

All The Little Things Victor Uriz II Synopsis

This one-act, two person play portrays an older couple reminiscing about their life together. It touches on the topics of raising a family, growing old and the trials of finding their place in a modern world. The dialogue is quick and peppered with repartee. There are moments of humor as well as dialogue that conveys impassioned emotions.

This story might take place in the kitchen and living room of almost any elderly couple. Perhaps you will find pieces of your parents, grandparents, or yourself in this drama/comedy. My intention is to create a world so raw and authentic that it will cause the audience to feel that they know and sympathize with the characters.

The primary theme woven within this piece— — *“It’s the little things that hold a life together.”*

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Staging: Kitchen adjacent to the den (family room). Stage is split in half exposing the audience to a side view of both rooms. There is a doorway connecting the two rooms.

Actors: A married couple. One black female named Loraine. One black male named Morris. A little girl and little boy to provide voices from off stage. The play may be adapted to represent a couple from any ethnic background.

Age of actors: Late sixties-early seventies.

Opening Scene: Loraine is in the kitchen sweeping the floor. Morris is in the den idly watching a baseball game on the TV. It’s an older house with its ambience frozen in the early 1970’s.

Estimated running time of the play is approximately twenty minutes.

The play was written May 30, 2017.

The beginning dialogue captures a series of comic miscommunications between Loraine and Morris.

Loraine hollers from the kitchen. "Did you feed the cat?"

Morris staring at a TV hollers back, (TV noise in the background). "No you don't look fat."

Loraine shakes her head and speaks to herself. "I swear, that man is as deaf as a bag of old rusty nails." She tries again, "Did you give the cat food?"

Morris responds in frustration "I can't hear you". He turns up the volume of the TV (irony). "Why does she have to holler at me like that?"

Loraine, She speaks to herself. "Yeah, he can hear me when it suits him. (speaking to the audience) "Watch this." "Do you want some bacon and eggs?"

Morris, "Over easy, two strips of the bacon. I like my bacon crispy darling."

Loraine, "Can you come in here and throw out the garbage?"

Morris, "Hell no, I don't want corn beef and cabbage."

Loraine, In aggravation shakes her head and responds. "We've been together now fifty four years, don't you think I know how you like your bacon."

Morris, Speaks in a mocking voice. "Oh baby ya know how I like my bacon, but ya don't ever heat up that pan of yours for me no more."

Loraine, "Why would a woman wanna go to the trouble of heating up a pan for a shriveled strip of bacon, all limp gristle and no meat."

Morris, "If ya can't stand the heat, get out the kitchen woman. (pause) "Hey, what you got cooking beneath that apron." Morris laughs in appreciation of his teasing.

Loraine, Hollers back, "Like I said, why waste my time heating up the stove when 30 seconds in a microwave oven gets the job done."

Morris, "I can't hear a word you're saying woman. I'm coming in there to get my meal." He gets up slowly from his chair and heads for the kitchen. He sits down. "One of these days I'm gonna take you out to that *All Ya Can Eat King Buffet*".

Lorraine, “Why waste the money, I can fix you a breakfast better and cheaper than the mess they serve up at that place. Eating all those foods mixed up in one sitting will only give you indigestion. It’s foolish people making pigs of themselves like that. It’s a crying shame, there’s children starving in other countries, while folks here are shoveling slop in their mouths like pigs at a trough. Mmm, Mmm Mmm.”

Morris, “Well sometimes it’s nice just to be waited on and fussed over.”

Lorraine, Roles her eyes as she sets down his plate and glass of milk. “Yes, I know what you mean, its nice to be fussed over. Do you need a warm up on that coffee? How bout a babies bottle and a bib?”

Morris, “Woman, you always got a snappy come back for me. But that’s what I love bout you. You got some sass to ya— —always keeping me on my toes. I swear, you’re a cross between Red Fox, Mohammad Ali and Moms Mabley. What was it she use to say? Oh yea— — *“Old age, you wake up one morning and you got it.”* Morris breaks into a laugh of self approval.

Lorraine, Responds with a snide remark. “Ali said it like this, about getting older. *“A man who views the world the same at fifty as he did at twenty has wasted thirty years of life.”*

Morris, “Yes sir—-yes sir, everybody and everything changes with time. Things come and go, the good and the bad ebbs and flows. Old moms once said *“If you always do what you always did, you will always get what you always got.”* “Ah-huh, some folks I suppose get old and wise while others just get old— —old and stupid.” He shakes his head in confirmation of this revelation.

There’s a pause in their dialogue. What follows is a mismatch in their communication.

Morris, “What do ya wanna do today?”

Lorraine, “Maybe we could drive up to Luther Pass and take a walk to see the wildflowers.”

Morris, “You know they got phones now that you can talk to.”

Lorraine, “Winnemucca Lake is so pretty this time of year. Springs always been my favorite season. It’s filled with the promise— —with the promise of good things yet to come.”

Morris, Yeah, it can tell ya what time it is. All you got to do is ask it.”

Lorraine, “It’s so pretty this time of year with all the wildflowers in bloom. It’s the good lords way of offering up a season of rebirth and renewal.”

Morris, "You can even ask it driving directions and it'll guide you turn by turn to where you wanna go. Imagine that."

Loraine, "Remember how we use to take the children there every year?. I swear, that seems like it was just yesterday. Where's the time go".

Morris, "I swear, people these days talk more and listen less." What the hell were you saying woman?" (the intent is to expose irony)

Loraine, "I miss the kids. My oh my, where's the time gone. I'll tell you this, I'm never to old to be someones mama. Once a mother, always a mother I suppose."

Morris, "Getting old ain't for sissies mama. It's ain't so much the years that get you, it's the miles that make you weary." Morris looks down at his hands. "This world moves to damn fast these days. Everybody's in a hurry. Talking to their phones and relying on computers to solve their problems."

Loraine. "They call them smartphones."

Morris, "Yeah right, smartphones. The phones are getting smarter and folks dumber. I guess I must be getting old, cause nothing makes much sense these days. Yeah, I miss the kids too. Marlene sent me a text yesterday and it took me twenty minutes to figure out how to open it up and read the damn thing. And then it took another twenty minutes for me to punch in my reply and send it."

Loraine, "Well that was nice of you dear. What did you say to her?"

Morris, "I gave up and just sent one of those yellow happy face mojo's."

Loraine, "I think they're called emoji's honey."

Morris, "I thought that was a cuban drink with smashed up mint and gin."

Loraine, "That's a Mojito."

Morris, "I don't drink nothing I can't pronounce. That's why I drink Bud. It comes out just like I'm exhaling." He takes in a deep breath and exhales, "Buuuuuuuuuuuuud".

Loraine, "Can you turn off that TV that you left on in the other room and put on some music. There's nothing on TV these days but trash talking politicians and nasty news stories. The weatherman can't even be trusted. He calls for sun and more often then not it'll rain. Listening to that god forsaken news twenty four hours a day will poison a Christian's soul."

Morris walks into the den and turns off the TV and then turns on the stereo ("I Just Got Paid" by Joe Bonamassa). He carefully walks over to the bookcase and reaches behind

some books and pulls out a bottle of “Jim Beam whiskey”. He takes a quick swig and grimaces, then puts it back. He slowly gets into the groove of the music. He starts to theatrically play air guitar.

Loraine hollers from the kitchen, “Turn that rock and roll music down”.

Morris “What?”

Loraine, “I said turn that damn thing down.”

Morris, “Yeah, I’m getting down. Come on in here girl and shake your money maker.”

Loraine, Reluctantly walks into the door frame leading to the den. She shakes her head and gives a reluctant grin.

Morris, Is getting down with his air guitar and waves Loraine to come join him.

Loraine, She starts to tap her foot and then moves into the den and starts to sway and free dance to the music.

After approximately one minute the song ends. They are both out of breath as they flop down on the couch.

Morris, “Now that’s music. None of that hip-idy hop rap noise. God, listen to me. I sound like some old man cursing modern music. Blues and rock and roll, now that’s the real stuff. Any fool can rap. You don’t got to be a musician or play an instrument, you don’t even have to be a singer. Any fool that can talk trash and rhyme two words can be a raper. Hell, I could do a rap.”

Loraine, “All right. Let’s see you freestyle.”

Morris, “What the hell is free-styling?”

Loraine, “Our grandson Marky was telling me about it when he visited last year. Its when you make up the words— --I mean— -- you make up a rap on the fly.”

Morris, “Yeah I can do that. But you gotta be my beatbox. You know, that drumbeat sound kids make with their mouths.” Morris does a poor imitation of a beatbox.

Loraine, “I’m no Snoopy Dog, but I’ll give it a try.” She stands up and starts beatboxing. Her versions of a beatbox is surprisingly good.

Morris gets up and starts to mimic the way a raper moves. He hunches over and grabs his crotch. He starts to rap, “*Me and Sunny Boy taking it to the streets, pumping out the jams and bumping to the beat, old school, new school, don’t make no difference fool, when Sunny Boy and me are rolling, rolling, rolling in our Escalade. All the girly’s in the*

short skirts, even old ladies wink and try to flirt, traffic cop got jelly donut dripping down his shirt, we're cruising so slow we're making it hurt, when Sunny Boy and me are rolling, rolling, rolling in our escalade."

They high five and fist bump as they break into a big laugh.

Loraine, "Damn boy, what's gonna be your street name? How bout M&M?."

Morris, "Nah I'm more like a "Big Hunk."

Loraine, "You're an M&M alright, Morris the Moron."

Morris, "Now that ain't funny. You keep messing with this old bull you're gonna get the horns."

A cell phone rings in the kitchen.

Morris, "I'll get that." he heads off to the kitchen.

Loraine goes to the bookshelf and from a different shelf she sneaks out a bag of Skittles and the book "Fifty Shades of Gray". She sits down and starts to eat her candy and read.

Morris is in the kitchen and is frustrated. He is struggling to find the right button on the cellphone to answer the call. He stammers, "Hello, hello, who's there? Are you there?"

Morris, "Is that you Marlene? (Pause) We were just talking about you. Mom's planning on making a big dinner for you all.(Pause) Yeah, I see. Uh-huh. (Pause) We understand. Maybe Memorial Day. Sure we understand. Okay, I know you have to run. We love you. Give the kids our love. We miss you all." He slowly rubs his chin and hangs up the phone.

Loraine quickly hides her book and candy.

Morris comes back into the Den. "Yeah, that was Marlene. They can't make it for Mother's Day."

Loraine, "Well, why not? I've already bought a big ole roast and all the fixings to make a pineapple upside down cake. That's her favorite desert."

Morris, Yeah I know. I pulled my old tackle box and fishing pole out to give to little Marky." He takes a deep breath."I guess Danny's got a big project at work he has to finish up. She said that the kids really ought not miss school. I told her that we understood. She wanted to talk to you, but she was late for a meeting. I was looking forward to seeing them all too."

Lorraine takes a deep breath and sighs. “God all mighty, I wish the kids lived closer. Time sure gets away from us. Where’s the time go? It seems just like yesterday that the kids graduated from high school. The next thing you know they were off to college. Then moved on to get a job in some city across the country. I guess there isn’t much opportunity for work around here.”

Morris, “Times sure have changed. But I don’t think for the better. When we were kids all the relatives stayed and made a life right here in their hometown. When I was a boy, every Sunday Mom would get us dressed up for church and then after church we’d make the rounds and visit all the Aunties, Uncles and grandparents. At the end of the day we’d all share a big Sunday meal together.”

Lorraine, “Yes, my family did the same. Everywhere we went we’d get candy, cookies and cold drinks. My folks called it visiting. It doesn’t seem like families visit much anymore. Everybody is scattered about like autumn leaves on a windy day.”

Morris, “I liked the visiting, but I didn’t care much for the going to church part. I suppose some of it stuck with me. The preacher would put a big scare into us all. He’d be carrying on about fire and brimstone and the wrath of god. It cured me of lying and acting a fool. Our folks made sure we learned our manners too. Always scolding us if we didn’t say our please’s and thank you’s. I was taught to shake the old men’s hands and to kiss the old ladies on the cheek. It was yes sir and yes Ma’am— —none of this dude and bro nonsense.” Morris chuckles, “My Uncle Reggie would wink and sneak a dollar in my hand when we’d shake. Hell, back then you could buy something for a dollar.”

Lorraine, “These days kids don’t get to experience all that. I think they’re missing out not having that feeling of belonging to something bigger than themselves. Families were there for one another. Someone got sick you’d bake them a casserole. When there was a new baby born, grandma was right there to show a girl how to care for it. Now a days they got classes for such things. Somethings you can’t learn in a book or a classroom. Attending to a baby takes a grandma’s love.”

Morris, “Yeah I still remember Grandpa standing at the head of his table with a glass of red wine and making his declaration— —”*To our family name— — —may you honor it and carry it with pride*”. “Daddy use to say, *A man’s only got two things in this world, he’s got his family name and his reputation. If you do wrong, it puts shame on us all. And, if you do right, it lifts us all up.* He didn’t have a lot of schooling but he was one of the smartest men I ever knew. Yes sir, great memories. It’s easy for a youngster to get lost these days if they don’t have a family to keep them moving in the right direction. Someone to lend a strong scolding or a whooping if need be.”

Lorraine, “Baby, we’ve got our own good family memories too.” Lorraine walks over to the table and picks up one of the old framed family picture. “I remember the day we took this photo. We got some kind of coupon in the mail to have a family portrait taken at Sears. You thought it was a silly idea, but I talked you into going.”

Morris, "Yeah I remember it well. We sat there between Sporting Goods and Hardware with that washed out backdrop of a barnyard behind us. The damn coupon was only good for one 4X5 picture. That photographer said we didn't read the small print. So, we got suckered into buying a family pack for \$20.00."

Loraine, "Yeah, but I think that was one of the best \$20.00 we ever spent." She holds up the photo. "Look at us all. We were just a young family making our way and having the time of our life. Look at you with that damn fedora you insisted on wearing. You look like a damn pimp daddy with it half cocked to the side of your head like that."

Morris, "Sometimes when I think back on those days, I wonder if I realized what a special time it was. You know?" You get so busy working and paying bills you forget all the small things. You're just raising a family, not ever seeing the time slipping through the hourglass. I always liked the sound of being called Papa. You know what I mean Mama." Morris picks up a framed photo of one of the kids in a baseball uniform.

Loraine, Still looking at the family photo. "I think I sewed that dress for Marlene. I wish we lived nearer to the kids. I could show the girls how to sew."

Morris snickers, "I don't think sewing can compete with mug-book or Facebook or any of those computer games kids play these days. Hey, remember how Rena use to be such a great little short stop. Man, she could scoop up a grounder and beeline it to first base all in one quick graceful motion, just like a ballerina. They won their division and went to state two years in a row. Saved us a lot of money too, getting that college scholarship."

Loraine, "My oh my, we'd go camping for over a week. Just a tent and a Coleman stove. It seems like you and Derek would limit out on rainbows and German Browns before mid day. At night we'd sit around the fire and you'd play silly songs on your guitar. Remember that song" (singing) *My girls a corker, she's a New Yorker, I buy her everything to keep her in style. She's got a pair of hips, just like two battle ships, hey boy's that's where my money goes.* "Oh my word, we'd make so much racket laughing and carrying on that I was afraid they'd throw us out of the park."

Morris, stands by the fireplace mantle. "Sometimes I wonder if I should've done things differently. Maybe I should've taken that promotion in Sacramento. It paid a lot more. Could have bought us one of those big stucco homes in the suburbs. You could of quit that bookkeeping job. I'd of bought you that Chesterfield you wanted. I could of." Loraine interrupts.

Loraine, "Don't be silly. We aren't city folks. This is our home, This is where we belong. We got everything we ever needed right here between these four walls."

Morris, "Maybe we should've taken that family trip to Hawaii rather than paint the house that year."

Loraine, She speaks in a defense tone. "You and Davy painted the house that year. It really needed it. We went to the shore like we always did. You know how the kids loved that boardwalk and the beach. They use to make you ride the roller coaster with them until they got brave enough to ride it on their own. I swear, I think I could here you screaming and hollering above all the children. You'd end up spending twenty dollars or more trying to knock those lead milk bottles down. The girls wouldn't be happy until you won them both stuffed animals."

Morris, "I use to have a pretty good throwing arm. I've won you a doll or two back in the day." Morris moves his arm as if warming up to throw a pitch. "We use to fit five of us in that old Ford Fairlane. No air conditioner, no electric windows, no fancy gadgets. Hell----no seat belts! And that was a three and a half hour drive. You'd bark directions at me while reading the Triple A map, all the while nagging at me to slow down."

Loraine, "The way you drive, I'm surprised we didn't get killed or divorced. I'd about pee myself cause you'd never stop for a bathroom break. Good lord!"

Morris, "We'd have that trunk weighted down so much with suitcases, ice chests, beach umbrella, beach toys, I'm surprised we didn't bottom out our shocks and drag the muffler. That car ran over 200,000 miles. She ran like a top until the day you backed into reverend Morsseys brand new 62 Chevy Malibu."

Loraine, "I felt so bad. The insurance company covered it. I think I baked him a rum cake as a peace offering."

Morris, "The reverend was a tea toddler, but you poured enough rum on top and inside that spongy cake, that one piece would get someone as drunk as a sailor on shore leave. I think your peace offering worked. He had his wife call you up the next day to get the recipe. I swear, you'd have to put a warning on that cake if you sold it at the church bake sale. Beware, do not drive after eating cake, you may get a DUI----Driving under the influence of cake." (Laughter) "We've always been blessed with good neighbors."

Loraine, "I was thinking the other day. We're the last of the original families still left living on the block. Everyone has either moved on or passed away. Most folks don't stay in the same house no more. I really don't understand it. Several of the old neighbors raised a family of five or six in a home no bigger than 1,500 square feet. Then their kids grow up and they go out and buy a new 3,000 square foot for just the two of them."

Morris, "With a house that big you could go days without even seeing your husband. Maybe you wouldn't think that's such a bad idea."

Loraine, "That doesn't make a lick of sense. The only way I'm moving from this house is when the angels carry me off."

Morris, "Our home, clean enough to be called a house, old and falling apart enough to be called a home. Every loose board, chipped tile, squeaky door comes with its own memory. New homes don't come with memories, ya gotta make and earn those things. This old house is full of Casper's."

Lorraine, "What's a Casper?"

Morris, (chuckles) "Friendly ghosts. It's strange. I was cleaning up the backyard yesterday and I intended on taking Buddies doghouse to the dump. I just couldn't bring myself to do it. That dog was part of the family, loyal and true."

Lorraine, "I remember when I'd drive home from work, if I wanted to know where the kids were, I'd just see which front-yard Buddy was laying in front of. He always kept a close eye on the kids."

Morris, "Boy, when he got old and his legs gave out, I'd have to lift him to get him to his feet. He never whined or whimpered. When he'd wake up before me and I wasn't there to get him to his feet, he'd half drag himself to one of the kids rooms and stay there till we all woke. Davy and me built him that doghouse."

Lorraine, "It doesn't seem that long ago. Time plays tricks on the mind. I don't feel old, but the bathroom mirror might beg to differ. Some things are hard to let go of. Isn't that silly?" Lorraine stands up and stares out the window lost in a memory. "Every spring you say you're gonna take down that old basketball hoop and take apart the treehouse in the backyard. I don't think either of us have the heart to do away with any of these things."

Morris, "We're living in a world today where everyone's looking for the next big thing. Big thing? — — — I say hooley on that."

Lorraine, "The other day I was going through the kitchen junk drawer looking for a button I needed to sew on one of your shirts and I found an old beaded key chain Rene made for me. I think she made it in third or fourth grade and gave it to me for mother's day. There was an old program from one of Marlene's dance recitals. There was a photo of Davy in his Dress Blues. He was so talented, smart and handsome. I wonder what he'd be doing today if — — —" It's quiet for a period of time. "Oh my god. — — — I'm Sorry."

Morris, "Don't, don't-----Lets not do this. Lets not go back there. We promised each other to not do this." Morris mournfully picks up a wood clock from the mantle and winds it. "This damn thing is always stopping. It's always wrong. It never kept good time. Always slow or stopping. You can always reset and rewind a clock. Damn, I wish we could do the same with some of the misfortunes that befall us in this life."

Lorraine, "Yes, its funny. It's all the little things that hold a life together. It's the little things. Is this what growing old is? — —-trying to hold onto things that are letting go of

you. (pause) Papa, we always got each other and our house of memories. I'm never letting go— --I'm never letting go of any of all the little things— --never letting go of you."

Morris, "Yes, it's the little things. Little things like this." He pulls Loraine close and gives her a little kiss on the cheek.

Morris, "I hope I've done all the right things. It's hard to know if you're pushing too hard or not pushing hard enough. Was I too tough or-----I don't know. There's some things I'd do differently if I could go back in time. Did I do alright mama?"

Loraine, "You've been a good husband and father-----you had it then, and ya still got it now baby. Even though you can sometimes be a grumpy old fart. I'm still glad I wake up next to you."

Morris, He reaches around and gives her ass a little swat. "I'll show you who's an old fart."

Loraine, She playfully pulls away. "Yeah, I'm glad you didn't take that old doghouse to the dump. Cause that's where you're gonna end up sleeping tonight if you don't behave yourself." They both laugh.

Loraine heads back to the kitchen and Morris turns on the TV. The following dialogue is marred by confusion and misinterpreted communication.

Morris hollers, "I guess I'll turn on the game and torture myself. Watch those damn Giants lose again."

Loraine, "What did you say?"

Morris, "I'm gonna watch the Giants make fools of themselves."

Loraine, "What? I can't hear what your'e saying. You aren't a giant fool?"

Morris, "What? I can't hear a damn word you're saying woman. Did you say something about a giant mule?"

Loraine, (spoken to herself) "Oh my word. That man's gonna be the death of me."
Hollers out to Morris, "Ya old mule, you need to throw the garbage out."

Morris, "Out's? There's two outs and a man on first."

Loraine is drying dishes and then pauses, reminiscing. Little girl voices giggling from off stage. "Mama can we please bake cookies. Am I pretty like you? Why are boys so stupid. Can you make me a dress for the school dance." Loraine has a sad smile come across her face.

Morris is sitting on the couch and the volume of the ballgame is lowered. From off the stage he hears the voices of young boys. "Come on dad, lets play catch. Show me how to tie a fishhook on my line. I'm gonna be as strong as you some day papa. Some day are you gonna show me how to drive a car?"

Morris pulls out his hanky and wipes his eyes.

Lorraine, Screams at the top of her lungs; distinctly pronouncing each word separately. "I love you, ya old fool."

Morris, "Baby I love you too. (Pause) Why don't we take that drive up to the lake before all those wildflowers wilt and die."

As the actors take their bows the song "Hello In There" is played by the artist John Prine.

