

# One Percent

by Ewa Bronowicz

“Alicja, you need to sacrifice and make money,” said the driver. “A lot of money. Hundred and fifty thousand dollars in savings, if you stay with the Rois three or four years.”

They were on the FDR Drive, heading south. He was speeding, zigzagging in between cars in a black Mercedes with custom-made red leather seats that smelled like hardwood floor wax. “This is my baby,” he said, making an all encompassing gesture around the car.

He had a good life, she thought. He worked for the Rois and had a good life.

“Mrs. Roi is shopping on Fifth Avenue; I dropped her off at Tiffany’s. That could be you one day.” The driver smiled as he said this.

Alicja pictured Mrs. Roi at Tiffany’s. Looking confident in her Prada sunglasses and Marc Jacobs boots, important and stunning. Alicja loved shopping, but did she need to shop on Fifth Avenue?

“Greed is not good,” she said, as if contradicting Gordon Gekko, the Michael Douglas character in the movie “Wall Street,” in which an innocent young man gives up his morality to give in to the temptations of the riches. The Occupy Wall Street movement, an effort to “end the monied corruption to our democracy,” had started three weeks before as a small protest in New York City’s Zuccotti Park and was now taking place in over seventy major cities in the country, and spreading internationally. This was a good sign, but Alicja doubted whether a leaderless mass with no actionable agenda could overturn the unequal distribution of wealth in America.

She had gone over there, to Wall Street, to see the protesters, on her day off last week. Zuccotti Park had transformed into a camp site, with hundreds of people, mostly young and white, some engaged in earnest debates about politics or the economy or the future; some

chanting slogans like “Bankers got bailed out. We the people got sold out;” some playing cards; yet others peeking lazily from sleeping bags, stretching as if they were in their own bedroom. They looked comfortable, and this bothered Alicja. She spoke to a man whose sign promoted Communism. She asked what the plan was. He said that the police would kick them, the protesters, out of this park, and they would find a new park, and then they would build igloos, and the igloos would spread across the city, and then across the country. Alicja listened to him with polite attention, but anger was boiling in her. How could this twenty-something kid stand there, dressed in a warm fleece from the Gap, snacking on chips and salsa, how could he stand there, how could he be a part of a movement to end inequality in America while representing another one of America’s downfalls, the young people’s ignorance about history, or at least about the history of the past hundred years, the two wars, the rise and fall of Communism and Fascism included? Alicja nodded and walked away. On the edge of the park, she passed a woman whose sign said, “I love cops who smoke pot.” A young policeman stood next to the woman and ordered the baffled tourists to keep on moving. The woman must have been Alicja’s age, in her early thirties, and she had long brown hair which she wore in a pony tail, just like Alicja. Alicja tried to make eye contact with her, to see if the message was a joke, but the woman’s gaze travelled beyond the park. Alicja returned to the middle of the gathering. She was surprised that, upon a closer look, the activities in the park were organized. There was a free food section, a library area, and an Occupa Wall Street en Espanol table. “This is kind of fun,” she heard a teenage girl say to a journalist. “Like a long sleepover party.”

Fun. Wasn’t fun, like greed, another one of America’s self-destructive philosophies? As Alicja squeezed through the crowds of protesters and passer-bys, she noticed a sign lying on a

sidewalk, with shoeprints on it. The sign read: “Jobs. Education. Health Care.” She walked away thinking that the protesters got it all wrong, but couldn’t quite figure out why.

The driver was saying, “But you have to live, and so you may as well live well, travel in a private jet, and plan for your future.”

She had gotten the job through an agency. The ad said: “top notch salary for a top notch nanny.” The woman at the agency had mentioned the private jet as one of the selling points. The starting salary was double what Alicja would have made as an elementary school teacher, a job offer she’d rejected after her summer nannying for the Rois unexpectedly turned into a long-term employment opportunity.

“Okay, so the schedule sucks,” the driver said. “And I don’t see my kids a lot.” He had just gotten off the highway, and maneuvered his way into the fastest lane of cars on Madison Avenue. They stopped at a red light, next to a Versace boutique. There was a Halloween display in the window. A skinny model was dressed in a blood red silk gown the bottom of which covered the floor around her. The belt was shaped like a bow. The model’s long blond hair was messy, like a witch’s, and she extended her arms, in a submissive gesture, towards a man standing next to her. The man was dressed in a violet fur cape and a matching eye mask. He looked like he was about to reach for the woman and untie the bow on her dress. Alicja wondered if this window display was also Mrs. Roi’s fantasy. She decided it was.

“What are we doing again?” the driver asked Alicja as the traffic light changed. Alicja told him they were going to a store called Lush and gave him the address.

He had a name—Tomek—but in her mind Alicja referred to him as the driver, not because that’s how the Rois called him, but because it suited him. He looked Polish: blond hair, blue eyes, long curved nose, high cheekbones; and he acted Polish: chivalrous and chauvinistic

all at once. He would drive her home during his off time, then text her saying that he wanted to have dinner and breakfast with her, adding a smiley face to the message. He talked some about his children but never mentioned a wife, who, naturally, must have been the caregiver to those children. He had the Mercedes already, now all he needed was a mistress. A spitting image of their boss, Mr. Roi, Alicja thought.

“But it’s only a few years of your life, and then, you can do whatever you want. It’s your road to freedom.” Was he Gordon Gekko’s confidante or his next victim?

Last weekend Alicja and the Rois had gone away to their sprawling, seven-bedroom mega-mansion in the Hamptons. Mrs. Roi had barged into her room at 6am, yelling that Molly, her six-year-old daughter, came into her bedroom and woke her up. “Take her downstairs right now,” she ordered. Alicja spent the entire day with Molly, a fifteen hour shift during which Mr. and Mrs. Roi strolled from their veranda to their heated pool to the private cinema room, sipping wine, Mr. Roi inseparable from his iPhone, Mrs. Roi busying herself with an iPad. Alicja should have quit right then, but decided to wait and see if she could find a way to zone the Rois out and focus on the money. She couldn’t decide whether her new job was the embodiment of the American dream or its deathbed.

They were now moving slowly along Madison Avenue. The street was clogged up ahead. Alicja didn’t want to ask Tomek how exactly a hundred and fifty thousand dollars meant freedom, especially in NYC. Freedom to do what? Go out to dinner?

They were two Poles, the 99 percent, working for the Rois, the 1 percent who owned 40 percent of American’s wealth. She had been their nanny for over a month. Her responsibilities included: playing the role of a parent to the Rois’ only child, Molly, while pretending that she was nothing more than a nanny in front of Mrs. Roi, as well as being at Mrs. Roi’s beck and call,

for anything. He had been their personal driver for over four years. His responsibilities included: driving the Rois and their nannies, as well as being at the Rois' beck and call, also for anything. They both worked about sixty hours a week, were paid cash off the books; no health insurance, no pension plan, no benefits other than two weeks of paid vacation, which they'd been told to take at a time convenient for the Rois.

"And you?" Alicja now said to him, looking at the road. "How much longer are you going to stay?" According to his calculations, he should already have enough to do whatever he wanted.

"One more year." He explained he was saving up to take his family to the Bahamas for Christmas.

She pictured him in the Bahamas, snapping photos of his children swimming with the dolphins, his wife in a straw hat, sipping a margarita. They'd both try to forget that the vacation was going to cost five months' rent and instead fool themselves into living like the Rois for a week. They'd have photos of their American Dream sent to their family and friends in Poland.

The driver now parked illegally, blocking a fire hydrant, and pointed to a large store front with a bodyguard standing by the entrance like a statue. When Alicja approached the door, the bodyguard opened it for her slowly and deliberately, and said, "Welcome to Lush." Alicja walked inside, feeling self-conscious about her outfit, a pair of blue jeans and a sweatshirt, both purchased on sale at H & M. Lush had a slanted ceiling with chandeliers and sparkling clothes hanging on a line, as if drying. Alicja ran her fingers through a top made of platinum fur. It was soft and cost \$890. She heard a voice ask if she needed help.

It was a tall blond woman, in tight brown pants and a black sparkling top. She wore heavy make up.

“My boss purchased a bag here, for fourteen hundred dollars, and it’s broken,” Alicja said. She lifted the bag to demonstrate the problem to the blond.

The blond examined the bag with her long pink fingernails. It was a metallic violet tote bag with the Lush brand name written across. It was made of snakeskin and had a gleaming finish. The blond disappeared with the bag behind the curtain, and promptly returned it to Alicja a few minutes later. “The manager says that the buckle is not broken. There is nothing wrong with the buckle,” she said. She’d make a great Stepford wife. “If it opens, then it’s supposed to be carried in your hand, that’s all,” the blond added, and smiled with a smile that was disproportionate to the gist of her message.

The driver laughed when Alicja told him the news. Alicja laughed too, but then realized that she was afraid of Mrs. Roi’s reaction.

Tomek raced back to Molly’s private school, the Success Academy, for dismissal. When Molly was in the car, or the other Rois, for that matter, he said nothing, other than professional remarks, and played the role of an exemplary driver with no personal opinions or preferences. Alicja thought of the French concierge in the novel “The Elegance of a Hedgehog” who under her professional persona lived a life of literary adventure, except that the driver’s adventure was not books but a desire to be Mr. Roi.

Molly’s school was inconveniently located about eighty blocks from the apartment, and was “the best,” according to Mrs. Roi. Alicja walked into the building, which was filled with nannies, like herself, dressed in leggings or jeans, sweaters and sweatshirts, and moms, dressed like Mrs. Roi, straight from a Lush catalogue.

Molly smiled when she saw Alicja. The little girl with freckles, large brown eyes and a voice that alternated between commanding and childlike. Was she the future heiress to the Rois’

fortune? She wore a navy knee-length school uniform and a white cardigan and she looked older than she was. In the car, Molly chatted about her art project, then cried because she wanted chocolate chip cookies “now,” then brightened up again when Alicja told her that her mother had a Halloween surprise for her. “I just hope the cleaner won’t throw it away because she’ll think it’s garbage,” Molly said.

“The cleaner has a name, Molly. What is her name?” Alicja asked, turning to Molly from her front seat. Molly stared at Alicja like she had just asked her to speak to her in Polish.

“Did you get it fixed?” Mrs. Roi welcomed them at the door.

Mrs. Roi was wearing a silk coral shirt with see-through sleeves and self-tie ribbons in the front, and a pair of pants with a wave-stitch pattern. She was the stay at home Mom who was too busy managing her full-time nanny, another nanny to work on the full-time nanny’s two days off, a full-time housekeeper and a full-time dog-walker, not to mention the driver, to care for her own child. She was in her mid-thirties, with long auburn hair and a figure shaped by a personal trainer and a diet of non-eating and getting through the day on a bottle of Naked reduced calorie citrus lemongrass juice, as well as an occasional cocktail, all of which she highly recommended to all her friends on the phone.

“Go there again tomorrow and get it fixed,” she said, and disappeared into the section of the apartment to which nannies and children were not allowed, as Mrs. Roi had told Alicja when she first gave her a tour of the apartment. She informed Alicja that there was a master bedroom, a bathroom, two closet rooms and two study rooms in the off-limits section of the apartment. Mrs. Roi then explained, quietly, that her husband and she needed some privacy. Alicja enthusiastically vowed to respect her employers’ privacy. Mrs. Roi smiled gently, and Alicja returned the smile. They would get along just fine.

Alicja now stood in the hallway, and picked up Molly's sandals thrown across the floor. Molly was already in her room, a suite with a king-size bed, a private closet, and a private bathroom, all sparkling pink. Alicja thought of her own childhood bed in a corner of the kitchen which she loved because at night she could break into the chocolate stash. Both her parents worked, but she remembered spending time with them, she remembered feeling happy. What would Molly remember from her childhood? Alicja took her phone out of her pocket. Mrs. Roi had just texted her: "Make salmon with teriyaki sauce for dinner. Call to get s delivered."

They had accounts everywhere, the butcher, the supermarket, the pet store. Grocery shopping consisted of picking up the phone and calling the right store, and asking for the right items. The salmon needed to be fresh and thinly sliced; the milk needed to be ordered daily, the dog treats had to be low-fat.

Molly, like any other typical kid her age, wouldn't touch the salmon and would insist on pasta and chicken fingers instead, but Alicja called the butcher nonetheless. She said it was for the Rois. The butcher thanked her and said the salmon would be delivered within fifteen minutes. After she'd hung up, she realized he didn't tell her the price. Nor did she ask.

"Are these organic?" Mrs. Roi glided into the kitchen and pointed to the box of strawberries that Alicja had bought earlier that day, upon Molly's request so she could take some strawberries to school for a snack. No, they were not organic, but she was ready to assure Mrs. Roi that they would taste delicious, when Mrs. Roi grabbed the box and tossed it in the garbage. "We eat everything organic. Is that clear?"

Alicja nodded.

"Where is my costume?" Molly screamed from her room.

“There is no yelling in the house,” Mrs. Roi yelled back. “And how about a thank you for the package?” Within seconds, Molly was in the kitchen, holding her new Halloween accessory—a net bag stuffed with fake rats, their tails sticking out of the net, trying to escape. There had been at least one package a day for a week now, all Halloween items.

“Thank you, Mother,” Molly said.

Mrs. Roi smiled graciously, and delegated Alicja to look underneath the counter. There was another package there. “Open it,” she said. The packaging slip said that there were three capes inside, two sizes for adults and one for a child. Molly climbed on a stool and grabbed one of them. It was all black and covered her all the way to the ground.

Mrs. Roi took one out too, and wrapped it around herself. She put the hood on her head. She looked noble and cold, like a character out of Dickens, a Lady Dedlock without a humiliating secret.

“I couldn’t help it,” she said, looking at herself in the mirror. “I figured, we could use them on any Halloween, and for fifty dollars each, I may as well get one for all of us,” she said. She threw the cape on the floor, and added that they should think about a costume “for Alice, a nanny costume, perhaps.”

“Alice could dress up as Mary Poppins!” Molly exclaimed.

“That’s not a good idea,” Mrs. Roi said, and walked out of the kitchen.

Molly went back to her room, and sat down on the floor. Alicja followed her. Lucia, the cleaning lady, was already vacuuming the styrofoam Molly must have left on the floor when opening the package. Alicja asked the girl to sit on the bed so that Lucia could finish her job. Molly complied. “Her name is Lucia?” she asked. “My name is Molly,” she said, looking at the Hispanic woman.

“I know, sweetie,” Lucia said, and smiled. She’d seen her every day for over a year now, but Alicja felt like this was a minor victory over the world of the Rois, Alicja’s own influence over the girl. Mrs. Roi had introduced Lucia to Alicja as “the cleaning lady.”

“Alice, come to my office,” Mrs. Roi said. Alicja had told her how to pronounce her name in Polish, but Mrs. Roi preferred the English version. Despite this, Alicja felt privileged—the only employees whom Mrs. Roi decided to address by their proper names were her nannies. “I’ve been trying to call you for the past five minutes,” Mrs. Roi said. She was sitting behind a large desk with fashion magazines and invitations to dinner parties and charity events scattered on it. Alicja hadn’t heard her, and said so, but Mrs. Roi interrupted her. “I called your phone and sent you messages,” she said. Alicja had left her phone in the kitchen. “This is unacceptable. You are to have your phone on you at all times. I need to be able to get in touch with you at all times.”

Alicja nodded. She had, by now, gotten used to her employer’s preferred method of communication: text messages. “Now, I am going out,” Mrs. Roi announced abruptly. “Don’t shampoo Molly’s hair. You’ll ruin it if you do it every night. I read an article about it today.” When Mrs. Roi stood up, the afternoon sunlight lit her face, and Alicja thought she saw a tear in her eye.

Alicja had made plans to see a friend at 10pm that evening, for a drink. Her shift ended at 9:30pm, supposedly, but whenever Mrs. Roi had gone out, she didn’t return until much later in the evening. Alicja now texted her friend Ela and cancelled the plans, reminding herself that she was putting her life on hold for twelve hundred dollars a week. She would get home at 11:30pm, on a bus, and would have to return to work at 7:30am the following morning, to take Molly to school so that Mrs. Roi could sleep in after a late night out.

“The bag is not broken.” The next day, Alicja, together with Tomek the driver, returned to Lush, where the same blond woman, this time wearing a dark velvet dress down to her knees, repeated the same message, in a tone that sounded robotic. The bag was not broken. Everyone knew the bag was not broken—except for Mrs. Roi. Alicja returned to the car, feeling humiliated. The driver told her to “forget it” and added that Mr. Roi’s assistant had called and asked to pick up her boss’ suit jacket from the dry cleaners and to drop it off at his office.

Mr. Roi. Alicja didn’t know exactly what he did, other than that he made money. She had only seen him three times: over the weekend in the Hamptons, and two evenings when he returned home late from dinner with his wife. Where he ate or spent his time on most evenings until 9:30pm at least was not clear. Alicja wondered if he knew her name. The only question he’d ever asked her was whether she skied. This was during lunch in the Hamptons, for which they all sat at the table like a happy family, even if Alicja was the one who cooked, set the table, and would clean up afterwards. Mrs. Roi had informed Alicja that they would all go to the Bahamas for Christmas, Jackson Hole in February, and Europe—Italy or Greece—in the summer. “Do you ski?” Mr. Roi had asked and glanced briefly at Alicja. She didn’t. “You will have a chance to learn,” he said, this time without looking at her. He was wearing a pair of blue jeans and a striped blue and white shirt that matched his blue eyes. His blond hair looked perfect.

“But what if I don’t want to learn?” Alicja asked, and then regretted it right away, because of the look Mrs. Roi gave her.

“Don’t be silly. Everyone wants to learn how to ski,” Mrs. Roi responded, and smiled at her husband’s approval.

Alicja now asked the driver where Mr. Roi worked.

“Wall Street, baby,” he responded and stopped the car in front of a Starbucks. He smiled. “Would you like some coffee?” He returned with a latte and a tea for himself. He looked almost American with the two grande cups attached to a paper tray. Alicja offered him money.

“It all goes on my business credit card,” he announced.

Within a few minutes they were on Broadway, passing Wall Street, where, except for numerous barricades and policemen strategically placed around them, life went on as usual: black and navy blue suits were out to lunch.

“Stupid,” Tomek said, pointing to the protesters at Zuccotti Park. “Get a job,” he shouted, looking over to the crowd.

“The unemployment rate is at 9%, and besides, this is about more than just having a job. The gap between the rich and the poor...,” Alicja started, but he interrupted her.

“I can bet that if I offered my job or your job to any of these losers out there, they would take it in a heartbeat,” the driver said, and turned right onto Liberty Street. Mr. Roi’s assistant, an attractive brunette with a big bust, stood at the corner. She picked up the jacket and smiled, the same smile the store assistant from Lush had.

As they drove away, the protesters loomed in the background. It occurred to Alicja that the movement was too contained, one square that wasn’t even on Wall Street but a few blocks away from it. The Rois and the Gekkos could easily travel to work and never pass a protester.

“I don’t want to go to gymnastics today,” Molly said, before getting into the car. She looked tired. Alicja touched her forehead. The girl didn’t seem to have a fever. Alicja asked if she slept okay the night before.

“I couldn’t. They were yelling,” Molly said in a whiney voice.

What could the Rois be arguing about? The assistant? She imagined Mrs. Roi in tears, begging her husband to spend more time at home. For a brief moment, she thought that Mrs. Roi must be very lonely. She now pulled Molly towards her, and gave her a big hug.

“Don’t get too attached,” Tomek whispered in Polish as he opened the back door for Molly.

Alicja sent a quick text message to Mrs. Roi. “Molly feels a little sick. Can she stay home instead of doing gymnastics?”

“Accident on the FDR,” the driver announced, looking at his electronic device. “We have to go through the city.”

Alicja heard her phone beep. “Gymnastics,” the message read. She told Molly that she’d have to go to gymnastics but that they would stop to get a special treat at Dean and Deluca. She’d heard Mrs. Roi promise Molly “a special treat” from Dean and Deluca to avert the girl’s emotional meltdown once, when Molly didn’t want to go to her horse back riding lesson in the Hamptons. Molly nodded, staring out the window.

Something was happening on Madison Ave. They were on 64<sup>th</sup> Street, and had to stop despite the green light. “What now?” the driver said in English.

There were hundreds of people on the street, many carrying signs or shouting. “Millionaires’ March.” He turned on the radio for traffic updates.

“The Millionaires’ March is on its way through the Upper East Side. About 400 marchers—trade unionists, retirees, students, an activist brass marching band and a topless woman—are chanting and drumming their way through the city’s wealthiest corridors to decry the concentration of wealth in the hands of the few, and also to pay a visit to the homes of...”

“How am I supposed to get through?” Tomek asked.

Alicja glanced back at Molly. The girl seemed to be staring above the street level, at the penthouses or the sky.

“Stop income inequality,” Alicja read one of the signs as Tomek tried to maneuver his way to the right, to Park Avenue.

“Shhh,” he put his finger to his lips, and waved his head towards Molly.

Both of us should be on the street, Alicja thought. When they got to the apartment building, at Eighty-Fourth and Park Avenue, a doorman opened the door for Alicja. She was holding the Lush bag in her hand, not on her shoulder, as instructed by the blond sales woman. The bag was fine, and the metallic violet matched Alicja’s purple leggings. But would the protesters think she were the 1 percent? How could she explain that she was just a nanny with her boss’ fourteen hundred dollar bag?

Molly’s Halloween costume had arrived, and the girl raced to the living room, to try it on. Mrs. Roi was in the kitchen, sipping her usual reduced calorie juice. “The bag?” she asked. Alicja, once again, started explaining that the bag was not broken. “Give me the bag,” Mrs. Roi said to Alicja. Alicja picked up the bag from a bench in the hallway and handed it over to her employer. “I will have Sara deal with it since you are incapable of doing so,” she announced. Sara, whose real name was Serena, was the Friday-Saturday nanny.

“I am a princess!” Molly yelled out, and circled around the kitchen in her new costume. “My dad’s great grandfather was a king of France, and Roi means king in French, and now I get to be a princess!” she exclaimed. Alicja was amazed to see how quickly Molly’s mood jumped from fatigue to ecstasy.

“This is not the first time that I have to tell you to keep the noise down,” Mrs. Roi ignored her daughter and raised her voice at Alicja.

Alicja stared at Mrs. Roi. “The Noise” seemed to be her nickname for Molly. The Millionaires’ March would be passing by the apartment building shortly, but neither Mrs. Roi nor Molly would know about it.

“Remember that this is your trial period. I can’t have anyone here who is incompetent. Now go and straighten Molly’s room before you go to gymnastics.”

Alicja started walking towards the girl’s room when Mrs. Roi screamed: “Take her with you! Do I really need to tell you this?” Alicja gestured to Molly, who was dancing in her sparkling dress with ribbons around her mother. “If I need to remind you once more what your job is,” Mrs. Roi went on, but didn’t finish the threat. Molly followed Alicja. The girl chose the nanny when her mother was in a bad mood. It was her survival instinct.

They walked into Molly’s room. Molly collapsed on her bed. Alicja looked around: the bed perfectly made, the American Girl dolls seated in chairs, all their clothes hanging in their respective American Girl closets. The room was immaculate.

Alicja thought about the freedom the Polish driver talked about, the \$150,000-in-savings freedom. She’d come to this country seven years ago, paid her way through college, and worked odd jobs to make ends meet. She’d wanted to be a teacher. This was her first chance to make the real bucks. Her friend Lucy who volunteered at the Occupy Wall Street library had told her that if she quit, she would do so for all the nannies in America who were treated like servants by their employers.

“There is nothing wrong with the bag,” Alicja now walked into Mrs. Roi’s office, without an invitation.

Mrs. Roi was standing by her desk, typing letters on her phone. “You were not called,” she said, without taking her eyes off the electronic device.

“It’s designed to be carried in your hand, not on your shoulder.”

Mrs. Roi raised her head to face Alicja. “I said you were not called,” she repeated, and stomped her foot on the floor. “Out,” she added, and returned to her text message.

“I can’t work for you,” Alicja said.

Mrs. Roi pressed a button on her phone. Whoever she called must have picked up right away. “The nanny wants to quit for no reason and I need to go out and…” Mrs. Roi handed the phone to Alicja.

“What’s happening?” Alicja heard Mr. Roi’s voice on the other end of the line. His voice was calm and distracted. She imagined him dealing with million dollar deals, negotiating with people about money, always about money. He was on Wall Street, or around Wall Street, near the heart of the Occupy Wall Street movement. Alicja now remembered that when he first met her, he’d said that their previous nanny had left because she had cancer, and that it was very disruptive to them. ‘Disruptive’ was the precise word he used.

“I’ve never been treated like this and…,” Alicja began to explain.

“So leave.”

She passed the phone back to Mrs. Roi.

“I can’t take it off,” Molly run into her mother’s office and started crying, her costume stuck on her head.

You will be a princess forever, Alicja thought. “Your mother will help you, Molly,” she said, patting her lightly on the back. Molly didn’t know this yet, but she would grow up and hire two nannies for her own child.

Alicja headed towards the front door, but Mrs. Roi gestured to follow her. She opened the back door, the one for deliveries and garbage pick-up.

Alicja took the elevator downstairs and the doormen held open the door to the street. Why weren't they marching? She knew the answer. Kids, families, mortgages, cars, vacations. Weren't those legitimate excuses?

Alicja looked at the street. She was sobbing lightly. She spotted Tomek in the Mercedes. He was eating something out of a plastic container, chewing in a hurry. The car didn't belong to him. It belonged to the Rois and the rest was fantasy.

The driver rolled down the window and, with his mouth full, called Alicja. She looked at him and then beyond him, into the distance, where she saw the protesters. She turned left to walk in their direction. When she heard Tomek call her name again, she started running. A few minutes later she reached the crowd. A tall man with big blue eyes that were wide open gently touched Alicja on her shoulder, then pointed his palm upward and toward the protesters. He looked like a wizard inviting her to enter a secret garden. She joined in mechanically, before she decided that she wanted to. It was a smooth transition, as if the protesters waited for her. They were chanting "We are the 99 percent!" and Alicja blended in with the other voices. They were heading to David Koch's apartment. She walked in front of a sign that read: "Wake up from the American Dream. Create a Livable American Reality." They stopped in front of a luxury apartment building, at 740 Park Avenue. The 19-floor limestone co-op has been called the world's richest apartment building. Koch, oil tycoon and the wealthiest man in New York City, occupied an 18-room duplex on the fourth and fifth floors. He had purchased it in 2005 for \$17 million. A doorman stood in front of the building. He was tall and skinny, probably in his mid-sixties, and he looked Russian. How many more years would he hail cabs and open doors for the city's 1 percent? The protesters now surrounded the front of the building, and demanded to see

David Koch. The doorman pretended not to hear them, and continued guarding the entrance to the lobby.

The protesters started walking again, and the doorman watched them with a mixture of anxiety and, Alicja would have sworn, jealousy. She started moving with the crowds. They would go to the next apartment, and then the next one. They would demand accountability for the Wall Street crimes, and the end of tax breaks for the city's richest residents. This was not exactly a strike European-style, where thousands would boycott work and march on the streets, starving themselves, paralyzing the city. But it was the beginning of something. Alicja remembered one other reason the Polish driver urged her to stay with the Rois. He said that even if the economy were to crash, they, he said, referring to the Rois, would never lose money. "You will always have job security," he said. The 1 percent was untouchable. Have been, so far, and for too long already. But what if the 99 percent head to their residences and knock on their door and then also camp at a park near their office, and what if, when the Rois turn on the TV, the 99 percent is in the news, too, and when Mr. Roi is driven to work, her driver will have to make a detour because of the Millionaire's March, and also, when Mrs. Roi attends her weekly spa session, she will overhear the beautician talk about the protesters like they are heroes? The power that Alicja now felt she, and the protesters all around the country, had, was to disrupt the lives of the rich.