

**Excerpt from *American Psycho* by Bret Easton Ellis**

"I really don't understand the differences in water," Courtney murmurs. [...]

"What do you mean?" McDermott inquires solemnly:

"Well," she says, "I mean what's *really* the difference between something like spring water and natural water, for instance, or, I mean, is there one?"

"*Courtney*. Natural water is any water from an underground source," Craig sighs, still staring out the window. "Mineral content hasn't been changed, although the water may have been disinfected or filtered." McDermott is wearing a wool tuxedo with notched lapels by Gianni Versace, and he reeks of Xeryus.

I momentarily break out of my conscious inertia to explain further: "And in spring water, minerals may have been added or removed and it's usually filtered, not processed." I pause. "Seventy-five percent of all bottled water in America is actually spring water." I pause again, then ask the cab, "Did anyone know that?"

A long, soulless pause follows and then Courtney asks another question, this one only half finished. "The differences between distilled and purified water is...?" [...]

"With distilled or purified water," McDermott is saying, "most of the minerals have been removed. The water has been boiled and the steam condensed into purified water."

"Whereas distilled water has a flat taste and it's usually not for drinking." I find myself yawning.

"And mineral water?" Courtney asks.

"It's not defined by the—" McDermott and I start simultaneously.

"Go ahead," I say, yawning again, causing Courtney to yawn also.

"No, you go ahead," he says apathetically.

"It's not defined by the FDA," I tell her. "It has no chemicals or salts or sugars or caffeine."

"And sparkling water gets its fizz from carbon dioxide, right?" she asks.

"Yes." Both McDermott and I nod, staring straight ahead.

"I knew that," she says hesitantly, and by the tone of her voice I can sense, without looking over, that she probably smiles when she says this.

"But only buy *naturally* sparkling water," I caution. "Because *that* means the carbon dioxide content is in the water at its source."

"Club soda and seltzer, for example, are artificially carbonated," McDermott explains.

"White Rock seltzer is an exception," I mention, nonplussed by McDermott's ridiculous, incessant one-upmanship. "Ramlosa sparkling mineral water is also very good."

The cab is about to turn onto Fourteenth street, but maybe four or five limousines are trying to make the same right so we miss the light. I curse the driver but an old Motown song from the sixties, maybe it's the Supremes, plays muted, up front, the sound blocked by the fiberglass partition. I try to open it but it's locked and won't slide across. Courtney asks, "What kind should you drink after exercising?"

"Well," I sigh. "Whatever it is, it should be really cold."

"Because?" she asks.

"Because it's absorbed faster than if it was at room temperature." Absently I check my Rolex. "It should probably be water. Evian. But not in plastic."