

THE \$710 HOUSEKEEPING VISIT



Truth be told, saving money is not the only reason I don't have a housekeeper. My major fear—being judged—becomes apparent when meeting Majed Awamleh, the owner of Buckhead Cleaning, to get an estimate for a “seasonal” service, a good old-fashioned spring cleaning—from baseboards to ceiling vents. As I give him a tour, I compulsively apologize for every stray dirty sock. “Of course,” Majed reassures repeatedly, as if everyone keeps a bowl of stale popcorn kernels in the bedroom. What would you expect in a home with two teenage boys? I know doctors who could learn from Majed's bedside manner. I feel better already.

As the big day draws near, I staunchly resist the temptation to preemptively swipe a toilet or wipe off the toaster oven. This is a test, I remind myself. So what if my entire extended family is arriving in two days? Majed won't let me down.

Indeed, he does not. His friendly crew arrives early. Within minutes, they've discovered a long-abandoned paper airplane and green plastic lizard tossed on top of the TV armoire. Veronica, Isabel and Ana spend nearly four hours on the kitchen/family room alone. I wonder if Majed factored all 48 white cabinet doors and the built-in shelves into his estimate? When they're finished, the room actually *sparkles*. I swear it looks like it's been painted. They clean the toaster oven, the blinds, the windows. This is bliss.

By 2:15, Majed arrives with reinforcements. Our yappy dog makes a run for their feet, loses footing on the newly buffed wood and slides, head first, into a door.

The crew finally pulls out at 5 p.m. Buckhead Cleaning also advertises deep cleaning (about 10 to 12 cents per square foot, plus extra for wood buffing and carpet cleaning) to prepare houses for sale. Heck, with my house looking this good, I remember why *we* bought it. *Buckhead Cleaning, 404-419-7855.*

—BETSY RILEY