

Daytona Beach, Florida, USA - 1994

Orien Santiago & Parker Teagan - 7 years old

15 years before the International Grand Prix

Phil Teagan owned his auto repair shop in Daytona Beach ever since his father retired at the elderly age of 65. His father left him with the business and enough money to run it well.

Teagan's Tinkerers was said to be owned by Phil's grandfather during the days of the Model T and when Daytona's racing scene was still in its infancy. The shop kept in touch with its history, having photos, parts, and sometimes replicas detailing the history of the motor car. Phil, being in his late 20s now, was practically born with a wrench in his hand and loved talking cars as much as he did working on them. In terms of employees, Phil had very few friends, helping out around the shop whenever they could. His only permanent "employee" was his 7-year-old daughter Parker. Parker's mom was a waitress at the local diner and was always on her feet. She was never the most maternal, leaving Parker with Phil for hours at a time. Parker, naturally, grew up around cars just like he did. He mostly talked her through stuff verbally considering she was a small child and letting her near a lot of the parts was too risky, but he made sure she had her own area in the workshop and a little red toolkit all to herself.

But one thing Phil was always scared of was Parker's social development. Due to being a family business, she had to be homeschooled. Parker would hide behind the counter whenever a customer would try to interact with her, or she would go out the back and wait it out until the customer would leave. The back was Phil's personal office, having his computer and other tools he needed for management. Parker had a little toy box full of diecast cars and books that she would read and play with.

One day during his lunch break, he would sip on his coffee and watch Parker lounge around in his office. She was yanking off one of the wheels on her Hot Wheels toy, having a tiny pile of spares on the floor. She was chewing a piece of gum and spit it out to stick onto the spare wheel. She stuck the wheel back on, and started driving the car into the wall. She looked happy, but not as much as she could be. Phil wanted her to be comfortable talking to another person, but he knows she'll just run or hide.

Phil heard a car engine park outside of the garage. After he finished his sandwich and coffee, he went outside and saw Mateo Santiago, a regular and friend of his.

"Mateo. It's good to see a friendly face." Phil greeted Mateo, approaching him. Phil liked working with Mateo seeing as how he's an ex-racer from Puerto Rico.

"Hola, Phil. You look well today."

"I'm doing fine, thanks. How's your car?"

"Not sure. It's been making some weird noises. I think something's wrong with the brakes."

Phil nodded confidently. "You know I'm gonna take good care of you, Mateo." He then looked down at Mateo's legs. At his feet was a young latino boy around Parker's age. He glanced up at Phil with big ol' eyes.

"Who's the kid?" Phil asked, pointing.

"Oh, this is my son, Orien. Sorry, Rio's out running errands in Orlando and she can't watch him, so I brought him along."

Phil crouched down to Orien's height. He extended a fist for him to bump. "Hey, little man."

"Wassup?" Orien bumped. Phil chuckled. The kid was already a bit of a charmer.

“So, how ‘bout you roll this car in here and I can take a look at ‘er for you?” Phil asked, turning back to Mateo.

“Sounds good.” Mateo took his car inside the shop and rolled it into the main work area, Phil following behind.

As Phil looked over at the engine, he glanced over at the counter. Orien was in the customer waiting area, dangling his feet over the chair he was sitting in. He looked so bored as he traced his finger alongside the rim of the chair. He saw a pair of tiny fingers clutching onto the counter. Parker was on her tiptoes, staring at the boy from the safety of her counter. This gave him an idea.

“Mateo, does little Orien have any food or drink allergies?”

“No, none that we know of.” Mateo replied nonchalantly, leaning against the Toyota Corolla’s rear passenger door. Phil leaned out of the door.

“Hey, Parks!” He called. The tiny fingers clutched the counter harder.

Parker peeked over the counter and stared at her father.

“Look in the fridge and you’ll see some juice boxes. Grab two of them for me.”

Parker did just as her father commanded. She walked over to Phil and Mateo with a juice box in each hand.

“No, not for us,” Phil shook his head, then pointed at Orien. “One for you, and one of him.”

Parker’s eyes widened. She glanced at Orien, who was still playing with his dangling feet. She then looked back at Phil, who gave her a simple smiling shrug. Hesitantly, she trudged over to where Orien was sitting. She could feel her face getting red and her eyes averting as she offered him a juice box.

“Thanks!” Orien snatched the juice box from her hands. Like a knife, he jabbed the straw through the little silver foil at the top. Parker leaped up into the chair next to him, placing her palms on her knees. After basically inhaling the juice, he turned to Parker. A little bit of apple juice dribbled down his chin. “I’m Orien, what’s your name?”

“Parker.” She squeaked cautiously.

“Cool name.” He complimented. “So, do you like cars?”

“Yeah. Do you?”

“I LOVE cars! Wanna see the toy I brought?” He asked, practically bouncing with excitement.

“Sure.” Parker accepted, smiling slightly. Orien hopped off the chair and went into the Corolla’s backseat. With both hands, he brought out a replica of a NASCAR stock car.

“It’s like really cool, it came with action figures. You can even change the tires on it, but I lost the pit crew.”

Parker looked at the tires on the toy car. She recognized the size and color of the bolts. They matched the tools in her box. She remembered it used to go to another toy Phil had, but he lost it somewhere, so she just had the toolbox.

“I think I have the pit crew set.”

“You do?” Orien lit up.

“Yeah, follow me.” Parker volunteered. The two of them entered Phil’s office and Parker grabbed her toolkit. Orien plopped the car down on the carpeted floor with one hand clawing the roof of the toy car. He began making noises with his mouth.

“Watch out, Orien Santiago is in the lead!” He announced in a deep voice. He made the car swerve on the floor. “Oh no! One of his tires is about to pop! What do we do?!”

Parker readied a tiny little drill. “Don’t worry! Pit crew expert Parker Teagan is at the rescue!”

Orien stopped his car by Parker’s knees. She took the tiny drill and pressed it against the bolts on the tires, causing them to pop up. One by one, she replaced the tires, pushing the bolts back in with the drill.

“Thanks! Now I’m back in the race!” Orien grumbled in his disguised voice, driving the car into the distance. He and Parker high-fived each other.

“You know, this was pretty fun.” Orien sighed with satisfaction.

“What game should we play next, Ryan?”

Orien froze in place. His eyes drifted to their corners. “What did you call me?”

“Ryan.” Parker said innocently.

“My name’s *Orien*.”

“I know, that’s what I said.”

“No, you said *Ryan*. My name is **Orien**. Literally, just add an O to the front of it.”

Parker thought to herself. She then looked back at Orien with a cheeky grin. “That’s too complicated, can I just call you Ryan?”

Orien looked up to the ceiling. “Y’know what, fine.”

Orien and Parker played the rest of the day away. Phil glanced through his office window from the driver’s seat of the car with pride. Parker finally found herself her very first friend.