

INT. ARTHUR'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Arthur's been projecting the films on his wall. There's a KNOCK. ANOTHER. THREE MORE. Art opens the door on Jeff, in yellow shorts and a t-shirt of Pope John Paul.

There's a decadence in Jeff's face that gives this outfit a macabre aspect as he raises his hand like a school kid.

JEFF

I call uncle.

ARTHUR

Should I give a fuck? What do you want?

JEFF

Perhaps a certain papal schlong? Mon-ami?

ARTHUR'S KITCHEN

Arthur pours liquor into a glass, sliding it sullenly across the bar to Jeff, who sets a hefty folder on the counter. The word SECRET is stencilled in obsessive lettering on the back. His T-Shirt says *Fibonacci's Flagellants #1123*.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Albertson's Brand? What do you drink when you don't have guests, kerosine?

ARTHUR

Just tell me what you want?

JEFF

I want your way with words, you crazy typewriter man.

Arthur glares, then pours a drink for himself, staring with a mix of hostility and curiosity.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Look, you obviously knew how to schmooze that fermented old haus-frau. I had an off day. Crazy white ladies freak me out. But I have something you need.

ARTHUR

I got what I need. She signed the release.

JEFF

Drop the bullshit "story angle" right now. I know what writers get paid.

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ARTHUR

Maybe I do it for love!

JEFF

Pal? I once dated the Australian Geraldo Rivera. Writers make chump change. You couldn't fill a gnat's ass with the respect I have for writers, but nobody's stupid enough to be in this for the *story*.

Arthur is stumped. He's about to speak, but stops and grabs a note pad. Meanwhile, Jeff pulls xeroxes from his manila folder, growing more manic by the second.

Jeff gulps down his shot, then takes the bottle.

JEFF (CONT'D)

I was in the stacks all night, researching. Had to resort to crank.

He leans across the counter.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Does my breath stink?

ARTHUR

Yes.

Art backs away as Jeff breathes into his palm.

JEFF

Need to hit the Certs, if I want any Twinkie tonight.

Arthur drops into his easy chair, exhausted.

ARTHUR

Jeff? You threw me out of the library. You tried to con my con. Now you're drinking all my liquor...

JEFF

—Albertsons!

ARTHUR

Why for fuck's sake would I even want you in my house?!

JEFF

Because you couldn't research your way out of a fucking strip mall, Sherlock.

(MORE)

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CONTINUED: (2)

JEFF (CONT'D)

I admit you can shoot the shit, but I have the trail to Kane. From *primary* sources.

ARTHUR

My story's fine.

JEFF

Tertiary sources AT BEST. Look, it's clear the French pope in Avignon sent your gold schlong to a condottieri named Hawkwood, who was running troops against the Roman pope in the Great Schism...

ARTHUR

French pope? And...

Jeff paces, opening Arthur's fridge. He points to a poster of *Clockwork Orange* on the wall and makes a face—'geek!'

He wipes his nose on a dishtowel.

JEFF

There were two popes; they didn't like each other. Papal funds were sent to this mercenary, described as 'a sizeable weight of gold, in shape resembling a purity of form, and in form resembling a purity of shape.' Now why would an Italian businessman who deals in facts and figures resort to such bizarre vagaries? He wouldn't, unless he were stymied by the requirements of papal infallibility from describing what *should* be the perfect male organ. Do you think this scribe would risk excommunication by describing a knobby old wart on the schlong of the pope himself?! No.

ARTHUR

I got a cramp in my hand. *Christ*.

JEFF

Don't get me started on Jesus. Talk about nepotism. Do we have a deal or not? Because I own the fucking Balinese.

ARTHUR

Who are the *Balinese*?!

Jeff pauses for a dramatic moment.

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CONTINUED: (3)

JEFF

They are the gentlefuckers who will pay big bucks for the schlong, Mr. Love-of-Journalism. But you don't touch 'em without me. 50/50.

Arthur thinks for a moment, soaking in Jeff's wild-eyed sincerity.

ARTHUR

OK. But I get the rights to the story.

THE CONTRACT

<--- SNIP Scene Continues --->