

ONE MAN'S TRASH

by  
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FADE IN:

INT. STORAGE UNIT

Darkness. Keys jingle. A lock clicks open and is removed.

The steel door rolls up, spilling florescent light onto stacks of boxes, plastic bins, and household goods.

JAMES (40s), dour, dressed comfortably in jeans, t-shirt and boots, scrutinizes the contents of the storage unit, unfamiliar with them.

He opens the nearest plastic bin. Inside are stacks of home and garden magazines.

He opens a box next to it full of crossword and sudoku books.

A clothes rack against the wall catches his attention. He opens the doors to find it full of men's clothes and shoes in plastic wrap.

James looks over the contents, sizing everything up. He pulls out his cell phone and makes a call.

JAMES

Hi. Are you busy right now?

James pulls the lid off another plastic bin full of kitchen utensils and appliances.

JAMES

I won an auction. Yeah, storage unit, finally got one. There's more here than I thought.

James listens for a moment, letting his eyes wander. He spots an older gaming console.

JAMES

You're the best. Unit two twelve.

James hangs up as he makes his way to the gaming console. He starts flipping through a box of games next to it.

LATER

James has cleared a space on the floor to sit. He looks through a photo album. The pictures have a few selfies of a MAN (50s) in various outdoor settings: a remote beach, a hiking trail, camping, in an RV.

Heeled boots echo towards the storage unit.

James continues through the photos as SUE (40s) strides into view, comfortable but stylish in jeans, a light jacket, boots, leather purse, hair tied back and little make up. She crosses her arms as she surveys the unit.

SUE

I can see why you bought this.  
It's kind of like ordered chaos.  
Very you.

James tosses the photos into a box.

SUE

Not even a chuckle? Tough crowd.

James looks at Sue, distraught, pained.

JAMES

This guy...

His voice catches.

Sue sets her purse down and sits on the floor in front of him.

SUE

Talk to me.

James points to the box of photos.

JAMES

Travel photos and selfies.

James points to the clothes rack.

JAMES

Men's clothes and shoes.

He gets up to show her the video games.

JAMES

Good games. Single player.

He pulls open the box of puzzle books.

JAMES

Crosswords. Sudokus.

SUE

I'm not following you...

JAMES

I do puzzles. I play games. I cook. I go places. There's a box over there full of home and garden magazines. I have some of them.

James tries to regain control of himself as despair overtakes him.

JAMES

This is me, Sue. I'm looking at my future. Alone.

Understanding dawns on Sue.

SUE

The last couple of years have been rough for you since Carol left. You haven't even tried dating, have you?

JAMES

I'm not ready.

SUE

You're afraid to. Of being rejected.

James nods, embarrassed.

SUE

I get it. I really do.

JAMES

I need some air.

James leaves the unit. Sue listens to his footfalls in the corridor fade away. She looks around the unit.

She spots an accordion file folder between boxes. Inside, she finds folded utility bills and starts reading.

EXT. STORAGE FACILITY - LATER

James paces around the parking lot.

He pulls out his cell phone and taps on Contacts.

He taps on CAROL, bringing up her number. His thumb hovers over the call button. And then--

Furious with himself, James jabs the back button, closing his contacts. The cell phone background is a picture of James and Sue laughing.

He looks at the picture and breathes, regaining his composure. He smiles faintly and looks in the direction of the storage unit.

INT. CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

James walks up the corridor, tossing the keys in his hand as he walks.

He comes up to the door of the...

STORAGE UNIT

...and sees Sue waiting for him.

JAMES  
Sorry about that.

SUE  
Feeling better?

James nods.

SUE  
Good. Let me show you something.

Sue takes out a crossword book and a sudoku book. She hands one to James and opens the other.

SUE  
Look at the writing.

JAMES  
What about it?

SUE  
They aren't the same.

JAMES  
One is letters, one is numbers.  
How can you tell?

SUE  
The sudokus are written left-  
handed.

James sees ink smudges that aren't present in the crossword book.

SUE  
Those single player games? Some of  
them have multiplayer modes. I  
even kicked your ass at a couple  
of them.

Sue moves to the clothes rack and does her best Vanna White impression.

James fumbles through the clothes, not sure what to look for.

SUE  
Check the tags, dummy.

JAMES  
Medium and large...

He checks the shoes, surprised by what he finds.

JAMES  
Eight and ten.

SUE  
I'm not finished yet!

Sue hands him two photos. One of the Man on a hiking trail. The other is a SECOND MAN (50s), same hair style, slightly slimmer.

SUE  
You must have flipped through  
these pretty quickly to miss  
they're of two different men.

James compares the pictures. He shakes his head, bewildered.

SUE  
And then there's this.

She holds out a cable bill. James's eyebrows rise as he reads.

SUE  
Twinkerbelle and the Lust Boys of  
Naughtyland! I am so renting that.

JAMES  
Twinkerbelle?

SUE  
You're clearly not up on your gay  
porn.

James looks around the storage unit, stunned.

JAMES  
They were a couple. How could I  
have gotten it so wrong?

SUE  
I think you saw what you needed to  
see. Maybe this is your wake up  
call, Twinkerbelle.

Sue pokes him in the ribs playfully. He smiles, but it's quickly replaced by pain.

JAMES

Maybe it is. I didn't realize how lonely I've been.

SUE

Maybe it means you're ready to try again. And you will never be alone. I'm not going anywhere.

James turns to face her as her words sink in. It's like he's seeing her for the first time. He stares at her in surprise and wonder.

Sue meets his gaze, squirming as he keeps staring at her, but she maintains his gaze. She's almost afraid to ask--

SUE

What?

James opens his mouth to speak...and backs down. He looks anywhere but at her.

JAMES

We'd better get this stuff cleared out.

Sue can't quite hide her disappointment, but she tries.

SUE

That's what I'm here for.

LATER

The storage unit is almost empty. Sue grabs a Monet water lilies print and her purse. James picks up the last box.

Sue walks to the corridor. James hasn't moved.

SUE

Coming?

JAMES

You're right. I haven't been alone. You've always been there. You were there when I met Carol. You were there to pick up the pieces when it fell apart. You've been there for the best times and you've seen me through the worst. You're the first person I think of to call when I need someone. You've been at the center of my world for as long as I can remember, and I think I've loved you for just as long.

Sue's excitement grows as he talks. She savors the words she has longed to hear before responding.

SUE

I love you. I've always loved you.

JAMES

Why didn't you say something?

SUE

I was afraid.

JAMES

I don't want to be afraid any more.

James lets the box drop. He kisses Sue, deliberate and purposeful at first, and then they are kissing with passion and years of unfulfilled love.

They slowly come apart. Their eyes meet.

JAMES

Let's go get rid of this crap.

SUE

How much did you pay for it?

JAMES

Four hundred.

Sue cringes playfully. She kisses him again.

SUE

Worth it.

James picks up the box and follows her out, pulling the storage unit door closed behind them.

FADE OUT.