

This is What's Left

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[A living room. A couch, coffee table, end table with a dead plant. A window lets some sun in. The decor is dated. An old person lived here. There are boxes around and a couple of oversized large trash cans; the room is being packed up.]

[At curtain, Alex, a worried-looking but put together man in his 30s, dressy casual clothes, is looking through a pile of papers. He flips, flips, flips, and exasperated, throws them into one of the bins. Taylor, his younger sibling, dressed in shorts and a t-shirt, far more relaxed, enters quickly, carrying a couple of boxes of loose stuff.]

NOTE THAT ALL ROLES CAN BE PLAYED MALE OR FEMALE.

TAYLOR

This is pretty much it.

*(Noticing the paper)*

What's that? That's not what we said we'd do.

ALEX

I know, but do I really need to clear every piece of paper with you?

*[There's a pause, which is an answer]*

ALEX (CONT'D)

Fine, I... admit it. Taylor, without consulting you, in violation of our agreement, I decided on my own to throw away  
(picking up some of the  
papers)

Mom and Dad's electric bills, dating back to 2003. Gone. Did the new central air that Mom bought after Dad died six years ago really pay for itself?

(Dropping them back in the  
pile)

It's a mystery that we'll never know. And... we'll never care.

TAYLOR

I get that this is annoying, Alex. But you know Mom! And, Dad kept everything.

ALEX

*Everything.*

TAYLOR

And kept it organized. But Mom couldn't keep anything together. Or throw anything away.

(He gets a look)

TAYLOR (CONT'D)

I'm talking about Mom.

ALEX

Are we? I didn't say anything-

*[ENTER Morgan, an older woman. She's dressed comfortably, if somewhat haphazardly and has multiple pens behind her ears, in pockets, and so forth. She carries a notebook with a lot of paper stuck in it, and more paper sticking out of her back pocket.]*

MORGAN

Yes you did, Alex, you just said something, but nobody knows what. Well team, I hope things are going well down here! Are we making piles for "Keep it," "Sell it," or "Dump it"?

TAYLOR

Morgan, we are getting there.

ALEX

Yeah, "we" have sorted the upstairs, the basement, the foyer, the laundry room, this half of the living room and...

(indicating what Taylor has done)

One sixth of the kitchen, too. Good job, good effort.

MORGAN

And I have the buyer for your Dad's model ship collection coming in half an hour. Oh, and nobody wants your parent's jewelry, it's all fake.

(pause)

I probably should have said that more compassionately.

(long pause)

ALEX

Really?

MORGAN

Yeah, sorry. We'll still handle it, though. Don't worry. After we make the sales of the stuff you guys don't want, then we have charity come and take what they want. Then, we come with the dumpster for what's left. Now I won't tell you how much of this stuff is going to end up in the dumpster, because if I did, you'd get really upset.

TAYLOR

(Getting upset)

The dumpster?

ALEX

Thank you, Morgan. For sparing our feelings.

MORGAN

Now we talked, Alex, about letting things go, like these model ships, you don't have room for them, do you?

ALEX

That's not my problem, it's just that-

TAYLOR

Actually, yeah-

MORGAN

Is that my phone?

*(she pulls out a phone)*

MORGAN (CONT'D)

Hello? "Morgan's MorganiZation Specialists", you can't spell Organization without Morgan.

MORGAN (CONT'D)

*(into the phone)*

Gary, did you just call? Wait, we were talking?

*(She hurries offstage)*

ALEX

It's just that Dad didn't have a model ship collection?

TAYLOR

Yeah, he didn't.

[THERE'S A PAUSE]

TAYLOR

We should probably fire her-

ALEX

-we gotta fire her.

TAYLOR

Okay.

ALEX

Okay.

*(There's another pause, as Taylor and Alex look at each other. Taylor quickly moves his finger to his nose. Alex does too, but not as quickly)*

ALEX (CONT'D)

First of all, you can **totally** spell "organization" without "Morgan"-

TAYLOR

-Totally, yes. And this house is way more of a mess now than when she started "Morganizing it."

ALEX

Well.

(gesturing around)

It's not all her fault...

TAYLOR

Oh, it's mine?

ALEX

You've sorted three boxes, then done your own Morganization.

TAYLOR

Well-

ALEX

You Morganized everything into the "keep" pile.

TAYLOR

Well it's better than the dumpster.

ALEX

Taylor...

*(Alex starts sifting through the, roughly, tossing a colander aside)*

TAYLOR

Hey easy with that, easy. How many times did we make pasta with this thing? Thursday night pasta night?

ALEX

That cost like five bucks at Kroger.

TAYLOR

That we used to shop at that Kroger every Sunday, after church, and it's a pit of dirt now.

ALEX

(mockingly)

And now this is all that's left of our Krogering.

*(Alex throws the colander into the pile).*

*(Morgan re-enters)*

MORGAN

Guys, we have a huge problem, and I have no idea how we're going to handle it. I'm sorry. When I said "don't worry," I didn't expect this. You should worry.

TAYLOR

Look, Morgan, we gotta-

MORGAN

Your Dad had that exercise bike in the den, right?

ALEX

Yeah, Mom never went in there. Never once, not even to clean.

MORGAN

Well, I don't know how he got it in there, because we can't get it out the door. It won't fit. He must have been some engineer, your Dad, to pull that off.

ALEX

He... brought it home in a box and put the bike together in that room?

TAYLOR

Yeah, that's... what he did. Look, Morgan, we really have to-

MORGAN

Well there's no way to get it out of the room. We've tried everything.

ALEX

...Take it apart?

MORGAN

(She checks her phone)

Wait. Okay. *Okay!* My assistant has an idea. We're going to try to carry it out the window. I'll be right back.

*[She exits]*

ALEX

(Yelling after her)

It's on the third floor!

TAYLOR

We gotta-

ALEX

Yeah, we gotta fire her not-it-

TAYLOR

Not-it-... oh, come on. Hiring her was your idea.

ALEX

Goddamn Yelp.

TAYLOR

Did we really need an Morganizer?

ALEX

I thought you needed one.

TAYLOR

Oh come on.

ALEX

You needed some kind of help. We have to do something with this. All of this. And I can't take four months off work. We don't do it, it all gets thrown away.

TAYLOR

Thanks for telling me that one more time.

ALEX

If it speeds you up-

TAYLOR

I'm not in a hurry.

ALEX

WHY NOT?

TAYLOR

Because when we're done... This is done.

ALEX

This?

TAYLOR

This... scratch in the wall? Ninth grade musical, you'd just come back from starring as Eugene in Grease. You were so scared but you nailed it. I gave you that bear hug and we fell into the wall.

ALEX

You can take a **picture** of a scratch in the wall, Taylor-

TAYLOR

That tray you just put in the "Dump It" bin - that tray had walnuts in it every Christmas. You used to say-

ALEX

-I know-

TAYLOR

-That it wasn't Christmas until that tray was out and we had walnuts from it. How many Christmases have you spent in this house?

*(Alex can't answer)*

TAYLOR (CONT'D)

How many?

ALEX

All of them.

TAYLOR

This phone. This useless landline phone. It's the phone you got the call on that you got into Princeton. You called your wife for the first time on it. It was the only way you talked with Mom for years-

ALEX

-Taylor-

TAYLOR

-Years that you were too busy to visit. You lived a five hour flight away and how many years did she see you only for the 48 hours around Christmas?

ALEX

So you're dragging your feet packing so you can tell me how crappy I've been?

TAYLOR

Just for once don't be in such a hurry to forget this.

ALEX

This isn't about forgetting, it's about acceptance! I'm not going to forget Mom and Dad, but they're dead, and hanging on to an old useless phone isn't going to change that.

TAYLOR

Would it kill you do something you feel for once? Every decision you make doesn't have to be completely rational.

ALEX

Every decision you make doesn't have to be overly sentimental. What are you going to do, move all this stuff into your studio apartment? Set up a museum to Mom and Dad? Why? Who cares?

TAYLOR

I DO! You should, Alex! If you don't, then I'm the only one that does, and when I'm not around then they're gone, they're \*gone\*... and nobody cares. Seventeen people for Mom's funeral. The hell was that? They had lots of friends...

ALEX

They never talked to those guys, not for years. They were recluses when they got older, Mom especially, after Dad died.

TAYLOR

Like, it's just you and me, and I feel like it's just me, Alex, and I can barely breathe sometimes-



ALEX

It's not just you man. It's not...

(small laugh)

Did I tell you that I left my laptop bag in the airport bathroom when I was flying back to see Mom in the hospital the last time?

TAYLOR

(This is a big deal)

NO.

ALEX

I know, right? Keeping track of things is literally my job. Logistics. Asset tracking. I can tell you where every piece of equipment my company owns is, at any time. But my bag.. I just... walked off without the bag! Left the whole bag just sitting there by a sink, got on the plane, flew back here. They closed the whole bathroom and confiscated it. Were going to blow it up, even.

TAYLOR

That's.... that's hilarious.

ALEX

I know. I haven't told anybody because.. it's kind of embarrassing.

TAYLOR

That you're human?

*(ALEX rolls his eyes)*

TAYLOR (CONT'D)

It's okay, you can be. You can take a minute to look at this stuff and enjoy being here, one more time. It's okay to hang on to some stuff.

ALEX

We have our own stuff, we don't need their stuff. We should find buyers for it while it's still valuable.

TAYLOR

That's not what I meant-

MORGAN

(re-entering, flipping through notes)

So all of the buyers for the furniture have flaked. Except for two where I told them the wrong... day... so they showed up either yesterday or will show up Tomorrow. One of those. I think we'll get ten bucks for the model ships, which brings our total sales to...

ALEX  
Ten dollars?

MORGAN  
Approximately.

(Beat)  
Yes. Exactly.

*(Alex and Taylor look at each other, stunned.)*

MORGAN (CONT'D)  
So we can build on that!

TAYLOR  
Nobody wants... any of this?

MORGAN  
It's not so much that they don't want it, it's that they don't want to pay any money for it.

ALEX  
So we can give it away?

MORGAN  
Well, not all of it. Nothing upholstered. And most of the furniture is mass produced, heavily used, and out of style.

TAYLOR  
Can... we donate it?

MORGAN  
If we can find places that will take it, maybe. Look, boys, this is what's happening. Baby boomers like yours parents are... passing away. And there's all this secondhand stuff flooding the market, flooding the secondhand stores, even flooding the charities.

TAYLOR  
This is OUR stuff, though, it's not worthless!

MORGAN  
It's not. It's not. Just because we can't sell it or even give it away, that doesn't mean it means anything less to you, Taylor.

ALEX  
It's our stuff, but it's just stuff. It's not... it's not all that's left.

*(There's a pause).*

TAYLOR  
I... can I use your phone?

*(Taylor takes Alex's phone and takes a picture of the scratches in the wall, and of the landline phone. He puts the phone in the dump pile).*

ALEX

Hey, check it out-

*(Alex grabs the phone and pretends to be on a call)*

Yo Rosa, I got two tickets to MC Hammer at the Spectrum.  
Hello? Rosa?

MORGAN

Oh god that reminds me-

ALEX

Of what?

TAYLOR

Hammertime?

MORGAN

No, I think I was on the phone with someone before I came down here-

*(Checks her phone)*

-Yes, oh no, hang on-

*(Morgan exits)*

ALEX

You know what? She's okay.

TAYLOR

She's fine.

*(There's a pause as they let the room breathe)*

TAYLOR (CONT'D)

Where's your bag, now?

ALEX

Doesn't matter. Hey, you think that old Sega works?

TAYLOR

Maybe. Last I remember, you drop kicked it after I beat you in NHL Hockey 94.

ALEX

By playing dirty!

TAYLOR

Loser cleans out the bathrooms?

ALEX

(while exiting)

Do you even know how to clean a bathroom?

TAYLOR

(while exiting)

Well, I saw you do it tons of times.

*(They exit)*