

# **CLEANING THE ATTIC**

by Michael Gainey

## **PAGE ONE – Five Panels**

### **PANEL ONE**

A PAGE WIDE PANEL In a dusty old attic, cardboard boxes are stacked haphazardly in front of exposed beams and plywood walkways. JUNIOR, 40s, a frumpy construction worker-type kneels on the floor, pulling WORN OLD TOYS from the flaps of one such box. His elderly mother, MA, kneels nearby and reaches desperately for the toys in Junior's hands.

MA: Be careful with those!

### **PANEL TWO**

Junior defiantly shoves the toys into a trash bag in front of him.

JUNIOR: Why do you still have these?

### **PANEL THREE**

Ma carefully takes the toys Junior just threw away from the trash and places them into a box next to her for safekeeping.

MA: They're your sister's.

### **PANEL FOUR**

Junior pulls more worn keepsakes from the box in front of him with one hand and uses the other hand to place them into a trash bag on the floor.

JUNIOR: And where's she?

### **PANEL FIVE**

Again, Ma saves the keepsakes Junior just tossed, retrieving them from the trash bag and placing them in a box. She speaks smugly about her favorite child.

MA: *She's* Assistant D.A.

## **PAGE TWO – Six Panels**

### **PANEL ONE**

Ma searches through the trash bag in front of her and turns away to deliver her hateful quip.

MA:               ...Not some lazy no-goodnik.

### **PANEL TWO**

Junior gestures with his hands in exasperation.

JUNIOR:        I run my own business!

### **PANEL THREE**

Ma waves off Junior's remark with a scowl. Junior continues rifling through the box unaffected. He's heard it before.

MA:                *A devastation* business.

JUNIOR:        Demolition, Ma.

### **PANEL FOUR**

Ma raises her voice, holding up a toy stethoscope. Junior clutches his face in frustrated disbelief.

MA:                You could have been a doctor!

JUNIOR:        Cuz you bought me a stethoscope?!

### **PANEL FIVE**

They sit in silence, slightly turned away from each other, settling their tempers.

### **PANEL SIX**

Junior holds OLD MAGAZINES in one hand and a BROKEN UMBRELLA in the other. Ma desperately snatches the Umbrella .

JUNIOR:        We gotta get rid o' these—

MA: No!

### **PAGE THREE – Six Panels**

#### **PANEL ONE**

From his knees, Junior clasps his hands together in a sincere prayer.

JUNIOR: Ma, I'm beggin' ya to move on.

#### **PANEL TWO**

Junior gestures toward the ceiling. Behind him, a soft spot in the roofing DRIPS into a rusty bucket on the floor.

JUNIOR: The house... it's barely standin'!

#### **PANEL THREE**

Junior counts the defects on one hand as he lists them.

JUNIOR: You got mold, termites, all this junk--

#### **PANEL FOUR**

Ma looks down at an old patchwork doll in her hands. The doll is in two pieces, the head in one hand, the worn body in the other. Ma's hair hangs in her face obscuring her eyes. She is an emotional time bomb.

MA: Junk?

#### **PANEL FIVE**

Ma's hands now SQUEEZE the old doll between surprisingly strong fingers. Her head has lifted slightly, revealing wide, manic eyes casting a hard stare at her off-panel son.

MA: JUNK?!

#### **PANEL SIX**

Junior's shoulders sink. He is a deer in headlights and his mother is the oncoming truck (off-panel). Her silhouette casts over him as she stands and Junior looks up at the growing figure in front of him.

JUNIOR: M-Ma?

## **PAGE FOUR - Five Panels**

### **PANEL ONE**

LOW ANGLE: Ma now towers over Junior (off-panel). Her form has become a monstrous phantom with hands extended, spreading claw-like fingers. Her stringy hair floats in place as if in zero gravity. Like a mix between the mythical banshee and the librarian ghost in Ghostbusters.

MA: This junk... was MY LIFE!

### **PANEL TWO**

A WIDER SHOT: We can now see Junior, still on his knees in front of the figure of his ghostly mother. He looks up in shock.

MA: You were too busy to visit a sick old lady

MA: Now...

### **PANEL THREE**

HIGH ANGLE: Junior cowers, his expression twisted in horror like a victim in The Ring or Edvard Munch's "The Scream".

### **PANEL FOUR**

A PAGE-WIDE PANEL: Towering over Junior's huddled form, the hideous figure of Ma holds out a paint canister and a paintbrush, wailing her orders for all to hear.

MA: ... go paint the wainscoting in the hallway!

END