

(...) 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 Romalian 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," Prince says. "You ain't see 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 Prince's words: "Raised lettering, pale nimbus white..."

"Holy shit," Van Patten exclaims. "I've never seen..."

"Nice, very nice," I have to admit. "But wait. Let's see Montgomery's."

Price pulls it out and though he's acting nonchalant, I don't see how he can ignore its subtle off-white coloring, its tasteful thickness. I am unexpectedly depressed that I started this.

"Pizza. Let's order a pizza," McDermott says. "Doesn't anyone want to split a pizza? Red snapper? Mmmmm. Bateman wants *that*," he says rubbing his hands eagerly together.

I pick up Montgomery's card and actually finger it, for the sensation the card gives off to the pads of my fingers.

"Nice, huh?" Price's tone suggests he realizes I'm jealous.

"Yeah," I say offhandedly, giving Price the card like I don't give a shit, but I'm finding it hard to swallow.

"Red snapper pizza," McDermott reminds me. "I'm fucking starving."

"No pizza," I murmur, relieved when Montgomery's card is placed away, out of sight, back in Timothy's pocket.

"Come on," McDermott says, whining. "Let's order the red snapper pizza."

"Shut up, Craig," Van Patten says, eyeing a waitress with the menu he's yanked from a passing busboy.

"Call her over *anyway*," Van Patten insists. "Ask her for water or a Corona or something."

"Why *her*?" I'm asking no one particular. My card lies on the table, ignored next to an orchid in a blue glass vase. Gently I pick it up and slip it, folded, back into my wallet.

And maybe by accident you take the wrong book with you on the train. But relax things happen anyway. There have been some different eighties after all.