

The Favorite

Before us a solid garage door covers the entirety of the stage.

The garage door raises revealing a pile of jumbled bags, boxes full of clothes, trunks, suitcases, tools, holiday decorations, cans of paint, stacks of magazines and many other bizarre and random items. There is an entrance to the garage from inside the house. After a moment a huge stack of boxes fall to the floor revealing Shelby Hunt.

Shelby wears a baggy sweatshirt, jeans, and a ball cap with the American Flag on it. She's in her forties and she is a woman who knows who she is, and knows what she wants. She is opinionated and inflexible in her thinking.

SHELBY

Mother F-r!

Shelby is stacking some boxes, but they are heavy and very hard for her to lift. She opens a box and pulls out an enormous ball of extension cords. She starts to untangle them, but they will not come undone. She is completely frustrated.

SHELBY (CONT'D)

Come on. Really? Really? Christ on a bike!

She angrily throws the extension cords aside. She opens a trash bag. She lifts it high and dumps out a huge pile of tired looking stuffed animals.

She holds one up and smells it. Then she starts lining all of them up one by one on one of the cartons.

Ethan Hunt, Shelby's husband enters from within the house. Ethan is a professor at a local University. Ethan is fascinated by his wife's and her families behavior. He carries some shopping bags with him.

ETHAN

How's it going?!

SHELBY

Very slow. You were gone a long time!

ETHAN

I got everything you asked for.

Ethan looks at a shopping list and recites it to Shelby.

ETHAN

(reading)

Trash bags, glass cleaner, duct tape, jelly beans, and an extension cord for the vacuum.

Shelby picks up the ball of tangled extension cords and aggressively shoves them into Ethan's free hand.

SHELBY

I already found extension cords. What took you so long?

ETHAN

(unpacking)

It was crowded. It's Labor Day weekend. The sales.

Ethan puts down the bag, and tries to untangle the ball of extension cords.

SHELBY

This is taking forever. We're never going to finish by tomorrow morning.

ETHAN

Why does there have to be a yard sale? Couldn't we just have someone come haul all of this junk away?

SHELBY

We don't know what's in here. There's a lot of good stuff. And we could use a few extra bucks.

ETHAN

We don't need the money. What do you think you'll make? After you split it with Megan and Dylan? Fifty bucks?

SHELBY

We can put it into our vacation fund. We'll go somewhere nice.

ETHAN

I told you, now is not a good time for me to get away from the University.

SHELBY

It never is, is it? Will you help me lift this box, please? I want to put it over there.

Ethan helps Shelby lift a very heavy box.

ETHAN

(struggling)

What's in here, meteorites?!

They lift the box onto a shelf.

ETHAN

Have you found anything good yet?

SHELBY

I found those extension cords. Now you can return the one you bought...Or maybe we should keep it. You can never have too many extension cords.

ETHAN

I think you actually can have too many extension cords.

Ethan works at untangling the cords, while he surveys the garage.

ETHAN

I can't believe there are so many boxes. And crates. And bags. And jars of washers and pennies.

SHELBY

You never know when something might come in handy.

ETHAN

A bull dozer would come in handy right about now.

Shelby sorts through a big box,
throwing things out of it as she
speaks.

ETHAN

You and Megan seem to be getting along okay.

SHELBY

(playing the "bigger"
person)

I always try to get along. She's the one who is always trying to push my buttons. It's been fine so far, but you watch—she's just waiting for the right moment to piss me off. She was just *acting* sad at the funeral. But she's not sad. She just wants all our friends and relatives to think she's a better person than me, because she's sad our mother is dead.

ETHAN

You don't think she's upset? It's normal for her to be upset.

SHELBY

She's a faker. She's happy, because she thinks we're selling this house.

ETHAN

I thought we were all still in discussions over what to do with the house.

SHELBY

Our house is way too small for all of our stuff, and this is a much better neighborhood. End of discussion.

ETHAN

This house is way too big for us, you'll just fill it with more junk. And it needs a lot of work. It will be a huge headache. I told you, I don't want to live here.

SHELBY

If she thinks she's going to get the money from our parents house and waste it to open that ridiculous winery, wine bar, or whatever stupid scheme she's concocted this time, she's got another thing coming.

ETHAN

Think coming.

SHELBY

What?

ETHAN

The expression is "another think coming". Not, "thing".

SHELBY

What is wrong with you??

ETHAN

I don't understand why your mother didn't put the house in her will. She put the blender in the will, but not the house.

SHELBY

That blender has a lot of sentimental value. I don't know why she left it to Megan.

ETHAN

It would have made it easier if she said which of you should have the house, or at least some kind of instructions. You and Megan should talk it out.

SHELBY

Why do you always want us to talk things out? You know, that talking never solves anything with that woman. It always ends up with her screaming at me and one of us throwing something.

ETHAN

You know, the death of a parent can bring up a lot of unresolved childhood issues. It's perfectly normal if you each express your grief in different ways.

SHELBY

Who's grieving? I'm over it.

ETHAN

Losing a parent is a traumatic event. Everybody deals with it differently. There's nothing that says how you have to feel.

SHELBY

Good. Because I don't feel anything.

ETHAN
You don't mean that.

SHELBY
Yes. I do.

ETHAN
No, you don't. It's okay. Your reaction is perfectly normal.

SHELBY
Stop trying to analyze me. We're not in your sociology class.

ETHAN
You know I teach psychology. I'm only trying to help.

Ethan gives Shelby a hug. She tenses at first but then hugs him back.

SHELBY
We're hugging now? Is that who we are? We're huggers? You don't have to worry about me honey, I'm fine.

ETHAN
I know you're fine, but it's okay if you feel a little sad going through all this stuff.

SHELBY
I'm not sad.

ETHAN
But it's okay if you are.

SHELBY
I'm fine.

ETHAN
I know you don't like feelings, but it's okay if you have them.

Ethan kisses Shelby on the forehead.

SHELBY
Go find out what's in that box over there.

Ethan and Shelby sort through various boxes.

ETHAN

Wow.

SHELBY

What? What's in there?

ETHAN

Pencils. Pens. Paper clips. Papers. Staples. And a lot of glitter.

SHELBY

That's probably from a junk drawer.

They continue to sort through
boxes and bags.

ETHAN

I don't understand a junk drawer. If it's junk, then why keep it?

SHELBY

It's not really junk, it's just what people say. Come on, quit jabbering. We've got work to do.

Ethan sorts through piles of
junk.

ETHAN

Look at all this stuff! Dried out paint cans, bleach, turpentine, muriatic acid, tar remover, old shellac, old weed killer, old ant killer, I don't even know what this is because the label's gone... grass seed, fertilizer, broken hack saws, four garden hoses with holes in them...

SHELBY

And a partridge in a pear tree...Get over it. Everyone's garage has junk like this.

ETHAN

Not like this. You know your mother was definitely a hoarder right?

SHELBY

I don't like that word. It sounds dirty. I'd call her a collector.

ETHAN

Fine. Collector. But, traits like that often get passed on to the offspring.

And you've been starting to save things in little boxes all over our house. I'm just a little concerned is all. With hoarding...sorry...collecting... the older you get, the worse it becomes.

SHELBY

I'm no hoarder. You're just wasteful. And don't use words like "offspring". You're just trying to sound fancy.

ETHAN

No, I'm trying to help you through a difficult time.

SHELBY

Well, knock it off!

Megan, Shelby's sister, enters from inside the house. She is in her forties, but it's hard to tell her age because she wears a frilly pink top, and a very short skirt. Something more appropriate for a girl in her teens. She is drinking a glass of wine.

MEGAN

(triumphant)

I finished cleaning out her closet!!!

SHELBY

We were going to do that together. I don't want you taking things without asking Dylan and I.

MEGAN

(lightly)

I'm not going to take anything without asking.

SHELBY

Did you find anything good?

MEGAN

I found a big box full of little toothpastes.

SHELBY

(towards Ethan)

Could come in handy on a vacation.

ETHAN

I told you, maybe next year.

MEGAN

Some of the clothes are vintage now. Somebody will want them.

SHELBY

Maybe we can sell them to that shop that sells all the old clothes. What's that place called?

A beat. Megan starts to cry,
over dramatically.

SHELBY

Oh no! Here we go!

MEGAN

(through crocodile tears)

I can't believe she's gone.

SHELBY

Well, that took about thirty seconds.

MEGAN

(sobbing)

I never got to say goodbye.

SHELBY

Because you haven't been here in two years.

MEGAN

(sobbing)

I've been very busy!!

SHELBY

I told you she was going to die four weeks ago.

MEGAN

(sobbing)

I didn't know you were serious!!

ETHAN

Megan, it's okay. This is a perfectly normal reaction. Guilt. Regret. It's okay.

SHELBY

Ethan, don't take her side! This is a performance.

ETHAN

I'm not siding with either one of you.

MEGAN

(dabbing her eyes)

I think we'll all feel much better once we sell the house and get some closure.

SHELBY

We're not selling this house. Ethan and I are going to fix it up and move in.

Megan's emotions turn on a dime.
She lashes out.

MEGAN

This house is as much mine as it is yours! And you guys don't need the money like I do.

SHELBY

I took care of Mom for five years. I've earned this house. You didn't give a shit about the house or Mom until she was dead.

MEGAN

You already have a perfectly good house, you don't need this one!

ETHAN

(to Shelby)

We really don't.

SHELBY

(to Megan)

How would you know what I need? You haven't even been to my house in years. We're crammed in there, I have no place to put anything.

ETHAN

Our house is over 2000 square feet.

SHELBY

Right. Tiny.

ETHAN

It's not a tiny house. Not like on those TV shows it isn't.

SHELBY

I have been waiting for five years for her to die, so that I could finally live someplace nice.

ETHAN

If we got rid of a bunch of stuff, the house would feel a lot bigger.

MEGAN

Ethan makes a lot of money, why don't you just put an addition on your own house if you want more space?

SHELBY

Teachers just don't make a lot of money Megan.

ETHAN

I'm a professor.