

THE QUALIFIER

Wheels

Written by

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The Cars trilogy, specifically Cars 2's World Grand Prix

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. DAYTONA BEACH - NIGHT

It's late at night in the streets of Daytona Beach, Florida. ORIEN SANTIAGO is riding around in a tricked out car with fancy lights, colorful tires and suspension and a loud engine. A goateed BOUNCER approaches his car.

BOUNCER
(Knocking on the window)
Hey, ese.

Orien slowly rolls down his window to look the man in the eye.

BOUNCER
You a cop?

Orien looks down at his car, then looks back up at the man.

ORIEN
Does it LOOK like I'm a cop?

BOUNCER
What's the password?

ORIEN
Tito Watts.

The bouncer nods his head slowly, moving away from Orien's car. Orien cruises through the beach, sizing up his competition. Three other street racers, HOOD, DECKLID, and SPOILER are hanging around their own cars, listening to loud rap music.

SPOILER
There's no way that story's real,
Decklid.

DECKLID
(Gesturing)
I'm serious!

Hood takes a swig of his root beer.

HOOD
(Gulps)
So let me get this straight: Your
car rams into an oil tanker, blows
up, flips OFF OF the bridge and
into the river below.
(MORE)

HOOD (CONT'D)
And you not only survive this, but
all you walked away with was a
scratch?

DECKLID
(Earnestly)
Yep!

HOOD
When?

Decklid lets out a droning moan, trying to think.

DECKLID
(Pounding head)
I don't remember when I had the
dream, but-

Spoiler and Hood groan in unison.

SPOILER
I knew it!

HOOD
(Unamused)
Told ya.

Orien's car pulls up to the crew. He honks his horn, which
plays a jazz tune to it.

ORIEN
(Waving)
Fellas.

HOOD
(Turning around)
Ayo, check out Ori's new ride!

Hood and Decklid run over to Orien's car.

DECKLID
(Caressing hood)
Dang, man. What kinda car you got?

Orien chuckles to himself, slapping the car door through the
window.

ORIEN
(Nonchalant)
Oh, this baby? A Porsche 911 GT2.

SPOILER
(Crossing arms)
What year is it?

ORIEN
A 2009.

DECKLID
(Amazed)
The car literally JUST came out and
you already got it tricked out?!

HOOD
(Looking at Orien)
What kinda mods you got on it?

ORIEN
If I told you guys, it'd be no fun.

SPOILER
(Sneering)
Oh? Keeping secrets are we?

ORIEN
(Tapping steering wheel)
I'd rather let my car do the
talking for me.

Orien slams his foot down on the gas, the Porsche letting
out a vicious roar that pierces the night air.

ORIEN
Hear that? She's saying she's ready
to beat all of you.

DECKLID
Big words, Orien. But let's see if
you can back them up.

Spoiler reaches into her jeans pocket and pulls out a wad of
cash.

SPOILER
To get us started, how about we
each bet \$250? Whoever wins gets a
grand.

HOOD
Sounds good, mama.

DECKLID
(Pumping fist)
I'm ready!

Orien floors the gas again, letting out another roar into the air.

ORIEN

She said that grand is ours!

Orien, Hood, Decklid and Spoiler get into their cars and drive off to the starting line.

CUT TO:

EXT. SOUTH DAYTONA - MOMENTS LATER

Orien and Decklid are parallel to each other. Decklid has a 1986 Pontiac Grand Prix 2+2.

REFEREE

(Shouting)

We're going to warm up with some drag races. Orien vs. Decklid first!

DECKLID

(To Orien)

You're going down, buddy!

ORIEN

(Snaps)

Right back at you!

The referee lifts up a checkered flag.

REFEREE

(Counting)

Three, two...

Orien revs up his engine loudly. Decklid does the same, but looks to the side.

DECKLID

(Relaxed)

Oh, my mirror's not adjusted.

REFEREE (O.S.)

Go!

As Decklid fixes his mirror, smoke covers the screen. The smoke dissipates, and Decklid finishes adjusting his mirror.

DECKLID

(Satisfied)

There we go.

Decklid looks around, wondering where Orien went. Orien is already at the finish line, and is reversing on the street.

DECKLID
(Lowers head)
Dang it.

Hood simply shakes his head in shame as Decklid moves his car out of the way. Hood gets into his 2005 Ford Mustang and pulls up next to Orien. They roll their windows down.

ORIEN
(Bragging)
Impressive, right?

HOOD
Beating Decklid ain't no
accomplishment!

Hood realizes what he said and looks over to a very sad Decklid.

HOOD
My bad, homie. You know I didn't
mean it.

The referee comes back between the two cars and raises his flag.

REFEREE
Three, two, one...
(Dropping flag)
Go!

Orien and Hood take off, starting off parallel to each other. Until about halfway, Hood is in the front, barely passing by Orien. He has a wide grin. Suddenly at the halfway mark, Orien speeds past him. Orien passes the referee.

REFEREE
Time!

Spoiler, on the sidelines, is stroking her chin.

SPOILER
(To herself)
Not a bad ride.

Orien takes his car back to the starting line. Spoiler gets into her red Chevy Cobalt SS. The two don't even exchange words as they go to the starting line. The referee silently waves his flag and the two take off.

They stay neck and neck, until Orien slowly creeps out in front of her car and passes the ref.

REFEREE
(Waving flag)
Time!

Spoiler puts on her brakes and looks over to Orien, who's giving her a sly grin. Hood walks over to Spoiler's window.

HOOD
(Whispering)
That thing's a beast.

SPOILER
It's good in a drag race, I'll give him that. But can it handle a good old-fashioned street race?

CUT TO:

EXT. DAYTONA BEACH SHORES - MOMENTS LATER

The four line up on the shore of Daytona Beach in a square. Spoiler and Hood are in the front while Decklid and Orien are behind them. Spoiler looks over to Hood on her right.

SPOILER
(Impressed)
Is that a new sound system?

HOOD
(Cocky)
Sure is, Spoils.

Hood turned up his car stereo, playing "My Boo" by Ghost Town DJs.

HOOD
(Dancing)
Pretty cool, right?

SPOILER
Yeah, but peep this.

Spoiler points down to the tires of her car, which have golden rims. There are also red LED underlights, turning the sand under her a hue of crimson.

HOOD
Wow, now the car is just like you:
Bougie.

Spoiler growls at him without saying a word.

DECKLID
(Shouting)
Hey, guys! Check out MY mods!

Decklid turns on his headlights, which are now a different color. Hood and Spoiler peek out of their windows to look at him with a straight face.

HOOD
Dawg, all of our first mods were
lights.

SPOILER
Nice try though, twinkle toes.

Decklid crosses his arms and pouts.

DECKLID
(Salty)
I thought it was pretty cool...

A REFEREE goes over to the cars. He stands in front of Hood and Spoiler's cars in the middle. He's holding a checkered flag.

REFEREE
(Shouting)
One lap. Up the shores, turn on
Ormond Beach, down Holly Hill, onto
Port Orange, then back here. Winner
gets \$1000.

The four racers rev up their engines, preparing for the race to begin. The ref brings up three fingers, then slowly brings each finger down. He hesitates on one, then finally lowers it.

REFEREE
(Waving flag)
Go!

Tires squealing, mixing sand with smoke, they take off. Hood and Spoiler stay level for a while, but Spoiler eventually overtakes him. Decklid is third place, Orien some ways behind him.

DECKLID
At least I'm not last.

Orien zooms past Decklid.

DECKLID
(Disappointed)
Oh.

Orien quickly catches up to Hood. Spoiler is still in the lead. The turn for Ormond Beach is coming up. Orien clutches the gear shift.

ORIEN
(To self)
It's showtime.

Spoiler turns onto the road to Ormond Beach. As Hood is turning, Orien goes on the inside and zooms by him. Hood's car rattles as Orien passes him with incredible speed. Orien weaves through a couple of passing cars, which honk at him angrily.

HOOD
Woah!

Orien is only feet behind Spoiler's car as the two drive down Holly Hill. Spoiler looks in her left side mirror and sees Orien's lights blinding her.

SPOILER
(Shouting)
You really want those thousand bucks, huh?!

ORIEN
Of course I do!

SPOILER
Well, you're going to have to work for it, amigo!

Spoiler slams her foot on the gas, giving her an extra boost. Orien simply shrugs, letting her have her moment. The two turn onto the Port Orange bridge heading back towards the shores. But as they turned back onto the shores before the finish line, Orien floors his gas pedal, zooming right by Spoiler.

REFEREE
(Waving flag)
Time!

Spoiler and Hood's cars finally approach the finish. Decklid's comes crawling at the very end, knowing it would be pointless to try. Orien gets out of his car.

ORIEN
(Leaning on car roof)
Okay, cough it up.

Everyone plops \$250 into Orien's hand. He inspects the money more closely.

ORIEN
This is only \$750.

Hood and Spoiler look over at Decklid in unison.

DECKLID
Why me?

SPOILER
You came in dead last, so...

Decklid sighs, rooting through his pocket and pulling out another big wad of cash to hand to Orien. He stuffs his hands back into his pocket and kicks the sand.

HOOD
(Patting Decklid's back)
You'll get 'em next time, homie.

SPOILER
So, Orien. What're you planning to do with this money?

Orien rolled out his thousand dollars, glaring at the presidential faces with glee.

ORIEN
Maybe I can get a nice, new-

Orien is interrupted by distant police sirens. The group jumps up, all of them frightened.

HOOD
(Scared)
Damn, it's the cops!

SPOILER
Somebody must've snitched!

ORIEN
Who cares?! We gotta run NOW!

The four of them run away from the impending cops. Hood is caught up in the middle of everything and gets pushed into the sand.

HOOD
Guys, wait!

The other three have already made it to their cars and drive off, leaving him there. The police cars catch up to him and arrest him on the ground. Decklid and Hood's cars are parallel to each other, periodically glancing at their mirrors.

SPOILER
(Tense)
They're catching up!

Decklid's face lights up.

DECKLID
I got an idea! We'll take the next
left to chase them away from Orien!

SPOILER
(Nods)
Good idea.

The two cars turn on the next left street into the city.
Tires can be heard squealing, followed by a crash.

DECKLID (O.S.)
Oops.

SPOILER (O.S.)
(Screaming)
Goddammit, Decklid!

A flood of police cars swarm down the street they crashed
on.

CUT TO:

I/E. U.S. 1 - LATER

Orien is on the interstate outside of Daytona Beach. It's so
late in the night that barely anyone is on the road. The
only sound in the night sky is Orien's car engine. He
glances at his side mirrors, no cop cars in sight.

ORIEN
(Relieved)
I think I lost them.

As Orien turns back to where he's driving, he slams on his
brakes. A wall of police cars are blockign the whole length
of the highway in front of him.

ORIEN
(Scared)
Crap!

Orien goes into reverse gear and tries to turn around to
escape. He turns around and sees another blockade behind
him, trapping him behind completely.

POLICE CRUISER

(Shouting)

We have you surrounded! Step out of
the vehicle!

EXT. U.S. 1 - CONTINUOUS

Orien, sighing, steps out of his car with his hands in the air. Two cops step out of their cruisers with their guns trained on Orien.

MALE COP

On the ground! Hands behind your
head!

Orien moves his arms to touch the back of his head and he slowly gets on his knees. The female cop gets behind him and handcuffs him.

FEMALE COP

Suspect secured!

A police sergeant, SERGEANT HAWTHORNE, walks up to Orien. He towers over him. Hawthorne takes off his glasses to glare at the young man.

SERGEANT HAWTHORNE

(Disdainful)

I should've known you'd be involved
in this.

Orien rolls his eyes in defeat.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. GO KART PARK - DAY (FLASHBACK)

It is fifteen years prior in 1994. Orien's 7th birthday is today, and his father MATEO SANTIAGO is covering his eyes with his gloved hands. He's guiding the young boy, as the young Orien can only wave his arms in front of him.

YOUNG ORIEN

(Shouting)

Are we there yet?!

MATEO

(Chuckles)

Almost.

The two of them reach the track. Mateo moves his hands, revealing the vacant go-kart track. Orien looks around in awe.

YOUNG ORIEN
 (Shocked)
 The go-kart track?!

MATEO
 (Steps forward)
 Yep. Happy seventh, champ. I know
 how mad you were at me for beating
 you last year, so I decided to give
 you a chance for a remake.

Orien looks left and right. He notices the lack of people in the park.

YOUNG ORIEN
 (Confused)
 But there's no one here.

MATEO
 Rented the whole place. No
 witnesses, nobody to get in the
 way. A completely fair rematch.

YOUNG ORIEN
 (Excited)
 Awesome!
 (Pointing)
 You're going down!

Orien runs over to the track and hops into the scarlet red go kart covered in a fire-pattern decal. Orien straps himself in with his stubby little kid arms. Mateo gets behind his go kart and pulls on the string. The engine sputters, releasing some exhaust.

MATEO
 (Coughing)
 Me choca.

Mateo gives the engine one more forceful yank, finally getting to go kart to start. He starts his own go-kart, a cerulean go kart with a wave-pattern decal, gets inside and buckles himself in. Mateo clears his throat dramatically.

MATEO
 (Imitating announcer)
 Ladies and gentleman! Welcome to
 the second annual Father-son Grand
 Prix in Daytona Beach! Last year,
 Mateo Santiago beat his son Orien
 fair and square last year, no
 matter how much he cried about it!
 (MORE)

MATEO (CONT'D)

But can Orien finally step out of
his papa's shadow and come out on
top as his own racer?! Let's find
out! One lap around the oval track!

Orien looks forward and grips his little hands on the
steering wheel.

MATEO

(Counting)

One... Two... Three!

The two take off, as their engines echo off the walls of the
large, open-spaced building. Orien lags behind Mateo for the
first third of the track, keeping at least a few feet
between them.

MATEO

(Turns around)

You better hurry up if you want to
catch up with me!

Orien furrows his brow and slams on the gas, picking up his
speed a little. His kart closes a bit of distance, but he's
still behind by a small amount for the second third. For the
final third, Mateo's foot sneakily presses down on the red
brake pedal, dropping his speed. Orien's kart catches up,
overtakes Mateo's, and crosses the finish line.

YOUNG ORIEN

(Panting)

I did it? I won?

Mateo, smiling, gets out of his kart, clapping for his son.

MATEO

(Happily)

Good job. You beat me.

Orien beams with excitement. He unbuckles himself and leaps
out of the kart, jumping up and down.

YOUNG ORIEN

(Cheering)

I did it! I did it! Papa, I did it!

Mateo grabs Orien and picks him up, swinging him up and
down.

MATEO

(Imitating announcer)

The champion of the 1994 Father-son
Grand Prix is Orien Santiago!

(MORE)

MATEO (CONT'D)
And for winning first place, he
gets... this!

Mateo takes a fist and gives Orien's head a noogie. Orien is giggling relentlessly, his face turning red and tears escaping his eyes from laughter.

FADE TO:

INT. POLICE STATION CELL - THE NEXT MORNING

Back in the present, Orien wakes up in his jail cell bed at around 8 in the morning the next day. A station cop is banging on the jail cell with his nightstick.

STATION COP
(Shouting)
Rise and shine, Santiago!

Orien groans, sitting up. The morning light is shining in his eyes.

STATION COP
(Nodding)
Get up. Sergeant Hawthorne wants to
talk to you.

ORIEN
(Groggily)
About what?

The station cop unlocks Orien's cell and opens the door.

STATION COP
Come to his office and find out.

Orien, after a few moments of sitting on his uncomfortable rusty bed, stands up and leaves his cell. The station cop leads him to Sergeant Hawthorne's office.

INT. SERGEANT HAWTHORNE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Sergeant Hawthorne is filling out some papers and drinking coffee. A knock is heard at his door.

SERGEANT HAWTHORNE
(Not looking up)
Come in.

The door opens and the station cop lets Orien in. Sergeant Hawthorne finally looks up.

SERGEANT HAWTHORNE
(Stern)
Have a seat.

Orien looks at a dusty wooden chair across from Sergeant Hawthorne's desk. He hesitantly sits down in the tiny chair. Hawthorne pulls out a pile of documents. He looks at a document with Hood's picture plastered on it with a paper clip.

SERGEANT HAWTHORNE
(Listing)
Ahmed "Hood" Nassar.

He moves the Hood document underneath the stack, revealing another document. This time, with Decklid's face on it.

SERGEANT HAWTHORNE (CONT'D)
Cody "Decklid" Faulkner.

He moves the Decklid document underneath the stack, revealing one of Spoiler.

SERGEANT HAWTHORNE (CONT'D)
Lena "Spoiler" Friedman.

And lastly, he moves the Spoiler document underneath the stack, revealing one of Orien.

SERGEANT HAWTHORNE
(Sighs)
And Orien Santiago.
(Looking at Orien)
I thought I told you I didn't want
to see your ugly mug in here again.

Orien shrugs.

ORIEN
(Nonchalant)
Hey, we're just a couple of young
adults having fun together late at
night. What's wrong with that?

Hawthorne gives Orien a death stare, making him sink into his chair a little.

SERGEANT HAWTHORNE
(Gravely)
Illegal street racing on public
roads? It was one in the morning, a
bystander or passing car could've
easily been harmed by your actions.

ORIEN
(Putting hands up)
But nobody actually DID get hurt,
so if you think about it-

Hawthorne angrily slams on his desk, shutting Orien up.

SERGEANT HAWTHORNE
Four years ago, when I caught you
street racing for the first time, I
let you go. You all were just
stupid teenagers. I thought you'd
grow out of it, gain some sense and
finally move on with your lives.
Now all I see is four stupid
adults.

Orien nods sheepishly, feeling uncomfortable under
Hawthorne's gaze.

ORIEN
(Nervously)
So... what punishment are we
looking at here?

Hawthorne grabs a sheet of paper and straightens it out.

SERGEANT HAWTHORNE
A \$1000 fine.

ORIEN
(Exasperated)
Are you kidding me?!

Hawthorne looks Orien coldly in the eye.

SERGEANT HAWTHORNE
(Deadpan)
Do I look like someone who's
joking?

ORIEN
(Desperate)
That's all of my prize money.

Hawthorne takes his pencil and begins writing on a new
paper.

SERGEANT HAWTHORNE
Not my problem.

ORIEN

(Clears throat)

You know what? I wholeheartedly apologize to you. We all made a severe lapse in judgment. I promise, the moment we leave this station, you will NEVER see us or our flashy cars ever again.

SERGEANT HAWTHORNE

(Tapping pencil on desk)

Oh, we won't.

Orien claps happily.

ORIEN

(Gladly)

Thank you so much, Sarge. You don't know how much your kindness-

SERGEANT HAWTHORNE

(Cutting im off)

Because we're impounding it.

Orien stops talking. His face contorts from a smile to one of confusion.

ORIEN

(Quietly)

Excuse me?

SERGEANT HAWTHORNE

We're going to have your car impounded.

ORIEN

(Hesitating)

But I thought... The thousand dollar fine WAS my punishment.

SERGEANT HAWTHORNE

It is. Your car is getting impounded on top of that.

(Shooing)

You can leave now.

ORIEN

(Defensive)

But-

SERGEANT HAWTHORNE

(Pushy)

Go. Your breath is distracting me from work.

Orien sighs in resignation. He stands up and begins to walk out of Hawthorne's office. But before he goes through the door, he turns back around.

ORIEN
Hey, out of curiosity, what's going to happen to the car once it's in the impound?

Hawthorne doesn't even look up from his paperwork.

SERGEANT HAWTHORNE
(Uncaring)
Probably to the junk yard to be scrapped for parts.

Orien's eyes widen in fear.

SERGEANT HAWTHORNE
(Smirking)
But hey. If you want, we can give you the car back.

ORIEN
(Smiling)
You can?

SERGEANT HAWTHORNE
Yep. You can keep the cute little scrap cube. It'll look good on a shelf!

Orien growls angrily at Hawthorne's joke, slamming the door shut.

CUT TO:

EXT. POLICE STATION - MOMENTS LATER

Orien walks out of the front doors to the police station, angrily mumbling to himself.

ORIEN
(Muttering)
That smug prick and his lame ass jokes.
(Mocking)
"Oh, you get to keep the cute little cube, maybe put it on a shelf."
(Angrily)
Yeah, how about I put my dusty shoes up your-

Orien stops and sees Hood, Decklid and Spoiler congregated in a circle on the sidewalk.

HOOD

(Bummed out)

What're we gonna do without our rides, man?

SPOILER

(Pinching bridge of nose)

My dad already is calling me and yelling at me to go to medical school.

She pounds on a lightpost nearby.

SPOILER

I don't WANT to go to med school, dad! I was born to be a RACER!

Hood scratches his head, unsure of what to do.

HOOD

(Shrugging)

I wonder if my cousin'll let me move in again.

Decklid stuffs his hands in his pockets, kicking some loose concrete on the ground.

DECKLID

(Sadly)

I was betting my sister's college fund out there.

Hood, Spoiler and Orien all turn to him with a look crossed between shocked and concerned.

DECKLID

(Defensive)

I lost all of MY money on our street races and I keep losing!

HOOD

(Sarcastic)

Have you ever tried being less of a loser?

Spoiler sighs and turns to Orien.

SPOILER

So how did it go with you?

ORIEN

They impounded my car. Hawthorne
said it'll probably be scrapped.

SPOILER

(Sympathetic)

Man, that must suck for you.

ORIEN

(Slightly disappointed)

Yeah, it's a bummer.

The trio look confused. Orien doesn't seem to be that
heartbroken over hearing his car was being destroyed.

HOOD

(Confused)

You ain't that mad about it?

DECKLID

Yeah, man. Those mods probably cost
a lot of money.

Orien realizes what they were talking about. He rubs the
back of his neck awkwardly, trying to find a way to tell
them.

ORIEN

(Awkward)

That actually... wasn't my car.

SPOILER

(Pauses)

What?

ORIEN

(Explaining)

Okay, so I have this rich neighbor
who's a HUGE car buff, and he's
always souping up his cars. Then he
found out I used to drive his cars
and started hiding his keys.
Eventually, I found where he
stashed the keys and... borrowed
them.

HOOD

Dawg, why would you steal his car
and illegally race with it?!

ORIEN

If I knew they were going to scrap
the car, I would've never done it!

The trio falls into a silence. The sound of passing cars fills the air as they try to brainstorm ways to get more money. Orien looks up at a power line post.

ORIEN
(Curious)
Hm?

He walks up to the post, where a flyer is hanging on by a nail in the post.

ORIEN
(Reading)
Daytona Beach Fun Family Race.
Sunday at 11 AM, cars provided,
winner earns \$1000. Check the
website link below for
registration.

Orien turns around at Da Partz. He has a huge grin on his face.

ORIEN
(Slyly)
I think I found a solution to the
prize money problem.

SPOILER
But what about breaking the news to
your neighbor?

ORIEN
(Pointing)
I have a solution to that one as
well.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE - DAY

Orien's rich neighbor, MR. LEARY, exits the front door of his house and locks the door behind him. He walks over to his driveway before stopping. His car is gone, but a sticky note is fluttering in the wind where it usually parks. Mr. Leary picks up the note and reads it.

NOTE
Dear Mr. Leary, your car got
impounded. It'll probably be
scrapped by next week. My bad :<.
From, O.S.

Mr. Leary doesn't even react to reading this note. He simply stares at it.

CUT TO:

EXT. GO KART PARK - DAY

It is the sunday of the Fun Family Race, where a bunch of citizens are racing in go karts. Orien, cramped inside of his own go kart, is weaving through a bunch of the other competitors. Children, parents and loners still living with their mothers are all left in Orien's dust, as he crosses the finish line.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

(Excited)

And the winner is Orien Santiago!

Orien unbuckles himself from his go kart and stands up. He smiles for the people clapping for him. However, he has to shake his legs to get rid of the tingle sensation from sitting in a cramped go kart like a crab. He limps over to the registration lady at the table by the entrance.

RECEPTIONIST

(Clapping)

I have to say, that was some
amazing racing out there!

Orien chuckles, looking at his fingernails with pride.

ORIEN

Ahh, you know. I'm only doing what
I do best.

The receptionist writes him up a check and passes it to him.

RECEPTIONIST

Here you go.

Orien takes his fingertips and slides the closer to his body.

ORIEN

(Closed eyes)

Thank you very-

He stops talking when he takes a closer look at the check.

ORIEN

Uhh...

RECEPTIONIST

Is something wrong?

ORIEN
 (Pointing)
 I think you forgot a zero here.

The receptionist looks closer at the check. It read
 "\$100.00"

RECEPTIONIST
 Looks right to me.

ORIEN
 But the poster for this race said
 "1st place: \$1000". And did I not
 win 1st place?

The receptionist leans even closer into the check, then
 glances over at a poster in the distance.

RECEPTIONIST
 (Realizing)
 Ohhhh... that.
 (Turns back to Orien)
 That was a printing error.

ORIEN
 (Screaming)
 A PRINTING ERROR?!

RECEPTIONIST
 The person who made the flyers made
 a typo. The prize money was
 supposed to be \$100 for first, but
 they must've overlooked the extra
 zero.

ORIEN
 (Complaining)
 This isn't even a month's worth of
 bills!

The receptionist gives a sympathetic shrug. Orien sighs
 heavily, the check nearly blowing off the desk before he
 snatches it and stuffs it into his front pants pocket.

ORIEN
 (Dejected)
 Thank you anyway.

Orien walks away from the desk, hands in his pocket. As he's
 leaving, a high-pitched ring comes from his pocket. Orien
 pulls out his flip phone, an old dilapidated Motorola V60
 with the screen nearly torn off. He receives a text.

TEXT

Yo, it's Pkr! Grnt + I r @ La Plaza
rn. U comin?

Orien prepares his fingers and responds.

ORIEN'S TEXT

Omw.

Orien flips his phone back closed and heads over to the bus stop.

CUT TO:

EXT. LA PLAZA - AFTERNOON

Orien makes it to La Plaza, a Mexican restaurant in town. He sees his friends PARKER TEAGAN and GRANT KANG are sitting at a table. Parker notices him coming towards the table and waves at him.

ORIEN

(Sitting down)

Sorry, I'm late. The bus lost a
tire on the way here.

GRANT

(Questioning)

Don't you have a car, Orien?

ORIEN

I do. I'm just not driving it to
save on gas.

GRANT

(Scratching head)

Things're that bad for you?

PARKER

(Leaning forward,
expectantly)

So how did the race go?

Orien sighs heavily, taking out his check and sliding it across the table. Parker and Grant lean over to read it.

PARKER

(Incredulous)

Only \$100?! I thought they were
giving you \$1000!

ORIEN

(Annoyed)

Apparently there was a
(MORE)

ORIEN (CONT'D)
(Air quotes)
"Printing error"

GRANT
That's gotta be illegal somehow.

ORIEN
(Complaining)
That's not enough to even cover a
month's worth of bills. On top of
that, I lost all the street racing
money I won to the cops. I had
\$1000, then they charged me \$994.

Orien digs through his pocket and pulls out a two dollar
bill, four ones, and four quarters.

ORIEN
(Looking in palm)
Hawthorne called on my way here and
said he lowered my penalty so I
could "buy myself something nice"

Orien stuffs his money back into his pocket. Parker takes a
nacho and swirls it around in her tiny bowl of guacamole.

PARKER
How's your mom doing, by the way?

ORIEN
She fell down the stairs a couple
days back. Her ankle got really
swollen.

GRANT
(Bites burrito)
The dialysis should fix the
swelling, shouldn't it?

ORIEN
(Sighs)
I know, we're starting it soon,
but... it's just so expensive. \$300
a visit? I can't do that. And my
mom can't work either, meaning it's
up to me to find a way to make
money for everything.

Parker chews on her nacho and grabs another one, this time
dipping it in salsa.

PARKER

(Smiling)

You could work in my dad's shop if you need the money.

ORIEN

Parker, I RACE cars, I don't FIX them.

GRANT

(Uncaring)

Yeah, but considering your lack of funds, maybe it's time to get a real job.

PARKER

(Snickers)

That's rich, coming from you.

GRANT

What? I make money.

PARKER

You make crap, you sell crap, and then you waste the rest of your days glued to the TV watching crap-

GRANT

(Correcting)

NASCAR, thank you. And I have to watch the pit crews fumble the cars. My strategies are simply better.

PARKER

Still, I'd hardly call that a real job.

GRANT

(Crosses arms)

It's called being an entrepreneur, thank you, and a lot of people buy the crap I make enough to where I don't need a "conventional" job.

PARKER

(Cranking neck)

A real job needs for you to get your hands dirty. I'm a hard worker, and my bank account shows that.

Parker takes her salsa-dipped nacho and pokes Grant on the nose with it, leaving bits of red salsa residue on the tip of his nose.

GRANT
(Wiping salsa)
You mean how you sabotage cars to
extort more money out of people?

PARKER
(Offended)
I don't do that!

GRANT
(Rolls eyes)
Oh, sure. First they come in for
oil changes, then they need to have
their service light turned off, and
then miraculously something's wrong
with the brake fluid-

PARKER
(Cutting him off)
Either way!

Parker looks over to Orien. She takes her hand and lightly taps on it.

PARKER
(Encouraging)
You're a resilient young man, Ryan.
You'll overcome any issue your
face.

ORIEN
(Relieved)
You're right. Let's just forget
about money troubles and just chill
with some Mexican food.

Orien takes out his wallet.

ORIEN
(Rooting through wallet)
Been thinking about buying a nice
beef taco-

Orien freezes upon looking in his wallet. He slowly looks at the two.

ORIEN
(Horrified)
Could, um... One of you spot me?

Parker and Grant glance at each other with deadpan expressions before Parker sighs, pulling out her own wallet.

PARKER
(Bored)
Alright, what do you want?

CUT TO:

INT. NYC TV STUDIO BACKSTAGE - EVENING

Famous NASCAR driver LEWIS HARVEY and his agent DIRK KENNEDY are backstage of a talk show. A young male production assistant brings them coffee.

DIRK
(Nodding)
Thank you, young man.

The P.A. walks out of the room, leaving Harvey and Dirk in the room. Harvey grabs his coffee and takes a sip.

HARVEY
(Impressed)
Black with one ounce of sugar and cream exactly. You know me so well.

Dirk chuckles smugly, rubbing the back of his neck.

DIRK
C'mon, I'm just doing my job.

HARVEY
Thank you so much for doing this for me, Dirk.

DIRK
(Leans forward)
The great Lewis Harvey deserves the best.
(Gesturing w/ hands)
I chose an event that has never been done before in the history of racing!

Dirk stands up and points at Harvey with fiery excitement.

DIRK
You're going to go out as a trailblazer!

Dirk proudly sits back down. He takes his cup of coffee and takes a long swig. Harvey sets his cup down.

HARVEY
(Humbly)
Honestly, I don't want a big event.
I'm glad with ending on a simple
race.

Dirk's eyes shoot open and he moves the cup away from his mouth.

DIRK
(Hesitates)
Come again?

Harvey leans back in his chair with one arm over.

HARVEY
Truth be told, I've been wantin' to
quit for years. Now that I got the
money, I can finally settle down.
It didn't feel right to just up and
leave, so i agreed to do one more
nice, simple, short oval race.

Dirk sets hiw own cup down. He's wincing to himself, unsure of how to break the news to Harvey.

DIRK
Yeah, um. About that...

Another female P.A. enters the break room.

FEMALE P.A.
Mr. Harvey, you're on.

Harvey stands up.

HARVEY
Whtever it is, can you tell me
after, Dirk?

DIRK
(Stammering)
Uh, yeah, sure! No problem!

Harvey gives a thumbs up and leaves for the front stage.

INT. TALK SHOW SET - CONTINUOUS

The host of Racings News Network, JOSH BASSINGER. Is at his desk.

BASSINGER

(Excited)

For tonight, we're going to reveal a revolutionary racing event. But first, I want our special guest to hear this exciting news with you all. He's won three NASCAR Cup Series in his long career. Please give it up for Lewis Harvey!

The crowd claps loudly and cheers as Harvey enters the stage, waving at the crowd. He goes over to Bassinger's desk and shakes his hand. He then walks over to the guest seat. The claps subdue.

BASSINGER

Thank you for coming tonight.

HARVEY

Thank you for having me.

BASSINGER

Now that you're here, are you ready to hear what this exciting new event is?

HARVEY

I'm ready. I'm ready to see what y'all got planned for me.

BASSINGER

Alrighty!
(Slams desk)
Band, drum roll please!

The drummer for the show's band plays a drum roll. He stops after building up to.

BASSINGER

(Energetic)

You've been selected to represent the United States in the upcoming International Grand Prix next month!

The crowd cheers and claps again. Harvey isn't smiling at all upon hearing the news.

HARVEY

(Blankly)

...The what?

BASSINGER

The International Racing Coalition's been planning the ultimate multi-class street circuit tournament where 90 racers from all over the world compete. From late March to early May, you'd be traveling to 9 different cities worldwide! And every race is action-packed, 50 full laps each!

HARVEY

I see.

BASSINGER

(Expectant)

Well? What do you think?

Harvey stands up suddenly.

HARVEY

(Resignation)

I quit.

Harvey, without a word, anticlimatically walks offstage, leaving Bassinger, his band, and the audience in silence.

CUT TO:

INT. NYC TV STUDIO BACKSTAGE - MOMENTS LATER

The IRC agents are scrambling. Dirk is twiddling his fingers. He's on the phone with an executive.

DIRK

(Hiding panic)

Sir, I PROMISE you, we'll have a another racer ready.

Dirk pauses for a couple of seconds, letting the voice on the other line speak.

DIRK

(Playing dumb)

No, I had NO idea he was even quitting, this was a COMPLETE shock to me too.

WHITNEY (O.S.)

(Enraged)

DIRK!!!

An angry business lady, WHITNEY, comes running up to him angry.

DIRK
(Gulps)
Hey, Whitney. How's it going-?

WHITNEY
(Hastily)
Dirk, PLEASE tell me you have a replacement.

DIRK
(Sheepish)
Every racer I asked also refused.

WHITNEY
(Annoyed)
In case you haven't realized, Dirk.
One of the biggest, most
anticipated events in racing is
coming up, and the U.S. has no rep.
One of the biggest nations for
racing, and we can't even join!

Dirk taps his foot impatiently, trying to devise a plan. He snaps with realization.

DIRK
Well if our already existing talent
won't join this tourney, then we'll
just have to scout some new talent.

WHITNEY
(Exasperated)
Dirk, what are you on now?

Dirk looks over to a poster of the Daytona International Speedway.

DIRK
(Determined)
Pack your bags. We're going to
Daytona.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. GROCERY STORE - EVENING

Orien proudly slams one pack of ramen noodles down on the cash register.

ORIEN
(Proudly)
Dinner for me and my mom!

The cashier looks down at the pack with a straight face, then back at Orien.

CASHIER
(Bored)
A singular pack of ramen noodles?

ORIEN
Yup!

The cashier shrugs and scans the ramen noodle pack. He taps a few things on the register.

CASHIER
(Droning)
2.50.

Orien opens up his wallet and sees he has no cash. Instead, he opts to use his card. He swipes the card. It declines.

ORIEN
(Feigning confusion)
Weird. Let me try again.

Orien tries to swipe the card again. It declines. He keeps trying to scan it, but the card keeps declining. After his seventh attempt, he tries one more time, but the cashier stops him by grabbing his hand.

CASHIER
(With pity)
Just take it, man.

ORIEN
Did I get a discount?

CASHIER
(Shakes head)
No. I just hate to see a man go hungry.

ORIEN
(Shyly)
Thank you.

Orien walks away from the register and towards the door.

CASHIER (O.S.)
Hey.

Orien turns around to look back at the cashier.

CASHIER
(Sympathetic)
Hope things get better for you.

Orien, a small smile creeping on his face, salutes the cashier.

CUT TO:

INT. RIO'S BEDROOM - LATER

Orien enters his mother RIO SANTIAGO's bedroom. She is reading a book on her bed.

ORIEN
I'm home.

RIO
(Warmly)
Welcome back.

Rio notices the pack of ramen noodles in Orien's hand.

RIO
(Pointing)
Is that for you?

ORIEN
Actually, it's dinner for both of us.

Rio raises one eyebrow at him, not believing him.

ORIEN
(Shamefully)
It was all I could afford.
(Optimistic)
You'd be surprised how much mileage we can get out of these. That's how Grant and I survived community college.

Orien walks closer to Rio's bed, but accidentally knocks over a glass of tomato juice.

RIO
(Fretful)
¡Ay, mi querido! That's the new
carpet!

Rio tries to stand up, but she starts crying in pain from her swollen ankle.

ORIEN
(Rushing over)
Hey, hey, hey! Your ankle!

Orien gently stops her from getting up. He slowly helps her back on the bed.

ORIEN
(With concern)
Your ankle's still swollen. I'll go
get it, okay?

Orien grabs a rag and cleans out the stain. He sighs with relief and sits back down on the bed next to Rio.

ORIEN
Once you start dialysis, it should
help with the pain.

RIO
I'm glad, but how are you going to
pay for it?

ORIEN
(Dodging the question)
I'll figure it out.

RIO
You keep saying that, but do you
really have it together?

ORIEN
Look, there's another race coming
up, and they're paying \$500, so if
I win first place, that should be
enough for the treatment.

RIO
(Crosses arms)
How much did the last race give
you? Didn't they give you a grand?

Orien looks off to the side, embarrassed.

ORIEN
Actually, due to complications, it
was only a hundred.

(Defensive)
I'm making money from racing!

RIO
(Puts hand on Orien's
shoulder)
It's just not enough, Orien.

ORIEN
(Sadly)
Life would be so much easier if dad
was still alive.

RIO
I know, baby. The money he left
behind for us wasn't going to last
forever, and I knew that. It was
enough to get you through school.

ORIEN
There's just nothing else I want to
do for money. Dad showed me that
you can make money doing what you
love. I love racing, and I want to
be just like him one day.

RIO
Have you considered going back to
college?

ORIEN
(Stubborn)
I dropped out for a reason.

RIO
Get a job? At least think about it.

ORIEN
(Thinking)
Okay, I'll THINK about it.

Orien stands up.

ORIEN
I'll make us our dinner, then work
on the finances.

Orien kisses Rio on the cheek before leaving the room.

CUT TO:

INT. DINING ROOM

Orien, now with a cup of instant noodles boiling by his side, has a pen in his hand as he's surveying his finances.

ORIEN
(To self)
Rent this month is... 2000...
Water, electric, heating all comes
up to about... 250... Internet and
cable is another 200... Don't
forget 80 for the phone bill...

Orien puts the pen in his mouth and chews on it as he types on a calculator.

ORIEN
(Mouth full)
That makes this month's total 2530.

He types some more on the calculator.

ORIEN
Take my fine into account, that's
an extra 994 I have to pay. And
with my-

He looks over to his \$100 check with disdain.

ORIEN
(Groans)
100 dollar check, that means I have
to pay 894.

Out of curiosity, Orien adds 300 to the expenses.

ORIEN
(Sighs)
An extra 1194 if mom starts
dialysis. Not even the new race can
cover that.

Orien bites on the pen even harder. The pen creaks a little until Orien feels something squirt in his mouth. He moves the pen away from his mouth and sees his mouth is full of ink.

ORIEN
(Mouthful)
Shonuva-!

Orien gets up and rushes over to his kitchen.

INT. LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Orien, mouth full of ink, walks over to his sink. The TV is on a Racing News Network Broadcast.

TV ANCHOR (O.S.)

In other news, the IRC's American branch is scrambling for a representative after the abrupt retirement of long-time NASCAR driver Lewis Harvey. Most NASCAR and Indy drivers requested have all turned down the offer, saying-

Orien makes it to the sink and fills a glass cup with water. He swishes it and spits it out, leaving dark blue-stained water to cascade down the sink. He turns the sink on to wash it down. He sighs, then walks back through the living room to make it back to the dining room.

TV ANCHOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Which is why the IRC will accept any citizen applicant interested for racing in the upcoming international Grand Prix.

Orien freezes, then looks over to his TV.

TV ANCHOR (O.S.)

Whichever lucky American is selected, they will go on into the IGP, where they'll get a chance to win the 10 million dollar prize. Hotels, food, transportation and all others expenses paid for. More details are online on the IRC's official website.

Orien is already gone, leaving a swivel chair swerving in place as he's gone.

CUT TO:

INT. DAYTONA IRC OFFICE WAITING ROOM - THE NEXT DAY

Orien reaches the desk of the waiting lobby where the registration forms are. A receptionist is typing on a computer when Orien jumps at the front desk, making her jump and shriek.

ORIEN

(Loudly)

Good morning! I'm here for the IGP registration.

The receptionist sinks into her seat for a second before clearing her throat and fixing her posture. She hands him a couple sheets of paper.

RECEPTIONIST
Fill this out, please. Clipboards
and pens are over there.

Orien nods. He goes over to the plastic clipboard stand and grabs one to put his papers on. He chooses a seat next to a fern and sits down. He grabs the pen chained to the top of the clipboard and begins to fill out his form.

ORIEN
(Mumbling)
Last name: Santiago. First name:
Orien. Date of birth: February 2,
1987...
(Few seconds of silence)
"Do I have a criminal record?"
Well, this question is optional,
soooo...

Orien taps his pen on the board to think. While he's filling out his form, his arm accidentally grazes a water glass that's already there, spilling all over his forms.

ORIEN
(Whining)
Come ooooooon!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DAYTONA IRC OFFICE WAITNG ROOM - THIRTY MINUTES LATER

Orien jumps back up to the receptionist's desk, scaring her again.

ORIEN
(Proudly)
Done!

RECEPTIONIST
(Breathless)
Please stop doing that!

ORIEN
(Scratching neck)
My bad.

The receptionist sighs and accepts the papers.

RECEPTIONIST
(Disgusted)
Why are the papers wet?

ORIEN
I accidentally spilled some water
on it earlier.
(Thumbs up)
Still perfectly readable!

The receptionist puts the papers down on her side of the desk.

RECEPTIONIST
(Mildly annoyed)
Thank you for filling out the form,
we'll send you more details later
today.

Orien grabs the hand of the receptionist with both of his hands. She looks incredibly disgusted by his forceful handshake.

ORIEN
No. Thank you.

Orien leaves the waiting room, leaving a disturbed receptionist.

INT. DAYTONA IRC OFFICE FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Orien is proudly strutting his way through the foyer confidently. Dirk and Whitney are on the second floor.

WHITNEY
(Unsure)
Dirk, are you sure this a good
idea?

DIRK
(Cocky)
I'm sure it's a good idea. Because
I came up with it.

WHITNEY
No, I mean, this is a worldwide
competition with some of the best
racers from other countries. Why
entrust our country's reputation to
some stranger with a driver's
license?

DIRK
(One finger up)
Trust me, I have a plan for that,
too.

The two of them go to the stairs descending down to the
first floor.

WHITNEY
Should've known this would happen.

DIRK
What?

WHITNEY
That another one quit on you.
Harvey was, what, your sixth racer?

DIRK
(Matter of fact)
Seventh, actually.

WHITNEY
You can't even hold down a driver
for longer than a few years, Dirk.
(Snarky)
I can tell the IRC's starting to
get sick of you. I don't think you
have many chances left with them.

DIRK
You would want me to get the pink
slip, huh?

WHITNEY
If you get fired, I won't have
anyone to boss around anymore.

The two reach the bottom floor.

DIRK
I'm just saying, Whitney. Have some
faith in our fellow citizens.
They're go-getters just like you
and I.

Dirk scans the foyer, trying to find someone to talk to as an
example. He sees Orien walking to the automatic sliding
doors.

DIRK
(Shouting)
Hey, young man.

Orien stops and turns around. Dirk, tailed by Whitney, go over to him.

DIRK
Are you one of the applicants for
the IGP?

ORIEN
(Confidently)
Sure am!

DIRK
(Offering hand)
Name's Dirk Kennedy. I'm an IRC
agent.
(Pointing with thumb)
And this uptight shrew is Whitney.

WHITNEY
(Curtly)
I'm his supervisor.
(Glaring at Dirk)
I also handle his paychecks.

Dirk chuckles nervously, throwing up his hands.

DIRK
(Nervous)
Hey, c'mon! I'm just trying to make
some light banter with our future
superstars!
(Claps)
So! What made you decide to sign up
for the Grand Prix?

ORIEN
(Stoked)
Being a race car driver has been a
dream of mine ever since I was a
kid! I just decided this would be
my big break, and I'm so pumped to
win the ten million!

Dirk laughs heartily, elbow bumping Whitney in the arm.
Whitney is unamused.

DIRK
Such fire! Such passion! You, my
friend, have the drive to win!
You're going to do great on the
qualifier!

Orien keeps his excited grin, but widens his eyes and calms
himself down.

ORIEN
(Disbelief)
The what?

DIRK
(Still happy)
Y'know, the qualifier.

Orien is just droning, trying to register what Dirk is saying to him. Dirk's smile fades.

DIRK
(Prompting)
The qualifier? This weekend, all applicants have to race? First place gets to be the racer in the Prix?

ORIEN
Are the cars provided for this race?

DIRK
(Shakes head)
Nope, you gotta bring your own. You do got a car, right?

ORIEN
I've never heard anything about this!

DIRK
It was on all of the TV broadcasts for the event, remember?

ORIEN
(Thinking)
Uhhhh....

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN (FLASHBACK)

Flashback to when Orien learned about the IGP. Orien is staring at the TV.

TV ANCHOR (O.S.)
-More details are online on the IRC's official website.

Orien runs upstairs to the office upstairs. The TV is still broadcasting.

TV ANCHOR (CONT'D)
 After registering, all applicants
 will have to compete in a
 qualifying race, where the winner
 gets to go on and race in the
 International Grand Prix.

BACK TO:

INT. DAYTONA IRC OFFICE FOYER

ORIEN
 -Uhh.....

DIRK
 It was also on the website? The
 same website you had to get your
 registration information from?!

CUT TO:

INT. HOME OFFICE - EVENING

Orien is on the family computer, shown scrolling through a
 section titled, "PLEASE READ BEFORE CONTINUING". He's
 scrolling past the section very quickly without reading.

ORIEN
 (Mumbling)
 Yada, yada, disclaimers and
 stuff...

He stops scrolling at the bottom, clicks the small box that
 says "I accept to the following" and then hits continue.

ORIEN
 There we go!

BACK TO:

INT. DAYTONA IRC OFFICE FOYER

Dirk leans over to Whitney.

DIRK
 (Whispering)
 If he doesn't even have the
 patience to read, he'd crash right
 on turn one.

WHITNEY
 (Singsongy)
 Already backfiriing.

Orien finally snaps back to his senses.

ORIEN

Wait! I do have my own car!

Dirk slyly shimmies away from Whitney.

DIRK

(Cheery)

Glad to hear! What kind is it?

ORIEN

(Dodging question)

You'll see.

DIRK

(To self)

Doesn't instill me with much confidence.

(To Orien)

See you Saturday!

Dirk and Whitney leave Orien, who leaves through the front doors himself.

CUT TO:

EXT. DAYTONA INTERNATIONAL SPEEDWAY - DAYS LATER

It is Saturday at around 11:30 A.M. Orien pulls up into the speedway in his real car, a blue 1994 Acura Legend Coupe. Because of the car's age, it's a little worse for wear. Rust can be seen in a couple of places, a crack can be seen on the front windshield, the headlights look a little dusty. He drives over to Dirk's location. He's on the phone with someone using his bluetooth earpiece.

DIRK

I told you, literally anybody will come to events if you promise them free food!

(Listens)

What do you mean, "Have I paid for it yet?" The free food thing was YOUR idea!

(Listens)

No no no! Sure I gave you the suggestion, but you're the one who decided to go through with it! Just-! Make it work, okay?

Dirk taps his earpiece, hanging up the call.

DIRK
(Groans)
Jesus.

Dirk turns around and sees the Acura. The window is still up, so he can't tell it's Orien in the car.

DIRK
Sorry, pal. General parking is over there.

The car window comes down, exposing Orien.

ORIEN
(Happily)
Hey, Mr. Dirk!

Dirk looks incredulously at the car.

DIRK
THIS is your car?

ORIEN
(Chip up)
Yep! It was a hand-me-down from my dad.

DIRK
(Stammering)
Well, um. What can it do?

ORIEN
It's very fa-
(Pauses)
It's pretty dura-
(Pauses)
It has some sturdy bra-
(Thinks)
It works as intended.

Dirk cranks his neck.

DIRK
Let's just see how it fares in the race.

Dirk looks inside of Orien's car and sees he's by himself. He looks around.

DIRK
Uh, you don't have anyone who came with you? Like family or friends who came to cheer you on?

ORIEN

Nope. I didn't actually tell them
that I signed up. I want it to be a
surprise if I win.

DIRK

(To self, snarky)
That's a pretty big IF.

ORIEN

Hm?

DIRK

(Coughs)
Head into the pits. Size up the
competition while you have the
time.

Orien nods, then rolls his car over to the pits

EXT. DAYTONA PITS - CONTINUOUS

Orien's car arrives in the pits. He decides to get out of
his car to size up his competition to see how hard this was
going to be for him. While strolling around, he sees a white
man with a fake tan and muscles not wearing a shirt. This is
BRODY. Brody is flexing his muscles for various women when
Orien shows up.

BRODY

Oh, hey. 'Sup, brah?

ORIEN

(Awkwardly)
What is up? B-Bro?

BRODY

(Offering fist)
'Sup, 'sup? I'm Brody, brah!

ORIEN

(Fists bumps)
Orien.

BRODY

(Amazed)
Dude, isn't that, like, a
constellation, brah?

ORIEN

Yes. Spelled different, though.
They spelled my name wrong on my
birth certificate.

BRODY
Aw, man, that must suck, bruh.

ORIEN
I actually like my name better this way. Makes me feel unique.

BRODY
(Guffaws)
That's cool, brah. Nice car.

ORIEN
Thank you.

Orien sees a white convertible behind Brody.

ORIEN
(Pointing)
Is that yours?

BRODY
Sh'yah, dude. Can't beat the classics, brah.

ORIEN
So why do you want to be in the Prix?

BRODY
(Dramatically)
No matter what brand I try, what over-the-counter meds I mix, even the hollistic junk... I can never attain the tan I want.

Orien says nothing for a few seconds. Simply blinking.

ORIEN
(Registering)
What?

BRODY
(Intense)
My spray tans, brah! I'm on a quest to find the perfect spray tan that will compliment my fine body! And once I find the one, I'll buy a lifetime supply. So that I can spend the rest of my life looking like a majestic golden baked potato.

ORIEN
Um. That's a... very cool goal.

BRODY

Hey, I'm gonna talk to some more
chicks. Catch ya on the flip side,
brah!

Brody leaves to go flex on some women. Orien shrugs and
continues to stroll through the pits to find another
competitor. He comes across a woman with a Minnesotan accent
in her 40s, MEGAN. She's standing next to a 2003 Lincoln
Aviator.

ORIEN

Hello.

MEGAN

Oh, young man. Are you for the
competition?

ORIEN

Sure am. So why're you here?

MEGAN

Got three children at home. Do you
have children, Alejandro?

ORIEN

(Offended)

My name isn't Alejandro.

MEGAN

Oh, I'm so sorry, you look like an
Alejandro to me.

Orien ignores this.

ORIEN

How old do you think I am?

Megan taps her chin, trying to think.

MEGAN

(Thinking)

Thiiiiirtyyyyyy.... four?

ORIEN

(Deadpan)

I'm only 22.

MEGAN

Oh.

ORIEN

(Moving forward)

Anyway, your reason for being here?

MEGAN

Like I said, I got three kids at home. One in high school, one in middle, one in elementary.

Megan laughs, with a little bit of a crazy tint to it.

MEGAN

You know, people always say kids are expensive, but that's an understatement. A big one.

ORIEN

(Freaked out)

Uh huh.

MEGAN

They're like little money leeches. It's always,

(Mockingly)

"Mom, I'm hungry", "Mom, I need new clothes", "Mom, the school needs a 500 dollar donation", and it just never ends. Dental expenses, medical bills.

(Spiraling)

All. The. Time. I'm starting to fear that they're gonna drive us out of the house and onto the streets.

Orien nods along. He's eyeing every possible emergency exit for him to withdraw to. Megan lets out some crazed laughter.

MEGAN

(Crazily)

Sometimes, I have dreams of just... going into their rooms while they're asleep, taking a pillow and covering their faces with it until they stop squirming and breathing.

(Deep breath)

Is that normal?

Orien nods vigorously with a fake smile on his face.

MEGAN

(Relieved laugh)

Okay, good. Because my husband said I belong in a psych ward after I told him! Isn't he just silly?

Megan laughs. Orien forces himself to laugh with her.

MEGAN
(Pointing)
That's my husband Pete over there.

Orien looks over to Pete. He has a notepad with the words
"PLEASE HELP ME" scribbled on it.

ORIEN
(Trying to end convo)
Gee, I would LOVE to just chat some
more, but uhh... I should go check
my tire gas... pressure levels.

Orien speed walks his way away from the crazed lady and her
husband.

MEGAN
(Smiling)
Alrighty. Hope we can talk again!

ORIEN
(To self)
I hope not.

Pete cries silently, reaching out for Orien to come back to
him. But Megan simply drags him off to the concessions
stand. Orien scans the area once more. He sees a man named
ALFONSO on his bike. He cheerfully rings his bike bell
towards Orien.

ORIEN
(Thinking)
A lot of weirdos here.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
Attention, all participants for the
qualifying race for the
International Grand Prix make their
way to the starting line in their
cars.

ORIEN
(Confidently, to self)
Showtime.

Orien hops in his blue Acura and makes his way to the start
line.

CUT TO:

INT. COMMUNICATIONS TOWER - MOMENTS LATER

Inside of the communications tower, Dirk and Whitney are
preparing to judge the race from up there.

DIRK
 (Smug)
 Looks like we got the best view
 here, eh Whitney?

WHITNEY
 (Unamused)
 So now we can watch this tragedy
 unfold in HD.

Dirk leans over into the microphone. He taps it with a
 finger to make sure it works.

DIRK
 (Dramatic announcer
 voice)
 Welcome to the qualifying race for
 the upcoming 2009 International
 Grand Prix! The rules are simple!

CUT TO:

EXT. OVAL TRACK - SAME TIME

The cars patiently wait to hear Dirk's announcement. The
 camera shows Brody in his white convertible, smugly
 caressing his steering wheel.

DIRK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 This race will be ten laps around
 the oval.

The camera shows Megan in her SUV, her eyes darting around
 crazily and gripping her steering wheel.

DIRK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 The winner will be the lucky car
 selected to head on over to the
 Grand Prix.

The camera shifts to Albert waiting patiently in his station
 wagon.

DIRK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 No shoving, no collisions.
 Basically, no foul play.

Orien, a little nervous, looks forward in his blue Acura.
 Dirk pauses for dramatic effect.

DIRK (V.O.)
 Is everybody ready?

CUT TO:

INT. COMMUNICATIONS TOWER - MOMENTS LATER

Dirk licks his lips before announcing the race's start.

DIRK

Go!

BACK TO:

EXT. OVAL TRACK

The cars all fly off the track. Orien slams on his gas. His engine roars, but the car doesn't move.

ORIEN

(Slamming gas pedal)

Come on, come on! Why isn't it working?!

Orien glances over at his shift stick. He forgot to switch the gear from park to drive. Orien rolls his eyes and hits the brake pedal to change his gear. He drives off to close the gap between himself and the other racers. He's lagging near the very back. For the first lap, the cars go around the oval track without incident. The second lap is the same.

CUT TO:

INT. COMMUNICATIONS TOWER

Dirk is smiling with pride. He taps on the tower soundboard with his fingertips.

DIRK

See that, Whitney? A third of the race is already over, and nothing's happened. It's okay, you can admit it.

Whitney is painting her nails.

WHITNEY

(Still focused on nails)

Admit what?

DIRK

That you're wrong.

(Whispering)

It hurts, I know.

WHITNEY

A Shakespearean tragedy never happens in the first act.

BACK TO:

EXT. OVAL TRACK

Near the front of the pack, Brody is impatiently tailgating Megan.

BRODY
(Honking horn)
C'mon! Out of the way, brah!

Megan rolls down her window and turns around to face Brody.

MEGAN
(Screaming)
Don't you DARE rush me!

BRODY
The ultimate spray tan is MINE!

Brody speeds up to beside Megan, to where the two are neck and neck. Brody lets out an ugly laugh.

MEGAN
(Angry)
Don't you dare!

BRODY
(Cackles)
Or what, dudette?

Megan lets out a primal scream as she cuts her wheel all the way to the right, slamming her minivan right into Brody's convertible. This causes a domino effect where all the cars begin to fall one by one. The entire section of the oval fills with smoke. A random man is driving his car.

RANDOM GUY
Oh my God!

He glances over to a camaro completely unaffected by the mayhem.

RANDOM GUY
That camaro didn't put his signal on.

The random guy's car gets swiped by a stray pickup truck. An old lady in a station wagon is cruising at 30 miles in the middle of the pack. The cars in front, next to, and behind her are all screeching.

OLD LADY
What's the speed limit?

Alfonso, on his bike, is pedaling quickly to avoid the cars and debris. He rings his bike bell. A tire from a car in front of him flies off and towards Alfonso. Alfonso frantically rings his bike bell in vain as the tire smashes him in the face, knocking him off his bike and into the sea of out of control vehicles.

BACK TO:

INT. COMMUNICATIONS TOWER

Dirk and Whitney are witnessing the chaos from the safety of the comms tower window. The screeching of tires and sounds of collisions can be heard from even up there. Dirk looks at the scene with dread while Whitney keeps an indifferent "I told you so" smile.

DIRK
(Breathless)
America is doomed.

Dirk stretches.

DIRK
(Resignation)
Welp, pack it in, guys. We can tell
the IRC that America can't
participate.

CUT TO:

EXT. OVAL TRACK

Orien's blue Acura is near the back, watching the chaos build up in front of him. Orien jumps and slams on his brakes to slow down enough to not fling his car right into the mayhem. He turns his wheel to try to move to the inside so he could avoid most of the carnage, but no cars are safe from the hundred-car pileup. Panicking, he closes his eyes. He sees a vision of street racing with Da Partz, the way how they had to weave through traffic and other road obstacles. Opening his eyes, Orien knows what he has to do. He begins to weave his car through the debris and cars. His car bumps up and down as he rolls over the bits of car debris, whether it be glass, a door, tire scraps or Alfonso's body rolling over in pain in the center of the storm. He turns his car left to dodge a motorcycle flying in his direction. He turns his car right to move past a drifting SUV. He turns his car right again to dodge a pickup truck being driven by a woman eating a burrito, seemingly unfazed by everything going on around her.

CUT TO:

INT. COMMUNICATIONS TOWER

Dirk is packing up his stuff, ready to leave the tower.

DIRK
(Speculative)
I wonder if Cinnabon is still
hiring.

Whitney, still scanning the mayhem, points to the cloud of smoke emanating from the crash.

WHITNEY
Dirk, look!

Dirk, already standing on the stairs down, walks back up and over to Whitney.

WHITNEY
The blue Acura!

Dirk looks over to where Whitney is pointing. Orien's Acura is weaving through the maze of destroyed cars and shouting.

DIRK
Whitney, look through the
registration forms. ID the Acura.

Whitney grabs a stack of papers lying around. She flips through the applications and stops on a random file.

WHITNEY
(Tapping paper)
Here it is.
(Reading slowly)
"Orien Santiago"

DIRK
"Santiago"?
(Scratches cheek)
Where have I heard that name
before?

BACK TO:

I/E. OVAL TRACK

Orien is in his stride as he's blissfully weaving through all of the flying cars. He's driving in a zigzag formation, his own tires squealing on the concrete. Almost as he reaches the end of the chaos, the old lady's station wagon kisses the side of Orien's car near the rear, causing his car to spin.

ORIEN

Woah!

His car keeps rotating until the car screeches to the finish line. First, his headlights penetrate the smoke, then his car rolls slowly out of the chaos.

DIRK (V.O.)

Um...

(Pause)

That concludes the qualifying race.
Would Orien Santiago meet us in the
pits?

Orien closes his eyes and takes one hand off the steering wheel to pump his fist in the air.

ORIEN

(Mouthing)

Yes!

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. DAYTONA PITS - TEN MINUTES LATER

Orien is leaning against his car waiting. Dirk and Whitney approach him together. All of the cars are getting towed and a good chunk of the racers are being put in ambulances.

WHITNEY

(Quietly)

Insurance is going to have a field day with this.

Dirk cheerfully approaches Orien, patting him on the shoulder.

DIRK

(Proudly)

You did a great job out there, kid!
I never doubted you for even a second!

Whitney rolls her eyes. Dirk shakes Orien's hand. Orien's eyes are shining.

DIRK

I'm proud to say that you, my friend, are on your way to travel the world.

ORIEN

I actually made it. Thank you so much.

Dirk waves him off.

DIRK

(Modest laughing)

Don't thank me. Thank Jesus.

Orien looks over to a camera crew next to a news van in the distance.

ORIEN

Is that a camera crew?

DIRK

(Nods)

Sure is.

ORIEN
(Expectantly)
If they were recording, does that mean that was my first TV event as a racer? Am I going to be famous?

DIRK
(Flatly)
Actually, we had to tell them to nuke all the footage. Too much chaos, national embarrassment, damage control, yada yada, all that biz.

Orien sags his shoulders.

ORIEN
(Disappointed)
Oh.

DIRK
Kind of a random question, but your father's name. Does it happen to be Mateo by any chance?

ORIEN
Yeah. Mateo Santiago was my dad's name.

DIRK
(Excited)
The stock car driver?

ORIEN
(Nodding)
Mhm. I want to become a racer just to be like him!

Dirk turns over to Whitney.

DIRK
(Quietly)
I TOLD you something good would come out of this!
(Back to Orien)
The guy who won the qualifier is the son of a racer? No wonder you have that talent! I'm very honored to sponsor you.

ORIEN
"Sponsor" me?

DIRK

Yep. This qualifying race was to find who'd replace Lewis Harvey after his abrupt resignation. And since I was his agent before, that makes me your agent. A kind of an honorary thing, if that makes sense.

Dirk pokes Orien's chest.

DIRK

(Sleazy)

From here on out, you're stuck with me, kid.

Whitney taps Orien's shoulder from behind.

WHITNEY

(Whispering)

If he starts misbehaving, call me.

DIRK

(Claps)

First order of business is your crew. If you have any recs, let me know. Of course, if there's nobody, I can hire one for you.

Orien strokes his chin.

CUT TO:

INT. GRANT'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Grant is in his apartment, watching a NASCAR race. On the TV, one of the cars bumps into another one, causing the other car to tilt and crash into a third car behind them.

GRANT

(Swearing)

Why didn't you move out the way?!
You deserved that!

A knock is heard from Grant's door. He stands up and walks over to the front door and peeps through the door hole. He sees a distorted Orien where his forehead is too big. He waves through the door with a goofy smile. Grant opens the door.

GRANT

(Casually)

Oh hey, Orien.

ORIEN
(Perky)
Good day to you too, Mr. Kang.

GRANT
(Scanning Orien)
You look chipper. Did something happen?

Orien rocks in place coyly.

ORIEN
Have you been keeping up with racing news lately? Specifically about the 2009 International Grand Prix next month?

GRANT
(Waiting)
Yeah? What about it?

Orien flashes a document to Grant. It's Orien's official confirmation saying he'll be the American racer in the IGP.

ORIEN
Guess who's going to be traveling the world soon?

GRANT
(Laughs)
That's awesome! This is, like, a dream come true for you!

ORIEN
I know, pinch me! I must be dreaming.

Grant goes to pinch Orien, but he backs off.

ORIEN
No, don't actually.

GRANT
So did you come here just to tell me the good news?

ORIEN
Actually, there's another reason I came. They asked me if I wanted to make a custom request for a pit crew, and...

Orien looks down, kicking the ground a bit. Grant patiently waits with his eyebrows raised.

ORIEN
(Serious)
I want you to be my crew chief.

Grant's eyes widen in shock.

GRANT
Me?

ORIEN
Yes, you.

GRANT
(Unsure)
SHouldn't you ask someone with
professional experience? Or
qualifications?

ORIEN
Look. I know two things about you:
You watch a lot of NASCAR and
you're a know-it-all. That's all
the qualifcation you need.

GRANT
I don't know...

ORIEN
It's also going to get lonely going
around the world by myself. I want
my friends to be by my side when I
do it.

Grant mulls over the idea to himself. After a while, he
nods.

GRANT
(Consenting)
Alright. I'll do it.

They high five each other.

GRANT
Anyone else you're thinking for the
crew?

CUT TO:

INT. TEAGAN'S TINKERERS

Orien heads inside of Teagan's Tinkerers, the auto shop
Parker works at. He walks over to the register, where
Parker's father PHIL eating a bacon, egg and cheese
sandwich.

ORIEN
(Waving)
Hey, Mr. Teagan.

Phil looks up from his sandwich and swallows the bite he was chewing.

PHIL
Oh. How are you, Orien?

ORIEN
Is Parker here?

Phil points to one of the garages next to the main store/lobby area.

PHIL
She's in garage one.

He takes a bite out of his sandwich again.

PHIL
(Chewing)
She's under a Ford Fiesta right now.

ORIEN
(Finger guns)
Got it. Thank you.

Orien walks over to the garage area where all the mechanics are all at work. Orien sees a pair of legs under a gray 2006 Ford Fiesta. Orien knocks on the car hood.

ORIEN
Knock knock. Paaaarkeeeer.

Parker rolls from under the car on her creeper. Her face and body are covered by splotches of oil.

PARKER
Hey, Ryan.

ORIEN
Are you busy right now?

PARKER
(Impatiently)
Yes, very.

A loud rattling sound comes from under the car. Parker leans under it and sees the catalytic converter fell off. Parker quickly emerges from under the car back up to Orien.

PARKER
(Panicked)
Actually, my schedule just opened
up!

ORIEN
(Pointing)
Shouldn't you try to fix that?

PARKER
(Dismissive)
I'll just tell the customer it was
already broken.

Parker sits up on the creeper.

PARKER
What's up?

ORIEN
(Showing paper)
Check it.

Parker leans in to read Orien's paper. She claps rapidly for
him.

PARKER
(Gushing)
Oh my God! Ryan, I'm so happy for
you!

ORIEN
I know! Awesome, right?

Orien bends his legs to look Parker on eye level.

ORIEN
I have a proposition for you: I was
asked to gather a pit crew, and
there's only one person I trust to
fill that role.

PARKER
(Touched)
Ryan, I...

Parker can only stutter as she tries to find the words.

ORIEN
(Persuading)
Trust me. I've never been more sure
of anything. Imagine: Us traveling
the world, trying different foods,
seeing all sorts of sights.

PARKER

So am I going to be working with
other crew members.

ORIEN

(Shakes head)

Nope. You're all the pit crew I
need.

PARKER

(Nervous)

Wait, so I'm the ONLY crew member?
Do you really think I could do
that?

ORIEN

I KNOW you can do it. You're the
best mechanic I know. You, Grant,
and I? We'll be unstoppable.

(Expectantly)

What do you say?

Parker closes her eyes and looks up at the ceiling.

PARKER

(Quiet laugh)

You've told me some crazy ideas
over the years, but this... this
has to be the craziest.

ORIEN

(Wagging finger)

Don't forget: A lot of the world's
craziest ideas ended up being the
most revolutionary.

PARKER

Okay. If you're confident, so am I.

They fist bump. Parker lays back down on her creeper.

PARKER

Now if you'll excuse me, I have a
story to fabricate.

Orien turns around and leaves the auto shop through an open
garage door.

CUT TO:

INT. ORIEN'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Orien opens the front door to his living room.

ORIEN
 (Sniffs)
 Something smells good in here.

Orien looks up and sees Rio strutting and waltzing around the kitchen, cooking some chicken breasts on a skillet.

RIO
 (Singing to self)
 Hubo una vez un gran Rey que tenía
 muchas tierras, un castillo y
 también un amor. Pero los caprichos
 de ese amor con el tiempo sin
 castillo y sin tierras lo dejó.

ORIEN
 (Disbelief)
 ...Mama?

Rio looks up and sees Orien's home.

RIO
 Oh, you're home.
 (Puts spice down)
 I was just making some dinner.

ORIEN
 You're walking.

RIO
 (Slightly offended)
 Isn't that normal? Most people
 walk.

ORIEN
 (Confused)
 You're... not in pain?

RIO
 I feel great! Dialysis worked
 wonders on my ankles!

Rio does a little dance in place, showing how much better her ankles feel.

RIO
 (Wistfully)
 Me siento como una mujer nueva.

ORIEN
 (Remembering)
 Oh, right. Your first day of
 treatment was today.

Orien trudges over to his sofa and plops down in it. Rio, concerned, sits next to him.

RIO
What's going on?

ORIEN
(Deep breath)
Mom, I have some exciting news.

Rio places an arm on his.

ORIEN
The IRC is holding an international street circuit tournament beginning next month. There was a qualifying race for it and... I won.

Orien pauses for another moment, then looks up at Rio.

ORIEN
If I win, I get ten million dollars. Then our money troubles, living check by check, all of that will be over! We can finally be stable!

Rio isn't smiling. She's playing with her fingers. Orien's excitement fades when he sees his mother isn't sharing his joy.

ORIEN
You're... not proud of me.

RIO
I am, but... There's no guarantee that you WILL win.

ORIEN
(Defensive)
But if I win-

RIO
(Sternly)
And if you don't?

Orien stays silent.

RIO
(Softens)
I'd hate to see you travel the world and come back home empty-handed. Give me a week or two, and I'll be well enough to work again.

Rio grabs Orien's hand and clasps it with her own.

RIO
We can figure this out together.

Orien gently removes her hands from this.

ORIEN
(Gently)
No, the last thing I want you to do
is push yourself too hard. Take it
easy.

RIO
I know, but-

ORIEN
(Desperately)
Mama, this could be the big break I
need. I have the chance to get my
career started and we won't have to
worry about money ever again.
(Pause)
Mama, please.

Rio bites her lip, not knowing what to say to Orien next.
After a while, she silently nods.

RIO
You're an adult. You make your own
choices. All I can do is give you
my advice.
(Stands up)
I won't stop you.

Rio walks over to the kitchen again.

RIO (CONT'D)
(Moving forward)
Let's get to this chicken breast
before it gets cold.

Orien turns around on the sofa.

ORIEN
Don't worry. I'll get you a
souvenir.

RIO
(Scoffs)
Just A souvenir? Orien, I have a
whole list of things I want.

ORIEN
(Laughs)
Mama, you know I'm still broke.

RIO
Then steal them.

ORIEN
We have time to figure it out.

Orien walks over to the kitchen and prepares himself a plate.

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF ACT THREE