as he got closer to me. And he did a weird thing. He reached down and instead of grabbing me, he grabbed me by the ankle. He reached down and grabbed me by the ankle. And then when he – when he stood up straight, I went upside down. And then he hit me all the way down the garden. And he threw

me. He literally threw me into the kitchen and I landed on Keith's guitar and broke it.

RACHEL: Oh no.

FRANK: Poor old Keith!

CATHY: And you didn't hate Frank?

KEITH: No, I hated the uniform to be honest. I tried everything I could to get out of that school.

[Flute sounds]

RACHEL: When you – you started drinking, I guess, in your late teens or whatever. So –

FRANK: Well, that's very reasonable of you. I started drinking – the first time I was in a pub I was 14.

RACHEL: Okay. So as you started –

KEITH: Put your deep voice on.

FRANK: I used to get served in my school uniform. About the second or third time, I went in and said, uh, 'pint of mild, please' in my deep voice. They'd said, 'pint of mild?' I'd said, 'well, bitter then.' Completely panicked.

CATHY: Aw, and they served you?

FRANK: Yes. I – there used to be a bloke, um, who worked in a pub near me. And he also – his main job was ice cream man. And I

used to come out of school. I used to buy ice cream from him and then I'd buy beer from him in the evening.

KEITH: And he used to make woodwork jobs. You know, there was a coffee table I think. And you had to take the money in to purchase it because the materials you've used and that. And I'd got my hair long and you weren't allowed to have your hair long. And he said, 'right, you're not paying for that today. You can take that money down the road,' he said, 'you can get your hair cut.' So I went to the pub down the road and had two pints and went home, you know. My dad would back us up on that. It's fashion –

CATHY: Really?

KEITH: Yeah. It's fashion. Not the pub, not going in the pub.

CATHY: I was going to say, yeah.

KEITH: But yeah, it's fashion. What's the matter with it? My dad was pretty fashionable, wasn't he really? When he worked –

FRANK: Well, the weird thing about my – about our dad was, um, that he – for all that, he had a strange broadmindedness.

KEITH: Yeah.

FRANK: He used to say to me, 'get into showbiz. That's the sort of job. Never mind the apprenticeships.'

KEITH: 'You don't want to work for a living.'

FRANK: Yeah, 'I wish I'd done that. Get on the bandwagon.' And he used to say, 'look at that. Look at that Aspel bloke.' Of Michael

Aspel. 'Not talented. Look at the money he's making. Get on the bandwagon.'

CATHY: But did he only do it with you? Or did he do it with you as well?

FRANK: I don't know.

KEITH: I don't think – well, I was all for dressing up, you know. I'd go to school in a cowboy outfit and get sent home, 'you can't be in a cowboy outfit.' And things like that. You know, that type of thing.

CATHY: So how did you feel about Frank going into – what did you think Frank was going to be?

KEITH: I was dead chuffed.

CATHY: Okay.

KEITH: Absolutely chuffed to bits. Unfortunately, I've completely lost my identity.

CATHY: Of course you have.

KEITH: Where we're doing this from now, there's a sign over the top of the bar with all the customer's names. And mine's up there: 'Skinner.'

CATHY: Frank, you look mortified.

FRANK: That's my stage name.

KEITH: And people shout, you know, they're going, 'alright, Skinner' and all that. And it's –

CATHY: So when he started first, what were you thinking when he first started doing – doing comedy?

KEITH: I was thinking –

FRANK: I didn't tell anyone at first.

KEITH: No, no. I mean I found out later when he was doing one at the Bear Hotel.

RACHEL: So you didn't see an early gig? You didn't –

KEITH: I didn't see an early gig, no. I haven't seen many of his gigs.

FRANK: I didn't tell – I didn't tell any of the family I was – I was doing it. I mean one of the problems was I was doing quite rude material. And that wasn't allowed in our house. We were never allowed to swear at home. And for all our dad's wildness, I never heard him swear many times.

KEITH: No. He even used to turn off 'Step toe and Son' because of the language, didn't he?

RACHEL: So how has your relationship changed since not – you not drinking, since Frank's –

KEITH: A lot of people say to me now, they say, uh, 'oh, you're Frank Skinner's brother.' And it's like, 'yeah.' 'Do you see much of him?' I say, 'yeah, he's on the telly nearly every day.' Like, you know. But because of the distance between us, we don't – and

because of him being a workaholic and me being a work avoider, you know, we don't –

CATHY: But you're not a work avoider. I don't think you are. I think from what I know, from when Frank speaks about you, you work really hard.

FRANK: I never ever remember you being out of work for more than maybe a fortnight or something.

KEITH: No. No, I couldn't – I couldn't get away with it any longer. I tried.

FRANK: No, but you're –

KEITH: I'm still working now at my age.

FRANK: I wouldn't like people to come away from this thinking that, um, as you say, you're over your time and you're still working full-time.

KEITH: Oh, yeah. Still working full-time.

RACHEL: That's not a work avoider.

KEITH: I do it because I don't have to. That's a brilliant thing. When you don't have to work, you can enjoy it. When you're desperate to have to work, then you don't enjoy it that much.

CATHY: What do you do now? What's your job?

KEITH: I'm a sheet metal worker. So I'm throwing massive fucking steel panels around all day.

CATHY: So physical – really physical job.

KEITH: Yeah. And then when I come out I'm walking down the high street and somebody stops me and asks me if I want to join a gym. The last thing I want to do is join a gym!

CATHY: Join a gym. No, exactly, exactly.

FRANK: When you say – when you say you don't have to work, what – what do you mean? Because you could go on the pension if you wanted to?

KEITH: I'm already on the pension. I'm – I'm doing quite well. Not so well as you.

FRANK: You don't have to declare it all.

KEITH: Of course I am. Crikey, I'll get in –

CATHY: From the Irish Love Tree or whatever it was you said?

KEITH: Oh, I make a few on the uh, I always win nearly every – and I am joking now. It seems an exaggeration. But nearly every week. You could say I might have four or five weeks off a year that I don't win.

FRANK: He always was lucky.

CATHY: Do you wish that you saw more of Frank?

KEITH: Uh, yeah, really, yeah. That's what we do. We sort of distance – and as I said, I don't drive. So –

FRANK: We should say as well, though, that there's four of us. There's – there's Nora, Terry, Keith, and me.

KEITH: Yeah.

FRANK: And Terry, Keith, and Nora live within what, three miles of each other?

KEITH: No, I don't see either of them either. I do sometimes. I see sometimes –

FRANK: And there's never been –

CATHY: Why is that? Why?

FRANK: There's no rift, is there?

KEITH: We never had – I guess I – it was something we used to dread, wasn't it? Going, uh, going visiting when you were a kid.

RACHEL: Yes.

KEITH: Especially, 'we're going to tea at Nora's so have something to eat before you go.' It was sort of little triangular sandwiches like we always used to think were doorstops, like see through them and that. And we weren't used to that.

FRANK: Remember Auntie Dory used to give us Smarties in custard?

KEITH: Smarties in custard.

CATHY: Oh, that's the worst thing I've ever heard.

KEITH: There were only three of them in there.

FRANK: If you pushed them across the surface, they – it's like a firework display. Different coloured smears.

CATHY: Aw, that's terrible.

FRANK: I used to dread visiting Auntie Dory because she was very nice to us and stuff, but in that era you had to ask permission to leave the table. You had to say, 'may I leave the table,' and I found that such a, um, trauma. I used to stay at the table long after the meal had gone. When the last Smartie had smeared.

[Flute sounds]

KEITH: You always feel like I'm encroaching on their territory. I think –

RACHEL: Yet you live so close to each other and –

KEITH: Yeah, and great, absolutely love meeting somewhere, you know. Like we went for a meal, didn't we? And when you do that, it's great. Bringing them into your environment, or – you saw, I haven't got room in my flat.

FRANK: If I see one of them, they'll often say, 'oh, I bumped into Keith in Oldbury. We talked for about 15 minutes.' So they'll meet in the street –

CATHY: I find it extraordinary.

FRANK: Have a warm-hearted chat, and then not see each other for four years.

CATHY: Because we literally live with each other. We work with each other, we live with each other, we do everything together. So I find it – I mean, I will talk endlessly to Frank, but I can't – I find it so unfathomable that you guys aren't – it's just – but maybe the age gap makes a big difference.

FRANK: It's a weird thing. It's a weird thing. Every – I – I pray everyday. And everyday I pray for my two brothers and my sister. But not only do I not see them, I rarely speak to them. I send them birthday cards and Christmas cards. And I think there is always part of me that is waiting for that phone call. Because we're all getting older.

KEITH: We are, yeah.

FRANK: And, um, and then, you know, then I'll look back. But I know that. But what have I done about it? I don't know if you know this, but Dad said to us, he said to me not long before he died, 'try to keep in touch with the others, you know, because they won't keep in touch with each other.' And I think if you consider what a family woman my mom was, and my dad – the family man dad was, I think they would be sad to know that we are virtual strangers from each other. I mean the four of us.

KEITH: Yeah.

FRANK: You know, maybe I'm wrong. Maybe it doesn't matter. I don't know.

KEITH: This is hard to say. And I don't know much about my elder brother and sister, but I do – because we've knocked about together a bit and that, and we've got the same friends and I'll see the same friends now and then. I still see them and they say, 'how's Slim doing?' which they nicknamed him at one time.

FRANK: Well I know if I got a phone call and it said Keith had dropped dead in the street, that that would torture me probably until I drop dead in the street.

KEITH: It wouldn't do me a lot of good.

FRANK: No, or anyone you fell on.

[All laugh]

FRANK: But yeah. I don't know if that's what – that's what people do. They let it go and they let it roll. And then in the end –

RACHEL: It's too late.

FRANK: Yeah. But we always say we're going to get together and have another meal, and then, you know, we never –

RACHEL: But then also you have a child, you have Buzz. So you're trying to get back. It is that thing of life happening, isn't it? And before you know it, the years have rolled by.

FRANK: But you know there's no one else I can have these conversations with. It's weird. You might have noticed a few times, um, today that I've said, 'my dad' –

RACHEL: Yes.

CATHY: Yes.

FRANK: And then corrected myself to, 'our dad.'

RACHEL: And Keith, you said, 'my dad.'

KEITH: Because I'm not used to being with my brothers and sister.

FRANK: There's lots of sort of stuff about our family that we don't know.

KEITH: Oh, there is.

FRANK: It was the sort of family you didn't sit around and talk about your deep intimate thoughts.

KEITH: Well we had, uh, we had a meal, didn't we? And we had all members of the family with us. So –

FRANK: This was – what would this have been about, two years ago?

KEITH: Yeah. And I got away from that meal feeling like a 40 year old who had found out he was adopted.

CATHY: Really?

KEITH: Because a lot of things I'd thought had happened hadn't happened. And a lot of things that had happened I'd thought hadn't happened.

FRANK: Yeah, because it was so confusing.

CATHY: But why? Why is that?

FRANK: Well I just think my mum and dad's attitude was, 'oh, we don't want to talk about that. That's all in the past and bla bla.'

KEITH: Yeah.

FRANK: So there was loads of stuff that we – that we all brushed under the carpet. And of course our older siblings know stuff because they were around. But then they were bred with that, 'we don't go on about, you know, we don't want to be...' And so yeah, when I see you two, who share everything and – and when you talk with your mum, you know, my dad used to say – our dad used to say – to me, 'deep as the ocean you are, deep as the ocean'. You know? There was lots about my life that I didn't tell them when they were alive.

CATHY: So neither of you talked, really talked to each other about emotional stuff? It was more jokey –

KEITH: No, but I do – I do consider it, I mean, there was, uh, I received a Christmas card a couple of Christmases ago. And it got 'From Frank and Buzz.' And what had happened is I didn't know at the time that you had been out running. And you hadn't come back. And you left a card for you to sign. He went and signed it. So I got it from Frank and Buzz. So I would text him, 'is everything alright?' You know, I thought, 'your name – Cath's name ain't on it.' I thought you'd run off and left him with Buzz, you know.

CATHY: Aww.

FRANK: Literally run off.

KEITH: Yeah, you know. And I thought – I mean, I was concerned. I had to ask you. I said, ‘look, I was going to – I didn’t send you a card,’ I said, ‘because I didn’t know what to put on it.’ I didn’t want to leave Cath off it.

CATHY: Yeah yeah yeah.

KEITH: Because if she was there, she’d be, ‘well, look there.’ And I didn’t want to put it on in case you had run off, and end up sending it with both names in the card.

FRANK: But that’s another thing. Because you don’t know, you know, you don’t know Buzz. You’ve met Buzz once.

KEITH: He was a baby.

FRANK: Yeah, yeah. You’d love him and he’d love you. And that’s – Buzz – with these two, like his Auntie Rachel is a central figure in his life. His Uncle Keith should be a central figure.

KEITH: I’ve actually got a picture of him in my wallet.

CATHY: But when Frank first became famous, would you ever think he’d gone up himself? Or did you ever think anything like that? Or did you feel anything negative?

FRANK: You can be honest.

CATHY: No, be honest.

KEITH: I did feel he was mixing in different company from what I could actually mix with. But then I’ve attended a few of his things

and I have met some of them. And I thought they're no different from us, really. It's just they're earning a few more and they're in the limelight.

CATHY: Exactly.

KEITH: So it's a job like I do, but mine's not too well paid and not a lot of people want to do it either. Including the gaffers sometimes, but I won't go into that. But uh, you know, so you do feel like, uh, well I don't want to – like I said, I don't want to encroach, you know? Bring, you know, bring you down to the level that we come from.

FRANK: Oh god, I don't think we'd like that.

KEITH: Yeah. Socialist trade union.

FRANK: When Buzz was born, I phoned Keith up to tell him. He said to me, 'I've gone up and drink myself to death now.' He said, 'I was hanging around in Harrison's.'

KEITH: I said, 'I was out of my mind at Harrison's, now I'll carry on drinking. I ain't got to outlive you now.'

CATHY: Exactly. Have you ever felt jealous of Frank's life?

KEITH: No, not really. Not really. I mean, I'd like a few like he's got. But you're constantly under the limelight. Everything you do – in fact, it does rub off on me. Because you'll be – 'Frank Skinner's brother's done this or Frank Skinner's brother's done that.' So I had to – I had to pull myself – pull my neck in sometimes thinking, 'well, I can't do this' –

FRANK: One funny thing about that is that our sister, um, keeps a – I don't know if she still does, but she used to keep a scrapbook of my career. And neighbours used to put clippings through the letterbox for her and she put them all in there. And Keith's in the paper for, um, some story –

KEITH: Assault.

FRANK: He was in the paper for assault. And about three people put the clippings through Nora's letterbox.

CATHY: No.

KEITH: He actually put it in the book. But he never put the finishing words, when it was totally impossible to have one what it was that I was supposed to have done and everything else.

RACHEL: Really?

KEITH: But uh –

CATHY: So you read the book?

FRANK: So you were innocent?

KEITH: Yeah, of course I was innocent. You should've put it in the book! I told you.

FRANK: I didn't know. You didn't tell me you'd been cleared.

KEITH: Yeah, I was –

RACHEL: You need to talk more.

KEITH: Yeah, we do.

FRANK: He only tells me about the assaults. He never tells me about the clearances.

CATHY: But when you read the book, what did you think? Did you think it was brilliant? Or did you think, 'no, that's – well, you thought that was wrong?'

KEITH: I loved it. Unfortunately, the – how can I say it – the layout of the book was terrible. And you keep flipping forwards and backwards. I couldn't really get into that. I'd have preferred it to have been a straight story, you know?

CATHY: Yeah.

KEITH: But that's because I know him more. Other people might want him to just get to the interesting bits.

CATHY: Yeah, yeah.

KEITH: When I wanted to get to the more mundane bits as well, because I was part –

FRANK: You wanted to get to your part.

KEITH: I wanted to get to my bits, you're quite right.

CATHY: Exactly.

KEITH: Yeah, three lines.

FRANK: I bought David Baddiel a book about alternative comedy. And next to his name, in the uh, index, I wrote, 'hello.' Sure enough, he phoned me up and said, 'you' – the first thing he did was go to his name in the index and there was a lovely little hello from me.

CATHY: Do you, Frank, ever think – is there any part of you that thinks, 'you know, I wish I was back here living that life'? Because I'm quite nostalgic and I do think that.

FRANK: We're sat here – have we established that we're in Cape Hill, in Smethwick?

CATHY: We're in Cape Hill, in Smethwick. By where you grew up. Do you ever wish you just lived this sort of simpler life, I suppose?

RACHEL: Simple but eccentric.

FRANK: No. Next question.

RACHEL: Yeah, moving on.

[Flute sounds]

FRANK: Growing up as we did, when we did, where we did, and as members of the working class, I felt every door was shut to any sort of creative or interesting job. I did what everyone else did. I left school and worked in a factory. That's what you did. And there was no one saying to me, 'do you know what? You could actually – what about you do this? What about if you try this?' If you'd said comedy, it's not like that's an essentially Cambridge activity.

CATHY: Your dad sort of said that, yeah.

FRANK: There's lots of working class blokes who would, you know, who would do comedy. So, but it just – you feel like it's all mapped out for you. You're going to go to the pub every night, you're going to work in a factory, you're going to get married young, you're going to live in a council flat, and bla bla bla. And I was there. I was well away on that trajectory. It's not like from the beginning I – I was on it. And it was only a series of weird circumstances. I basically started reading books and decided I wanted to go and be a student. And from that, everything triggered off.

CATHY: But if you go back to what you said in the beginning, do you honestly think if the – if you were the older brother, that Keith would have followed your path?

FRANK: I say this – I've made myself unpopular on TV productions by saying to young upper-middle class people born in London to often media families, 'you guys. You've got all the privilege. And all the doors are open for you. And I'm not blaming you for that. Because, you know, good luck to you. You've landed, you know, on your feet.

But there are so many people I know back home, including my brother and kids I went to school with, who could easily have been successful television people, successful broadcasters. And I'm not building up – definitely bright, bright like Keith. Bright, funny, interesting people who could have done it. And they didn't have the chance.

And I think if you do have the opportunity and you in any way squander it and you just go into it because you want to sit in the

club doing cocaine with your media friends, I've got no time for you. I don't resent anyone for having more privilege than we do. That's just the way it's dealt.' But I do – if I'd been the oldest, and I'd shown the others that the doors were open, I certainly think Keith could well have ended up there.

RACHEL: But Keith, you did do a part in Frank's sitcom.

KEITH: I've done a few parts.

CATHY: Have you? I thought it was just one.

KEITH: Yeah, I've played, uh, Kathy Burke in 'Gimme Gimme Gimme'. Emanuel Petit, French footballer. I've, uh –

FRANK: I've forgotten those.

KEITH: Yeah, and I've played a fisherman in 'Blue Heaven.'

FRANK: Yeah. When you were a fisherman in 'Blue Heaven,' which was a sitcom, they played it to me. And you weren't in it. And I said, 'where's my brother?' And they said, 'it's just a bit over the length. That bit had to go.' I said, 'you're going to have to cut somewhere else. That's got to be in it.' And it was – I knew they were right. I knew that was the bit that had to go. I said, 'you can't cut that. It's got to go back in.' So we had to cut – we had to cut one of my jokes.

KEITH: I'll tell you what I love. Recently he was on the radio and we were on about when he had to cut Bruce Forsyth's hair ?? He had to cut his own hair and he didn't cut my hair? That was brilliant.

FRANK: I remember Keith was an extra on that. And there was a woman – you get like professional extras who say, ‘oh yes, I was in – I was in ‘Crossroads’ 17 times. And she said, ‘and how did you get this part?’ And Keith said –

KEITH: I slept with the writer.

CATHY: Amazing. Amazing.

RACHEL: I think we should probably wrap this up because the pub is opening, so you’re going to hear noises in the microphone.

FRANK: It’s not so much noise in the background. It’s since the pub’s open Keith’s gotten very jolly.

RACHEL: Yeah, yeah.

CATHY: It’s true.

KEITH: I’ve forgotten somebody’s dripping now.

FRANK: You’ve brought some dripping?

KEITH: I’ve got some – somebody asked me to get them some dripping because, uh, Blackheath, which is close to here, it’s more a village than a town. It’s very very old fashioned. And you can get old fashioned things like –

FRANK: Do you know like beef drippings?

RACHEL: Yeah, we should get some for Mum.

KEITH: They have pork drippings.

RACHEL: We should get some for Mum. Mum loves dripping. But I – last question then, please. What would you –

FRANK: Most old people can't avoid drippings.

CATHY: Not now.

RACHEL: Right, so.

FRANK: Last question?

RACHEL: So what would you most like to say to each other now?

KEITH: I'd love to see more of you. And I mean, not just on the telly. Because a lot of people say, 'don't you see him?' And it makes him seem like he's someone who wants nothing to do with us.

CATHY: He's really not. He's a workaholic.

KEITH: Yeah, I know he is.

FRANK: But, um, yes. What do I want to say to Keith? I love you, Keith. Yeah. I'd like you to be part of my son's life, is what I would really like. Because he would love you as well, and that would be good. Can we end by Cath promising that I'll be allowed to bring Buzz to come and see you?

KEITH: I told you, my flat is so small.

FRANK: I'm sure you can get a five year old in it.

KEITH: You can get a five year old in it, but where are you going to go?

FRANK: My idea was – my idea was to drop him off and then go to the match.

[All laugh]

[Guitar and flute music]

This has been a Little Wander production. Local artwork from Cathy Mason. Voice from Melanie Walters. Music from Rhodri Viney. With special thanks to Beth Forrest, Steve Pickup, Sam Roberts, Henry Widdicombe, and Jo Williams. Other podcasts from Little Wander include Here to Judge and Welcome to Spooktown. Subscribe now on iTunes, Spotify, or wherever you get your podcasts.

RACHEL: Thanks for listening.

CATHY: She's doing that holding a very phallic microphone.

RACHEL: I know.