

"CUFF-LINKS"

By

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INT. SPACIOUS LIVING ROOM - DAY

A living room filled with space and light. The decor is sparse and elegant--in a way that hints at "classy" but screams "expensive".

THE CLEANER sits on a long, milky-white sofa. They notice a reddish spot on one of the cushions and start scratching at it with their nail.

In the connecting hallway, footsteps echo off the tiled floor. One side of a phone conversation plays out, almost audible, as DEELEY speaks in hushed tones. The conversation concludes and they join THE CLEANER in the living room.

DEELEY

Sorry about that. Business.  
(Pause.) The house looks lovely.  
I'm so glad I got home early enough  
to tell you that.

THE CLEANER

Thank you.

DEELEY

No, thank you. You know you're like  
family to us? We really do think  
so.

DEELEY smiles, the smile gets awkward and then they laugh to shrug off the silence.

DEELEY (CONT'D)

You're not in trouble. I hope you  
don't think that.

THE CLEANER

I don't.

DEELEY

You look nervous.

THE CLEANER

I'm not sure what I'm doing here.

DEELEY

I'll pay you for your time, I'll  
pay extra for now. Overtime.

THE CLEANER

That's okay. I really can't stay long.

DEELEY

I just thought it might be good if we had a talk.

DEELEY sits a little closer to THE CLEANER. Another awkward smile.

DEELEY (CONT'D)

I think you found my cuff-links.

THE CLEANER

I'm sorry?

DEELEY

Cuff-links. For a shirt- for my shirts. They're gold? With a design on them like a constellation? Planets and stars?

Another pause.

THE CLEANER

I don't know what to say.

DEELEY

You're not in trouble. But did you find them?

THE CLEANER

I don't steal from you.

DEELEY

I wasn't suggesting you did.

THE CLEANER looks down at their hands. They reach into their pocket and produce a single cuff-link: gold, planets and stars. They hand it to DEELEY, who sighs.

THE CLEANER

I didn't know what to do.

DEELEY takes the cuff-link and smiles.

DEELEY

That's it. You're a life-saver! Do you have the other one?

THE CLEANER is already holding it, staring at it.

THE CLEANER

These aren't yours.

DEELEY

I'm sorry?

THE CLEANER  
You don't wear cuff-links.

DELLEY  
Yes I do.

But THE CLEANER shakes their head.

THE FLEANER  
You told me, once, that you don't like them. "Waste of buttons." And you waited until I laughed.

DEELEY  
I own cuff-links. I own this set.

THE CLEANER  
I know your wardrobe. I wash your shirts. Why would you own cuff-links?

THE CLEANER waits.

DEELEY  
I need them back.

THE CLEANER  
Who do they belong to?

DEELEY  
That's none of your business.

THE CLEANER  
Nobody in this family.

DEELEY  
Watch yourself.

THE CLEANER  
You're like family to me as well, do you know? You might not know it. But I feel it just the same.

THE CLEANER holds out their hand; DEELEY drops the cuff-link into it, and THE CLEANER puts both back in their pocket.

DEELEY  
What do you want?

THE CLEANER  
Will you drive me to the station?

END.