AMERICAN PSYCHO


Bret Easton Ellis,
ABANDON ALL HOPE YE WHO ENTER HERE is scrawled in blood red lettering on the side of the Chemical Bank near the corner of Eleventh and First and is in print large enough to be seen from the backseat of the cab as it lurches forward in the traffic leaving Wall Street and just as Timothy Price notices the words a bus pulls up, the advertisement for Les Misérables on its side blocking his view, but Price who is with Pierce & Pierce and twenty-six doesn’t seem to care because he tells the driver he will give him five dollars to turn up the radio, “Be My Baby” on WYNN, and the driver, black, not American, does so.

“I’m resourceful,” Price is saying, “I’m creative, I’m young, unscrupulous, highly motivated, highly skilled. In essence what I’m saying is that society can not afford to lose me. I’m an asset.” Price calms down, continues to stare out the cab’s dirty window, probably at the word FEAR sprayed in red graffiti on the side of a McDonald’s on Fourth and Seventh. “I mean the fact remains that no one gives a shit about their work, everybody hates their job, I hate my job, you’ve told me you hate yours. What do I do? Go back to Los Angeles? Not an alternative. I didn’t transfer from UCLA to Stanford to put up with this. I mean am I alone in thinking we’re not making enough money?” Like in a movie
another bus appears, another poster for *Les Misérables* replaces
the word—not the same bus because someone has written the
word dyke over Eponine’s face. Tim blurs out, “I have a co-op
here. I have a place in the Hamptons, for Christ sakes.”
“Parents’, guy. It’s the parents.”
“I’m buying it from them. Will you fucking turn this up?”
he snaps but distractedly at the driver, the Crystals still blaring
from the radio.
“If don’t go up no higher,” maybe the driver says.
Timothy ignores him and irritably continues. “I could stay
living in this city if they just installed Blaupunkt in the cabs.
Maybe the ODM III or ORC II dynamic tuning systems?” His
He takes off the expensive-looking Walkman from around
his neck, still complaining. “I hate to complain—I really do—
about the trash, the garbage, the disease, about how filthy this
city really is and you know and I know that it is a sty . . .” He
continues talking as he opens his new Tumi calfskin attaché case
he bought at D. F. Sanders. He places the Walkman in the case
alongside a Panasonic wallet-size cordless portable folding
Easa-phone (he used to own the NEC 9000 Porta portable) and
pulls out today’s newspaper. “In one issue—in one issue—let’s
see here . . . strangled models, babies thrown from tenement
roofops, kids killed in the subway, a Communist rally, Mafia
boss wiped out, Nazis”—he flips through the pages excitedly—
“baseball players with AIDS, more Mafia shit, gridlock, the
homeless, various maniacs, faggots dropping like flies in the
streets, surrogate mothers, the cancellation of a soap opera, kids
who broke into a zoo and tortured and burned various animals
alive, more Nazis . . . and the joke is, the punch line is, it’s all
in this city—nowhere else, just here, it sucks, whoa wait, more
Nazis, gridlock, gridlock, baby-sellers, black-market babies,
AIDS babies, baby junkies, building collapses on baby, maniac
baby, gridlock, bridge collapses”—His voice stops, he takes in
a breath and then quietly says, his eyes fixed on a beggar at the
corner of Second and Fifth, “That’s the twenty-fourth one I’ve
seen today. I’ve kept count.” Then asks without looking over,
“Why aren’t you wearing the worsted navy blue blazer with the
gray pants?” Price is wearing a six-button wool and silk suit by

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Ermenegildo Zegna, a cotton shirt with French cuffs by Ike
Behar, a Ralph Lauren silk tie and leather wing tips by Fratelli
Rossetti. Pan down to the *Post*. There is a moderately interesting
story concerning two people who disappeared at a party
aboard the yacht of a semi-noted New York socialite while the
boat was circling the island. A residue of spattered blood and
three smashed champagne glasses are the only clues. Foul play
is suspected and police think that perhaps a machete was the
killer’s weapon because of certain grooves and indentations
found on the deck. No bodies have been found. There are no
suspects. Price began his spiel today over lunch and then
brought it up again during the squash game and continued
ranting over drinks at Harry’s where he had gone on, over three
J&Es and water, much more interestingly about the Fisher
account that Paul Owen is handling. Price will not shut up.

“Diseases!” he exclaims, his face tense with pain. “There’s
this theory out now that if you can catch the AIDS virus through
having sex with someone who is infected then you can also
catch anything, whether it’s a virus per se or not—Alzheimer’s,
muscular dystrophy, hemophilia, leukemia, anorexia, diabetes,
cancer, multiple sclerosis, cystic fibrosis, cerebral palsy, dys-
lexia, for Christ sakes—you can get dyslexia from pussy—”

“I’m not sure, guy, but I don’t think dyslexia is a virus.”

“Oh, who knows? They don’t know that. Prove it.”

Outside this cab, on the sidewalks, black and bloated pi-
geons fight over scraps of hot dogs in front of a Gray’s Papaya
while transvestites idly look on and a police car cruises silently
the wrong way down a one-way street and the sky is low and
gray and in a cab that’s stopped in traffic across from this one,
a guy who looks a lot like Luis Carruthers waves over at Timo-
thy and when Timothy doesn’t return the wave the guy—
slicked-back hair, suspenders, horn-rimmed glasses—realizes
it’s not who he thought it was and looks back at his copy of USA
*Today*. Panning down to the sidewalk there’s an ugly old home-
less bag lady holding a whip and she cracks it at the pigeons who
ignore it as they continue to peck and fight hungrily over the
remains of the hot dogs and the police car disappears into an
underground parking lot.

“But then, when you’ve just come to the point when your
reaction to the times is one of total and sheer acceptance, when your body has become somehow tuned into the insanity and you reach that point where it all makes sense, when it clicks, we get some crazy fucking homeless nigger who actually wants—listen to me, Bateman—wants to be out on the streets, this, those streets, see, those”—he points—“and we have a mayor who won’t listen to her, a mayor who won’t let the bitch have her way—Holy Christ—let the fucking bitch freeze to death, put her out of her own goddamn self-made misery, and look, you’re back where you started, confused, fucked . . . Number twenty-four, nope, twenty-five . . . Who’s going to be at Evelyn’s? Wait, let me guess.” He holds up a hand attached to an impeccable manicure. “Ashley, Courtney, Muldwyn, Marina, Charles—am I right so far? Maybe one of Evelyn’s ‘artiste’ friends from ohmygod the ‘East’ Village. You know the type—the ones who ask Evelyn if she has a nice dry white chardonnay—” He slaps a hand over his forehead and shuts his eyes and now he mutters, jaw clenched, “I’m leaving. I’m dumping Meredith. She’s essentially daring me to like her. I’m gone. Why did it take me so long to realize that she has all the personality of a goddamn game-show host? . . . Twenty-six, twenty-seven . . . I mean I tell her I’m sensitive. I told her I was freaked out by the Challenger accident—what more does she want? I’m ethical, tolerant, I mean I’m extremely satisfied with my life, I’m optimistic about the future—I mean, aren’t you?”

“Sure, but—”

“And all I get is shit from her . . . Twenty-eight, twenty-nine, holy shit it’s a goddamn cluster of burns. I tell you”—He stops suddenly, as if exhausted, and turning away from another advertisement for Les Misérables, remembering something important, asks, “Did you read about the host from that game show on TV? He killed two teenage boys? Depraved faggot. Droll, really droll.” Price waits for a reaction. There is none. Suddenly: Upper West Side.

He tells the driver to stop on the corner of Eighty-first and Riverside since the street doesn’t go the right way.

“Don’t bother going arou—” Price begins.

“Maybe I go other way around,” the cabdriver says.

“Do not bother.” Then barely an aside, teeth gritted, unsmiling: “ Fucking nitwit.”

The driver brings the cab to a stop. Two cabs behind this cab both blare their horns then move on.

“Should we bring flowers?”

“Nah. Hell, you’re banging her, Bateman. Why should we get Evelyn flowers? You better have change for a fifty,” he warns the driver, squinting at the red numbers on the meter.

“Damn. Steroids. Sorry I’m tense.”

“Thought you were off them.”

“I was getting acne on my legs and arms and the UVA bath wasn’t fixing it, so I started going to a tanning salon instead and got rid of it. Jesus, Bateman, you should see how ripped my stomach is. The definition. Completely buffed out . . .,” he says in a distant, odd way, while waiting for the driver to hand him the change. “Ripped.” He stiffs the driver on the tip but the driver is genuinely thankful anyway. “So long, Shlomo,” Price winks.

“Damn, damn, damned,” Price says as he opens the door. Coming out of the cab he eyes a beggar on the street—“Bingo: thirty”—wearing some sort of weird, tacky, filthy green jumpsuit, unshaven, dirty hair greased back, and jokingly Price holds the cab’s door open for him. The bum, confused and mumbling, eyes locked shamefully on the pavement, holds an empty Styrofoam coffee cup out to us, clutching in a tentative hand.

“I suppose he doesn’t want the cab,” Price snickers, slamming the cab door. “Ask him if he takes American Express.”

“Do you take Am Ex?”

The bum nods yes and moves away, shuffling slowly.

It’s cold for April and Price walks briskly down the street toward Evelyn’s brownstone, whistling “If I Were a Rich Man,” the heat from his mouth creating smoky plumes of steam, and swinging his Tumi leather attaché case. A figure with slicked-back hair and horn-rimmed glasses approaches in the distance, wearing a beige double-breasted wool-gabardine Cerruti 1881 suit and carrying the same Tumi leather attaché case from D. F. Sanders that Price has, and Timothy wonders aloud, “Is it Victor Powell? It can’t be.”

The man passes under the fluorescent glare of a streetlamp with a troubled look on his face that momentarily curls his lips into a slight smile and he glances at Price almost as if they were acquainted but just as quickly he realizes that he doesn’t know
Price and just as quickly Price realizes it's not Victor Powell and the man moves on.

"Thank god," Price mutters as he nears Evelyn's.

"It looked a lot like him."

"Powell and dinner at Evelyn's? These two go together about as well as paisley and plaid." Price rethinks this. "White socks with gray trousers."

A slow dissolve and Price is bounding up the steps outside the brownstone Evelyn's father bought her, grumbling about how he forgot to return the tapes he rented last night to Video Haven. He rings the bell. At the brownstone next to Evelyn's, a woman—high heels, great ass—leaves without locking her door. Price follows her with his gaze and when he hears footsteps from inside coming down the hallway toward us he turns around and straightens his Versace tie ready to face whoever. Courtney opens the door and she's wearing a Krizia cream silk blouse, a Krizia rust tweed skirt and silk-satin d'Orsay pumps from Manolo Blahnik.

I shiver and hand her my black wool Giorgio Armani overcoat and she takes it from me, carefully airkissing my right cheek, then she performs the same exact movements on Price while taking his Armani overcoat. The new Talking Heads on CD plays softly in the living room.

"A bit late, aren't we, boys?" Courtney asks, smiling naughtily.

"Inept Haitian cabbie," Price mutters, airkissing Courtney back. "Do we have reservations somewhere and please don't tell me Pastels at nine."

Courtney smiles, hanging up both coats in the hall closet.

"Eating in tonight, darlings. I'm sorry, I know, I know, I tried to talk Evelyn out of it but we're having ... sushi."

Tim moves past her and down the foyer toward the kitchen.

"Evelyn? Where are you, Evelyn?" he calls out in a singsong voice. "We have to talk."

"It's good to see you," I tell Courtney. "You look very pretty tonight. Your face has a ... youthful glow."

"You really know how to charm the ladies, Bateman."

There is no sarcasm in Courtney's voice. "Should I tell Evelyn you feel this way?" she asks flirtatiously.

"No," I say. "But I bet you'd like to."

"Come on," she says, taking my hands off her waist and placing her hands on my shoulders, steering me down the hall in the direction of the kitchen. "We have to save Evelyn. She's been rearranging the sushi for the past hour. She's trying to spell your initials—the P in yellowtail, the B in tuna—but she thinks the tuna looks too pale—"

"How romantic."

"—and she doesn't have enough yellowtail to finish the B"—Courtney breathes in—"and so I think she's going to spell Tim's initials instead. Do you mind?" she asks, only a bit worried. Courtney is Luis Carruthers' girlfriend.

"I'm terribly jealous and I think I better talk to Evelyn," I say, letting Courtney gently push me into the kitchen.

Evelyn stands by a blond wood counter wearing a Krizia cream silk blouse, a Krizia rust tweed skirt and the same pair of silk-satin d'Orsay pumps Courtney has on. Her long blond hair is pinned back into a rather severe-looking bun and she acknowledges me without looking up from the oval Wilton stainless-steel platter on which she has artfully arranged the sushi. "Oh honey, I'm sorry. I wanted to go to this darling little new Salvadorian bistro on the Lower East Side—"

Price groans audibly.

"—but we couldn't get reservations. Timothy, don't groan." She picks up a piece of the yellowtail and places it cautiously near the top of the platter, completing what looks like a capital T. She stands back from the platter and inspects it. "I don't know. Oh, I'm so unsure."

"I told you to keep Finlandia in this place," Tim mutters, looking through the bottles—most of them magnums—at the bar. "She never has Finlandia," he says to no one, to all of us.

"Oh god, Timothy. Can't handle Absolut?" Evelyn asks and then contemplatively to Courtney, "The California roll should circle the rim of the plate, no?"

"Bateman. Drink?" Price sighs.

"J&B rocks," I tell him, suddenly thinking it's strange that Meredith wasn't invited.

"Oh god. It's a mess," Evelyn gasps. "I swear I'm going to cry."
“The sushi looks marvelous,” I tell her soothingly.
“Oh it’s a mess,” she wails. “It’s a mess.”
“No, no, the sushi looks marvelous,” I tell her and in an
attempt to be as consoling as possible I pick up a piece of the
fuke and pop it in my mouth, groaning with inward pleasure,
and hug Evelyn from behind; my mouth still full, I manage to
say “Delicious.”
She slaps me in a playful way, obviously pleased with my
reaction, and finally, carefully, airkisses my cheek and then
turns back to Courtney. Price hands me a drink and walks
toward the living room while trying to remove something invis-
ible from his blazer. “Evelyn, do you have a lint brush?”
I would rather have watched the baseball game or gone to
the gym and worked out or tried that Salvadorian restaurant
that got a couple of pretty good reviews, one in New York
magazine, the other in the Times, than have dinner here but
there is one good thing about dinner at Evelyn’s: it’s close to my
place.
“Is it okay if the soy sauce isn’t exactly at room tem-
pera
ture?” Courtney is asking. “I think there’s ice in one of the
dishes.”
Evelyn is placing strips of pale orange ginger delicately in
a pile next to a small porcelain dish filled with soy sauce. “No,
It’s not okay. Now Patrick, could you be a dear and get the Kirin
out of the refrigerator?” Then, seemingly harassed by the gin-
ger, she throws the clamp down on the platter. “Oh forget it.
I’ll do it.”
I move toward the refrigerator anyway. Staring darkly,
Price reenters the kitchen and says, “Who in the hell is in the
living room?”
Evelyn feigns ignorance. “Oh who is that?”
Courtney warns, “Ev-ee-yn. You did tell them, I hope.”
“Who is it?” I ask, suddenly scared. “Victor Powell?”
“No, it’s not Victor Powell, Patrick,” Evelyn says casually.
“It’s an artist friend of mine, Stash. And Vanden, his girlfriend.”
“Oh so that was a girl in there,” Price says. “Go take a look,
Bateman,” he dares. “Let me guess. The East Village?”
“Oh Price,” she says flirtatiously, opening beer bottles.
“Why no. Vanden goes to Camden and Stash lives in SoHo, so
there.”
“No,” she says and then pointing at Tim, “to Price.”
Tim still glares at her fiercely. I say nothing and stare at Tim’s drink.
“Be a hon,” she tells me, “and place the sushi on the table. Tempura is in the microwave and the sake is just about done boiling. . . .” Her voice trails off as she leads Price out of the kitchen.

I am wondering where Evelyn got the sushi—the tuna, yellowtail, mackerel, shrimp, eel, even bonito, all seem so fresh and there are piles of wasabi and clumps of ginger placed strategically around the Wilton platter—but I also like the idea that I don’t know, will never know, will never ask where it came from and that the sushi will sit there in the middle of the glass table from Zona that Evelyn’s father bought her like some mysterious apparition from the Orient and as I set the platter down I catch a glimpse of my reflection on the surface of the table. My skin seems darker because of the candlelight and I notice how good the haircut I got at Gio’s last Wednesday looks. I make myself another drink. I worry about the sodium level in the soy sauce.

Four of us sit around the table waiting for Evelyn and Timothy to return from getting Price a lint brush. I sit at the head taking large swallows of J&B. Vanden sits at the other end reading disinterestedly from some East Village rag called Deception, its glaring headline THE DEATH OF DOWNTOWN. Stash has pushed a chopstick into a lone piece of yellowtail that lies on the middle of his plate like some shiny impaled insect and the chopstick stands straight up. Stash occasionally moves the piece of sushi around the plate with the chopstick but never looks up toward either myself or Vanden or Courtney, who sits next to me sipping plum wine from a champagne glass.

Evelyn and Timothy come back perhaps twenty minutes after we’ve seated ourselves and Evelyn looks only slightly flushed. Tim glares at me as he takes the seat next to mine, a fresh drink in hand, and he leans over toward me, about to say, to admit something, when suddenly Evelyn interrupts, “Not there, Timothy,” then, barely a whisper, “Boy girl, boy girl.” She gestures toward the empty chair next to Vanden. Timothy shifts his glare to Evelyn and hesitantly takes the seat next to Vanden, who yawns and turns a page of her magazine.

“Well, everybody,” Evelyn says, smiling, pleased with the meal she has presented, “dig in,” and then after noticing the piece of sushi that Stash has pinned—he’s now bent low over the plate, whispering at it—her composure falters but she smiles bravely and chirps, “Plum wine anyone?”

No one says anything until Courtney, who is staring at Stash’s plate, lifts her glass uncertainly and says, trying to smile, “It’s . . . delicious, Evelyn.”

Stash doesn’t speak. Even though he is probably uncomfortable at the table with us since he looks nothing like the other men in the room—his hair isn’t slicked back, no suspenders, no horn-rimmed glasses, the clothes black and ill-fitting, no urge to light and suck on a cigar, probably unable to secure a table at Camoks, his net worth a pittance—still, his behavior lacks warrant and he sits there as if hypnotized by the glistening piece of sushi and just as the table is about to finally ignore him, to look away and start eating, he sits up and loudly says, pointing an accusing finger at his plate, “It moved!”

Timothy glares at him with a contempt so total that I can’t fully equal it but I must enough energy to come close. Vanden seems amused and so now, unfortunately, does Courtney, who I’m beginning to think finds this monkey attractive but I suppose if I were dating Luis Carruthers I might too. Evelyn laughs good-naturedly and says, “Oh Stash, you are a riot,” and then asks worriedly, “Tempura?” Evelyn is an executive at a financial services company, FYI.

“I’ll have some,” I tell her and I lift a piece of eggplant off the platter, though I won’t eat it because it’s fried.

The table begins to serve themselves, successfully ignoring Stash. I stare at Courtney as she chews and swallows.

Evelyn, in an attempt to start a conversation, says, after what seems like a long, thoughtful silence, “Vanden goes to Camden.”

“Oh really?” Timothy asks icily. “Where is that?”

“Vermont,” Vanden answers without looking up from her paper.

I look over at Stash to see if he’s pleased with Vanden’s casually blatant lie but he acts as if he wasn’t listening, as if he were in some other room or some punk rock club in the bowels of the city, but so does the rest of the table, which bothers me
since I am fairly sure we all know it's located in New Hampshire.

"Where did you go?" Vanden sighs after it finally becomes clear to her that no one is interested in Camden.

"Well, I went to Le Rosay," Evelyn starts, "and then to business school in Switzerland."

"I also survived business school in Switzerland," Courtney says. "But I was in Geneva. Evelyn was in Lausanne."

Vanden tosses the copy of Deception next to Timothy and smirks in a wan, bitchy way and though I am pissed off a little that Evelyn doesn't take in Vanden's condescension and hurl it back at her, the J&B has relieved my stress to a point where I don't care enough to say anything. Evelyn probably thinks Vanden is sweet, lost, confused, an artist. Price isn't eating and neither is Evelyn; I suspect cocaine, but it's doubtful. While taking a large gulp from his drink Timothy holds up the copy of Deception and chuckles to himself.

"The Death of Downtown," he says; then, pointing at each word in the headline, "'Who-gives-a-rat's-ass'?"

I automatically expect Stash to look up from his plate but he still stares at the lone piece of sushi, smiling to himself and nodding.

"Hey," Vanden says, as if she was insulted. "That affects us."


"Well, that's a cool club in the Village," Vanden shrugs. "Yeah, that affects us too."

Suddenly Stash speaks without looking up. "That's called The Tonka. He sounds pissed but his voice is even and low, his eyes still on the sushi. "It's called The Tonka, not Sri Lanka. Got it? The Tonka."

Vanden looks down, then meekly says, "Oh."

"I mean don't you know anything about Sri Lanka? About how the Sikhs are killing like tons of Israelis there?" Timothy goads her. "Doesn't that affect us?"

"Kappanaki roll anyone?" Evelyn cuts in cheerfully, holding up a plate.

"Oh come on, Price," I say. "There are more important problems than Sri Lanka to worry about. Sure our foreign policy is important, but there are more pressing problems at hand."

"Like what?" he asks without looking away from Vanden. "By the way, why is there an ice cube in my soy sauce?"

"No," I start, hesitantly. "Well, we have to end apartheid for one. And slow down the nuclear arms race, stop terrorism and world hunger. Ensure a strong national defense, prevent the spread of communism in Central America, work for a Middle East peace settlement, prevent U.S. military involvement overseas. We have to ensure that America is a respected world power. Now that's not to belittle our domestic problems, which are equally important, if not more. Better and more affordable long-term care for the elderly, control and find a cure for the AIDS epidemic, clean up environmental damage from toxic waste and pollution, improve the quality of primary and secondary education, strengthen laws to crack down on crime and illegal drugs. We also have to ensure that college education is affordable for the middle class and protect Social Security for senior citizens plus conserve natural resources and wilderness areas and reduce the influence of political action committees."

The table stares at me uncomfortably, even Stash, but I'm on a roll.

"But economically we're still a mess. We have to find a way to hold down the inflation rate and reduce the deficit. We also need to provide training and jobs for the unemployed as well as protect existing American jobs from unfair foreign imports. We have to make America the leader in new technology. At the same time we need to promote economic growth and business expansion and hold the line against federal income taxes and hold down interest rates while promoting opportunities for small businesses and controlling mergers and big corporate takeovers."

Price nearly spits up his Absolut after this comment but I try to make eye contact with each one of them, especially Vanden, who if she got rid of the green streak and the leather and got some color—maybe joined an aerobics class, slipped on a blouse, something by Laura Ashley—might be pretty. But why does she sleep with Stash? He's lumpy and pale and has a bad cropped haircut and is at least ten pounds overweight; there's no muscle tone beneath the black T-shirt.

"But we can't ignore our social needs either. We have to
stop people from abusing the welfare system. We have to provide food and shelter for the homeless and oppose racial discrimination and promote civil rights while also promoting equal rights for women but change the abortion laws to protect the right to life yet still somehow maintain women's freedom of choice. We also have to control the influx of illegal immigrants. We have to encourage a return to traditional moral values and curb graphic sex and violence on TV, in movies, in popular music, everywhere. Most importantly we have to promote general social concern and less materialism in young people.”

I finish my drink. The table sits facing me in total silence. Courtney's smiling and seems pleased. Timothy just shakes his head in bemused disbelief. Evelyn is completely mystified by the turn the conversation has taken and she stands, unsteadily, and asks if anyone would like dessert.

“'I have... sorbet,'” she says as if in a daze. “Kiwi, carambola, cherimoya, cactus fruit and oh... what is that...” She stops her zombie monotone and tries to remember the last flavor. “Oh yes, Japanese pear.”

Everyone stays silent. Tim quickly looks over at me. I glance at Courtney, then back at Tim, then at Evelyn. Evelyn meets my glance, then worriedly looks over at Tim. I also look over at Tim, then at Courtney and then at Tim again, who looks at me once more before answering slowly, unsurely, “Cactus pear.”

“Cactus fruit,” Evelyn corrects.

I look suspiciously over at Courtney and after she says “Cherimoya” I say “Kiwi” and then Vanden says “Kiwi” also and Stash says quietly, but enunciating each syllable very clearly, “Chocolate chip.”

The worry that flickers across Evelyn's face when she hears this is instantaneously replaced by a smiling and remarkably good-natured mask and she says, “Oh Stash, you know I don't have chocolate chip, though admittedly that's pretty exotic for a sorbet. I told you I have cherimoya, cactus pear, carambola, I mean cactus fruit—”

“I know. I heard you, I heard you,” he says, waving her off. “Surprise me.”

“Okay,” Evelyn says. “Courtney? Would you like to help?”

“Of course.” Courtney gets up and I watch as her shoes click away into the kitchen.

“No cigars, boys,” Evelyn calls out.

“Wouldn’t dream of it,” Price says, putting a cigar back into his coat pocket.

Stash is still staring at the sushi with an intensity that troubles me and I have to ask him, hoping he will catch my sarcasm, “Did it, uh, move again or something?”

Vanden has made a smiley face out of all the disks of California roll she piled onto her plate and she holds it up for Stash's inspection and asks, “Rex?”

“Cool,” Stash grunts.

Evelyn comes back with the sorbet in Odeon margarita glasses and an unopened bottle of Glenfiddich, which remains unopened while we eat the sorbet.

Courtney has to leave early to meet Luis at a company party at Bedlam, a new club in midtown. Stash and Vanden depart soon after to go “score” something somewhere in SoHo. I am the only one who saw Stash take the piece of sushi from his plate and slip it into the pocket of his olive green leather bomber jacket. When I mention this to Evelyn, while she loads the dishwasher, she gives me a look so hateful that it seems doubtful we will have sex later on tonight. But I stick around anyway. So does Price. He is now lying on a late-eighteenth-century Aubusson carpet drinking espresso from a Ceralene coffee cup on the floor of Evelyn’s room. I’m lying on Evelyn’s bed holding a tapestry pillow from Jenny B. Goode, nursing a cranberry and Absolut. Evelyn sits at her dressing table brushing her hair, a Ralph Lauren green and white striped silk robe draped over a very nice body, and she is gazing at her reflection in the vanity mirror.

“Am I the only one who grasped the fact that Stash assumed his piece of sushi was”—I cough, then resume—“a pet?”

“Please stop inviting your 'artiste' friends over,” Tim says tiredly. “I'm sick of being the only one at dinner who hasn't talked to an extraterrestrial.”

“It was only that once,” Evelyn says, inspecting a lip, lost in her own placid beauty.

“And at Odeon, no less,” Price mutters.
I vaguely wonder why I wasn’t invited to Odeon for the artists dinner. Had Evelyn picked up the tab? Probably. And I suddenly picture a smiling Evelyn, secretly morose, sitting at a whole table of Stash’s friends—all of them constructing little log cabins with their french fries or pretending their grilled salmon was alive and moving the piece of fish around the table, the fish conversing with each other about the “art scene,” new galleries; maybe even trying to fit the fish into the log cabin made of french fries.

“If you remember well enough, I hadn’t seen one either,” Evelyn says.

“No, but Bateman’s your boyfriend, so that counted.” Price guffaws and I toss the pillow at him. He catches it then throws it back at me.

“Leave Patrick alone. He’s the boy next door,” Evelyn says, rubbing some kind of cream into her face. “You’re not an extraterrestrial, are you honey?”

“Should I even dignify that question with an answer?” I sigh.

“Oh baby.” She pouts into the mirror, looking at me in its reflection. “I know you’re not an extraterrestrial.”

“Relief,” I mutter to myself.

“No, but Stash was there at Odeon that night,” Price continues, and then, looking over at me, “At Odeon. Are you listening, Bateman?”

“No he wasn’t,” Evelyn says.

“Oh yes he was, but his name wasn’t Stash last time. It was Horseshoe or Magnet or Lego or something equally adult,” Price sneers. “I forget.”

“Timothy, what are you going on about?” Evelyn asks tiredly. “I’m not even listening to you.” She wets a cotton ball, wipes it across her forehead.

“No, we were at Odeon.” Price sits up with some effort. “And don’t ask me why, but I distinctly remember him ordering the tuna cappuccino.”

“Carpaccio,” Evelyn corrects.

“No, Evelyn dear, love of my life. I distinctly remember him ordering the tuna cappuccino,” Price says, staring up at the ceiling.

“He said carpaccio,” she counters, running the cotton ball over her eyelids.


“You didn’t even recognize him earlier tonight,” she says.

“Oh but I do remember him,” Price says, turning to me. “Evelyn described him as ‘the good-natured body builder.’ That’s how she introduced him. I swear.”

“Oh shut up,” she says, annoyed, but she looks over at Timothy in the mirror and smiles flirtatiously.

“I mean I doubt Stash makes the society pages of W, which I thought was your criterion for choosing friends,” Price says, staring back, grinning at her in his wolfish, lewd way. I concentrate on the Absolut and cranberry I’m holding and it looks like a glassful of thin, watery blood with ice and a lemon wedge in it.

“What’s going on with Courtney and Luis?” I ask, hoping to break their gaze.

“Oh god,” Evelyn moans, turning back to the mirror. “The really dreadful thing about Courtney is not that she doesn’t like Luis anymore. It’s that—”

“They canceled her charge at Bergdorf’s?” Price asks. I laugh. We slap each other high-five.

“No,” Evelyn continues, also amused. “It’s that she’s really in love with her real estate broker. Some little twerp over at The Feathered Nest.”

“Courtney might have her problems,” Tim says, inspecting his recent manicure, “but my god, what is a . . . Vanden?”

“Oh don’t bring this up,” Evelyn whines and starts brushing her hair.

“Vanden is a cross between . . . The Limited and . . . used Benetton,” Price says, holding up his hands, his eyes closed.

“No.” I smile, trying to integrate myself into the conversation. “Used Fiorucci.”


“Timothy, lay off,” Evelyn says. “She’s a Camden girl. What do you expect?”

“Oh god,” Timothy moans. “I am so sick of hearing Camden-girl problems. Oh my boyfriend, I love him but he loves
someone else and oh how I longed for him and he ignored me and blahblah blah blah—god, how boring. College kids. It matters, you know? It's sad, right Bateman?"

"Yeah. Matters. Sad."

"See, Bateman agrees with me," Price says smugly.

"Oh he does not." With a Kleenex Evelyn wipes off whatever she rubbed on. "Patrick is not a cynic, Timothy. He's the boy next door, aren't you honey?"

"No I'm not," I whisper to myself. "I'm a fucking evil psychopath."

"Oh so what," Evelyn sighs. "She's not the brightest girl in the world."

"Hah! Understatement of the century!" Price cries out. "But Stash isn't the brightest guy either. Perfect couple. Did they meet on Love Connection or something?"

"Leave them alone," Evelyn says. "Stash is talented and I'm sure we're underestimating Vanden."

"This is a girl..." Price turns to me. "Listen, Bateman, this is a girl—Evelyn told me this—this is a girl who rented High Noon because she thought it was a movie about—he gulps—marijuana farmers."

"It just hit me," I say. "But we deciphered what Stash—I assume he has a last name but don't tell me, I don't want to know, Evelyn—does for a living?"

"First of all he's perfectly decent and nice," Evelyn says in his defense.

"The man asked for chocolate chip sorbet for Christ sakes!" Timothy wails, disbelieving. "What are you talking about?"

Evelyn ignores this, pulls off her Tina Chow earrings. "He's a sculptor," she says tersely.

"Oh bullshit," Timothy says. "I remember talking to him at Odeon. He turns to me again. "This was when he ordered the tuna cappuccino and I'm sure if left unattended would have ordered the salmon au lait, and he told me he did parties, so that technically makes him—I don't know, correct me if I'm wrong, Evelyn—a caterer. He's a caterer!" Price cries out. "Not a fucking sculptor!"

"Oh gosh calm down," Evelyn says, rubbing more cream into her face.

**AMERICAN PSYCHO**

"That's like saying you're a poet." Timothy is drunk and I'm beginning to wonder when he will vacate the premises.

"Well," Evelyn begins. "I've been known to—"

"You're a fucking word processor!" Tim blurs out. He walks over to Evelyn and bows next to her, checking out his reflection in the mirror.

"Have you been gaining weight, Tim?" Evelyn asks thoughtfully. She studies Tim's head in the mirror and says, "Your face looks... rounder."

Timothy, in retaliation, smells Evelyn's neck and says, "What is that fascinating... odor?"

"Obsession." Evelyn smiles flirtatiously, gently pushing Timothy away. "It's Obsession. Patrick, get your friend away from me."

"No, no, wait," Timothy says, sniffing loudly. "It's not Obsession. It's... It's..." and then, with a face twisted in mock horror, "It's... oh my god, it's O.T. Instan!"

Evelyn pauses and considers her options. She inspects Price's head one more time. "Are you losing your hair?"

"Evelyn," Tim says. "Don't change the subject but..." And then, genuinely worried, "Now that you mention it... too much gel?" Concerned, he runs a hand over it.

"Maybe," Evelyn says. "Now make yourself useful and do sit down."

"Well, at least it's not green and I haven't tried to cut it with a butter knife," Tim says, referring to Vanden's dye job and Stash's admittedly cheap, bad haircut. A haircut that's bad because it's cheap.

"Are you gaining weight?" Evelyn asks, more seriously this time.

"Jesus," Tim says, about to turn away, offended. "No, Evelyn."

"Your face definitely looks... rounder," Evelyn says. "Less... chiseled."

"I don't believe this." Tim again.

He looks deep into the mirror. She continues brushing her hair but the strokes are less definite because she's looking at Tim. He notices this and then smells her neck and I think he licks it at quickly and grins.
I laugh good-naturedly while getting up from the bed, escorting him out of the room.  
"Wait! My espresso!" he calls out.
Evelyn laughs, then claps as if delighted by Timothy’s reluctance to vacate.
"Come on fella," I say as I push him roughly out of the bedroom. "Beddy-bye time."
He still manages to blow her a kiss before I get him out and away. He is completely silent as I walk him out of the brownstone.

After he leaves I pour myself a brandy and drink it from a checkered Italian tumbler and when I come back to the bedroom I find Evelyn lying in bed watching the Home Shopping Club. I lie down next to her and loosen my Armani tie. Finally I ask something without looking at her.

"Why don’t you just go for Price?"
"Oh god, Patrick," she says, her eyes shut. "Why Price? Price?" And she says this in a way that makes me think she has had sex with him.

"He’s rich," I say.
"Everybody’s rich," she says, concentrating on the TV screen.
"He’s good-looking," I tell her.
"Everybody’s good-looking, Patrick," she says remotely.
"He has a great body," I say.
"Everybody has a great body now," she says.

I place the tumbler on the nightstand and roll over on top of her. While I kiss and lick her neck she stares passionlessly at the wide-screen Panasonic remote-control television set and lowers the volume. I pull my Armani shirt up and place her hand on my torso, wanting her to feel how rock-hard, how halved my stomach is, and I flex the muscles, grateful it’s light in the room so she can see how bronzed and defined my abdomen has become.

"You know," she says clearly, "Stash tested positive for the AIDS virus. And . . ." She pauses, something on the screen catching her interest; the volume goes slightly up and then is lowered. "And . . . I think he will probably sleep with Vanden tonight."
“Good,” I say, biting lightly at her neck, one of my hands on a firm, cold breast.
“You’re evil,” she says, slightly excited, running her hands along my broad, hard shoulder.
“No,” I sigh. “Just your fiancé.”
After attempting to have sex with her for around fifteen minutes, I decide not to continue trying.
She says, “You know, you can always be in better shape.”
I reach for the tumbler of brandy. I finish it. Evelyn is addicted to Parnate, an antidepressant. I lie there beside her watching the Home Shopping Club—at glass dolls, embroidered throw pillows, lamps shaped like footballs, Lady Zirconia—with the sound turned off. Evelyn starts drifting.
“Are you using minoxidil?” she asks, after a long time.
“No. I’m not,” I say. “Why should I?”
“Your hairline looks like it’s receding,” she murmurs.
“It’s not,” I find myself saying. It’s hard to tell. My hair is very thick and I can’t tell if I’m losing it. I really doubt it.
I walk back to my place and say good night to a doorman I don’t recognize (he could be anybody) and then dissolve into my living room high above the city, the sounds of the Tokens singing “The Lion Sleeps Tonight” coming from the glow of the Wurlitzer 1015 jukebox (which is not as good as the hard-to-find Wurlitzer 850) that stands in the corner of the living room. I masturbate, thinking about first Evelyn, then Courtneyn, then Vanden and then Evelyn again, but right before I come—a weak orgasm—about a near-naked model in a halter top I saw today in a Calvin Klein advertisement.

Morning

In the early light of a May dawn this is what the living room of my apartment looks like: Over the white marble and granite gas-log fireplace hangs an original David Onica. It’s a six-foot-by-four-foot portrait of a naked woman, mostly done in muted grays and olives, sitting on a chaise longue watching MTV, the backdrop a Martian landscape, a gleaming mauve desert scattered with dead, gutted fish, smashed plates rising like a sunburst above the woman’s yellow head, and the whole thing is framed in black aluminum steel. The painting overlooks a long white down-filled sofa and a thirty-inch digital TV set from Toshiba; it’s a high-contrast highly defined model plus it has a four-corner video stand with a high-tech tube combination from NEC with a picture-in-picture digital effects system (plus freeze-frame); the audio includes built-in MTS and a five-watt-channel on-board amp. A Toshiba VCR sits in a glass case beneath the TV set; it’s a super-high-band Beta unit and has built-in editing function including a character generator with eight-page memory, a high-band record and playback, and three-week, eight-event timer. A hurricane halogen lamp is placed in each corner of the living room. Thin white venetian blinds cover all eight floor-to-ceiling windows. A glass-top coffee table with oak legs by Turchin sits in front of the sofa, with Steuben glass animals placed strategically around expensive crystal ashtrays from Fortunoff, though I don’t smoke. Next to the Wurlitzer jukebox is a black ebony Baldwin concert grand piano. A polished white oak floor runs throughout the apartment. On the other side of the room, next to a desk and a magazine rack by Gio Ponti, is a complete stereo system (CD player, tape deck, tuner, amplifier) by Sansui with six-foot Dun-tech Sovereign 2001 speakers in Brazilian rosewood. A down-filled futon lies on an oakwood frame in the center of the bedroom. Against the wall is a Panasonic thirty-one-inch set with a direct-view screen and stereo sound and beneath it in a glass case is a Toshiba VCR. I’m not sure if the time on the Sony digital alarm clock is correct so I have to sit up then look down at the time flashing on and off on the VCR, then pick up the Ettore Sottsass push-button phone that rests on the steel and glass nightstand next to the bed and dial the time number. A cream leather, steel and wood chair designed by Eric Marcus is in one corner of the room, a molded plywood chair in the other. A black-dotted beige and white Maud Sienna carpet covers most of the floor. One wall is hidden by four chests of immense bleached mahogany drawers. In bed I’m wearing Ralph
Lauren silk pajamas and when I get up I slip on a paisley ancient madder robe and walk to the bathroom. I urinate while trying to make out the puffiness of my reflection in the glass that encases a baseball poster hung above the toilet. After I change into Ralph Lauren monogrammed boxer shorts and a Fair Isle sweater and slide into silk polka-dot Enrico Hidolin slippers I tie a plastic ice pack around my face and commence with the morning's stretching exercises. Afterwards I stand in front of a chrome and acrylic Washmobile bathroom sink—with soap dish, cup holder, and railings that serve as towel bars, which I bought at Hastings Tile to use while the marble sinks I ordered from Finland are being sanded—and stare at my reflection with the ice pack still on. I pour some Plax antiplaque formula into a stainless-steel tumber and swish it around my mouth for thirty seconds. Then I squeeze Rembrandt onto a faux-tortoise-shell toothbrush and start brushing my teeth (too hung over to floss properly—but maybe I flossed before bed last night?) and rinse with Listerine. Then I inspect my hands and use a nailbrush. I take the ice-pack mask off and use a deep-pore cleanser lotion, then an herb-mint facial masque which I leave on for ten minutes while I check my toenails. Then I use the Probright tooth polisher and next the Interplak tooth polisher (this in addition to the toothbrush) which has a speed of 4200 rpm and reverses direction forty-six times per second; the larger tufts clean between teeth and massage the gums while the short ones scrub the tooth surfaces. I rinse again, with Cepacol. I wash the facial masque off with a spearmint face scrub. The shower has a universal all-directional shower head that adjusts within a thirty-inch vertical range. It's made from Australian gold-black brass and covered with a white enamel finish. In the shower I use first a water-activated gel cleanser, then a honey-almond body scrub, and on the face an exfoliating gel scrub. Vidal Sassoon shampoo is especially good at getting rid of the coating of dried perspiration, salts, oils, airborne pollutants and dirt that can weigh down hair and flatten it to the scalp which can make you look older. The conditioner is also good—silicone technology permits conditioning benefits without weighing down the hair which can also make you look older. On weekends or before a date I prefer to use the Greune Natural Revitalizing

Shampoo, the conditioner and the Nutrient Complex. These are formulas that contain D-panthenol, a vitamin-B-complex factor, polysorbate 80, a cleansing agent for the scalp; and natural herbs. Over the weekend I plan to go to Bloomingdale's or Bergdorf's and on Evelyn's advice pick up a Foltene European Supplement and Shampoo for thinning hair which contains complex carbohydrates that penetrate the hair shafts for improved strength and shine. Also the Vivagen Hair Enrichment Treatment, a new Redken product that prevents mineral deposits and prolongs the life cycle of hair. Luis Carruthers recommended the Aramis Nutripillex system, a nutrient complex that helps increase circulation. Once out of the shower and towel-dried I put the Ralph Lauren boxers back on and before applying the Mousse A Raiser, a shaving cream by Pour Hommes, I press a hot towel against my face for two minutes to soften abrasive beard hair. Then I always slather on a moisturizer (to my taste, Clinique) and let it soak in for a minute. You can rinse it off or keep it on and apply a shaving cream over it—preferably with a brush, which softens the beard as it lifts the whiskers—which I've found makes removing the hair easier. It also helps prevent water from evaporating and reduces friction between your skin and the blade. Always wet the razor with warm water before shaving and shave in the direction the beard grows, pressing gently on the skin. Leave the sideburns and chin for last, since these whiskers are tougher and need more time to soften. Rinse the razor and shake off any excess water before starting. Afterwards splash cool water on the face to remove any trace of lather. You should use an after-shave lotion with little or no alcohol. Never use cologne on your face, since the high alcohol content dries your face out and makes you look older. One should use an alcohol-free antibacterial toner with a water-moistened cotton ball to normalize the skin. Applying a moisturizer is the final step. Splash on water before applying an emollient lotion to soften the skin and seal in the moisture. Next apply Gel Appaisant, also made by Pour Hommes, which is an excellent, soothing skin lotion. If the face seems dry and flaky—which makes it look dull and older—use a clarifying lotion that removes flakes and uncovers fine skin (it can also make your tan look darker). Then apply an anti-aging
eye balm (Baume Des Yeux) followed by a final moisturizing “protective” lotion. A scalp-programming lotion is used after I towel my hair dry. I also lightly blow-dry the hair to give it body and control (but without stickiness) and then add more of the lotion, shaping it with a Kent natural-bristle brush, and finally slick it back with a wide-tooth comb. I pull the Fair Isle sweater back on and reslip my feet into the polka-dot silk slippers, then head into the living room and put the new Talking Heads in the CD player, but it starts to digitally skip so I take it out and put in a CD laser lens cleaner. The lens is very sensitive, and subject to interference from dust or dirt or smoke or pollutants or moisture, and a dirty one can inaccurately read CDs, making for false starts, inaudible passages, digital skipping, speed changes and general distortion; the lens cleaner has a cleaning brush that automatically aligns with the lens then the disk spins to remove residue and particles. When I put the Talking Heads CD back in it plays smoothly. I retrieve the copy of USA Today that lies in front of my door in the hallway and bring it with me into the kitchen where I take two Advil, a multivitamin and a potassium tablet, washing them down with a large bottle of Evian water since the maid, an elderly Chinese woman, forgot to turn the dishwasher on when she left yesterday, and then I have to pour the grapefruit-lemon juice into a St. Rémy wine-glass I got from Baccarat. I check the neon clock that hangs over the refrigerator to make sure I have enough time to eat breakfast unhurriedly. Standing at the island in the kitchen I eat kiwifruit and a sliced Japanese apple-pear (they cost four dollars each at Cristede’s) out of aluminum storage boxes that were designed in West Germany. I take a bran muffin, a decaffeinated herbal tea bag and a box of oat-bran cereal from one of the large glass-front cabinets that make up most of an entire wall in the kitchen; complete with stainless-steel shelves and sandblasted wire glass, it is framed in a metallic dark gray-blue. I eat half of the bran muffin after it’s been microwaved and lightly covered with a small helping of apple butter. A bowl of oat-bran cereal with wheat germ and soy milk follows; another bottle of Evian water and a small cup of decaf tea after that. Next to the Panasonic bread baker and the Salton Pop-Up coffee maker is the Cremina sterling silver espresso maker (which is, oddly, still warm) that I got at Hammacher Schlemmer (the thermal-insulated stainless-steel espresso cup and the saucer and spoon are sitting by the sink, stained) and the Sharp Model R-1810A Carousel II microwave oven with revolving turntable which I use when I heat up the other half of the bran muffin. Next to the Salton Sonata toaster and the Cuisinart Little Pro food processor and the Acme Supreme Juicerator and the Cordially Yours liqueur maker stands the heavy-gauge stainless-steel two-and-one-half-quart teakettle, which whistles “Tea for Two” when the water is boiling, and with it I make another small cup of the decaffeinated apple-cinnamon tea. For what seems like a long time I stare at the Black & Decker Handy Knife that lies on the counter next to the sink, plugged into the wall: it’s a slicer/peeler with several attachments, a serrated blade, a scalloped blade and a rechargeable handle. The suit I wear today is from Alan Flusser. It’s an eighties drape suit, which is an updated version of the thirties style. The favored version has extended natural shoulders, a full chest and a bladed back. The soft-rolled lapels should be about four inches wide with the peak finishing three quarters of the way across the shoulders. Properly used on double-breasted suits, peaked lapels are considered more elegant than notched ones. Low-slung pockets have a flapped double-besom design—above the flap there’s a slit trimmed on either side with a flat narrow strip of cloth. Four buttons form a low-slung square; above it, about where the lapels cross, there are two more buttons. The trousers are deeply pleated and cut full in order to continue the flow of the wide jacket. An extended waist is cut slightly higher in the front. Tabs make the suspenders fit well at the center back. The tie is a dotted silk design by Valentino Couture. The shoes are crocodile loafers by A. Testoni. While I’m dressing the TV is kept on to The Patty Winters Show. Today’s guests are women with multiple personalities. A nondescript overweight older woman is on the screen and Patty’s voice is heard asking, “Well, is it schizophrenia or what’s the deal? Tell us.”

“No, oh no. Multiple personalities are not schizophrenic,” the woman says, shaking her head. “We are not dangerous.”

“Well,” Patty starts, standing in the middle of the audience, microphone in hand. “Who were you last month?”

Patty Winters

multiple personalities
“Last month it seemed to be mostly Polly,” the woman says.
A cut to the audience—a housewife’s worried face; before
she notices herself on the monitor, it cuts back to the multiple-
personality woman.

“Well,” Patty continues, “now who are you?”

“Well . . .” the woman begins tiredly, as if she was sick of
being asked this question, as if she had answered it over and
over again and still no one believed it. “Well, this month I’m
. . . Lambchop. Mostly . . . Lambchop.”

A long pause. The camera cuts to a close-up of a stunned
housewife shaking her head, another housewife whispering
something to her.

The shoes I’m wearing are crocodile loafers by A. Testoni.
Grabbing my raincoat out of the closet in the entranceway
I find a Burberry scarf and matching coat with a whale embroi-
dered on it (something a little kid might wear) and it’s covered
with what looks like dried chocolate syrup crisscrossed over
the front, darkening the lapels. I take the elevator downstairs to the
lobby, rewinding my Rolex by gently shaking my wrist. I say
good morning to the doorman, step outside and hail a cab,
heading downtown toward Wall Street.

Identity, selfhood

Harry’s

Price and I walk down Hanover Street in the darkest mo-
mants of twilight and as if guided by radar move silently toward
Harry’s. Timothy hasn’t said anything since we left P & P. He
doesn’t even comment on the ugly bum that crouches beneath
a Dumpster off Stone Street, though he does manage a grim
wolf whistle toward a woman—big tits, blonde, great ass, high
heels—heading toward Water Street. Price seems nervous and
edgy and I have no desire to ask him what’s wrong. He’s wear-
ing a linen suit by Canali Milano, a cotton shirt by Ike Behar,
a silk tie by Bill Blass and cap-toed leather lace-ups from Brooks
Brothers. I’m wearing a lightweight linen suit with pleated

AMERICAN PSYCHO

trousers, a cotton shirt, a dotted silk tie, all by Valentino Couture,
and perforated cap-toe leather shoes by Allen-Edmonds.

Once inside Harry’s we spot David Van Patten and Craig
McDermott at a table up front. Van Patten is wearing a double-
breasted wool and silk sport coat, button-fly wool and silk trou-
ers with inverted pleats by Mario Valentino, a cotton shirt by
Gitman Brothers, a polka-dot silk tie by Bill Blass and leather
shoes from Brooks Brothers. McDermott is wearing a woven-
linen suit with pleated trousers, a button-down cotton and linen
shirt by Basile, a silk tie by Joseph Abboud and ostrich loafers
from Susan Bennis Warren Edwards.

The two are hunched over the table, writing on the backs of
paper napkins, a Scotch and a martini placed respectively in
front of them. They wave us over. Price throws his Tumi leather
attaché case on an empty chair and heads toward the bar. I call
out to him for a J&B on the rocks, then sit down with Van Patten
and McDermott.

“Hey Bateman,” Craig says in a voice that suggests this is
not his first martini. “Is it proper to wear tasseled loafers with
a business suit or not? Don’t look at me like I’m insane.”

“Oh shit, don’t ask Bateman,” Van Patten moans, waving
a gold Cross pen in front of his face, absently sipping from
the martini glass.

“Van Patten?” Craig says.

“Yeah?”

McDermott hesitates, then says “Shut up” in a flat voice.

“What are you screwballs up to?” I spot Luis Carruthers
standing at the bar next to Price, who ignores him utterly.
Carruthers is not dressed well: a four-button double-breasted
wool suit, I think by Chaps, a striped cotton shirt and a silk bow
tie plus horn-rimmed eyeglasses by Oliver Peoples.

“Bateman: we’re sending these questions in to GQ,” Van
Patten begins.

Luis spots me, smiles weakly, then, if I’m not mistaken,
blushes and turns back to the bar. Bartenders always ignore
Luis for some reason.

“We have this bet to see which one of us will get in the
Question and Answer column first, and so now I expect an
answer. What do you think?” McDermott demands.
“About what?” I ask irritably.

“Tasseled loafers, jerk-off,” he says.

“Well, guys…” I measure my words carefully. “The tasseled loafer is traditionally a casual shoe…” I glance back at Price, wanting the drink badly. He brushes past Luis, who offers his hand. Price smiles, says something, moves on, strides over to our table. Luis, once more, tries to catch the bartender's attention and once more fails.

“But it’s become acceptable just because it’s so popular, right?” Craig asks eagerly.

“Yeah.” I nod. “As long as it’s either black or cordovan it’s okay.”

“What about brown?” Van Patten asks suspiciously.

I think about this then say, “Too sporty for a business suit.”

“What are you fags talking about?” Price asks. He hands me the drink then sits down, crossing his legs.

“Okay, okay, okay,” Van Patten says. “This is my question. A two-parter…” He pauses dramatically. “Now are rounded collars too dressy or too casual? Part two, which tie knot looks best with them?”

A distracted Price, his voice still tense, answers quickly with an exact, clear enunciation that can be heard over the din in Harry’s. “It’s a very versatile look and it can go with both suits and sport coats. It should be starched for dressy occasions and a collar pin should be worn if it’s particularly formal.” He pauses, sighs; it looks as if he’s spotted somebody. I turn around to see who it is. Price continues, “If it’s worn with a blazer then the collar should look soft and it can be worn either pinned or unpinned. Since it’s a traditional, preppy look it’s best if balanced by a relatively small four-in-hand knot.” He sips his martini, recrossing his legs. “Next question?”

“Buy the man a drink,” McDermott says, obviously impressed.

“Price?” Van Patten says.

“Yes?” Price says, casing the room.

“You’re priceless.”

“Listen,” I ask, “where are we having dinner?”

“I brought the trusty Mr. Zagat,” Van Patten says, pulling the long crimson booklet out of his pocket and waving it at Timothy.

“I was there. I don’t need to hear this story again,” Van Patten says.

“But I never told you what happened afterwards,” McDermott says, arching his eyebrows.

“Hey, when were you guys there?” I ask. “Why wasn’t I invited?”

“You were on that fucking cruise thing. Now shut up and listen. So okay I picked up this Vassar chick at Tunnel—hot number, big tits, great legs, this chick was a little hardbody—and so I buy her a couple of champagne kirs and she’s in the city on spring break and she’s practically blowing me in the Chandelier Room and so I take her back to my place—”

“Whoa, wait,” I interrupt. “May I ask where Pamela is during all of this?”

Craig winces. “Oh fuck you. I want a blow-job, Bateman. I want a chick who’s gonna let me—”

“I don’t want to hear this,” Van Patten says, clamping his hands over his ears. “He’s going to say something disgusting.”

“You prude,” McDermott sneers. “Listen, we’re not gonna invest in a co-op together or jet down to Saint Bart’s. I just want some chick whose face I can sit on for thirty, forty minutes.”

I throw my swizzle stick at him.

“Anyway, so we’re back at my place and listen to this.” He moves in closer to the table. “She’s had enough champagne by now to get a fucking rhino tipsy, and get this—”

“She let you fuck her without a condom?” one of us asks.

McDermott rolls his eyes up. “This is a Vassar girl. She’s not from Queens.”

Price taps me on the shoulder. “What does that mean?”

“Anyway, listen,” McDermott says. “She would...
ready?" He pauses dramatically. "She would only give me a hand-job, and get this... she kept her glove on." He sits back in his chair and sips his drink in a smug, satisfied sort of way.

We all take this in solemnly. No one makes fun of McDermott's revelatory statement or of his inability to react more aggressively with this chick. No one says anything but we are all thinking the same thought: Never pick up a Vassar girl.

"What you need is a chick from Camden," Van Patten says, after recovering from McDermott's statement.

"Oh great," I say. "Some chick who thinks it's okay to fuck her brother."

"Yeah, but they think AIDS is a new band from England," Price points out.

"Where's dinner?" Van Patten asks, absently studying the question scrawled on his napkin. "Where the fuck are we going?"

"It's really funny that girls think guys are concerned with that, with diseases and stuff," Van Patten says, shaking his head.

"I'm not gonna wear a fucking condom," McDermott announces.

"I have read this article I've Xeroxed," Van Patten says, "and it says our chances of catching that are like zero zero zero zero zero point half a decimal percentage or something, and this no matter what kind of scumbag, slutbucket, horndog chick we end up boffing."

"Guys just cannot get it."

"Well, not white guys."

"This girl was wearing a fucking glove?" Price asks, still shocked. "A glove? Jesus, why didn't you just jerk off instead?"

"Listen, the dick also rises," Van Patten says. "Faulkner."

"Where did you go to college?" Price asks. "Pine Manor?"

"Men," I announce: "Look who approaches."

"Who?" Price won't turn his head.

"I fink," I say. "Biggest weasel at Drexel Burnham Lambert."

"Connolly?" Price guesses.

"Hello, Preston," I say, shaking Preston's hand.

"Fellows," Preston says, standing over the table, nodding to everyone. "I'm sorry about not making dinner with you guys tonight."

Preston is wearing a double-breasted wool suit by Alexander Julian, a cotton shirt and a silk Perry Ellis tie. He bends down, balancing himself by putting a hand on the back of my chair. "I feel really bad about canceling, but commitments, you know."

Price gives me an accusatory look and mouths "Was he invited?"

I shrug and finish what's left of the J&B.

"What did you do last night?" McDermott asks, and then, "Nice threads."

"Who did he do last night?" Van Patten corrects.

"No, no," Preston says. "Very respectable, decent evening. No babes, no blow, no brew. Went to The Russian Tea Room with Alexandra and her parents. She calls her father—get this—Billy. But I'm so fucking tired and only one Stoli. He takes off his glasses (Oliver Peoples, of course) and yawns, wiping them clean with an Armani handkerchief. "I'm not sure, but I think our like weird Orthodox waiter dropped some acid in the borscht. I'm so fucking tired."

"What are you doing instead?" Price asks, clearly uninterested.

"Have to return these videos, Vietnamese with Alexandra, a musical, Broadway, something British," Preston says, scanning the room.

"Hey Preston," Van Patten says. "We're gonna send in the GQ questions. You got one?"

"Oh yeah, I've got one," Preston says. "Okay, so when wearing a tuxedo how do you keep the front of your shirt from riding up?"

Van Patten and McDermott sit silently for a minute before Craig, concerned and his brow creased in thought, says, "That's a good one."

"Hey Price," Preston says. "Do you have one?"

"Yeah," Price sighs. "If all of your friends are morons is it a felony, a misdemeanor or an act of God if you blow their fucking heads off with a thirty-eight magnum?"

"Not GQ material," McDermott says. "Try Soldier of Fortune."

"Or Vanity Fair." Van Patten.
"Who is that?" Price asks, staring over at the bar. "Is that Reed Robison? And by the way, Preston, you simply have a tab with a buttonhole sewn into the front of the shirt, which can then be attached by a button to your trousers; and make sure that the stiff pleated front of the shirt doesn't extend below the waistband of your trousers or it will rise up when you sit down now is that jerk Reed Robison? It looks a helluv a lot like him."

Stunned by Price's remarks, Preston slowly turns around, still on his haunches, and after he puts his glasses back on, squints over at the bar. "No, that's Nigel Morrison."

"Ah," Price exclaims. "One of those young British faggots serving internship at . . . ?"

"How do you know he's a faggot?" I ask him.

"They're all faggots." Price shrugs. "The British."

"How would you know, Timothy?" Van Patten grins.

"I saw him fuck Bateman up the ass in the men's room at Morgan Stanley," Price says.

I sigh and ask Preston, "Where is Morrison interning?"

"I forget," Preston says, scratching his head. "Lazard?"

"Where?" McDermott presses. "First Boston? Goldman?"

"I'm not sure," Preston says. "Maybe Drexel. Listen, he's just an assistant corporate finance analyst and his ugly, black-tooth girlfriend is in some dinky rathole doing leveraged buyouts."

"Where are we eating?" I ask, my patience at an all-time low. "We need to make a reservation. I'm not standing at some fucking bar."

"What in the fuck is Morrison wearing?" Preston asks himself. "Is that really a glen-plaid suit with a checkered shirt?"

"That's not Morrison," Price says.

"Who is it then?" Preston asks, taking his glasses off again.

"That's Paul Owen," Price says.


Owen stands at the bar wearing a double-breasted wool suit.

"He's handling the Fisher account," someone says.

"Lucky bastard," someone else murmurs.

"Lucky Jew bastard," Preston says.

"Oh Jesus, Preston," I say. "What does that have to do with anything?"

"Listen, I've seen the bastard sitting in his office on the phone with CEOs, spinning a fucking menorah. The bastard brought a Hanukkah bush into the office last December," Preston says suddenly, peculiarly animated.

"You spin a dreidel, Preston," I say calmly, "not a menorah. You spin a dreidel."

"Oh my god, Bateman, do you want me to go over to the bar and ask Freddy to fry you up some fucking potato pancakes?" Preston asks, truly alarmed. "Some . . . latkes?"

"No," I say. "Just cool it with the anti-Semitic remarks."

"The voice of reason," Price leans forward to pat me on the back. "The boy next door."

"Yeah, a boy next door who according to you let a British corporate finance analyst intern sodomize him up the ass," I say ironically.

"I said you were the voice of reason," Price says. "I didn't say you weren't a homosexual."

"Or redundant," Preston adds.

"Yeah," I say, staring directly at Price. "Ask Meredith if I'm a homosexual. That is, if she'll take the time to pull my dick out of her mouth."

"Meredith's a fag hag," Price explains, unfazed, "that's why I'm dumping her."

"Oh wait, guys, listen, I got a joke." Preston rubs his hands together.

"Preston," Price says, "you are a joke. You do know you weren't invited to dinner. By the way, nice jacket; nonmatching but complementary."

"Price, you are a bastard, you are so fucking mean to me it hurts," Preston says, laughing. "Anyway, so JFK and Pearl Bailey meet at this party and they go back to the Oval Office to have sex and so they fuck and then JFK goes to sleep and . . ." Preston stops. "Oh gosh, now what happens . . . Oh yeah, so Pearl Bailey says Mr. President I wanna fuck you again and so he says I'm going to sleep now and in . . . thirty—no, wait . . . Preston pauses again, confused. "Now . . . no, sixty minutes . . . no . . . okay, thirty minutes I'll wake up and we'll do it again
but you've got to keep one hand on my cock and the other on my balls and she says okay but why do I have to keep one hand on your dick and one... one hand on your balls... and...” He notices that Van Patten is idly doodling something on the back of a napkin. “Hey Van Patten—are you listening to me?”

“I’m listening,” Van Patten says, irritated. “Go ahead. Finish it. One hand on my cock, one hand on my balls, go on.”

Luis Carruthers is still standing at the bar waiting for a drink. Now it looks to me like his silk bow tie is by Agnes B. It’s all unclear.

“I’m not,” Price says.

“And he says because...” Again Preston falters. There’s a long silence. Preston looks at me.

“Don’t look at me,” I say. “It’s not my joke.”

“And he says... My mind’s a blank.”

“Is that the punch line—My mind’s a blank?” McDermott asks.

“He says, um, because...” Preston puts a hand over his eyes and thinks about it. “Oh gosh, I can’t believe I forgot this...”

“Oh great, Preston.” Price sighs. “You are one unfunny bastard.”

“My mind’s a blank?” Craig asks me. “I don’t get it.”

“Oh yeah, oh yeah, oh yeah,” Preston says. “Listen, I remember. Because the last time I fucked a nigger she stole my wallet.” He starts chuckling immediately. And after a short moment of silence, the table cracks up too, except for me.

“That’s it, that’s the punch line,” Preston says proudly, relieved.

Van Patten gives him high-five. Even Price laughs.


“Yeah, Bateman,” McDermott says. “Cheer up.”

“Oh I forgot. Bateman’s dating someone from the ACLU,” Price says. “What bothers you about that?”

“It’s not funny,” I say. “It’s racist.”

“Bateman, you are some kind of morose bastard,” Preston says. “You should stop reading all those Ted Bundy biographies.” Preston stands up and checks his Rolex. “Listen men, I’m off. Will see you tomorrow.”

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AMERICAN PSYCHO

“Yeah. Same Bat Time, same Bat Channel,” Van Patten says, nudging me.

“Preston leans forward before leaving. “Because the last time I fucked a nigger she stole my wallet.”

“I get it. I get it,” I say, pushing him away.

“Remember this, guys: Few things perform in life as well as a Kenwood.” He exits.

“Yabba-dabba-do,” Van Patten says.

“Hey, did anyone know cavemen got more fiber than we get?” McDermott asks.

Pastels

I’m on the verge of tears by the time we arrive at Pastels since I’m positive we won’t get seated but the table is good, and relief that is almost tidal in scope washes over me in an awesome wave. At Pastels McDermott knows the maître d’ and though we made our reservations from a cab only minutes ago we’re immediately led past the overcrowded bar into the pink, brightly lit main dining room and seated at an excellent booth for four, up front. It’s really impossible to get a reservation at Pastels and I think Van Patten, myself, even Price, are impressed by, maybe even envious of, McDermott’s prowess in securing a table. After we piled into a cab on Water Street we realized that no one had made reservations anywhere and while debating the merits of a new Californian-Sicilian bistro on the Upper East Side—my panic so great I almost ripped Zagat in two—the consensus seemed to emerge. Price had the only dissenting voice but he finally shrugged and said, “I don’t give a shit,” and we used his portaphone to make the reservation. He slipped his Walkman on and turned the volume up loud so that the sound of Vivaldi was audible even with the windows halfway open and the noise of the uptown traffic blasting into the taxi. Van Patten and McDermott made rude jokes about the size of Tim’s dick and I did too. Outside Pastels Tim grabbed the napkin with Van Patten’s final version of his carefully
phrased question for *GQ* on it and tossed it at a bum huddling outside the restaurant feebly holding up a sloppy cardboard sign: *I AM HUNGRY AND HOMELESS PLEASE HELP ME*.

Things seem to be going smoothly. The maître d’ has sent over four complimentary Bellinis but we order drinks anyway. The Ronettes are singing “Then He Kissed Me,” our waitress is a little hardbody and even Price seems relaxed though he hates the place. Plus there are four women at the table opposite ours, all great-looking—blond, big tits: one is wearing a chemise dress in double-faced wool by Calvin Klein, another is wearing a wool knit dress and jacket with silk faille bonding by Geoffrey Beene, another is wearing a symmetrical skirt of pleated tulle and an embroidered velvet bustier by, I think, Christian Lacroix plus high-heeled shoes by Sidonie Larizzedi, and the last one is wearing a black strapless sequined gown under a wool crepe tailored jacket by Bill Blass. Now the Shirelles are coming out of the speakers, “Dancing in the Street,” and the sound system plus the acoustics, because of the restaurant’s high ceiling, are so loud that we have to practically scream out our order to the hardbody waitress—who is wearing a bicolored suit of wool grain with passementerie trim by Myrone de Péronville and velvet ankle boots and who, I’m fairly sure, is flirting with me: laughs sexily when I order, as an appetizer, the monkfish and squid ceviche with golden caviar; gives me a stare so steamy, so penetrating when I order the gravlax potpie with green tomato sauce I have to look back at the pink Bellini in the tall champagne flute with a concerned, deadly serious expression so as not to let her think I’m too interested. Price orders the tapas and then the venison with yogurt sauce and fiddlehead ferns with mango slices. McDermott orders the sashimi with goat cheese and then the smoked duck with endive and maple syrup. Van Patten has the scallop sausage and the grilled salmon with raspberry vinegar and guacamole. The air-conditioning in the restaurant is on full blast and I’m beginning to feel sad that I’m not wearing the new Versace pullover I bought last week at Bergdorf’s. It would look good with the suit I’m wearing.

“Could you please get rid of these things,” Price tells the busboy as he gestures toward the Bellinis.

stitching, a red, white and blue fireworks-print silk tie by Hugo Boss and plum washed-wool trousers with a quadruple-pleated front and slashed pockets by Lazo. He’s holding a glass of champagne and hands it to the girl he’s with—definite model type, thin, okay tits, no ass, high heels—and she’s wearing a wool-crepe skirt and a wool and cashmere velour jacket and draped over her arm is a wool and cashmere velour coat, all by Louis Dell’Olio. High-heeled shoes by Susan Bennis Warren Edwards. Sunglasses by Alain Mikli. Pressed-leather bag from Hermès.

“Hey fellas. How y’all doin’?” Montgomery speaks in a thick Georgia twang. “This is Nicki. Nicki, this is McDonald, Van Buren, Bateman—nice tan—and Mr. Price.” He shakes only Timothy’s hand and then takes the champagne glass from Nicki. Nicki smiles, politely, like a robot, probably doesn’t speak English.

“Montgomery,” Price says in a kindly, conversational tone, staring at Nicki. “How have things been?”


“Listen, Montgomery,” Price says, staring at Nicki but still being unusually kind to someone I thought was a stranger. “Squash?”

“Call me,” Montgomery says absently, looking over the room. “Is that Tyson? Here’s my card.”

“Great,” Price says, pocketing it. “Thursday?”

“Can’t. Going to Dallas tomorrow but . . .” Montgomery is already moving away from the table, hurrying toward someone else, snapping for Nicki. “Yeah, next week.”

Nicki smiles at me, then looks at the floor—pink, blue, lime green tiles crisscrossing each other in triangular patterns—as if it had some kind of answer, held some sort of clue, offered a coherent reason as to why she was stuck with Montgomery. Idly I wonder if she’s older than him, and then if she’s flirting with me.

“Later,” Price is saying.

“Later, fellas . . .” Montgomery is already about halfway across the room. Nicki slinks behind him. I was wrong: she does have an ass.

“Eight hundred million.” McDermott whistles, shaking his head.

“College?” I ask.

“A joke,” Price hints.

“Rollins?” I guess.

“Get this,” McDermott says. “Hampden-Sydney.”

“He’s a parasite, aloser, a weasel,” Van Patten concludes.

“But he’s worth eight hundred million,” McDermott repeats emphatically.

“Go over and give the dwarf head—will that shut you up?” Price says. “I mean how impressed can you get, McDermott?”

“Anyway,” I mention, “nice babe.”

“That girl is hot,” McDermott agrees.

“Affirmative.” Price nods, but grudgingly.

“Oh man,” Van Patten says, distressed. “I know that chick.”

“Oh bullshit,” we all moan.

“Let me guess,” I say. “Picked her up at Tunnel, right?”

“No,” he says, then after sipping his drink, “She’s a model.

Anorexic, alcoholic, uptight bitch. Totally French.”

“What a joke you are,” I say, unsure if he’s lying.

“Wanna bet?”

“So what?” McDermott shrugs. “I’d fuck her.”

“She drinks a liter of Stoli a day then throws it up and redrinks it, McDermott,” Van Patten explains. “Total alkie.”

“Total cheap alkie,” Price murmurs.

“I don’t care,” McDermott says bravely. “She’s beautiful. I want to fuck her. I want to marry her. I want her to have my children.”

“Oh Jesus,” Van Patten says, practically gagging. “Who wants to marry a chick who’s gonna give birth to a jug of vodka and cranberry juice?”

“He has a point,” I say.

“Yeah. He also wants to shag up with the Armenian chick at the bar,” Price sneers. “What’ll she give birth to—a bottle of Korbel and a pint of peach juice?”

“What Armenian chick?” McDermott asks, exasperated, craning his neck.

“Oh Jesus. Fuck off, you faggots.” Van Patten sighs.

The maître d’ stops by to say hello to McDermott, then notices we don’t have our complimentary Bellinis, and runs off before any of us can stop him. I’m not sure how McDermott knows Alain so well—maybe Cecelia?—and it slightly pisses me
off but I decide to even up the score a little bit by showing everyone my new business card. I pull it out of my gazelleskin wallet (Barney’s, $850) and slap it on the table, waiting for reactions.

“What’s that, a gram?” Price says, not apathetically.

“New card,” I try to act casual about it but I’m smiling proudly. “What do you think?”

“Whoa,” McDermott says, lifting it up, fingering the card, genuinely impressed. “Very nice. Take a look.” He hands it to Van Patten.

“Picked them up from the printer’s yesterday,” I mention.

“Cool coloring,” Van Patten says, studying the card closely.

“That’s bone,” I point out. “And the lettering is something called Silian Rail.”

“Silian Rail?” McDermott asks.

“Yeah. Not bad, huh?”

“It is very cool, Bateman,” Van Patten says guardedly, the jealous bastard, “but that’s nothing . . .” He pulls out his wallet and slaps a card next to an ashtray. “Look at this.

We all lean over and inspect David’s card and Price quietly says, “That’s really nice.” A brief spasm of jealousy courses through me when I notice the elegance of the color and the classy type. I clench my fist as Van Patten says, smugly, “Eggshell with Romanian type . . .” He turns to me. “What do you think?”

“Nice,” I croak, but manage to nod, as the busboy brings four fresh Bellinis.

“Jesus,” Price says, holding the card up to the light, ignoring the new drinks. “This is really super. How’d a nitwit like you get so tasteful?”

I’m looking at Van Patten’s card and then at mine and cannot believe that Price actually likes Van Patten’s better. Dizzy, I sip my drink then take a deep breath.

“But wait,” Price says. “You ain’t seen nothin’ yet . . .” He pulls his out of an inside coat pocket and slowly, dramatically turns it over for our inspection and says, “Mine.”

Even I have to admit it’s magnificent.

Suddenly the restaurant seems far away, hushed, the noise distant, a meaningless hum, compared to this card, and we all hear Price’s words: “Raised lettering, pale nimbus white . . .”
“Kate is the chick who Van Patten’s having the affair with,” Price explains, staring back at Montgomery’s table.
“What happened to Miss Kittridge?” I ask.
“Oh god, guys, lighten up. Fidelity? Right.”
“Aren’t you afraid of diseases?” Price asks.
“From who, Amanda or Kate?” I ask.
“I thought we agreed that we can’t get it.” Van Patten’s voice rises. “So-o-o-o . . . shithead. Shut up.”
“Didn’t I tell you—”
Four more Bellinis arrive. There are now eight Bellinis on the table.
“Oh my god,” Price moans, trying to grab at the busboy before he scampers off.
“Red snapper pizza . . . red snapper pizza . . .” McDermott has found a mantra for the evening.
“We’ll soon become targets for horny Iranian chicks,” Price drones.
“It’s like zero zero zero percentage whatever, you know—are you listening?” Van Patten asks.
“. . . snapper pizza . . . red snapper pizza . . .” Then McDermott slams his hand on the table, rocking it. “God-damnit, isn’t anybody listening to me?”

I’m still tranced out on Montgomery’s card—the classy coloring, the thickness, the lettering, the print—and I suddenly raise a fist as if to strike out at Craig and scream, my voice booming, “No one wants the fucking red snapper pizza! A pizza should be yeasty and slightly bready and have a cheesy crust! The crusts here are too fucking thin because the shithead chef who cooks here overbakes everything! The pizza is dried out and brittle!” Red-faced, I slam my Bellini down on the table and when I look up our appetizers have arrived. A hardbody waitress stands looking down at me with this strange, glazed expression. I wipe a hand over my face, genially smiling up at her. She stands there looking at me as if I were some kind of monster—she actually looks scared—and I glance over at Price—for what guidance?—and he mouths “Cigars” and pats his coat pocket. McDermott quietly says, “I don’t think they’re brittle.”

“Honey,” I say, ignoring McDermott, taking an arm and pulling her toward me. She flinches but I smile and she lets me pull her closer. “Now we’re all going to eat a nice big meal here—” I start to explain.
“But this isn’t what I ordered,” Van Patten says, looking at his plate. “I wanted the mussel sausage.”
“Shut up.” I shoot him a glance then calmly turn toward the hardbody, grinning like an idiot, but a handsome idiot. “Now listen, we are good customers here and we’re probably going to order some fine brandy, cognac, who knows, and we want to relax and bask in this”—I gesture with my arm—“atmosphere. Now”—with the other hand I pull out my gazelleskin wallet—“we would like to enjoy some fine Cuban cigars afterwards and we don’t want to be bothered by some loutish—”

“Loutish.” McDermott nods to Van Patten and Price.
“Loutish and inconsiderate patrons or tourists who are inevitably going to complain about our innocuous little habit. . . . So”—I press what I hope is fifty into a small-boned hand—“if you could make sure we aren’t bothered while we do, we would gratefully appreciate it.” I rub the hand, closing it into a fist over the bill. “And if anyone complains, well . . .” I pause, then warn menacingly, “Kick ‘em out.”

She nods mutely and backs away with this dazed, confused look on her face.

“And,” Price adds, smiling, “if another round of Bellinis comes within a twenty-foot radius of this table we are going to set the maître d’ on fire. So, you know, warn him.”

After a long silence during which we contemplate our appetizers, Van Patten speaks up. “Bateman?”
“Yes?” I fork a piece of monkfish, push it into some of the golden caviar, then place the fork back down.
“You are pure prep perfection,” he purrs.
Price spots another waitress approaching with a tray of four champagne flutes filled with pale pinkish liquid and says, “Oh for Christ sakes, this is getting ridiculous. . . .” She sets them down, however, at the table next to us, for the four babes.
“She is hot,” Van Patten says, ignoring his scallop sausage.
“I’m not impressed,” Price sniffs. “Look at her knees.”

While the hardbody stands there we check her out, and
though her knees do support long, tan legs, I can't help noticing that one knee is, admittedly, bigger than the other one. The left knee is knobbier, almost imperceptibly thicker than the right knee and this unnoticeable flaw now seems overwhelming and we all lose interest. Van Patten is looking at his appetizer, stunned, and then he looks at McDermott and says, "That isn't what you ordered either. That's sushi, not sashimi."

"Jesus," McDermott sighs. "You don't come here for the food anyway."

Some guy who looks exactly like Christopher Lauder comes over to the table and says, putting me on the shoulder, "Hey Hamilton, nice tan," before walking into the men's room.

"Nice tan, Hamilton," Price mimics, tossing tapas onto my bread plate.

"Oh gosh," I say, "hope I'm not blushin'."

"Actually, where do you go, Bateman?" Van Patten asks.

"For a tan."

"Yeah, Bateman. Where do you go?" McDermott seems genuinely intrigued.

"Read my lips," I say, "a tanning salon," then irritably, "like everyone else."

"I have," Van Patten says, pausing for maximum impact, "a tanning bed at . . . home," and then he takes a large bite out of his scallop sausage.

"Oh bullshit," I say, cringing.

"It's true," McDermott confirms, his mouth full. "I've seen it."

"That is fucking outrageous," I say.

"Why the hell is it fucking outrageous?" Price asks, pushing taps around his plate with a fork.

"Do you know how expensive a fucking tanning salon membership is?" Van Patten asks me. "A membership for a year?"

"You're crazy," I mutter.

"Look, guys," Van Patten says. "Bateman's indignant."

Suddenly a busboy appears at our table and without asking if we're finished removes our mostly uneaten appetizers. None of us complain except for McDermott, who asks, "Did he just take our appetizers away?" and then laughs uncomprehendingly. But when he sees no one else laughing he stops.
“She’s in Boston, seeing her dentist.” Van Patten shrugs, pussywhipped.

“What in the hell are you going to do?” My voice wavers. I’m still thinking about Van Patten’s card. “Call up HBO?”

“No,” he says. “I have a touch-tone phone hooked up to program a Videocar VCR programmer I bought at Ham-macher Schlemmer.” He walks away pulling his suspenders up. “How hip,” I say tonelessly.

“Hey, what do you want for dessert?” McDermott calls out.

“Something chocolate and flourless,” he shouts back.

“Has Van Patten stopped working out?” I ask. “He looks puffy.”

“It looks that way, doesn’t it,” Price says.

“Doesn’t he have a membership at the Vertical Club?” I ask.

“I don’t know,” Price murmurs, studying his plate, then sitting up he pushes it away and motions to the waitress for another Finlandia on the rocks.

Another hardbody waitress approaches us tentatively, bringing over a bottle of champagne, Perrier-Jouët, nonvintage, and tells us it’s complimentary from Scott Montgomery.

“Nonvintage, that weasel,” Price hisses, craning his neck to find Montgomery’s table. “Loser.” He gives him a thumbs-up sign from across the room. “The fucker’s so short I could barely see him. I think I gave thumbs-up to Conrad. I can’t be sure.”

“Where’s Conrad?” I ask. “I should say hello to him.”

“The dude who called you Hamilton,” Price says.

“That wasn’t Conrad,” I say.

“Are you sure? It looked a helluva lot like him,” he says but he’s not really listening; he blatantly stares at the hardbody waitress, at exposed cleavage as she leans down to get a firmer grip on the bottle’s cork.

“No. That wasn’t Conrad,” I say, surprised at Price’s inability to recognize co-workers. “That guy had a better haircut.”

We sit in silence while the hardbody pours the champagne. Once she leaves, McDermott asks if we liked the food. I tell him the potpie was fine but there was way too much tomatillo sauce. McDermott nods, says, “That’s what I’ve heard.”

Van Patten returns, mumbling, “They don’t have a good bathroom to do coke in.”

“Dessert?” McDermott suggests.

“Only if I can order the Bellini sorbet,” Price says, yawning.

“How about just the check,” Van Patten says.

“Time to go bird-dogging, gentlemen,” I say.

The hardbody brings the check over. The total is $475, much less than we expected. We split it but I need the cash so I put it on my platinum AmEx and collect their bills, mostly fresh fifties. McDermott demands ten dollars back since his scallop sausage appetizer was only sixteen bucks. Montgomery’s bottle of champagne is left at the table, undrink. Outside Pastels a different bum sits in the street, with a sign that says something completely illegible. He gently asks us for some change and then, more hopefully, for some food.

“That dude needs a facial real bad,” I say.


“Oh shit. What’s that gonna get him?” I ask, staring at the bum.

“Appetizers on Jams.” Van Patten laughs. He gives me high-five.

“Dude,” McDermott says, inspecting his tie, clearly offended.

“Oh, sorry . . . cab,” Price says, waving down a cab. “... and a beverage.”

“Off to Tunnel,” McDermott tells the driver.

“Great, McDermott,” Price says, getting in the front seat. “You sound really excited.”

“So what if I’m not some burned-out decadent faggot like yourself,” McDermott says, getting in ahead of me.

“Did anyone know cavemen got more fiber than we do?” Price asks the cabdriver.

“Hey, I heard that too,” McDermott says.

“Van Patten,” I say. “Did you see the comp bottle of champage Montgomery sent over?”

“Really?” Van Patten asks, leaning over McDermott. “Let me guess. Perrier-Jouët?”


“Fucking weasel,” Van Patten says.
Tunnel

All of the men outside Tunnel tonight are for some reason wearing tuxedos, except for a middle-aged homeless bum who sits by a Dumpster, only a few feet away from the ropes, holding out to anyone who pays attention a Styrofoam coffee cup, begging for change, and as Price leads us around the crowd up to the ropes, motioning to one of the doormen, Van Patten waves a crisp one-dollar bill in front of the homeless bum’s face, which momentarily lights up, then Van Patten pockets it as we’re whisked into the club, handed a dozen drink tickets and two VIP Basement passes. Once inside we’re vaguely hassled by two more doormen—long wool coats, ponytails, probably German—who demand to know why we’re not wearing tuxedos. Price handles this all suavely, somehow, either by tipping the dorks or by persuading them with his clout (probably the former). I stay uninvolved and with my back to him try to listen as McDermott complains to Van Patten about how crazy I am for putting down the pizzas made at Pastels, but it’s hard to hear anything with Belinda Carlisle’s version of “I Feel Free” blasting over the sound system. I have a knife with a serrated blade in the pocket of my Valentino jacket and I’m tempted to gut McDermott with it right here in the entranceway, maybe slice his face open, sever his spine; but Price finally waves us in and the temptation to kill McDermott is replaced by this strange anticipation to have a good time, drink some champagne, flirt with a hardbody, find some blow, maybe even dance to some oldies or that new Janet Jackson song I like.

It gets quieter as we move into the front hallway, heading toward the actual entrance, and we pass by three hardbodies. One is wearing a black side-buttoned notched-collar wool jacket, wool-crepe trousers and a fitted cashmere turtleneck, all by Oscar de la Renta; another is wearing a double-breasted coat of wool, mohair and nylon tweed, matching jeans-style pants and a man’s cotton dress shirt, all by Stephen Sprouse; the best-looking one is wearing a checked wool jacket and high-waisted wool skirt, both from Barney’s, and a silk blouse by Andra Gabrielle. They’re definitely paying attention to the four of us and we repay the compliment, turning our heads—except for Price, who ignores them and says something rude.

“Jesus Christ, Price, lighten up,” McDermott whines.
“What’s your problem? Those girls were very hot.”
“Yeah, if you speak Farsi,” Price says, handing McDermott a couple of drink tickets as if to placate him.
“What?” Van Patten says. “They didn’t look Spanish to me.”
“You know, Price, you’re going to have to change your attitude if you want to get laid,” McDermott says.
“You’re telling me about getting laid?” Price asks Craig.
“You, who scored with a hand-job the other night?”
“Your outlook sucks, Price,” Craig says.
“Listen, you think I act like I do around you guys when I want some pussy?” Price challenges.
“Yeah, I do,” McDermott and Van Patten say at the same time.

“You know,” I say, “it’s possible to act differently from how one actually feels to get sex, guys. I hope I’m not causing you to lose your innocence, McDermott.” I start walking faster, trying to keep up with Tim.

“No, but that doesn’t explain why Tim acts like such a major asshole,” McDermott says, trying to catch up with me.

“Like these girls care,” Price snorts. “When I tell them what my annual income is, believe me, my behavior couldn’t matter less.”

“And how do you drop this little tidbit of info?” Van Patten asks. “Do you say, Here’s a Corona and by the way I pull in a hundred eighty thou a year and what’s your sign?”

“One ninety,” Price corrects him, and then, “Yeah, I do. Subtlety is not what these girls are after.”

“And what are these girls after, O knowledgeable one?” McDermott asks, bowing slightly as he walks.

Van Patten laughs and still in motion they give each other high-five.

“Hey,” I laugh, “you wouldn’t ask if you knew.”
“They want a hardbody who can take them to Le Cirque twice a week, get them into Nell’s on a regular basis. Or maybe a close personal acquaintance of Donald Trump,” Price says flatly.

We hand our tickets to an okay-looking girl wearing a wool-melton duffel coat and a silk scarf from Hermès. As she lets us in, Price winks at her and McDermott is saying, “I worry about disease just walking into this place. These are some skanky chicks. I can just feel it.”

“I told you, dude,” Van Patten says and then patiently restates his facts. “We can’t get that. It’s like zero zero zero point oh one percentage—”

Luckily, the long version of “New Sensation” by INXS drowns out his voice. The music is so loud that conversation is possible only by screaming. The club is fairly packed; the only real light coming in flashes off the dance floor. Everyone is wearing a tuxedo. Everyone is drinking champagne. Since we only have two VIP Basement passes Price shoves them at McDermott and Van Patten and they eagerly wave the cards at the guy guarding the top of the stairs. The guy who lets them pass is wearing a double-breasted wool tuxedo, a cotton wing-collar shirt by Cerruti 1881 and a black and white checkered silk bow tie from Martin Dingman Neckwear.

“Hey,” I shout to Price. “Why didn’t we use those?”

“Because,” he screams over the music, grabbing me by the collar, “we need some Bolivian Marching Powder. . . .”

I follow him as he rushes through the narrow corridor that runs parallel to the dance floor, then into the bar and finally into the Chandelier Room, which is jammed with guys from Drexel, from Lehman’s, from Kidder Peabody, from First Boston, from Morgan Stanley, from Rothschild, from Goldman, even from Citibank for Christ sakes, all of them wearing tuxedos, holding champagne flutes, and effortlessly, almost as if it were the same song, “New Sensation” segues into “The Devil Inside” and Price spots Ted Madison leaning against the railing in the back of the room, wearing a double-breasted wool tuxedo, a wing-collar cotton shirt from Paul Smith, a bow tie and cummerbund from Rainbow Neckwear, diamond studs from Trianon, patent-leather and grosgrain pumps by Ferragamo and an antique Hamilton watch from Saks; and past Madison, disappearing into darkness, are the twin train tracks which tonight are lit garishly in preppy greens and pinks and Price suddenly stops walking, stares past Ted, who smiles knowingly when he spots Timothy, and Price gazes longingly at the tracks as if he suggest some kind of freedom, embody an escape that Price has been searching for, but I shout out to him, “Hey, there’s Teddy,” and this breaks his gaze and he shakes his head as if to clear it, refocuses his gaze on Madison and shouts decisively, “No, that’s not Madison for Christ sakes, that’s Turnbull,” and the guy who I thought was Madison is greeted by two other guys in tuxedos and he turns his back to us and suddenly, behind Price, Ebersol wraps an arm around Timothy’s neck and laughingly pretends to strangle him, then Price pushes the arm away, shakes Ebersol’s hand and says, “Hey Madison.”

Madison, who I thought was Ebersol, is wearing a splendid double-breasted white linen jacket by Hackett of London from Bergdorf Goodman. He has a cigar that hasn’t been lit in one hand and a champagne glass, half full, in the other.

“Mr. Price,” shouts Madison. “Very good to see you, sir.”

“Madison,” Price cries back. “We need your services.”

“Looking for trouble?” Madison smiles.

“Something more immediate,” Price shouts back.

“Of course,” Madison shouts and then, coolly for some reason, nods at me, shouting, I think, “Bateman,” and then, “Nice tan.”

A guy standing behind Madison who looks a lot like Ted Dreyer is wearing a double-breasted shawl-collared tuxedo, a cotton shirt and a silk tartan bow tie, all of it, I’m fairly sure, from Polo by Ralph Lauren. Madison stands around, nodding to various people who pass by in the crush.

Finally Price loses his cool. “Listen. We need drugs,” I think I hear him shout.


But he still stands there, nodding to people who push past us.

“Like what about now?” Price screams.

“Why aren’t you wearing a tux?” Madison shouts.
“How much do we want?” Price asks me, looking desperate. “A gram is fine,” I shout. “I have to be at the office early tomorrow.”

“Do you have cash?”
I can’t lie, nod, hand him forty.
“Thank you,” Price shouts to Ted.

“Hey,” Madison says, introducing his friend, “this is You.”
This guy and Madison both smile and Ted shakes his head and shouts a name I can’t hear.


“Yeah. Great to meet you, Hugh.” Price holds up his wrist and taps the gold Rolex with his index finger.


I want to light my cigar but don’t have any matches; yet just holding it, catching some of its aroma along with the knowledge that drugs are incoming, comforts me and I take two of the drink tickets from Price and try to get him a Finlandia on the rocks which they don’t have, the hardbody behind the bar informs me briskly, but she’s got a rad body and is so hot-looking that I will leave her a big tip because of this. I settle on an Absolut for Price and order a J&B on the rocks for myself. As a joke I almost bring Tim a Bellini but he seems far too edgy tonight to appreciate this so I wade back through the crowd to where he stands and hand him the Absolut and he takes it thankfully and finishes it with one gulp, looks at the glass and grins, giving me an accusatory look. I shrug helplessly. He resumes staring at the train tracks as if possessed. There are very few chicks in Tunnel tonight.

“Hey, I’m going out with Courtney tomorrow night.”
“Her?” he shouts back, staring at the tracks. “Great.” Even with the noise I catch the sarcasm.

“Well, why not? Carruthers is out of town.”
“Might as well hire someone from an escort service,” he shouts bitterly, almost without thinking.

“Why?” I shout.

Because she’s gonna cost you a lot more to get laid.”

“No way,” I scream.

“Listen, I put up with it too,” Price shouts, lightly shaking his glass. Ice cubes clank loudly, surprising me. “Meredith’s the same way. She expects to be paid. They all do.”

“Price?” I take a large gulp of Scotch. “You’re priceless...”

He points behind him. “Where do those tracks go?” Laser lights start flashing.

“I don’t know,” I say after a long time, I don’t even know how long.

I get bored watching Price, who is neither moving nor speaking. The only reason he occasionally turns away from the train tracks is to look for Madison or Ricardo. No women anywhere, just an army of professionals from Wall Street in tuxedos. The one female spotted is dancing alone in a corner to some song I think is called “Love Triangle.” She’s wearing what looks like a sequined tank top by Ronaldus Shamask and I concentrate on that but I’m in an edgy pre-coke state and I start chewing nervously on a drink ticket and some Wall Street guy who looks like Boris Cunningham blocks my view of the girl. I’m about to head off to the bar when Madison comes back—it’s been twenty minutes—and he sniffs loudly, a big plastered jittery grin on his face as he shakes hands with a sweaty stern-looking Price who moves away so quickly that when Ted tries to slap him in a friendly sort of way on his back he just hits air.

I follow Price back past the bar and the dance floor, past the basement, and upstairs, past the long line for the women’s room which is strange since there seem to be no women at the club tonight, and then we’re in the men’s room, which is empty, and Price and I slip into one of the stalls together and he bolts the door.

“I’m shaking,” Price says, handing me the small envelope.

“You open it.”

I take it from him, carefully unfolding the edges of the tiny white package, exposing the supposed gram—it looks like less—to the dim fluorescent light of the men’s room.

“Jeez,” Price whispers in a surprisingly gentle way. “That’s not a helluva lot, is it?” He leans forward to inspect it.
“Maybe it’s just the light,” I mention.
“What the fuck is Ricardo’s problem?” Price asks, gaping at
the coke.
“Shhh,” I whisper, taking out my platinum American Express
card. “Let’s just do it.”
“Is he fucking selling it by the milligram?” Price asks. He
sticks his own platinum American Express card into the pow-
der, bringing it up to his nose to inhale it. He stands there
silently for a moment, and then gasps “Oh my god” in a low,
throaty voice.
“What?” I ask.
“It’s a fucking milligram of . . . Sweet’n Low,” he chokes.
I do some of it and come to the same conclusion. “It’s defi-
nitely weak but I have a feeling if we do enough of it we’ll be
okay—” But Price is furious, red-faced and sweating; he
screams at me as if this was my fault, as if buying the gram from
Madison was my idea.
“I want to get high off this, Bateman,” Price says slowly, his
voice rising. “Not sprinkle it on my fucking All-Bran!”
“You can always put it in your café au lait,” this prissy voice
in the next stall cries out.
Price stares at me, eyes widening in disbelief, then flies into
a rage and whirs around, pounding his fist against the side of
the stall.
“Calm down,” I tell him. “Let’s do it anyway.”
Price turns back to me and, after running a hand over his
stiff, slicked-back hair, seems to relent. “I guess you’re right,”
and then he raises his voice, “that is, if the faggot in the next
stall thinks it’s okay.”
We wait for a sign and then the voice in the next stall finally
lisps, “It’s okay with me. . . .”
“Fuck yourself!” Price roars.
“Fuck yourself,” the voice mimics.
“No, fuck yourself,” Price screams back, trying to scramble
over the aluminum divider, but I pull him down with one hand
and in the next stall the toilet flushes and the unidentified per-
son, obviously unnerved, scampers out of the men’s room. Price
leans against the door of our stall and stares at me in this hope-
less way. He rubs a trembling hand over his still-crimson face
and shuts his eyes tightly, lips white, slight residue of cocaine
under one nostril—and then quietly he says, without opening
his eyes, “Okay. Let’s do it.”
“That’s the spirit,” I say. We take turns digging our respec-
tive cards into the envelope until what we can’t get with the
cards we press our fingers into and snort or lick off the tips then
rub into our gums. I’m not anywhere near high but another J&B
might give the body a false enough impression to kick in some
kind of rush no matter how weak.
Stepping out of the stall we wash our hands, inspecting our
reflections in the mirror, and, once satisfied, head back to the
Chandelier Room. I’m beginning to wish I’d checked my over-
coat (Armani) but no matter what Price says I feel kind of high
and minutes later as I wait at the bar trying to get this hard-
body’s attention it starts not to matter. I finally have to lay a
twenty on the counter to get her attention, even though I have
plenty of drink tickets left. It works. Taking advantage of the
drink tickets, I order two double Stolis on the rocks. She pours
the drinks in front of me.
I’m feeling good and I shout out to her, “Hey, don’t you go
to NYU?”
She shakes her head, unsmiling.
“Hunter?” I shout.
She shakes her head again. Not Hunter.
“Columbia?” I shout—though that’s a joke.
She continues to concentrate on the bottle of Stoli. I decide
not to continue the conversation and just slap the drink tickets
on the bar as she places the two glasses in front of me. But she
shakes her head and shouts, “It’s after eleven. Those aren’t good
anymore. It’s a cash bar. That’ll be twenty-five dollars,” and
without complaining, playing it totally cool, I pull out my gaz-
elleskin wallet and hand her a fifty which she eyes, I swear,
contemptuously and, sighing, turns to the cash register and
finds my change and I say, staring at her, quite clearly but
muffled by “Pump Up the Volume” and the crowd, “You are a
fucking ugly bitch I want to stab to death and play around with
your blood,” but I’m smiling. I leave the cunt no tip and find
Price who is standing again, morosely, by the railings, his hands
gripping the steel bars. Paul Owen, who is handling the Fisher
account, is wearing a six-button double-breasted wool tuxedo and he stands next to Price screaming something like “Ran five hundred iterations of discounted cash flow minus on an ICM PC took company cab to Smith and Wollensky.”

I hand the drink to Price, while nodding to Paul. Price says nothing, not even thanks. He just holds the drink and mournfully stares at the tracks and then he squints and bends his head down to the glass and when the strobe lights start flashing, he stands up straight and murmurs something to himself.

“Are you high?” I ask him.

“How are you?” Owen shouts.

“Very happy,” I say.

The music is one long, unending song that overlaps with other, separate songs connected only by a dull thumping beat and it obliterates all conversation which, while I’m talking to a weasel like Owen, is perfectly okay with me. There seem to be more girls in the Chandelier Room now and I try to make eye contact with one of them—model type with big tits. Price nudges me and I lean in to ask if we should perhaps get another gram.

“Why aren’t you wearing a tuxedo?” Owen asks, behind me.

“I’m leaving,” Price shouts. “I’m getting out.”

“Leaving what?” I shout back, confused.

“This,” he shouts, referring to, I’m not sure but I think, his double Stoli.

“Don’t,” I tell him. “I’ll drink it.”

“Listen to me, Patrick,” he screams. “I’m leaving.”

“Where to?” I really am confused. “You want me to find Ricardo?”

“I’m leaving,” he screams. “I . . . am . . . leaving!”

I start laughing, not knowing what he means. “Well, where are you going to go?”

“Away!” he shouts.

“Don’t tell me,” I shout back at him. “Merchant banking?”

“No, Bateman. I’m serious you dumb son-of-a-bitch. Leaving. Disappearing.”


He looks away from me, doesn’t answer, just keeps staring past the railings, trying to find the point where the tracks come to an end, find what lies behind the blackness. He’s becoming a drag but Owen seems worse and I’ve already accidentally made eye contact with the weasel.

“Tell him don’t worry, be happy,” Owen shouts.

“Are you still handling the Fisher account?” What else can I say to him?


He points at some guy wearing a shawl-collar, single-breasted wool tuxedo, a cotton shirt with a bow tie, all by Pierre Cardin, who stands near the bar, directly beneath the chandelier, holding a glass of champagne, inspecting his nails. Owen pulls out a cigar, then asks for a light. I’m bored so I go for the bar without excusing myself to ask the hardbody I want to cut up for some matches. The Chandelier Room is packed and everyone looks familiar, everyone looks the same. Cigar smoke hangs heavy, floating in midair, and the music, INXS again, is louder than ever, but building toward what? I touch my brow by mistake and my fingers come back wet. At the bar I pick up some matches. On my way back through the crowd I bump into McDermott and Van Patten, who start begging me for more drink tickets. I hand them the rest of the tickets knowing that they are no longer valid, but we’re crushed together in the middle of the room and the drink tickets don’t offer enough incentive for them to make the trek to the bar.


“Basement sucks,” McDermott shouts.

“Did you find drugs?” Van Patten shouts. “We saw Ricardo.”

“No,” I shout. “Negative. Madison couldn’t find any.”

“Service, dammit, service,” the guy behind me shouts.

“It’s useless,” I shout. “I can’t hear anything.”

“What?” Van Patten shouts. “I can’t hear anything.”

Suddenly McDermott grabs my arm. “What the fuck is Price doing? Look.”

As in a movie, I turn around with some difficulty, standing on my toes to see Price perched on the rails, trying to balance
himself, and someone has handed him a champagne glass and drunk or wired he holds both arms out and closes his eyes, as if blessing the crowd. Behind him the strobe light continues to flash off and on and off and on and the smoke machine is going like crazy, gray mist billowing up, enveloping him. He’s shouting something but I can’t hear what—the room is jammed to overcapacity, the sound level an ear-splitting combination of Eddie Murphy’s “Party All the Time” and the constant din of businessmen—so I push my way forward, my eyes glazed on Price, and manage to pass Madison and Hugh and Turnbull and Cunningham and a few others. But the crowd is too densely packed and it’s futile to even keep trying. Only a few of the faces are fixated on Tim, still balancing on the railing, eyes half closed, shouting something. Embarrassed, I’m suddenly glad I’m stuck in the crowd, unable to reach his to save him from almost certain humiliation, and during a perfectly timed byte of silence I can hear Price shout, “Goodbye!” and then, the crowd finally paying attention, “Fuckheads!” Gracefully he twists his body around and hops over the railing and leaps onto the tracks and starts running, the champagne flute bobbing as he holds it out to his side. He stumbles once, twice, with the strobe light flashing, in what looks like slow motion, but he regains his composure before disappearing into blackness. A security guard sits idly by the railing as Price recedes into the tunnel. He just shakes his head, I think.

“Price! Come back!” I yell but the crowd is actually applauding his performance. “Price!” I yell once more, over the clapping. But he’s gone and it’s doubtful that if he did hear me he would do anything about it. Madison is standing nearby and sticks his hand out as if to congratulate me for something. “That guy’s a riot.”

McDermott appears behind me and pulls at my shoulder. “Does Price know about a VIP room that we don’t?” He looks worried.

Outside Tunnel now, I’m high but really tired and my mouth tastes surprisingly like NutaSweet, even after drinking two more Stolis and half a J&B. Twelve-thirty and we watch limousines try to make left turns onto the West Side Highway. The three of us, Van Patten, McDermott and myself, discuss the possibilities of finding this new club called Nekenieh. I’m not really high, just sort of drunk.

“Lunch?” I ask them, yawning. “Tomorrow?”


“What about breakfast?” I suggest.


“That reminds me,” I say, inspecting a hand. “I need one too.”

“How about dinner?” McDermott asks me.

“I’ve got a date,” I say. “Shit.”

“What about you?” McDermott asks Van Patten.

“No can do,” Van Patten says. “I’ve got to go to Sunmakers. Then private workout.”

In the elevator Frederick Dibble tells me about an item on Page Six, or some other gossip column, about Ivana Trump and then about this new Italian-Thai place on the Upper East Side that he went to last night with Emily Hamilton and starts raving about this great fusilli shiitake dish. I have taken out a gold Cross pen to write down the name of the restaurant in my address book. Dibble is wearing a subtly striped double-breasted wool suit by Canali Milano, a cotton shirt by Bill Blass, a mini-glen-plaid woven silk tie by Bill Blass Signature and he’s holding a Missoni Uomo raincoat. He has a good-looking, expensive haircut and I stare at it, admiringly, while he starts humming along to the Muzak station—a version of what could be “Sympathy for the Devil”—that plays throughout all the elevators in the building our offices are in. I’m about to ask Dibble if he watched The Patty Winters Show this morning—the topic was Autism—but he gets out on the floor before mine and repeats the name of the restaurant, “Thaidalano,” and then “See you, Marcus” and steps out of the elevator. The doors shut. I am wearing a mini-houndstooth-check wool suit with pleated trou-
think I was hallucinating while watching it. I don’t know. I can’t be sure. I don’t remember,” I murmur, placing the Journal back down and then, picking up today’s Financial Times; “I really don’t know.” She just stands there waiting for instructions. I sigh and place my hands together, sitting down at the Palazzetti glass-top desk, the halogen lamps on both sides already burning. “Okay, Jean,” I start. “I need reservations for three at Camols at twelve-thirty and if not there, try Crayons. All right?”

“Yes sir,” she says in a joky tone and then turns to leave. “Oh wait,” I say, remembering something. “And I need reservations for two at Arcadia at eight tonight.”

She turns around, her face falling slightly but still smiling. “Oh, something . . . romantic?”

“No, silly. Forget it,” I tell her. “I’ll make them. Thanks.”

“I’ll do it,” she says.

“No. No,” I say, waving her off. “Be a doll and just get me a Perrier, okay?”

“You look nice today,” she says before leaving.

She’s right, but I’m not saying anything—just staring across the office at the George Stubbs painting that hangs on the wall, wondering if I should move it, thinking maybe it’s too close to the Aiwa AM/FM stereo receiver and the dual cassette recorder and the semiautomatic belt-drive turntable, the graphic equalizer, the matching bookshelf speakers, all in twilight blue to match the color scheme of the office. The Stubbs painting should probably go over the life-size Doberman that’s in the corner ($700 at Beauty and the Beast in Trump Tower) or maybe it would look better over the Pacrizzini antique table that sits next to the Doberman. I get up and move all these sporting magazines from the forties—they cost me thirty bucks apiece—that I bought at Funchies, Bunkers, Oaks and Gleeks, and then I lift the Stubbs painting off the wall and balance it on the table then sit back at my desk and fiddle with the pencils I keep in a vintage German beer stein I got from Man- tiques. The Stubbs looks good in either place. A reproduction Black Forest umbrella stand ($675 at Hubert des Forges) sits in another corner without, I’m just noticing, any umbrellas in it.

I put a Paul Butterfield tape in the cassette player, sit back
at the desk and flip through last week's *Sports Illustrated*, but can't concentrate. I keep thinking about that damn tanning bed Van Patten has and I'm moved to pick up the phone and buzz Jean.

"Yes?" she answers.

"Jean. Listen, keep your eyes open for a tanning bed, okay?"

"What?" she asks—incredulously, I'm sure, but she's still probably smiling.

"You know. A tanning bed," I repeat casually. "For a... tan."

"Okay..." she says hesitantly. "Anything else?"

"And, oh shit, yeah. Remind me to return the videotapes I rented last night back to the store." I start to open and close the sterling silver cigar holder that sits by the phone.

"Anything else?" she asks, and then, flirtatiously, "How about that Perrier?"

"Yeah. That sounds good. And Jean?"

"Yes," she says, and I'm relieved by her patience.

"You don't think I'm crazy?" I ask. "I mean for wanting a tanning bed?"

There's a pause and then, "Well, it *is* a little unusual," she admits, and I can tell she is choosing her words very carefully. "But no, of course not. I mean how else are you going to keep up that devilishly handsome skin tone?"

"Good girl," I say before hanging up. I have a great secretary.

She comes into the office five minutes later with the Perrier, a wedge of lime and the Ransom file, which she did not need to bring, and I am vaguely touched by her almost total devotion to me. I can't help but be flattered.

"You have a table at Camelots at twelve-thirty," she announces as she pours the Perrier into a glass tumbler. "Non-smoking section."

"Don't wear that outfit again," I say, looking her over quickly. "Thanks for the Ransom file."

"Um..." She stalls, about to hand me the Perrier, and asks, "What? I didn't hear you," before setting the drink on my desk.

"I said," and I repeat myself calmly, grinning, "do not wear that outfit again. Wear a dress. A skirt or something."

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**Health Club**

The health club I belong to, Xclusive, is private and located four blocks from my apartment on the Upper West Side. In the two years since I signed up as a member, it has been remodeled three times and though they carry the latest weight machines (Nautilus, Universal, Keiser) they have a vast array of free weights which I like to use also. The club has ten courts for tennis and racquetball, aerobics classes, four aerobic dance studios, two swimming pools, Lifecycles, a Gravitron machine, rowing machines, treadmills, cross-country skiing machines, one-on-one training, cardiovascular evaluations, personalized programs, massage, sauna and steam rooms, a sun deck, tanning booths and a café with a juice bar, all of it designed by J. J. Vogel, who designed the new Norman Prager club, Petty's. Membership runs five thousand dollars annually.

It was cool this morning but seems warmer after I leave the office and I'm wearing a six-button double-breasted chalk-striped suit by Ralph Lauren with a spread-collar pencil-striped Sea Island cotton shirt with French cuffs, also by Polo, and I remove the clothes, gratefully, in the air-conditioned locker.
room, then slip into a pair of crow-black cotton and Lycra shorts with a white waistband and side stripes and a cotton and Lycra tank top, both by Wilkes, which can be folded so tightly that I can actually carry them in my briefcase. After getting dressed and putting my Walkman on, clipping its body to the Lycra shorts and placing the phones over my ears, a Stephen Bishop/Christopher Cross compilation tape Todd Hunter made for me, I check myself in the mirror before entering the gym and, dissatisfied, go back to my briefcase for some mousse to slick my hair back and then I use a moisturizer and, for a small blemish I notice under my lower lip, a dab of Clinique Touch-Stick. Satisfied, I turn the Walkman on, the volume up, and leave the locker room.

Cheryl, this dumpy chick who is in love with me, sits at her desk up front signing people in, reading one of the gossip columns in the Post, and she brightens up noticeably when she sees me approaching. She says hello but I move past her quickly, barely registering her presence since there’s no line at the Stairmaster, for which usually one has to wait twenty minutes. With the Stairmaster you work the body’s largest muscle group (between the pelvis and knees) and you can end up burning more calories per minute than by doing any other aerobic activity, except maybe Nordic skiing.

I should probably be stretching first but if I do that I’ll have to wait in line—already some faggot is behind me, probably checking out my back, ass, leg muscles. No hardbodies at the gym today. Only faggots from the West Side, probably unemployed actors, waiters by night, and Muldwyn Butner of Sachs, who I went to Exeter with, over at the biceps curl machine. Butner is wearing a pair of knee-length nylon and Lycra shorts with checkerboard inserts and a cotton and Lycra tank top and leather Reeboks. I finish twenty minutes on the Stairmaster and let the overmuscled, bleached-blond, middle-aged faggot behind me use it and I commence with stretching exercises. While I stretch, The Patty Winters Show I watched this morning comes back to me. The topic was Big Breasts and there was a woman on it who had a breast reduction since she thought her tits were too big—the dumb bitch. I immediately called McDermott who was also watching it and we both ridiculed the woman through the rest of the segment. I do about fifteen minutes of stretching before heading off to the Nautilus machines.

I used to have a personal trainer whom Luis Carruthers had recommended but he came on to me last fall and I decided to develop my own fitness program which incorporates both aerobic exercises and training. With weights I alternate between free weights and weight machines that use hydraulic, pneumatic or electromechanical resistance. Most of the machines are very efficient since computerized keypads allow one to make adjustments in weight resistance without getting up. The positive aspects of the machines include minimizing muscle soreness and reducing any chance of injury. But I also like the versatility and freedom that free weights offer and the many variations in lifting that I can’t get on the machines.

On the leg machines I do five sets of ten repetitions. For the back I also do five sets of ten repetitions. On the stomach crunch machine I’ve gotten so I can do six sets of fifteen and on the biceps curl machine I do seven sets of ten. Before moving to the free weights I spend twenty minutes on the exercise bike while reading the new issue of Money magazine. Over at the free weights I do three sets of fifteen repetitions of leg extensions, leg curls and leg presses, then three sets and twenty repetitions of barbell curls, then three sets and twenty repetitions of bent-over lateral raises for the rear deltoids and three sets and twenty repetitions of latissimus pulldowns, pulley rows, dead lifts and bent-over barbell rows. For the chest I do three sets and twenty reps of incline-bench presses. For the front deltoids I also do three sets of lateral raises and seated dumbbell presses. Finally, for the triceps I do three sets and twenty reps of cable pushdowns and close-grip bench presses. After more stretching exercises to cool down I take a quick hot shower and then head to the video store where I return two tapes I rented on Monday, She-Male Reformatory and Body Double, but I rent Body Double because I want to watch it again tonight even though I know I won’t have enough time to masturbate over the scene where the woman is getting drilled to death by a power drill since I have a date with Courtney at seven-thirty at Café Luxembourg.