

LIES, HAMBURGERS, AND CUFFLINKS

Written by

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EXT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Female SCREAMS come from inside the building.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

A dark abandoned storage room.

JEFF (30) wakes up. He has the eyes of a hitman and the analytical mind of an investigator. Still dizzy, he looks for clues and checks every detail he can put his eyes on.

He's hurt and tied to a chair. Jeff can hear the female screams that come from the other room.

From the shadows, two mobsters observe him.

The taller one is a Russian tough guy who looks like a wrestler. This is DIMITRI "THE BEAR" FEDOROV (40).

At Dimitri's side, Jeff sees "CHAINSAW" REED (28). He's an African-American with a big Afro. He combs his vast hair, whistles, and observes Jeff.

The screams cease. A woman sobs.

Upbeat, FABRICE "THE PIANIST" BISSET (50s) enters the room. He wears an elegant suit with a pink tie.

Jeff notices the blood stains on Fabrice's collar and shirt.

Smiling, Fabrice walks towards Jeff, who tries to stay awake. Fabrice stares at Jeff's eyes and speaks with a French accent.

FABRICE

Good morning, Cinderella.

Fabrice glances to a hospital pushcart at Jeff's side. It's full of blades and torture instruments.

FABRICE (CONT'D)

You're probably thinking: what is this guy going to ask me? Right?

Fabrice looks for something in the cart. He finds his cigarette lighter in the middle of the sharpening knives and scalpels.

FABRICE (CONT'D)

Voilà!

He lights his cigar and turns to Jeff.

FABRICE (CONT'D)

I'll ask you nothing. Not now. In my experience, you're going to lie, and it gets me wrathful. So, I'll allow you some time first to you figure out how serious this situation is.

Fabrice smokes the cigar, savors its taste, and puts the hot and red glowing tip on Jeff's arm.

JEFF

(in pain)
Aaaargh!!!

FABRICE

We'll talk later.

Fabrice turns his back and walks away, just to be interrupted by Jeff.

JEFF

It's not Cinderella.

FABRICE

What?

JEFF

You said, "Good morning, Cinderella." You mean Sleeping Beauty, not Cinderella.

Fabrice grins.

FABRICE

A smart-ass. *Oui*. This will be fun.

EXT. RESTAURANT - DAY

It's a roadside restaurant. The kind you would find in a highway in Nevada.

SUPER: "Three days before"

Jeff hops out from his old Toyota. He wears glasses and a dorky haircut, which makes him look like a nerd.

He observes the sign on the Restaurant's door: "Closed."

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

ASHLEY (30s) is the restaurant's manager. Hoarse voice, cheap tattoos, dry hair with a colored tuft, she looks like a cut-throat bitch who just came out from a Led Zeppelin show.

Puzzled, she examines Jeff's résumé.

ASHLEY

You have written here that you lost your last job for stealing.

JEFF

No. I said I was accused of stealing. I didn't do it.

ASHLEY

Are you a moron? Nobody writes this kind of stuff down.

JEFF

But there was an item on the form that--

ASHLEY

Oh, for Christ's sake!

JEFF

Do you prefer people to lie to you?

Ashley sighs.

ASHLEY

Forget it. Do you know how to cook hamburgers?

JEFF

Yep.

ASHLEY

Get the apron.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Fabrice sits close to Jeff.

FABRICE

Jeff... Do you know why they call me *Le Pianist*?

Jeff is silent.

FABRICE (CONT'D)

When I play on the right keys,
people tend to sing.

JEFF

I wasn't working at the restaurant
the night of--

FABRICE

I know. I don't care. You were
working there after that. You saw
things.

JEFF

I saw nothing, I--

FABRICE

Who picked up the tomato sauce?

Jeff seems concerned.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Ashley examines the sauce bowl on the counter. It's full.
Angry, she turns to Jeff.

ASHLEY

Did you touch the tomato sauce?

JEFF

We needed more.

ASHLEY

What the fuck, Jeff! I told ya not
to touch the containers in the
pantry!

JEFF

Oh! Is that where the pantry is? I
meant to ask you just--

Ashley steps out in a hurry.

PANTRY

Ashley examines the tomato sauce pot and puts her hand inside
it. All she finds is tomato sauce.

Jeff walks in.

ASHLEY

Where are they?

JEFF

What?

ASHLEY

The freaking cufflinks!

JEFF

I didn't touch this pot. The expiration date was over.

Jeff points to another tomato sauce pot, open.

ASHLEY

Shit!

Ashley storms out into the...

KITCHEN

She grabs a big kitchen knife and moves to the...

COUNTER

Fuming, Ashley steps through...

THE MAIN HALL

Where she finds...

LAURA (20s), Mexican-American, who mops the floor wearing the restaurant's uniform. If she didn't look so tired and mistreated, she could be a hot girl.

Ashley wields the knife and points it to Laura.

ASHLEY

You son-of-a-bitch, deceiving,
Mexican thief!

Ashley presses the knife against Laura's neck.

LAURA

Ash, calm down!

ASHLEY

To Hell with calm down. Where are
the damn cufflinks?

LAURA

I don't know! I don't know!!! You
took 'em!

ASHLEY

Liar!

Jeff steps in.

JEFF

Hey! Hey, hey, hey! Put the knife
down, or I'll call the cops!

Laura releases Ashley.

LAURA

One of you two took 'em!

JEFF

Took what?

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

A barrel full of water.

Jeff's face is held under the water by Dimitri and Reed.

FABRICE

Mister Semenov is a man with a nice
taste. I must say, he wears some
really *magnifique* cufflinks.

Jeff struggles.

FABRICE (CONT'D)

It seems he may have lost a special
one. Eighteen-carat white gold with
a twenty-one-carat canary yellow
diamond in the center. Sounds
familiar?

Fabrice nods to Dimitri and Reed. They allow Jeff to breathe.

JEFF

I don't know of any--

Dimitri and Reed push Jeff's face under the water again.

FABRICE

It's not about money. Although they
do cost four point two million
dollars, the pair. It's about
respect, Jeff.

JEFF

(gasps for air)
I never saw this pair of--

Back in the water.

FABRICE

Mister Semenov is a trusting gentleman. He does business the old way, with a handshake. But... if people start to consider they can just grab whatever they think they deserve... You see, there's a lesson to be taught here.

Dimitri and Reed pull Jeff by the hair and raise his head.

JEFF

She took it...

FABRICE

She? Who?

INT. RESTAURANT, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ashley still has the knife. She watches over Laura and Jeff, who check all the drawers and pots in the kitchen.

JEFF

You know, it's quite past my hour.

ASHLEY

No one leaves until we find those goddamn cufflinks.

Ashley notices Laura with a cell phone.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

I said no phones! Drop it!

LAURA

I need to find someone to take care of my daughter.

ASHLEY

Laura... you have no idea what you're getting into. Give me those cufflinks. Now.

LAURA

For the last time: I don't have 'em!

ASHLEY

You knew I would sell 'em tonight. Did you get his number? The buyer?

Laura puts away her phone. She moves around and drops a paper napkin close to Jeff.

LAURA
You're paranoid. You never told me
where you hid 'em. You probably
left 'em at home.

ASHLEY
Is that so?

Jeff reads the napkin. It says: "I've got the cufflinks. Help me out. I'll give you half." Ashley doesn't notice it.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
I will have to call my guys. You
know that, don't you? If I do that,
things will get ugly.

LAURA
I can't tell you what I don't know!
I don't know where you put those
frickin' cufflinks.

Jeff folds the napkin and puts it inside his pocket.

ASHLEY
Girl... You're a good liar, I'll
give you that. You're as stubborn
as a--

PAM! Ashley falls on the ground, knocked out.

Serious, Jeff holds a shovel in his hands. It has a blood mark from Ashley's head.

Jeff doesn't look so innocent anymore. He takes off his glasses, corrects his hairstyle, and turns to Laura.

JEFF
Show me.

BATHROOM

Jeff is at Laura's side. Uneasy, Laura tries to get something out from her intimate parts.

LAURA
It's quite difficult with you
standing right next to me.

Jeff looks the other way but still peeks at Laura.

JEFF

Think of me as a doctor.

LAURA

Are you a doctor?

JEFF

You're not leaving my sight,
cupcake.

Laura shakes with her panties down. A metal thing falls on the ground.

Disgusted, Laura grabs the cufflinks and shows them to Jeff.

LAURA

Satisfied?

Jeff examines Semenov's cufflinks and seizes them.

JEFF

Do you drive?

INT./EXT. JEFF'S TOYOTA, TRAVELING - NIGHT

Laura drives. Jeff is at her side with a pistol in his hand.

LAURA

Your name isn't really Jeff, is it?
You are no hamburger cook.

JEFF

Don't you like my hamburgers?

LAURA

Where should I drive?

JEFF

You promised me half. So, my guess
is you already know how much these
are worth. Which means you talked
to the buyer. Let's see him.

LAURA

He's in Mexico.

JEFF

You're fun. And hot. I would prefer
not to kill you.

Laura moans.

LAURA
He lives in Carson City...

JEFF
Good girl.

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

Jeff fills the Toyota's tank.

JEFF
How did it happen?

LAURA
What do you mean?

JEFF
Semenov's cufflinks. You girls
didn't find 'em on the streets.

LAURA
We didn't kill that guy, right?

JEFF
I've never said that.

LAURA
Alright. Fucking Russians.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Laura sets up the beer cans on a tray.

LAURA
George, hurry up with these buffalo
wings! These guys will get--

BAM! BAM! BAM!

Behind Laura, a violent shooting starts.

GEORGE (22), the cook, comes out from the kitchen to check
what's going on.

BAM!

Laura ducks behind the counter. George falls dead in front of
her, a bullet hole in his forehead.

LAURA (CONT'D)
George! George!

ANATOLY (40), a Russian guy in a leather jacket, is on the ground, wounded. He grunts, in pain.

Anatoly bleeds and crawls as he tries to get to his fallen gun.

The other two shooters point their guns at Anatoly.

The first shooter is a RED-HAIRED WOMAN (mid-20s) who wears a black jumpsuit. The second one is a BALD MAN (40s), who wears a fake Police uniform.

The Bald Man kicks Anatoly's gun away.

RED-HAIRED WOMAN
Louisiana Joe sends his regards.

ANATOLY
(Russian, subtitles)
You traitorous son-of-a--

BAM, BAM, BAM. Red-Haired Woman and Bald Man execute Anatoly.

Ashley enters the hall.

ASHLEY
Fuckin' Jesus...

Bald Man points his gun at Ashley. He's interrupted by...

...PIETRO (35), a Russian mobster who works for Anatoly. Out of nowhere, he steps into the restaurant with a submachine gun in his hands.

PIETRO
(Russian)
BASTARDS!!!

Pietro shoots a burst of bullets at Red-Haired Woman and Bald Man. Red-Haired Woman shoots back.

Ashley hides behind the counter next to Laura.

BRA-TATATATAT!!! The submachine gun sings its melody.

Red-Haired Woman and Bald Man are severely wounded. Soaked in blood, they try to breathe their last gulps of air.

Pietro has a bullet in his shoulder. He steps out of the restaurant and leaves a trail of blood.

A moment of silence, interrupted by the last moan from Bald Man.

Hidden, Laura and Ashley listen as the car peels away. They stand up and observe the dead bodies.

Ashley notices a small velvet box over the table where the group was seated. She opens it and finds the cufflinks.

LAURA
Should we call the police?

ASHLEY
Hell no.

END OF FLASHBACK

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Jeff has a black eye and a few more bruises. He glances at Laura and Ashley, who are now in the same room. Both girls are hurt and tied up.

FABRICE
This is really fascinating. Ashley says Laura has the cufflinks. Laura blames on Jeff. Jeff points his finger to Ashley...

Laura and Ashley are broken down. Jeff observes.

FABRICE (CONT'D)
Maybe it's time to be more... creative. *Allons-y!*

Fabrice grabs a can of gasoline and pours it over Laura and Ashley.

LAURA
(muffled)
Mmmm... mmm... mmm...

ASHLEY
(muffled)
No! Noooo!!! Please!

JEFF
Stop!

Fabrice glances at Jeff.

JEFF (CONT'D)
I'll talk.

INT./EXT. JEFF'S TOYOTA, TRAVELING - NIGHT

Laura drives as Jeff examines her phone contacts.

Jeff stares at a photo of a sickly six-year-old girl in Laura's cell phone.

JEFF
Is that your daughter?

LAURA
Yep.

JEFF
Is she ill?

Laura looks the other way.

LAURA
She needs a new kidney.

JEFF
Was that your plan? Steal the cufflinks to pay for her operation?

LAURA
It crossed my mind.

Jeff grunts.

LAURA (CONT'D)
I'm not a terrible person, okay?

JEFF
You're not. You're just stupid.

LAURA
Her name is Olivia. Doctors say she isn't eligible for the operation. There's this guy in India, and with two hundred thousand dollars--

JEFF
Just stop. Do you think I care? You're not the first one telling me a sad story.

LAURA
It's not fair. She's so young... Please. Don't do anything to her.

JEFF
Save your breath, kiddo. This is a job. You've just drawn the shorter straw.

Laura remains quiet.

JEFF (CONT'D)
What happened to the bodies?

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. RESTAURANT, DAY

Ashley wields a meat cleaver, covered in blood.

Disgusted, Laura takes a dismembered arm and puts in a bag. There are four large sacks at her side, full of body parts.

LAURA
That's the last one. Now, what?

Ashley smiles.

INT. DOG KENNEL - DAY

Three GERMAN SHEPHERD DOGS are quite cheerful as they eat their meat. There are a few more dogs in the other sections of this kennel.

SHAPIRO (65) observes his pets as they devour the happy meal. He's a tired old man with thick glasses and a can.

SHAPIRO
You're so kind. They love the restaurant's leftovers.

ASHLEY
It's a shame to see good meat expire.

SHAPIRO
Indeed. Do you mind if I--

ASHLEY
Don't worry. We can take care of the rest.

Shapiro nods and walks away. Ashley smirks.

EXT. DOG KENNEL - DAY (LATER)

Ashley and Laura walk out of the building towards Ashley's SUV.

ASHLEY

Let me handle it. Just keep your damn mouth shut.

LAURA

Those dudes will come back.

ASHLEY

Do you think they'll risk being arrested for first-degree murder because of a pair of cufflinks?

LAURA

I don't know.

ASHLEY

We'll say George disappeared. I'll hire a new cook tomorrow, repair the windows, and we'll act as it never happened.

LAURA

What about the cufflinks?

ASHLEY

We can sell 'em. I know a guy who probably knows a guy.

END OF FLASHBACK

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Fabrice nears Jeff's face.

FABRICE

Alright, Jeff. Enlighten us. After Anatoly was killed... who helped Laura with the cufflinks?

JEFF

The Chameleon.

Fabrice laughs. Dimitri and Reed laugh too.

FABRICE

You're a piece of work. You said you were a cook. How does a cook know about the Chameleon?

JEFF

I don't. That's what Laura told me.

FABRICE

She did?

LAURA

(muffled)

Mmmm... mmm... mmm...

JEFF

They're working together.

Fabrice laughs. Dimitri and Reed are serious now.

FABRICE

The Chameleon? Not the bogeyman? Or Santa Claus? Jeff... There's no Chameleon. These are stories told by the bosses to scare ze foot soldiers.

JEFF

I'm just repeating what I heard.

FABRICE

I thought you were smarter than that.

Fabrice beats the crap out of Jeff.

EXT. HIGHWAY 395 - NIGHT

The Toyota is parked at the roadside.

Jeff pees on a tree. Laura is next to him. She wears a handcuff which locks her arm to Jeff's.

LAURA

I couldn't wait in the car?

JEFF

Are you shy?

Jeff shakes his "baby maker" and puts it back inside his pants. Laura seems disgusted.

They walk towards the car.

LAURA

Are you some sort of hitman?

JEFF

I'm an investigator. For a special kind of client.

LAURA

The Mob?

Jeff doesn't answer that. They enter the car.

INT./EXT. JEFF'S TOYOTA, TRAVELING - CONTINUOUS

Laura starts the engine and drives.

LAURA

Exactly what do you investigate?

JEFF

Do you know that stores pay for people to pretend they're costumers, so they write a report on the shop's service?

LAURA

Like a mystery shopper?

JEFF

Is that what they're called? Yep. That's what I do. I just check their service.

LAURA

Are you going to kill me?

Jeff doesn't answer.

The car passes by a sign: "Carson City - 15 miles"

EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE (CARSON CITY) - NIGHT

The Toyota parks outside a discrete suburban house in a humble neighborhood.

Jeff observes the entrance.

LAURA

Here is the meeting place. He thinks I'm Ashley.

JEFF

Let me do the talking.

They get out of the Toyota.

AT THE DOOR

Jeff knocks with Laura at his side. The door opens.

FABRICE
(smiling)
Come in.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Jeff spits blood.

Fabrice is in front of him, ready to land another punch.

FABRICE
It seems you're out of answers, *mon ami*. Unfortunately for you, you're only useful as long you provide me with some responses.

Jeff coughs.

Dimitri examines Ashley's pale face. Her eyes are petrified.

DIMITRI
She's gone.

FABRICE
Such a waste.

Fabrice closes Ashley's eyes. Laura sobs.

FABRICE (CONT'D)
I believe it's time to close the night. It was a pleasure meeting you, Jeff. Any last words?

Reed hands Fabrice a pistol with a silencer. Fabrice points the gun at Jeff and is about to shoot.

JEFF
You never asked me for the buyer's name.

FABRICE
What?

JEFF
You were waiting in the house where we were supposed to drop the goods.

FABRICE
I was following you.

JEFF

All you asked for was the location of the cufflinks. You never asked me who the buyer was.

FABRICE

It's not important.

JEFF

That's the only thing Mister Semenov cared about. He wanted to get this fence and make it an example. He said it to you, directly.

Fabrice is pale.

FABRICE

How do you--

JEFF

You could interrogate me for days. The only explanation why you're ending this so quick is... because you know we didn't steal it.

MONTAGE

JEFF (V.O.)

It was you who hired Anatoly...

- Fabrice sits with Anatoly in a restaurant.

JEFF (V.O.)

...You gave him the safe's combination...

- In the dark, Anatoly opens Semenov's safe.

JEFF (V.O.)

...Then, you had him killed. But the plan backfired.

- Outside view from the restaurant during Anatoly's execution. Pietro comes in with his submachine gun.

END OF MONTAGE

JEFF

That's when you offered to buy 'em from Ashley. Of course, she didn't know you would kill her.

(MORE)

JEFF (CONT'D)

My guess is you plan to blame on us, get rid of the bodies, and go back to the restaurant to find 'em. What you don't know is that the cufflinks aren't there.

FABRICE

Who... who are you?!

JEFF

Semenov was right. It was you all along. You're the traitor. You're working for Louisiana Joe.

Fabrice presses the trigger and shoots at Jeff. The pistol has no ammunition.

Dimitri and Reed point their guns at Fabrice.

Cautious, Dimitri collects Fabrice's pistol. Reed frees Jeff from the chains and ropes. Fabrice closes his eyes.

FABRICE

Tell Semenov I'm sorry. I'm... My daughter... she was arrested. She's in Russia now. Louisiana Joe promised me that he--

JEFF

Do it.

BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM!

Jeff limps away, as Dimitri and Reed shoot all their ammunition on Fabrice.

INT./EXT. JEFF'S TOYOTA, TRAVELING - NIGHT

Jeff drives with Dimitri at his side. Reed holds Laura hostage.

DIMITRI

You have a weird line of work, Mister Chameleon.

JEFF

Call me Jeff.

EXT. HIGHWAY 395 - NIGHT

Dimitri and Reed drag Laura, who is tied. Jeff walks right after them. Reed whistles.

They step towards the tree where Jeff peed before.

Reed frees Laura's mouth.

REED

Where did you bury the cufflinks?

LAURA

Why are you asking me that? He was
the one who buried it.

Puzzled, Reed glances at Jeff.

BAM! Jeff puts a bullet in his head.

Dimitri tries to draw his gun, but he is not quick enough.

BAM! BAM! BAM! Jeff kills Dimitri as well.

Astounded, Laura observes Jeff as he nears the tree and
retrieves the buried cufflinks.

JEFF

Let's go.

Jeff and Laura leave the bodies behind.

INT./EXT. JEFF'S TOYOTA, TRAVELING - NIGHT

Laura is in the driver's seat. Jeff is seated just next to
her.

LAURA

Where should we go now?

Jeff examines the cufflinks.

JEFF

I've always been curious about
India.

Laura glares at Jeff. She starts the engine.

LAURA

Are you going to save my daughter?
Or are you going to kill me?

JEFF

Just drive.

The car peels away and cruises Highway 395.

FADE OUT.