

ONE LAST TASK

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by Larry Hendricks

SETTING

An attorney's office on the fifth floor of a building. There is a desk, with two chairs, placed on a nice rug. On the desk are an urn and some paperwork. On the far side of the desk is a large window.

CHARACTERS

MALCOLM BASCOMB: In his late 30s.

Dangerous clothing.

QUINTEN BASCOMB: In his early 30s.

Business suit, tie.

DELILAH: The office cleaner. Uniformed.

[Delilah is in the office vacuuming the nice rug. She is humming a little tune to herself while she works. She turns off the vacuum, looks at her watch, opens the window and lights a cigarette.]

QUINTEN

[off stage] Don't give me that crap. Just suffer through it a minute.

MALCOLM

[off stage]: This is a waste of time. Bastard's still trying to control me from the grave.

[Delilah hears the men, throws her cigarette out the window and fans the air to get rid of the smoke.]

Quinten and Malcolm burst into the office.

QUINTEN

Oh, Delilah. I didn't know you were here.

DELILAH

Just cleaning up your office, Mr. Bacomb.

QUINTEN

You wouldn't mind going to the third or fourth floor offices to do some cleaning, would you?

DELILAH

I'm on my break. Union rules, you know?

QUINTEN

Well, we wouldn't want you to break union rules, now would we?

[Delilah goes to pick up the vacuum to leave with it.]

QUINTEN

Don't worry about that, Delilah. This won't take too long.

DELILAH

You're the boss.

[Delilah sets the vacuum by the window and exits to the right. Quinten sits at his desk and begins looking at the paperwork on the desk. Malcolm paces around the office.]

QUINTEN

Couldn't you have at least waited until after this is over to start drinking, Malcolm?

MALCOLM

I'm sorry, mother.

QUINTEN

Kiss my ass, you drunken degenerate.

MALCOLM

If you had my life you'd drink, too, Quinten.

QUINTEN

You don't want to get me started, brother.

[Malcolm looks out the window and kicks the vacuum cleaner. Quinten looks through papers on the desk.]

MALCOLM

You're cleaning lady's kind of hot.

QUINTEN

Who? Delilah? I happen to be married, you remember?

MALCOLM

I'd nail her. I'm just sayin'.

QUINTEN

Witty.

MALCOLM

Shut it.

QUINTEN

Kiss my ass. Have a seat, brother.

MALCOLM

I think I'll stand.

QUINTEN

OK, let's get down to business, shall we?

[Quinten rifles through the papers again.]

QUINTEN

Let's see, where's the signature page? I've got something for you to sign.

[Malcolm stops and stares at the urn.]

MALCOLM

Is that him?

QUINTEN

Yes.

MALCOLM

Seems kind of small. What are we going to do with him?

QUINTEN

Father's wishes are specified in his will. He assigned me executor.

MALCOLM

Figures -- you being the attorney and all. Always doing the right thing. Squeaky clean. Church going. Hair cut like a preppie. Doing everything father said. I bet you don't even have to put your pants on one leg at a time, or take a dump every morning like the rest of us.

QUINTEN

Don't test me. He would like the two of us, and only us, to scatter his ashes along the banks of the Missouri river near Helena, Montana. You know, where he grew up.

MALCOLM

And where he forced us to accompany him every goddamned year when we were kids to go fly fishing. I hate fly fishing.

QUINTEN

Well, you won't have to do that any more, now will you?

MALCOLM

Fitting if you ask me.

QUINTEN

How's that, loser?

MALCOLM

That such a large man would end up in such a small vessel.

QUINTEN

Your point?

MALCOLM

A vile, bigger-than-life ogre ends up like this.

QUINTEN

I think you need to take a shit.

MALCOLM

What do you know? You were always his favorite. I'll bet he's left the whole show to you anyway.

QUINTEN

Would it be a surprise? I mean, look at you. You're a mess. You're already drunk at 6 o'clock in the evening. You've probably been drinking all day. No job. Your hair looks like a rat's nest. You stink like a bum. Your second wife left you. Or was it your third? You move about to a new city every time you run up debts you can't repay.

MALCOLM

So you're better than me? I'm the older brother here.

QUINTEN

You sure don't act like it.

MALCOLM

You've always been an ass-kissing turd.

QUINTEN

Very adult of you.

MALCOLM

Why am I here?

QUINTEN

Father's last wishes.

MALCOLM

He didn't give a damn about me. I'm probably here so he can screw me one last time without my permission.

QUINTEN

He did the best he could.

MALCOLM

What planet were you living on? Really? You really think that?

QUINTEN

I loved him.

MALCOLM

Pure excrement. You just wanted to make sure you were held prominently in his will.

QUINTEN

We disagree. You'll never understand.

MALCOLM

Enlighten me, oh wise one.

QUINTEN

It wouldn't get through that booze addled cesspool between your ears.

MALCOLM

I'm the one who has to live with it.

QUINTEN

Father's greatest disappointment. He was glad that mother was dead so she wouldn't have to bear the shame of it.

MALCOLM

Why'd you have to go there? You're an evil little demon, aren't you?

QUINTEN

If the truth hurts ...?

MALCOLM

I don't need to listen to this crap.

QUINTEN

Why couldn't you just make an effort? You could have done great things with your life. How hard would it have been for you to just apply yourself? To show a little backbone. Father always said you had a weak will.

MALCOLM

What do you know? You didn't bear the brunt of father's wrath day in and day out like I did. I don't recall you getting regular beatings. I don't recall him ever calling you an idiot, somebody not qualified to clean his toilets. He never told you that you'd never amount to anything. He never knocked you in the noggin so hard that it gave you a concussion. You never had to

hide the bruises. You never had to face the ridicule of being shunned by him publicly.

QUINTEN

But the drugs, the booze, the women, the prison time? That's how you coped, right? Blasting your way through the world and your family like a tornado, leaving a bloody mess. I don't buy it. You had it good. I had it good. We didn't want for nothing. You squandered your life, pure and simple.

MALCOLM

I'll never be rid of him. I need to be rid of him.

[He picks up the urn from the desk and starts shaking it by his ear. Quinten stands and grabs for the urn. He misses.]

QUINTEN

Leave that alone.

MALCOLM

Piss off.

QUINTEN

I mean it.

MALCOLM

Shut it, crap stain. You know what? I think I'm going to take this to the nearest bar and have a drink. I'm going to celebrate that he's dead. Then, I'm going to pour this into a urinal and piss on it. Then, we'll both be rid of him.

QUINTEN

No you're not.

MALCOLM

Who's going to stop me?

QUINTEN

Give that to me.

MALCOLM

Step aside, douchebag.

[Malcolm tries to exit, and Quinten grabs him. They struggle, and during the struggle, the contents of the urn tumble out onto the floor. The urn hits the ground. Malcolm backs away and stands at the window. Quinten falls to his feet where the ashes have fallen.]

QUINTEN

Look at what you've done.

MALCOLM

It wasn't just me.

QUINTEN

You destroy everything you touch.

MALCOLM

At least I'm honest in my misery. And I'm my own man.

QUINTEN

How can we be brothers?

MALCOLM

Dad should have worn a condom.

QUINTEN

The authorities should have kept you in prison. It's the only safe place for you.

MALCOLM

Never to be forgiven, right?

[Quinten picks up the urn and examines it.]

QUINTEN

Why do you hate me so much?

MALCOLM

I don't hate you. I hate what you and father represent. The money. The power. Controlling other people's lives. It's delusion. It doesn't make you better than anybody else.

QUINTEN

Well, welcome to the club. Father left you half of it all. You're a rich man now.

MALCOLM

No way, man. I'll give it to charity. I'm not dancing with that devil. I have my soul to think about. I haven't sold mine like you have.

QUINTEN

Low blow.

MALCOLM

If the truth hurts ...?

QUINTEN

You're dead to me after this is over. You're an animal.

MALCOLM

And you're a "yes" man. You're afraid to be your own man. You're a pussy.

[Quinten throws the urn at Malcolm. He tries to catch it, stumbles on the vacuum cleaner and falls out the window. Quinten gets up and rushes to the window.]

QUINTEN

Oh, God. Hold on, Malcolm. Jesus. Hold on. I'm going to get help. Oh, shit. Call 911 somebody.

[Quinten runs from the room to the left. After a few seconds, a knock sounds at the right. Delilah peeks in from the right. When she sees the office empty, she enters. She walks over to the vacuum and sees the mess on the floor.]

DELILAH

Jesus, what on Earth happened here?

[Delilah shrugs, picks up the vacuum, turns it on and begins sucking up the mess on the floor.]

BLACKOUT and END