

Picture Perfect

by DJ Sanders

Sarah Lawrence has recently brought home her husband from the hospital after suffering a second stroke placing him in a coma. As she anticipates the arrival of her son, her grandson, and her grandson's mother, every hour is critical to ensure the house is properly prepared for their weekend visit. Sarah's prayers are answered when Jackie, a home health care worker, arrives unexpectedly early to help Sarah care for her husband, prepare for visitors, and offer her the support she needs.

Matthew, the eldest and only surviving son, arrives to discover his mother has neglected to inform him of his father's medical condition. Attention is diverted from the feuding mother and son when Alyssa and Rubin arrive. The ten-year-old grandson is truly the apple of his grandmother's eye while Alyssa remains estranged from the other family members because she never married the now deceased Mark Lawrence. Over the course of the weekend, Sarah's strong Christian morals clash with Matthew's outspoken political stances. Each family member is resolute in sharing his or her opinions, but is anyone willing to listen?

Picture Perfect, at its heart, is about family and forgiveness. Three generations of Lawrences find themselves in this awkward family reunion struggling to relate to one another. Family secrets, regrets, and grudges all come to the surface as emotions are heightened by the possible loss of a family member. This drama is an honest portrait of the contemporary American family and reflects the clash between traditional family values and modern ideologies.

Sample scene from
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by DJ Sanders

from ACT I, Scene One

(JACKIE is in the bedroom checking Jacob's pulse and other vital signs.

SARAH enters the living room carrying a heavy box. SARAH starts to make her way over to the coffee table.

JACKIE leaves the bedroom and enters the living room)

JACKIE

Sarah, what do you think you're doing?

(JACKIE goes over and helps SARAH set the box down on the table. The two sit and SARAH lets out a gasp of exhaustion)

SARAH

Thank you.

JACKIE

What were you thinking?

SARAH

I was trying to find some of the boys' old clothing in the basement. I thought Alyssa might like them for Rubin. How's Jacob?

JACKIE

No change.

SARAH

Oh, I do hope he wakes up this weekend. That's all I've prayed for this week that he wake so he can see his grandson one more time.

(beat)

I know the second that Rubin's in the house, he'll be tugging on his grandpa's arm to play baseball. That boy loves baseball, just like his grandfather.

(SARAH opens the box)

JACKIE

That doesn't look like clothing.

SARAH

I couldn't find the clothes. We probably sold them at a garage sale years ago.

(SARAH pulls out a photo album)

No one has looked at these in years.

(SARAH opens up the photo album and begins to show JACKIE)

SARAH (Cont'd)

There's Jacob...and there's Matthew...he must have been nine or ten in this picture--wait, this is the old house, we moved in...ten, Matthew was ten and Mark would have been six. There's Mark.

JACKIE

They look like their father.

SARAH

Yes, they both took after him--in the looks department.

(turns the page)

This is the high school where Jacob and I met, there in the background. He always took the kids there to practice. I told you that Jacob used to play for the minors, right?

JACKIE

Yes.

SARAH

That damn knee of his. He would have played for the major leagues, we were all sure of it...

(beat)

But it wasn't in God's plan.

JACKIE

I don't see you in any of these?

SARAH

I'm in hardly any of them. I was usually the photographer. If I let Jacob take a picture we'd usually get back some picture of his index finger or else several pictures of women's rear ends.

(JACKIE looks at SARAH confused)

SARAH (Cont'd)

Oh, not that kind. They were just pictures of people sitting in the bleachers--only from behind. Of course they were an accident, no doubt Jacob knocked the camera while yelling at one of the umpires--he always yelled at the umpires, over anything. But it never ceased to amaze me how many pictures we'd get of some stranger's...derrière.

(pointing to a picture)

And these were their uniforms. I never cared for the colors. Peach and baby blue. They were the Palmer Pigeons. I didn't like the name either.

JACKIE

That's Matthew?

SARAH

Yes, Mark wasn't old enough to play at the time.

(pointing to another picture)

There's Mark on his father's lap.

(SARAH turns the page)

JACKIE

(pointing to a picture)

That must be you.

SARAH

Can you believe I wore my hair like that? But it was the style back then.

(takes a moment and then closes
the book)

I'd better put this away or I'll never get everything else ready.

JACKIE

What time are they suppose to be here?

SARAH

(checking her watch)

Alyssa and Rubin's flight should be in any minute, they said they'd take a taxi. I volunteered to meet them at the airport, but she insisted that they'd be fine without me. I get no gratitude from her. I send money, I buy clothes for that boy--I bought those tickets for them--I'm sorry, I'm rambling on.

JACKIE

Is Matthew still coming?

SARAH

Who knows. He said he might arrive. Which means I won't hold my breath. The last several "might"s turned into "won't"s. I'm going to check on the bedrooms to make sure everything is ready.

JACKIE

Should I vacuum in here?

SARAH

Heavens no, you shouldn't be vacuuming my house. Sit down and rest, you've done more than enough today. I'm just going to check on Jacob for a moment, then I'll be upstairs finishing the rooms.

(SARAH goes into the bedroom and checks
on Jacob.

JACKIE goes around the living room
trying to straighten things up.

SARAH leaves the bedroom and exits.

MATTHEW LAWRENCE walks up along the trash cans with a cigarette still burning. He takes another puff of the cigarette before putting it out and tossing it in the trash can. He hesitates a moment before trying the doorknob and entering the house.

MATTHEW walks in and notices JACKIE)

MATTHEW

(confused)

I'm sorry, uh...

JACKIE

You must be Matthew.

MATTHEW

Yes...

(Awkward pause)

JACKIE

I'm Jackie.

MATTHEW

Oh.

JACKIE

Your mother's upstairs, would you like me to get her?

MATTHEW

No. Don't bother.

(beat)

For a second there, I thought she might have moved and not sent me her forwarding address. I wouldn't put it past her.

(MATTHEW goes into the kitchen and grabs a soda and comes back into the living room)

MATTHEW (Cont'd)

So where's my dad?

JACKIE

Pardon?

MATTHEW

Where's my father? Mr. Lawrence, or Jacob. His car's still here.

JACKIE

He's in the bedroom. You can go in there and see him.

MATTHEW

He's probably taking a nap or something. I won't bother him.

JACKIE

You won't bother him.

MATTHEW

I'll just wait till he gets up.

JACKIE

Till he gets up...?

MATTHEW

Yeah.

JACKIE

Oh.

MATTHEW

What's...is there something wrong with--? Is there something I should know?

JACKIE

I'm sorry, I don't know how to break this but-- I'm afraid your father's in a bit of a coma.

MATTHEW

A bit of a coma?

JACKIE

I should probably let your mother tell you all this.

MATTHEW

Wait a minute. So who are you?

JACKIE

I've been hired on to help take care of your father.

MATTHEW

What? I don't understand--

JACKIE

I'm sorry, perhaps I should allow your mother to explain.

MATTHEW

No, please fill me in here. I think I have a right to know.

JACKIE

Well...the doctors found a tumor--a brain tumor and the swelling got too much for his brain and it caused a stroke.

MATTHEW

Then what's he doing here? Shouldn't he be at the hospital?

JACKIE

Your mother said that after his first stroke he--

MATTHEW

Wait a minute, first stroke? When was this?

JACKIE

I'm not entirely certain. You would have to ask your mother.

MATTHEW

Damn her.

JACKIE

I'm sorry.

MATTHEW

So wait, how come he's not in the hospital?

JACKIE

Your father signed some papers after his first stroke stating that he did not want to be kept in a hospital for any reason. After this stroke he was taken to the hospital and kept there until they felt he could be brought home. Your mother just had him brought here a few days ago.

MATTHEW

He always was a stubborn one with doctors. I'm surprised mom brought him home. How long ago did he have this...stroke?

JACKIE

Your mother said about three weeks ago.

MATTHEW

Three weeks!

(SARAH enters)

SARAH

Hello, Matthew.

MATTHEW

Mother.

SARAH

So you decided to actually show up this time.

MATTHEW

Don't do this to me.

SARAH

What? The last four times you said you were coming, you never showed. Two of those times you didn't even call to cancel.

MATTHEW

You know what I'm talking about. Why didn't you tell me about this?

SARAH

About what?

MATTHEW

He's in a coma?

SARAH

I told you in my last letter that he was sick.

MATTHEW

You didn't tell me he had a brain tumor or that he had a stroke.

JACKIE

I'm terribly sorry, Sarah.

SARAH

It's not your fault, Jackie.

JACKIE

I'll be in with Jacob if you need me.

SARAH

Thank you.

(JACKIE goes into the bedroom)

MATTHEW

Three weeks.

(pause)

Why didn't you tell me?

SARAH

Your father liked the birthday card you sent him.

MATTHEW

What birthday card?

(Pause)

MATTHEW (Cont'd)

Is this because I didn't send dad a fucking birthday card?

SARAH

You will not use that kind of language in this house, do you understand?

(beat)

Do you?

MATTHEW

Fine. When were you going to tell me?

SARAH

You're here now. You know.

MATTHEW

And what about the first stroke? When was that?

SARAH

Last year.

MATTHEW

When did you plan on mentioning that?

SARAH

It was a minor stroke. He recovered quickly.

MATTHEW

I had a right to know.

SARAH

Why?

MATTHEW

He's my father.

SARAH

So now you claim him.

MATTHEW

Look, if this is about Mark's--

SARAH

It's about everything, Matthew. Not just that.

(beat)

You wanted to live your life the way you wanted to, fine. We couldn't change that, and you made that perfectly clear. But you are a Lawrence still. The least you could do is make a tiny effort to stay in touch, let me know what's up in your life.

MATTHEW

It's not been easy.

SARAH

Who's had it easy? Name me one person who's had it easy. Did I raise you believing that life was easy? Did I?

MATTHEW

No.

SARAH

See? Now you know why.

MATTHEW

You should have told me, mother.

SARAH

What would you have done? Hopped in your car and rushed over? One would think, but I've learned better.

MATTHEW

I might have come...if you said he was sick.

SARAH

I told you he was sick, in my letter.

MATTHEW

You know what I mean! If you told me he had a...

(beat)

How bad is it?

SARAH

You can go in and see him.

(Pause)

SARAH (Cont'd)

He's just in the bedroom. Go in and see for yourself.

MATTHEW

I think that woman's doing something in there.

SARAH

Her name is Jackie. You won't bother her. Go ahead and visit him.

MATTHEW

Maybe later.

SARAH

Why not now? What's wrong with now?

MATTHEW

Just stop it, mother.

SARAH

Stop what?

(JACKIE comes into the living room)

JACKIE
I'm sorry, but...

SARAH
Yes?

JACKIE
I was just wondering where I might find some more towels.

SARAH
Oh, I just washed them. I'll run down and get them.

JACKIE
I can get them.

SARAH
No, let me.

(SARAH leaves.

Awkward silence)

MATTHEW
Sorry about that.

JACKIE
Don't worry about it.

(Pause)

MATTHEW
So how is he?

JACKIE
You can go in and have a look.

MATTHEW
Uh...not right now. I will...later. It's just...

JACKIE
I understand.

For more information or to obtain the full script, please contact

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