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# The Man from Elysian Fields

By Phillip Jayson Lasker

Pasadena, home to little old ladies,  
noble laureates...  
high tech science,  
beautiful museums...  
and a Pulitzer  
Prize winner or two.  
Welcome to a city  
where people still read.  
Are you looking  
for anything special?  
-Do you like thrillers?  
-Not particularly.  
It's a pretty good one.  
-I didn't think Hitler had children.  
-Well...  
none that we know of, but what  
if Hitler had a child with...  
Eva Braun...  
then raised in Argentina by the Nazis  
to follow in his father's steps.  
That's so ridiculous!  
Well, it's a premise, and  
they're allowed to be ridiculous.  
Thanks, but I'm gonna  
keep looking.  
-A 25-dollar-book for 3,99.  
-Not, if I don't buy it.  
Right.  
Is this you?  
-Did you write this book?  
-It took 7 years out of my life...  
but don't let that influence you.  
Would you sign this for me?  
-Are you sure?  
-Sure!  
-What would you like me to say?  
-You're the author.  
Thanks.  
-"Enjoy". I definitely will.  
-Please, do.  
-Thanks.  
-Thank you.  
-Bye.  
-Bye.

This is the story of Byron Tiller...

a modest man living in a modest  
Pasadena neighborhood.

A neighborhood built for  
middle income families...

when the middle was still closer  
to the top than the bottom.

-Say "hi" to mom!

-Hi.

-Hi, how are you? You know?

-No.

-I sold a book today.

-Hey, that's good!

I haven't done the math, but I think  
it'll bring us another 3 cents.

-Course the taxes will kill us.

-The important thing is, honey...

...people are reading your work.

-I went to Rizzoli's.

Couldn't find it but I turned around  
and there it was: 7 years of my life.

In the remainder bin, along with  
cookbooks, self-help...

...and achieving orgasms.

-If orgasms don't get full price...

...you have nothing to be ashamed of.

-What is this?

What?

Did Heinz die or something?

The man makes 57 varieties  
and we can't afford any of them?

Why pay extra for a label?

How many diapers is Nathaniel still  
going through? In one week?

That depends on if he decides to spit  
his food up instead of swallow it.

And when does he decide to take  
muscle control seriously?

Three, I think.

Then my new book  
better get published...

quick.

I don't want you to have a worry,  
champ. Dad's gonna take care of you.

You go to sleep now,  
Mr. Nathaniel Hawthorne Tiller.  
I love you.  
What are you doing in there?  
I'm moving his head. Making sure  
it doesn't flatten out on one side.  
It hardened two years ago.  
Come to bed.  
Come to bed?  
-What were my two men talking about?  
-Mostly we talked about law schools.  
-I think he's leaning towards Duke.  
-That's a good school.  
He thinks so.  
-Maybe he doesn't wanna be a lawyer.  
-Nobody wants to be a lawyer.  
That's why you have to shove  
that seed in early.  
-Maybe he wants to write, like dad.  
-If his head doesn't flatten out...  
that won't happen.  
-You don't have a flat head.  
-Maybe not on the outside.  
-Honey...  
-What?  
God gave you a gift.  
Remember what "Newsweek" said?  
"Byron Tiller's sentences  
have bounce and color.  
'Hilter's Child' shows sparks  
of originality...  
...not often seen in thrillers."  
-"In the thriller mode", he said.  
-And what about the "Times"?  
-Refresh me.  
I believe he said something about  
me and that Hemingway guy.  
-Yeah?  
-Yes.  
-I think it slipped my mind.  
-Really, it slipped your mind?  
Maybe I should refresh  
your memory.  
Refreshing, here I go.

"Like Hemingway,  
he carves his sentences...  
with a...  
with a diamond cutter's eye...  
Leaving the best and the brightest."  
-God, you're good!  
-I can't hear you!  
I said you're good!  
Whether his wife was talking  
to Byron or God isn't certain.  
But there seemed to be more than  
enough credit to go around.  
And that's what got my attention.  
Tucked neatly between the Hollywood  
porn shops, novelty shops...  
and Scientology shops...  
crammed in amongst the recording  
studios whose heyday had long past...  
the unproduced screenwriters  
whose deals had long lapsed...  
the bad actors teaching methods  
on emoting to other bad actors...  
who dream of one day  
passing an audition...  
sat Byron Tiller, who until recently  
believed writing novels...  
no one wanted to read  
was a real job.  
Sell, baby, sell.  
Goals have a way of becoming less  
high-minded when you need money.  
-Priority.  
-Yes, sir.  
Thank you.  
The type of man perfect  
for Elysian Fields.  
-Come in.  
-Thanks.  
I sent it to you because  
Little Brown published the last one.

**So I figured:**

a winning combination?  
-Biscotti?

-No, I'm okay, thanks.

Well, I'm sure it could use  
a trim here and there...

...but that's why you're the editor.

-All I can say is that...

Excalibur must be great. Everyone  
wanna kill each other just to get it.

It's the sword that King Arthur  
himself pulled out of the rock.

-I know the back story.

-Of course.

It just seems a little out of place  
in a novel about migrant workers.

Well, Excalibur  
represents a symbol.

-A symbol?

-It represents to me...

the downtrodden's

hopes and dreams for the future.

And the migrant workers

are simply a microcosm.

Aren't they always?

See...

...that's where we have a problem.

-What is that?

Tell you a little secret  
about microcosms.

-People hate them.

-I wasn't aware.

Think about it.

Who'd sit on a bus...

to read a book saying

you're part of a microcosm?

Already knows it.

He looks around and he knows.

Symbolism's worse. Poor bastard picks  
up a book, he wants it spelled out.

No one wants to waste their time  
looking for deeper meaning.

My wife thinks it's

the best thing I ever wrote.

She must love you very much.

Look, I've always been open to

any kind of suggestions, changes...

-That wouldn't be fair to you.

-Anything.

Maybe next time.

-Could I get an advance?

-On what?

-On the next one.

-You know I'd like to, but...

Virgil, I know that my problems  
are not your problems...

but I got nothing left to live on.

-Are you really that desperate?

-Yes.

Then use that emotion.

All of the best novels  
are written in desperation.

So are the best suicide notes.

Why'd I think a guy in a US\$ 1,400  
suit'd care about migrant workers?

So what if your editor hated your  
book? You know my advice to you?

Fuck him.

Thanks, Harry.

That's one swell pep talk.

Hello.

-How are you doing?

-We haven't been introduced.

No.

-The name's Luther Fox.

-Byron Tiller.

So you're a writer?

Right.

-Anything I'd know?

-I sincerely doubt it.

I did manage to publish a little  
piece of shit called Hitler's Child.

I liked it.

-You read it?

-You sound surprised.

I never actually met my public.

Well... here I am.

-What are you doing next?

-I'm toying with a few ideas.

I think I'd make a very good  
key punch operator.

-Things a bit tough at the moment?  
-Hemingway killed himself.  
And people actually bought his books.  
Me? I'm in the fucking remainder bin.  
It's easy to think of the remainder  
bin as doom on some cosmic level.  
Don't you think you're making  
a mountain out of a mole hill?  
The problem is that my mountain  
has shrunk into a mole hill.  
And unless you have family...  
of moles...  
how do you live?  
A man can always support his family  
if he's willing to do the necessary.  
I've got to go.  
Listen, I appreciate the drinks  
and the ear.  
Thank you.  
If a key punch operator doesn't  
happen for you, why don't you...  
drop by the office? Maybe we can  
work something out.  
Nothing like a little life experience.  
-Hey. What did your editor say?  
-Why aren't you asleep?  
I couldn't wait.  
I had to hear what he said.  
-He saw room for changes.  
-But he loved it, right?  
-Love, I don't know. It's relative.  
-Relative to what?  
To whether you're  
a John Grisham or not.  
Somebody like me,  
they don't get too effusive.  
They are going to publish it, right?  
Yes.  
-Did he say when?  
-No, that's scheduling.  
The other side of the building.  
I'll find out.  
I told you it would  
all work out, didn't I?



Paul Pearson!

Paul Pearson!

-I thought it was you.

-Good to see you.

-Good to see you.

-Things going well since you left us?

Yes, great. I've just had  
my first novel published.

So I hear. Been meaning  
to read it, but...

...couldn't find it anywhere.

-Right.

-So, how's the office?

-You know advertising.

-Killing ourselves a little very day.

-I miss it.

The action, the deadlines. There's  
a hell of an adrenaline rush there.

I'd even consider getting back in  
under the right circumstances.

-You told me to go fuck myself.

-That was the adrenaline talking.

You'd really be willing  
to come back?

Salary'd be smaller,  
accounts would be shit.

-Whatever you decide.

-Well, that's a good attitude.

-Why didn't you have it before?

-Well, I've grown up a little.

I'm very glad to hear it.

Thank you.

I'll see you in the morning?

Actually, I think it'd be better  
if you just...

go fuck yourself.

Congratulations, Byron.

So you've come here to celebrate?

-Where else?

-My two favorite people.

Tell you what. I'm gonna send over  
my very best bottle of wine.

-No, Dom, that's not necessary.

-It's my gift to the author.

That's very generous.  
Now don't get mad, but...  
I think maybe we should borrow  
some money from my parents.  
-Your father hates me.  
-The reason he'll loan us the money.  
It'll make him feel superior.  
-I won't give him the satisfaction.  
-Honey, he's never satisfied.  
You know that.  
And once your novel gets published,  
we'll pay him back. With interest.  
Did you ever think that  
your father was right?  
-About what?  
-Maybe I am a failure.  
You just love me and figure  
that everything is gonna work out.  
Unconditional love can be  
a real pain in the ass.  
Bye. Bye.  
-Love you.  
-See you after work.  
What do you want  
to do now, champ?  
Want to go to the park for a while?  
It's a tough fucking business.  
If you write the Goddamned Iliad who  
knows if anyone's going to buy it.  
Take your last book.  
Nice little review on the "Times"...  
...meant nothing, right?  
-In that neighborhood.  
-What kind of business is that?  
-Ask what Gutenberg was thinking?  
I don't give a damn what Gutenberg  
was thinking. Let's cut the bullshit.  
You need money, right?  
-Just a loan.  
-I've given the matter a thought...  
...and I won't lend you the money.  
-Why?  
What was it Shakespeare said?  
"Neither a borrower nor a lender be".

I'm only here because I promised  
your daughter I would meet you...  
and stick my tongue up your ass.  
I guess my work here is done.  
We both know you'll never  
be able to support your family.  
Think about it!  
Hi, how're you doing?  
Yeah?  
Hi.  
-Is Mr. Luther Fox around?  
-This is "around". See him anywhere?  
No. Will you tell him that  
Byron Tiller came by to see him?  
Byron Tiller, the writer?  
-You heard of me?  
-Sure.  
The other day, from Luther.  
Right.  
My fame is spreading.  
I assumed you'd be here.  
-My receptionist told me you came by.  
-She doesn't like people very much.  
I've known her for 6 years.  
And the only things  
I'm sure she likes...  
are romance novels and raisinettes.  
-Not much of an office, is it?  
-Not much an office, it's a place...  
to pick up your messages.  
Right. Just I was thinking...  
the other day you mentioned you might  
have something for me, so I came by.  
-Come over and we'll talk about it.  
-Sure.  
You know, the only other job  
I've ever had is with an ad agency.  
They wouldn't let me back in. I've  
been to many employment agencies...  
and they just keep telling me "I'm  
not equipped to do anything else".  
So, what is it? What kind of  
business is it that you're in?  
Elysian Fields is an escort service.

An escort service.

Escort service.

So what you're

saying is you sort of...

you know, stand on a street corner

and put on a cowboy hat?

No. We're not hustlers.

We tend to the wounds

of lonely women...

in need of emotional

as well as spiritual solace.

-Women.

-Often is only friendship.

-Only women?

-Call me old-fashioned.

And this is the job that you

thought I would be right for?

Well, you're handsome,

well-educated, and compassionate.

-How do you know I'm compassionate?

-I'm the one who read your novel.

-Compassion was its best strength.

-Thank you.

Even if the premise was shit.

If you would've read the fly leaf,

you'd have noticed I'm married...

...and have a kid.

-All the better.

-How is that better?

-Well, we're professionals.

A family at home prevents any

unnecessary entanglements...

...with the clientele.

-You have a family at home?

I'm not that fortunate, but many

of our employees do.

Look, I'm not trying to sit on top

of any moral high ground...

but this business you're in, doesn't

it make you a little bit ashamed?

No. Poverty does that.

What I'm suggesting here, it can be

as short term as you want it to be...

just to get you out of this

little dry patch in your life.

Temporary.

Hello.

How are you?

I was passing by.

I wanted to thank you for the...

You thanked me last night.

-Well, I don't remember.

-I do.

It's not easy to be polite when  
you're suicidal. I was impressed.

I've just gotta get that...

-Again...

-No, come on in. Come in.

-Are you sure?

-Yeah, absolutely.

I didn't know you were already  
back in the country, Mrs. Hardwick.

My book says that you're gonna be  
in India for another month.

Well, I know curry can do that.

But you always look  
wonderful, my dear.

Naturally.

I'm not sure if I can do something  
on such short notice.

How much body hair do you have?

-What?

-How much body hair do you have?

Body hair? Why?

The amount they pay,  
they can afford to be particular.

Let me call you back  
about five o'clock, okay?

I'm sure I can find you someone  
by then. Bye, bye, Mrs. Hardwick.

-She's not right for you, anyway.

-Right. Look, Luther...

I confess I've been thinking about  
what you proposed to me last night.

-Do you play tennis?

-Badly.

-Good, she hates to lose.

-Who's that?

-Mrs. Franklin Buckner.

-Look...

I was up all last night...

Mrs. Loretta Forbes, of Encino, 46,  
likes opera, the ballet...

That's kind of what I was thinking.

Maybe like on an interim basis.

Something like opera, tennis, ballet...

but just no, you know?

I just don't want the...

well, you know...

the thing over there.

Maybe this is a...

...a very bad idea.

-An idea's only bad if doesn't work.

Right, maybe somewhere down the line

you can find me a nice old gal...

that's looking for like

a bridge partner.

-Byron...

-What?

I was nervous my first time too.

That's why it's so important we find  
someone you can respond to in kind.

I mean, if we can't

provide true love...

at least we can find symmetry.

And your wedding ring and

your specs, they'll have to go.

Luther...

...I appreciate what you've done.

-Well, I haven't done anything yet.

-Maybe that's for the best.

-Andrea Allcott, 35 years old.

Charismatic. Face of an angel.

You should have a lot in common.

Her husband's a novelist, too.

Just like you.

-Great.

-You may have heard of him.

Tobias Allcott.

Tobias Allcott,

the Pulitzer Prize winner?

Yeah, well, actually,

I think he's won three.  
But Pulitzers Prizes' winner  
sounds almost gluttonous.  
In college I took an entire course...  
...just specifically on his writing.  
-Really? How did you do?  
B plus.  
Maybe you should bone up.  
Baby, have you seen my earrings?  
What did you do, swallow it?  
I've got a really good feeling  
about this guy.  
You always had a good instinct  
for this kind of thing.  
I do, don't I?  
He must be quite a prospect.  
Well, when Picasso's art teacher  
saw his first doodles...  
he must've sensed  
something special.  
That's just how I felt  
when I first met you.  
Darling,  
you're hopelessly romantic.  
Hopeful.  
It's a lot worse.  
It's late.  
-Let's go and do something there.  
-No, George expects me.  
Let's go and celebrate.  
Don't you think  
it's a trifle premature?  
The best time to celebrate:  
before everything turns sour.  
Don't worry.  
It won't.  
-Here.  
-What's this?  
It's last month's check.  
I forgot.  
So did I.  
-Are you going out?  
-Didn't I tell you?  
I have a meeting with

the Little Brown publishers.

-This late?

-Drinks and dinner.

-Why?

-It's a bit early to talk about it.

-Not to me.

-You know I'm a little superstitious.

No, you're not.

About the good things I am.

You haven't noticed because good things haven't been coming up lately.

They want me to meet some people from the Book of the Month Club.

-My God, really?

-There's no guarantees.

-No, honey, but that's great!

-They'll squeeze me to a short one.

February.

I wish you had something nicer to wear.

It's just dinner.

Table's gonna hide most of me.

If they have lobster, order it. Cause then you're covered by the bib.

I gotta go.

I'm gonna wanna hear everything when you get home.

You must be the new man.

Nigel Halsey.

Byron Tiller.

Yes, the writer.

Well, the master must be impressed.

I see he took you to Dunhill.

Let's see.

Not her again. Never tell a client she has a nice ass. It'll never end.

Would you like a Bulgari tonight?

No, no, you take it.

Thanks.

You ever done this kind of work before?

It's like rolling off a log. Just don't roll off until they finish.

Well, Luther actually said that they



don't all necessarily want to.

Right. Right.

You'll get used to it.

It's when they want you to hold them afterwards, as if it meant something.

That's when you realize it's all bullshit. But what business isn't?

Could be selling used cars. At least we give them their money's worth.

But don't worry, Byron.

You'll be fine.

All these rich bitches want

is some companionship...

and sex.

We're like cocker spaniels

with hard-ons.

-I'll keep that image in mind.

-Good.

Hello?

Hi. It's me.

Is anything wrong?

No. I just...

got one of those urges to tell you that I love you.

And I love you.

-Why?

-You know why.

I need to hear it.

Because...

you're smart and funny...

...and thoughtful.

-Dena...

I don't...

...I don't feel any of those things.

-Byron, you're just nervous.

But it's okay, you know why?

Why?

'Cause I'll be right here,

believing in you. Okay?

Everyone is nervous the first time.

It was important for Byron

to meet someone beautiful.

Someone like Andrea Allcott,

who, indeed...

had the face of an angel.  
And it wasn't just her face.  
Plastic surgeons make money to buy  
yachts for rearranging nature...  
in a more pleasing way. No, this  
wasn't just a run-of-the-mill angel.  
This one, I'm sure...  
God handled himself.  
You must be the man  
from Elysian Fields.  
Yes.  
I hate to go to these alone. I'd have  
got out of it, but it's for charity.  
Let's hope they find a cure for  
whatever it is... quick.  
So, what would you like to do now?  
-Are you hungry?  
-Not really.  
-Actually, a biscotti would be nice.  
-A biscotti. Of course.  
-One biscotti, please.  
-Sure.  
-How much?  
-Two dollars.  
Listen, may I get a receipt?  
-Here you go.  
-Thank you.  
You don't have to thank me.  
It's a business expense.  
Which brings up a question  
I'm not sure I should ask.  
Asking is your prerogative.  
Not answering is mine.  
Why didn't you consider bringing  
a friend this evening?  
Right.  
Why would someone like you  
need someone like me?  
There are some occasions to which  
a woman should have an escort.  
Yes, but...  
I would figure that it would be very  
easy for you to find a real one.  
Aren't you a real one?

I mean someone you wouldn't  
have to arrange.  
I'm married.  
That's not always  
a stumbling block.  
I love my husband dearly.  
That's very nice.  
We think so.  
Will you be all right in a taxi?  
Good night, Mr. Tiller.  
Good night.  
If you could mail the check  
immediately, Mrs. Randolph...  
I'd really appreciate it.  
Thank you, good bye.  
I don't know why they call them  
outstanding checks.  
-As if not being paid is a good thing.  
-I saw you last night.  
-Where?  
-At the concert.  
She's very attractive.  
You mean Jennifer Adler,  
she's been a client for years.  
In fact, she's the only client  
I still handle personally.  
If it hadn't been for her, I probably  
would've retired years ago.  
Well, I think I'll be retiring now.  
What, already?  
Yeah, I'm not sure that I'm really  
cut out for this sort of thing.  
Byron, are you doubting  
my instincts?  
Well, then I hope you like  
experimental theatre.  
I hate coming to these things alone.  
-I'd have gotten out of it...  
-Let me guess...  
it's for charity.  
I used to have one of those  
on my dashboard.  
So...  
how about a biscotti?

You want me to get in this time?  
If you like.  
If I don't, will the check bounce?  
It might.  
-Where to then, ma'am?  
-Pasadena.  
-Would you like one?  
-No, thank you.  
-So, do you go out often?  
-Not often.  
Most of my friends are my husband's,  
and most of his friends are dead.  
Would you like me  
to see you to the door?  
That'd be polite.  
-Thank you, Phillip.  
-Good night, ma'am.  
Thank you.  
Do you like hot cocoa?  
-Do you make it with milk or water?  
-Milk, of course.  
What would you have done  
if I'd said water?  
Prayed for marshmallows.  
It's delicious.  
I wasn't sure how much milk.  
I usually don't make any one.  
Doesn't your husband  
like hot cocoa?  
He has diabetes.  
You seem so very young  
to be married to someone like him.  
It didn't matter at first...  
but in the last couple of years,  
you know...  
I'm sure it's very tough on him,  
being a writer.  
-What would you know about that?  
-I'm sort of a writer myself.  
Really?  
Yes, really.  
Are you surprised?  
Actually, no.  
You're not the sort of man who'd be

satisfied taking lonely women around.  
There's nothing lonelier than  
watching the man you love slowly die.  
"Death. The only immortal...  
who treats us all alike, whose pity  
and whose peace and whose refuge...  
are for all."  
-Very beautiful.  
-Mark Twain.  
The reality is less poetic.  
Sorry.  
Hello, darling. What are you  
doing up so late?  
I forgot to take my insulin shot.  
I just went down to get it.  
But you feel okay?  
Yeah, I'm all right.  
to meet Byron Tiller.  
Byron?  
Hello, sir.  
-Byron's a writer, too.  
-Is that a fact?  
Yes, I write a little bit.  
Certainly not in your league.  
Well, at least that's comforting.  
-Would you like some food?  
-No, thanks, darling.  
You just continue on  
with what you're doing.  
-It's an honor to meet you, sir.  
-I'd say "the pleasure's all mine"...  
but that would be foolish,  
wouldn't it?  
Good night.  
Shit!  
Byron Tiller...  
you're simply inspiring.  
-Morning.  
-Good morning.  
Did you sleep well?  
Not a wink.  
Neither did I. Seems we're  
a couple of insomniacs.  
Well, Lottie got me going

with some strong coffee.

Lottie, you shouldn't give him  
a mug! He's not a tradesman.

I'm not hungry. Thank you.

It's not for you!

Mr. Allcott wants you to bring  
him his breakfast.

Me? Why?

Well, it'll come up  
in conversation.

Come in.

-Come in!

-I heard you typing, but...

I didn't want to disturb you at work.  
Your breakfast is getting cold.

Well, it doesn't make any difference,  
anyway. I'm not allowed to eat it.

A soft-boiled egg is all I get.

And the rest of it's just for show  
so I don't feel deprived.

-It ends up in the dog's tray later.

-Yes, sir. Enjoy.

Did you have a good time last night?

It's quite all right.

She has my blessing.

A man should make sure  
his wife is taken care of.

Any way he can.

Don't you agree?

-Yes, very much, sir.

-Perhaps it was a mistake...

marrying a woman

much younger than me, but...

I was very robust until

just a few years ago.

-I've heard all the stories, sir.

-Only believe the outrageous ones.

I was blessed to live a life  
without boundaries.

In the end...

only God gets to do that.

Genius should be afforded privileges  
not handed out to ordinary men.

-You think I'm a genius?

-Yes, sir, I do.

Well, you're probably right.

But even that...

becomes more difficult with time.

You know, when I was your age...

ideas used to flow out of me.

Now I have to squeeze them like farts

before I can string them together.

-You're probably just in a slump.

-Slump?

A slump happens in the middle  
of your life, not at the end of it.

-But you're working now.

-It took me 12 years to write that.

I was just going through,

tidying it up a bit...

killing all the

unnecessary adjectives.

-I can't wait for it to be published.

-Yes, I...

don't think I'll be able

to wait either.

All my organs turned against me.

These little bastards!

Would you like to read it?

-Really?

-You're a writer.

I'd like another

professional's opinion.

-My wife thinks it's wonderful.

-Yes.

But she is my wife, and you can

never trust a value system...

where true love is involved.

-What are you doing?

-Reading.

My editor gave me the latest

manuscript from Tobias Allcott.

-Is it any good?

-None of it is any good.

Then put it down

and pay attention to me!

It's about time a man spent time

with his wife instead of his editor.

You ready?

Yeah...

-What do you think?

-Very nice.

I spent a lot, but you need a suit now that you're an important author.

-Where did you get the money?

-Daddy sent us US\$ 1,000.

-Won't give more until you apologize.

-I'm not gonna apologize.

I told him it'd be a cold day in hell until you did. Give him some time.

Now it says right...

here that it's made out of 80% of the good stuff.

-Right.

-And only 20% of the cheaper fabric.

So you don't even notice.

And...

I had them put extra room on the crotch.

Do you like it?

I told the salesman that it was for a very important novelist...

that the Book of the Month Club was after.

Dena, I told you...

that...

it's still in the talking stages.

-I'm sending out positive vibrations.

-I can see that.

Make love to me.

Tobias brought me here on our first date.

How did you meet him?

I went to interview him at the house, and I never left.

Must've been one hell of an interview.

Tobias likes to have youth around him. Says it keeps him young.

What were you gonna say?

It doesn't seem to be working anymore.



His eyes are still young  
when he looks at me.  
I guess that's all that matters.  
My husband says he's given you  
a copy of the novel to read.  
He doesn't usually do that.  
He must think very highly of you.  
He doesn't even know me.  
What did you think?  
-It's wonderful, right?  
-The best thing he's ever written.  
-Piece of shit, isn't it?  
-Yes.  
Will you do something for me?  
Tell him.  
-Tell him what?  
-Tell him that it's no good.  
-I can't do that.  
-Well, then the critics will.  
And it'll kill him. The only thing  
he has left is his reputation.  
And when he dies,  
I want him holding onto it.  
-I don't know.  
-Please, Byron.  
Mind if I sit down?  
Mind if I don't stand up?  
Nice ducks.  
I think we're just...  
contributing to...  
their lackadaisical attitude.  
Most people would like to come  
back as a bird in their next life.  
They don't know what they're talking  
about. It's a miserable existence.  
I mean, living on handouts...  
and leftovers, for God's sake.  
-I guess flying represents freedom.  
-Birds don't know that.  
Flying to them is work.  
Unless, of course,  
you're an eagle or a hawk.  
Soaring. Soaring, though.  
Soaring could be pleasurable.

-What would you like to come back as?  
-I wouldn't.  
I'll never have it better  
than I did in this lifetime.  
Never.  
-Most people can't say that.  
-Yeah, well...  
doesn't make it  
any easier leaving it.  
We'll feed the ducks.  
When I was working, I could still  
feel that calling, you know?  
And now that the book is finished...  
I just can't find a reason  
for me any longer.  
Did you read it?  
Yes, I did.  
And?  
It's wonderful.  
For a first draft.  
-Can't you take a little criticism?  
-What do you mean, "a first draft"?  
-What didn't you like about it?  
-Can we just talk about this later?  
It stinks, okay?  
It stinks? It stinks?  
The whole thing?  
I can't get too specific at the moment.  
I've got other things on my mind.  
Jesus Christ.  
Might have broken my nose.  
Well, show me.  
Show me!  
Not your nose!  
Come on!  
All right, you just show me what's  
wrong with what I've written.  
-I don't want to bleed on it.  
-My blood is on every page.  
Now goddamn it, you tell me  
what's wrong with it.  
-You know why you're a great writer?  
-I thought we agreed it was genius.  
That helps. But it's the characters

that you actually write about.

They are so real that the reader actually feels their flesh.

-Thank you.

-Yes, but this is 800 pages...

on the fall of the Roman Empire, for God's sakes!

-It's well researched.

-Who cares?

Goddamned! Who the fuck are you to criticize my work?

-I am nobody.

-Yes. Exactly.

But a nobody can still be right.

Wait a second.

Are you supposed to be drinking?

No, I'm not. My doctor says it'll kill me. Let's hope he's right.

Look, I'm not saying that what you have here is not great.

-What are you saying it, then?

-You might've taken a wrong approach.

What is the main theme you actually wanted to write the book about?

That every social structure makes slaves out of one group or another.

-That's terrific!

-Thank you for your approval.

So what do you need

Roman slaves for?

-What's wrong with them?

-Nobody can identify with them.

just wasted 12 years of my life?

-No!

-What, then?

Prove that with another oppressed group. There's enough to pick from.

This could be the greatest novel that you ever wrote.

I already thought it was.

You just gotta get rid of the Roman slaves and find yourself another...

microcosm.

Blacks?

Jews?  
Homosexuals?  
Who, then?  
Migrant workers.  
Migrant workers.  
Migrant workers?  
Son of a bitch!  
When did you get contacts?  
The editor said that...  
the glasses, they're probably what  
hurt the sales of Hitler's Child.  
I thought he said that  
about the goatee.  
He sprung for the contacts because  
glasses make me look intellectual...  
and scare people off. Nobody wants  
to read a book and look up a word...  
Why don't you just take a picture  
without the glasses on?  
I guess maybe the public appearances.  
I know you like them. If you want...  
Not really. I just liked you  
with all your defects.  
You wanted to see me?  
You know when I was here last?  
No.  
Neither do I.  
Beautiful, isn't it?  
Makes you feel  
as if anything's possible.  
You know,  
I was a bit of a child prodigy.  
-Played Mozart by the time I was 7.  
-Really?  
Not the same as being Mozart, but  
it's not bad for a start, isn't so?  
What happened?  
I grew up.  
Wolfgang never stood a chance.  
I'm finding that regrets  
don't do a person much good.  
You know, Byron,  
this is a tricky business.  
You're very lucky to have

a wife and family.  
Don't let their love slip  
through your fingers.  
Do you know why  
I brought you here?  
No, my darling, why?  
This is where I took you  
on our first date.  
-No, it isn't.  
-Well, the location is the same.  
They tore the restaurant down.  
LA is a tough place  
to be romantic in.  
You do all right.  
You remember that new guy  
I was telling you about?  
I cut a deal for him that'll bring in  
more money than I've seen in years.  
That's wonderful, darling!  
-And I've been thinking...  
-I love when you think. It's so sexy.  
Not using success to enrich your life  
is to put failure into Gucci shoes.  
-I don't know what you mean. Thanks.  
-No, let me get this one.  
Thank you.  
Here.  
What's this?  
It's the check I made out  
to you last month.  
I don't want it.  
You're the only woman, in 30 years,  
I felt I could be myself with.  
I don't want your money anymore.  
I just want you.  
I don't understand.  
I want you to leave your husband.  
I want to marry you.  
You must be out of your mind.  
Why the hell would I do that?  
Here, take this back!  
What the hell are you thinking  
about? Come on, let's go.  
You're silly.

That was a good one!  
Very nice. This is wonderful.  
You eat like this every night?  
Thank you.  
Not every night.  
Tonight's a celebration.  
Welcome to the family.  
And I must say, it was a most  
generous offer. I thank you.  
Well, I don't know  
how much time I have left.  
But I wanna spend it seeing  
my beautiful wife happy.  
-I'll certainly do whatever I can.  
-No. You'll do whatever she wants.  
Right.  
-Darling, you should tell him.  
-Yes, darling.  
So Byron...  
I'm going to need  
your help, too.  
-Okay.  
-With my book.  
-Any suggestions I can offer...  
-No, I don't want any suggestions.  
They'll only annoy me.  
I want you to help me to rewrite it.  
Yeah, okay.  
-You mean, like... together?  
-You won't be sitting on my lap.  
No. I like your ideas.  
Andrea seems to...  
trust you. And Luther says  
that you're a Yale man.  
Well, you can't be all bad.  
-Co-authorship.  
-Co-authorship?  
My name next to...  
...next to your name?  
-Possibly in the same letter case.  
-Byron, what are we doing here?  
-Acclimating.  
Acclimating. We're even gonna have  
your father over for dinner.

-Follow me.  
-This is crazy.  
How can we afford this?  
Tobias Allcott wants  
to write with me.  
With me.  
Dance with me.  
Let's put him in a zoot suit.  
Hello, Byron.  
I was out last night with a woman  
who had me sucking on her toes.  
-Does this look normal to you?  
-Cold sore.  
There should be places on a person  
where they don't want company.  
Guess what new words Nathaniel  
learned today?  
-What?  
-What the hell happened to my daddy?  
-That's not funny.  
-It wasn't meant to be.  
-I just need to finish this chapter.  
-You can do it tomorrow.  
-You gotta spend some time with us.  
-Dena, I need a few minutes.  
-Byron, please.  
-Don't you understand what I'm doing?  
-Believe me, I've been trying.  
-I just need some time.  
-This is our big break!  
-We were fine with the little breaks!  
Do you think that I enjoy  
having to do it this way?  
How many chances happen in  
a lifetime? If there is one, grab it.  
Even if you hate  
everything that comes with it!  
And I hate this! I hate it!  
But I'm doing it for you!  
I'm doing it for Nathaniel!  
Who is it?  
-Thanks, darling. They're beautiful.  
-Are you feeling okay?  
Tired.

You need to get some sleep.  
I'm only tired when my eyes are open.  
When they're closed, I just feel...  
scared.  
Where are you going?  
-I'm going to the office to see...  
-No, you can work later.  
That's the problem.  
I can't work.  
When I think, it's like walking  
into an empty room.  
If there's anything good  
filling the pages...  
...it's because of him.  
-Don't talk like that.  
They say the saddest thing  
is to outlive your children.  
My talent was my child.  
You're weary.  
You have no respect  
for the truth. None.  
It's what I love most about you.  
Well done. Well done.  
I haven't heard any laughing.  
What's wrong with her? There's  
some funny stuff in there.  
Yeah, well...  
she seldom laughs out loud  
when she's reading.  
It's her only imperfection.  
You know, Andrea is  
the only one of them...  
who I believe  
ever loved me completely.  
She overlooked my faults...  
and I'm sorry she did.  
If she hadn't, I probably would have  
done something about them.  
Be careful of women who love you  
just the way you are.  
It's a sure sign they  
settle too easily.  
It's...  
wonderful.



Thank you, darling.  
Did you really like it?  
I loved it.  
But do you think it's commercial?  
People always buy Tobias's novels  
whether or not they read them.  
It's the nice thing  
about being an icon.  
-Excuse me?  
-Are you all right?  
-Couldn't sleep.  
-Are you feeling unwell?  
I feel wonderful.  
That's why I couldn't sleep.  
I didn't want to sleep through it.  
What are you drinking?  
Water...  
with just enough malt in it to take  
the metallic taste away from it.  
I...  
just wanted to...  
tell you how grateful  
I am to both of you.  
And good night.  
Sleep well, my darling.  
You need something.  
I don't want to be alone tonight.  
Not tonight.  
-Come and lie down, please.  
-Thank you, darling.  
Hi.  
Are you going out?  
I wanted to pick up Nathaniel  
and go get something to eat.  
-Give us a chance to talk.  
-What would we talk about, Byron?  
Where are you going?  
Why don't you tell me where  
you've been going every night?  
Look at me and you tell me!  
You are such a fucking asshole!  
And I'm an asshole!  
I was so fucking blind to it!  
It's none of your business

where I'm going!

How are you?

Pretty good.

-Mind if I sit down?

-Go ahead.

You haven't been around much.

-I've left you messages.

-I took a bit of time off myself.

So what's on your mind?

You said to me once

that you were married.

-While you were in the business?

-Well, there was some overlapping.

-And?

-And what?

Is that what wrecked your marriage?

Relationships are complicated.

It's never just

one thing that ends them.

You had told me that most of your

employees were married.

I didn't say happily. You've got  
to learn to listen for adjectives.

Now that I finished the book, I have  
a little bit more time on my hands .

I'd like to come by.

Maybe have some lunch.

I won't be there. I think it's time

I was leaving the business.

Maybe you should think

of doing the same.

-I'm a writer now.

-They're still paying you as a whore.

Don't forget that.

They never do.

Bye-bye.

What are you gonna do?

Best I can, I imagine.

"That's another important object to  
accomplish 10,000 years to come."

Come in.

-I thought you might like some tea.

-Thank you. That's very kind.

Thank you, Byron.

That's...  
very nice of you.  
Thank you.  
-Listen, I was wondering.  
-Yes?  
-When will the book be published?  
-We were talking about that, right?  
Yes, well, we...  
we thought it might be a good idea  
if we waited until I died.  
Excuse me, but what for?  
Well, if you publish posthumously,  
I'm a red hot ticket.  
Critics will be afraid to shit on me,  
and sales will go through the roof.  
I mean, my doctor says I have...  
a few weeks left. A month.  
At most.  
Now it'll mean that you're  
well taken care of.  
And that will make me happy.  
Thank you for the tea.  
Byron. Wait a minute.  
If it would make you  
feel any better...  
I've already begun  
to have chest pains.  
Mark Twain, huh? I like him.  
He always has a way of turning  
a phrase that makes me feel good.  
"Let this drop fall patiently  
during 5,000 years.  
It's falling now...  
it'll still be falling when all  
these things shall be sunk down.  
The afternoon of history and  
the twilight of tradition will be..."  
I feel so foolish.  
Couldn't think of a word to say.  
-It was a beautiful service.  
-I was fortunate.  
I said everything I wanted  
to say to him before he died.  
I'd like to write a foreword to the

book. To thank him. Do you like that?

Very much.

-But it won't be necessary.

-No, it's no trouble. I wanna do it.

I'm very proud of our work.

-Your work.

-The novel is very special to me.

Byron, I know this is going

to disappoint you, but...

I wasn't privy to any deal you made  
with my husband. And...

as far as I can tell,

you never had a contract.

-What are you saying?

-Or any proof of a verbal agreement.

Well, excuse me a second.

I wrote that book.

-You understand.

-Understand what? I wrote that book!

I can't have any name beside his.

Then everyone will know he needed  
help, and I can't have that.

You were the one who wanted to hold  
off the publishing until he died.

I had to protect his reputation.

And you made that possible.

I gave up my life for this.

I gave up my life for this book!

And that's all you can say to me?

Thank you for a wonderful time.

There is no fucking way

you're gonna get away with this!

-You don't have a choice.

-No?

Unless you want

to humiliate yourself.

Remember... you've been

handsomely paid for your services.

Please, don't hate me.

If you'd ever been in love,

you'd understand.

Fuck you.

The number you have reached

is not accessible anymore.

And there's no new number. Be sure  
you have checked the directory...  
You must be the man  
from Elysian Fields.  
Is it that obvious?  
-I made a reservation at Huntington.  
-My husband eats there.  
-Well, we can go someplace else.  
-It's OK. He looks right through me.  
-That's impossible.  
-Thank you.  
-He's probably very busy at work.  
-So he tells me.  
You know, when a man  
is concerned...  
with taking care of his family, his  
priorities can get all scrambled.  
But it has nothing to do with love.  
For what I'm paying you, I expect  
you to be on my side in everything.  
-Yes, ma'am.  
-Now...  
I'm just going to powder my nose.  
I thought I'd bump into you here.  
-Having drinks?  
-No, just leaving.  
Who are you with?  
Norma Van Reuten, of San Marino.  
-Christ!  
-What?  
She's the one who likes having her  
toes sucked. Just some advice...  
make it easy on yourself. Do not  
take her dancing first, okay?  
-Thanks.  
-We got to watch each other's backs.  
Who are you dragging  
around tonight?  
Her.  
What, we're not getting a room?  
What makes a man do what you do?  
I think of our mission as a way of  
giving joy to others, my darling.  
Actually, I really need

to know the truth.  
Well, that's simple...  
fucking is the last resort  
for a man who feels impotent.  
Thank you.  
Good night.  
Good night.  
This business has a way  
of making you look a little older.  
And perhaps  
even a notch or two wiser.  
-Any thoughts?  
-I'll have the linguini with clams.  
Good choice. And you, sir?  
-What would you suggest?  
-Try the pasta primavera.  
Not very convincing.  
What is "primavera"?  
Spring.  
Vegetables with pasta.  
-What, like squash?  
-Like squash.  
-Are those fresh?  
-Like spring.  
Fine.  
Take ten.  
I'll cover for you.  
-Hi.  
-Hi.  
Sorry.  
They're my set to the house.  
I heard Dom gave you a job.  
I figure that the only thing I have  
a chance of getting back...  
is my self-respect.  
Did it work?  
It'd be a lot easier without  
my clip-on bow tie.  
-How's my boy?  
-Oh, he's fine. Good.  
-He's talking a lot?  
-He asks about you.  
-Are you writing?  
-If I'm writing?

I'm having a little trouble.  
Coming up with inspiration.  
Have you eaten? I have  
a dinner break in twenty minutes.  
I don't think so.  
I have to get back.  
-I understand.  
-I just...  
came to tell you that Nathaniel and I  
moved back to the old neighborhood.  
I heard.  
I've been trying to reach you.  
Your phone is unlisted.  
I guess I've just been  
in that kind of a mood.  
I'm so sorry.  
-Believe me...  
-Good night, Byron.  
This is Nathaniel's direct line.  
Wow, such a beauty! You know  
how you two look together?  
-How?  
-Natural.  
I gotta see my wife, you know how  
she gets if nobody orders her specials.  
-It's not her fault.

**-I tell her:**  
-But she's so sensitive!  
-It's the menu.  
-What's wrong with the menu?  
-You want me to be honest?  
-Just a little.  
-Everything sounds exactly the same.  
Manicotti sounds like Ossobuco. You  
use "succulent" to describe 3 dishes!  
-Want me to look? I'll rewrite it.  
-You'll do that for me?  
I'm feeling inspired.  
I did see him one more time.  
It was about a year later.  
He'd written a novel titled "Eclipse"  
about a marriage falling apart.  
I took a certain pride in knowing

I'd helped ruin his life enough...  
to give him something  
substantial to write about.  
"In a moment, she would turn  
and he'd never see her again.  
There were things that he knew  
that he should have said.  
That he wanted to say.  
But when he looked  
into his wife's face...  
all he could remember is what  
the old man had said.  
'Be careful of women who are content  
to love you just as you are.  
It's a sure sign  
they settle too easily'.  
His wife loved him too much  
to be willing to settle.  
But he no longer had  
the conscience to change.  
He had convinced himself that  
everything he was doing...  
he was doing for her.  
He had mastered the fatal technique  
of believing his own lies.  
Then one day,  
his wife and child were gone.  
He had everything a man could ever  
need except a reason to wake up.  
That single split second  
after you open your eyes...  
and there's that someone  
to turn to...  
who loves you...  
who loves you more and holds you  
tighter through defeat and victory.  
He poured himself another scotch...  
knowing then that he would  
spend the rest of his life...  
trying to gain  
that split second back."  
Thanks for coming.  
Thank you.  
-What's your name?



-Yasmim, with a "Y".  
-I really loved your book.  
-Thank you.  
There you go.  
-Thank you.  
-Thank you.  
-Hi.  
-Hi.  
-What's your name?  
-Georgette.  
-It was very touching.  
-Thank you.  
I just wish she'd taken him  
back in the end.  
So do I.  
I've been married 3 times, and I all  
know is when it's over, it's over.  
You gotta know  
when it's time to move on.  
It's time.  
The name?  
Make it out to Nathaniel.  
Did you read it?  
Why couldn't you say  
those things to me before?  
I'm a writer.  
I'd spent years trying  
to pleasure women.  
He learned that what's important  
is knowing how to please...  
only one.  
Now there's  
something to write about.