

~~niless. Cannot find it — don't overlook the butter — and that's where I changed my life, with my philosophy. (She stops to take a pastry from the plate.)~~

~~WYLER. What's that?~~

~~ALEXA. A brioche.~~

~~WYLER. No, I mean your philosophy.~~

**ALEXA.** (She is now a hub of activity between her cigarette in a holder, her purse contents, her tea and her brioche.) Well, I mean that's your job. As the writer. I only know that I'm living it. I need you to define it for me. Something to do with sketching out what you want to be and then coloring it in as it goes. Being what your dreams are, and ... well, look at us now, I see your picture and just feel instinctively you know what I'm talking about. I read your book and now here we are at the Hotel Paramount over *petite déjeuner* and great lashings of butter and I'm offering you one thousand dollars a week to write the story of my life and —

WYLER. Really?

ALEXA. Oh, God. Haven't I told you? I have absolutely no mind for money whatsoever, that's what accountants are for — (From within her Judith Leiber jeweled egg, she pushes aside pills and make-up and pulls out a wad of cash.) And agents, though I don't believe in agents, do you?

WYLER. Mine is —

ALEXA. Let's not deal with them. They are such unbearable leeches. Why should she get a hundred of your thousand? I introduced myself. Here we are one thousand dollars. (She hands him a thousand dollars in twenties and a couple hundreds held together with a rubber band.) I find that agents have no imagination. No taste for ... possibilities.

WYLER. Actually, I agree.

ALEXA. Waiter! Let's keep this *entre nous*. I believe in cash, I think in this flighty world it's the only thing left with any impact. Now I don't see this taking more than a few months, the info gathering part and then we'll work out a juicy amount for you to actually write it. Remember David Bowie wants to play my father. Maybe Iman could play my mother? If he could be darkened and she could be lightened. (A Waiter glides by.)

Check please. I mean does this interest you in any way, shape or form?

WYLER. Does this interest me? In any way, shape or form? Well let's see. I've lived my life making sacrifices for the moment when I would see my first novel published. I've made sacrifices, lived sacrifices until this moment — I'm living in a place CNN would casually dismiss as third world. The people who are my age who don't do what I do have homes and cars and — I scrounge for subway fare. So I have my nine-years-in-the-making overnight success and you know? I'm thinking, oh this is where they pull back the velvet cord and I get to meet whomever I want to meet and do whatever I want to do and I'm still looking for fucking temp work to hustle together rent. Because no one ever tells you about that little breather period between critical success and financial success. Does this interest me in any way, shape or form? Yes. I would say this interests me in every way, shape and form.

ALEXA. Happiness!

WYLER. Just tell me what you need to know.

ALEXA. Only one thing. I ask it before any business relationship.

WYLER. What's that?

ALEXA. If you absolutely had to sleep with one of the Three Stooges, which one would it be?

WYLER. What? (He starts to laugh.)

ALEXA. No really lamb, the answer reveals your personality. I mean if you say Moe, I know you wish to be dominated — (Wyler laughs harder.) Which I, of course, am incapable of, and if you say Larry, well, I mean, God help you.

**WYLER.** I'm just trying to think of a situation where I would absolutely have to sleep with one of the three stooges.

~~ALEXA. Too funny. Now darling, what shall I do? My accountant, Martel Grushkov, wants a record of all these businessy lunches, but won't let me have credit cards because I just see homeless people and I want to buy them socks. I'll need a receipt of some sort~~

~~WYLER. I could put this on my credit card and you can give me cash, if that could help.~~