

BRICK, JR.

A Drama in Four Scenes

By Greg Phillips

Contact:
Greg Phillips
1019 Grant Street, Unit D
Santa Monica, CA 90405
(310) 717-5282
Gregphillipsdrama@yahoo.com

Brick takes a deep breath and lounges back in the chair and stares at the ceiling.

BRICK JR.

Oh, fucking Christ. Home again.

After a moment, his mother Margaret Pollitt enters. She is now in her 60s, and has aged very gracefully. She is wearing a stylish summer dress, but hasn't zipped up the back of it yet.

MARGARET

There you are. Sookey said you hadn't even gotten dressed yet, and she was absolutely right. You're doing nothing but lounging around while our world is getting ready to spin off its axis. Your favorite cousins have just arrived, and I cannot abide the thought of having to be alone with them, much less listen to the sound of their squawking voices, so I need you to get down there now and play host to them because I do not want the no-necks to think we've lost our impeccable manners.

BRICK JR.

Good morning, Mother.

MARGARET

Look at you. Handsome as ever and fit as a fiddle. You still have your magnificent, swimmers build from your college days at Ole Miss.

BRICK JR.

Mama Sook thinks I've lost a little too much weight.

MARGARET

Nonsense. As they say, one can never be too thin or too rich. Now, go ahead and put on this beautiful, new, seersucker suit I picked up for you at Neiman Marcus. The moment I saw it, it just screamed your name, so I had no choice but to buy it.

BRICK JR.

Don't I have enough summer suits already?

MARGARET

Perhaps, but I thought you needed a new one to celebrate your homecoming, and this salmon color will look simply divine on you. Always remember, one can never have too many beautiful things in life because they can help balance all the ugliness that's out there in the world. Now, would you mind zipping me up?

BRICK JR.

(Zipping her up.)

What were you doing over in Dallas other than shopping for my new suit and this new dress, which I might add is quite lovely?

MARGARET

Thank you.

BRICK JR.

Well?

MARGARET

I never ask you about your little getaways to Dallas, do I?

BRICK JR.

Fair enough.

MARGARET

But of course the two of us have never had secrets from each other, have we?

BRICK JR.

I suppose not.

MARGARET

That's right. The two of us could always depend on each other no matter what was going on this house, couldn't we?

BRICK, JR.

You're stalling.

MARGARET

Oh, very well. I just needed to get out of Mississippi and be surrounded by a little culture if you know what I mean. Just a little outing to escape the mundane existence of life. Whenever I stay in this house too long without you, I start to feel a little down. Just like you feel sometimes, but I go shopping instead of... Sorry. Now, please, do not mention this to your cousin Trixie who, as you know, watches every goddamned nickel and dime we spend.

BRICK JR.

Whether we like it or not, it's Marlene's job to do that, Mother. We've been through this a million times.

MARGARET

I don't think it's her job to tell me that I should have stayed at the local Holiday Inn instead of the divine Mansion on Turtle Creek because it's cheaper. Oh, Brick, I had never seen such a grand hotel in all of my life, and the food and service were beyond divine. We must go there together one weekend. Wouldn't that be wonderful?

BRICK JR.

My goodness. The Mansion on Turtle Creek. That certainly would put Marlene in a tailspin.

MARGARET

And that is why we aren't going to utter a word about it to anyone because I do not want your welcome home celebration to be spoiled by a financial lecture.

BRICK JR.

It's already been spoiled by having to go to the cemetery today.

MARGARET

As you well know, on each and every Memorial Day all the living Pollitts go to visit all the dead Pollitts who are permanently installed in the family cemetery. A tradition, that in my book, has gone on far too long, but we must continue as long as the dreaded cousins continue to come to mourn their finally departed father, Gooper, and place tacky flowers on his grave while we try to pay our proper respects to your father, Big Mama, and of course Big Daddy. God rest their souls.

BRICK JR.

I just don't think I'm really up to it this year.

MARGARET

I thought everything was going to be okay once you got back from that place.

BRICK JR.

Yes, everything is just wonderful, but don't you think it's a bit much asking someone who just got out of rehab to go visit a cemetery?

MARGARET

Some people find cemeteries very peaceful. Why the French even have picnics in them.

BRICK JR.

Can you just imagine that? We'd truly be the talk of the Delta if we ate fried chicken and deviled eggs on Daddy's grave.

MARGARET

I will have you know I have already danced on several of your relative's graves, so why not a picnic? See, I made you smile. Now, come on and get dressed in this beautiful, new suit I bought you, and let's get this over with so we can get on with our lives, and the no-necks can be on their merry way.

BRICK JR.

You really need to stop calling them that after all these years. I swear one of them is going to hear you one day, considering how they're always trying to listen in on conversations, especially Dixie, and you know good and well how that's going to turn out. Another big family fight.

MARGARET

Why stop now? They're too stupid to even know what we're talking about half the time. They're just like their parents. Trixie, or Marlene as she likes to be called these days, has a perpetual scowl on her face just like Brother Man did, and Dixie is just like poor, old, crazy Sister Woman. Nothing but a dithering fool. Wait till you see her. She's as big as a house. Going to have twins this time. That'll make six just like the very fertile Miss Mae Flynn Pollitt had. Imagine six more fat, little no-necks running around this world. It seems the meek shall not inherit this earth, but the no-necks will.

BRICK JR.

(Clapping.)

Bravo, Mother. My therapist out in California would have loved you.

MARGARET

I have no use for those people, and neither did you.

BRICK JR.

I'm not so sure about that.

MARGARET

I did not raise you to be weak like your father was.

BRICK JR.

You're right. Unfortunately, I seemed to have inherited it naturally. It's in my genes. My DNA.

MARGARET

Nonsense. Don't forget that part of your DNA comes from me. It's not all from the Pollitt side of the family. My family was filled with nothing but survivors. People who never gave up no matter how terrible things were. Unlike your father who never had to fight or work for anything. It all came so easily for him. That's why he was weak.

BRICK JR.

So, I got my good side from you, and the bad from Daddy?

MARGARET

I'd like to think my DNA simply overpowered your father's and canceled out his weaknesses.

BRICK JR.

Did you ever really love Daddy?

MARGARET

What a silly question. Of course I did. He was the love of my life.

BRICK JR.

But were you the love of his?

MARGARET

I'm afraid you'll have to ask your father that question when you visit his grave today.

BRICK JR.

I wish I could, but unless we hold a seance at the cemetery, I'm not so sure that's going to be possible.

MARGARET

Why don't you just let the past stay in the past where it belongs.

BRICK, JR.

And what good is that going to do me?

MARGARET

Because I really don't see the point of any of this, or how any of this has anything to do with you. The relationship two people have with each other is a private thing that even their children do not need to understand or try to analyze.

BRICK JR.

Is that so, Dr. Pollitt?

MARGARET

Yes, indeed. You also need to know that there is always one person in a relationship who loves more than the other, and I was that person. It's really that simple.

BRICK JR.

Then who did Daddy love the most?

MARGARET

Why... you, of course.

BRICK JR.

I was talking about romantic love.

MARGARET

What kind of craziness did these people in California put into your head?

BRICK JR.

Just... things. Things to think about.

MARGARET

Well, it sounds like a load of crap to me as Big Daddy used to say. Nothing but a big load of crap. I knew good and well this was all going to be a huge mistake.

BRICK JR.

No, it's not. All I'm trying to do is simply figure out the truth.

MARGARET

The truth? What a joke. The truth is whatever you want it to be. Everybody's idea of the truth is different even though we all think we possess the one true truth. No two people have the same truth. In fact, no one in this family has ever had the same truth.

BRICK JR.

Okay. Then, I'd love to finally hear your truth about Skipper?

MARGARET

Excuse me?

BRICK, JR.

Skipper? Did I just hit a nerve?

MARGARET

You most certainly did not.

BRICK JR.

Then, who is or who was Skipper?

MARGARET

I'm not quite sure who you're referring to. I've known several Skippers in my life. There was one when I was in high school with, and I do believe there was another who used to...

BRICK JR.

Oh, come off it, Mother. It's a name I often heard whispered when I was a child. I'm sure you know exactly the Skipper I'm talking about.

MARGARET

I didn't realize you were such an observant child. You certainly got that from my DNA.

BRICK JR.

It's easy to observe the obvious.

MARGARET

Were we really that obvious or were you just an overly nosey child?

BRICK JR.

I don't know. Why don't you tell me?

MARGARET

Tell you what? I have no earthly idea what you want me to tell you.

BRICK, JR.

Very well. Then let me tell you my little story, and maybe it will trigger some memories.

MARGARET

There's no need to be smart.

BRICK, JR.

Sorry.

(Pause.)

You see, the day before Daddy died, I went into his room to check on him, and nobody else was in there. It was very peaceful. Just me and Daddy. I thought he was asleep, but after a minute or two he opened his eyes and said to me, "Is that you Skipper?" Of course I said, "No, Daddy. It's me, Brick." But he just ignored me and took my hand in his and said, "Skipper, you finally came back to me." I didn't know what to do, so I just held his hand until he fell asleep again.

MARGARET

Why did you never tell me about this?

BRICK JR.

It felt too personal.

(Pause.)

So who is Skipper?

MARGARET

He was a friend of your father's.

BRICK JR.

What kind of a friend?

MARGARET

Just a poor, lost soul he took under his wing. You know your father. He was always picking up strays and such.

BRICK JR

When was this?

MARGARET

Before you were born. Back in the day when they played a little football together.

BRICK JR.

Just like Lacey Jr. and I used to play football with Daddy in the back yard?

MARGARET

Goodness, no. You were both just innocent kids. Your father and Skipper were so called professional players who also used to drink a lot together.

BRICK JR.

That's it? Just drinking and football buddies?

MARGARET

What else would there be? Friends playing ball together and drinking too much. Seems to be a common theme among certain men.

BRICK JR.

Perhaps, but it seemed to me there was something else he was trying to convey to me on his deathbed.

MARGARET

Oh, please. He was a dying man. Dying people say and do all sorts of things they wouldn't normally because they're hallucinating. I really don't think you should read too much into this one.

BRICK JR.

Were you also friends with Skipper?

MARGARET

We tolerated each other as most wives tolerate their husband's friends.

BRICK JR.

Tolerance? That's it?

MARGARET

What else did you expect?

BRICK JR.

Something a little more passionate. Love or hate.

MARGARET

I reserve those emotions for family. Now, don't get me wrong. Skipper could have a certain charm about him, but I never really fell for it as others did.

BRICK JR.

But Daddy did?

MARGARET

Some would have said, yes, but I don't think so. As you well know, your father's weaknesses lied elsewhere.

BRICK JR.

So where is Skipper now? I'd like to meet him some day.

MARGARET

Unfortunately, dead and in his grave just like your father.

BRICK JR.

I see. So that's it? That's all there is?

MARGARET

As far as I know, yes, but why don't you ask me whatever it is you really want to know?

BRICK JR.

Because I'm not really sure what I want to know, but I feel strongly there's something more I need to know, so my life can make better sense.

MARGARET

Don't make me laugh. If life made sense, none of us would want to live it. Now, let's stop all of this madness and get on with this day so we can get it over with and move on to tomorrow.

BRICK JR.

So, other than a little DNA, you don't think Daddy and I share any other truths?

MARGARET

Absolutely not the kind you seem to be thinking of. Now, not to change the subject, but I would like to tell you a truth I have decided on.