

The Janitor

The hour was eleven at night and the job was not yet finished. The man worked tirelessly to clean the place. "It's got to be spotless," the boss had said. With a gloved hand, he retrieved a bottle of bleach from his coat pocket and splashed some on a rag. The pungent odor made his eyes water. He returned the bottle and began scrubbing a tabletop.

The bottom of his mask was soaked in sweat. Nobody was there, but he decided to keep it on, just in case. He leaned in to examine his work. Gleaming, as if nobody had ever laid a finger on it. He moved on to wiping down the walls.

Sooner or later, people would be here to inspect his job. If he missed a spot, he would suffer greatly. He estimated he would have to be done in about ten minutes. He paused and looked around the room. He still had to polish the floor and dispose of the two large trash bags slumped against the back window.

He finished cleaning the walls and moved on to the floor. He checked his watch. Time was running out. He dropped down to hands and knees and scrubbed with more determination. He inched back towards the window, so as not to scuff the newly cleaned floor. Little time was left, but he couldn't rush.

Finally, the floor was complete. Under the mask, a look of relief spread across his face. He tucked the rag into his pocket and carefully opened the window. The muffled sounds of the city disturbed the silence. He hoisted the trash bags out of the window and onto the fire escape. He climbed after them and shut the window behind him.

He pulled off his ski mask. No need for that anymore. As he made his way down the steep stairs, trash bags in hand, he heard the sirens approaching.