

Orien was surprised when he received a random invitation that slid underneath his hotel room, inviting him to a bakery in London near the Tower Bridge. The invitation didn't have a sender listed, which was strange and made him a little wary. Still, his curiosity overpowered his wariness and he went anyway. While he had his hands in his racing suit pockets and strolling through the cloudy skies of London, gazing upon walls and walls of muted color buildings, he passed by an electronics store. On the TVs was an advertisement of some sort of English high-end clothing brand. And of course, they're sponsored by Nigel.

"The lovely people of Britain always wonder about my attire outside of my racing uniform," He said on the TV before he began to unzip his racing jacket. Underneath, he's wearing a blue business suit. The background changed to a casino filled with women and money. "I exclusively shop at Bonds, where you can expect only top-quality clothing and accessories. You can find your local bonds in many cities in not just England, but across all of the United Kingdom. If you shop at Bonds, you can *be almost* as attractive and stylish as me!" He chuckled before lifting up a wine glass to the screen, giving that same smug smile he always gives. *Scumbag*, Orien thought, kicking a pebble down the street.

When he arrived, a bell rang as he entered the quaint establishment. A neat little piano tune was playing gently over the speakers of the bakery. A TV was playing a British racing news network showing a race somewhere in Canterbury. He wasn't paying much attention. He noticed someone waving at him from a table at a distance.

"Ey, Orien! Over 'ere!" The voice, bouncy and jovial said. It was Jabari. He was sitting with Tetsuko, who looked extra bored today. Orien approached them and sat down.

"I'm guessing you're the one who invited me here." Orien said, pulling up a chair. He sat down at the table, across from Jabari and perpendicular to Tetsuko.

“You know me so well. I am flattered.” He chuckled. Orien looked over to Tetsuko.

“I thought you said you hated being friends with other racers, Tetsuko.”

“I do. It’s just that every time I kicked the invitation through the door, he just slid it back. I got tired and just decided to come to shut him up.”

“I tend to ‘ave that effect on people.” Jabari shrugged, smirking.

“So then why are we here?” Orien asked.

“Isn’t it obvious? I wanted to treat ya both. Congratulatin’ Orien on his rite a’ passage into the racin’ world, and celebratin’ Tetsuko’s first place win.”

“I didn’t win, I still tied with Thorne...” Tetsuko muttered. Jabari reached over and put a hand on her shoulder.

“I understand. You’re always wantin’ to be betta. But there ain’t no shame in learnin’ to pat yourself on the back for a good job once in a while. Sit in da moment.”

The trio of them ordered their sweets, and a waitress took their menus. Orien put both hands on the table, facing Jabari.

“Mr. Jabari, I’ve been meaning to ask you something.”

“No need for da mista.” Jabari closed his eyes and smiled, waving him off.

“Why do you race?”

Jabari shrugged happily. “I race for da sake of it.”

“You’re in the Grand Prix for fun?” Tetsuko asked, raising an eyebrow.

“Yep. It relaxes me, like a form a’ meditation for me. Da relaxation actually helps me race betta.”

The waitress returned with their desserts. Orien got a brownie tray, Jabari ordered himself a cake while Tetsuko had a giant cinnamon bun. The three kind of ate in silence as they enjoyed

their food. Orien, in the middle of one of his brownies, noticed Tetsuko had something white on the tip of her nose. Orien didn't know whether or not to speak up, but he couldn't take his eyes off of her. Tetsuko's eyes drifted up.

“What?”

“Oh, uh, it's nothing.” Orien dismissed. Tetsuko glanced over at Jabari, questioning him with her eyes. Jabari noticed too, but he was covering his mouth to hide his giggling. On the TV on the ceiling of the bakery, a talk show host was on a set with a London backdrop, with several landmarks like the London Eye, the Big Ben, and the Tower Bridge behind the host. A middle-aged man was a host.

“With the 2009 International Grand Prix reaching its fourth race right here in London, local fans and tourists have been getting very excited for the preparation. We've been seeing an increase in tourism and the economy around London and the surrounding area as a result. This week, we're joined by the Prince of British Racing himself, Nigel Thorne!”

The audience clapped rapturously as Nigel strutted on stage, smiling and waving to the fans. The way he walked truly was like royalty, like a peacock parading his feathers. As he sat down, he crossed his legs.

“Thank you for coming this afternoon, Nigel.”

“Thank you for having me.” Nigel said warmly. It sounded rehearsed, too clean.

“Now Nigel, before we begin, I'm going to sound like a broken record here, but we are truly captivated by your performance this entire Prix.”

Nigel chuckled, waving off the host. “It is really nothing. I was simply doing what I love.”

“Really, three first place finishes are nothing short of spectacular performances. That said, I heard you were only 22 years old.”

“I’ve been mistaken for younger, but yes.” Nigel joked. The crowd chuckled softly at him. Orien felt a little bit of bile rise in his throat.

“Tell me, how did you get into motorsport, anyway?” The host asked, putting a finger on his chin. Nigel leaned back, relaxing into his chair. His voice had an air of superiority and condescension as he began to speak.

“I had my first race at 16 at Thruxton Park. Won my first match. Had a perfect win record ever since then. I didn’t get the moniker ‘The Prince of British Racing’ until I was 19 at the 2006 National Circuit in Towcester, and I had won the race, the title, and a sponsorship with Bonds for winning, to which they have been my sponsor for three years and counting. That was when the media started to take notice of me, and I became the face of British Motorsport overnight. People just started calling me that and the name just kind of stuck.”

“Why not the ‘*King* of British racing’?” The host asked.

“I was too babyfaced to be declared king.” Nigel cracked, sneering at his own joke. The crowd ate that up. Some cheered, some clapped.

“Speaking of your record, I’m sure many people back at home wanted to ask you about your tie with Tetsuko Ohama in Rio. Tell me, are you afraid Tetsuko Ohama will eventually beat you?”

Nigel readjusted himself in his guest chair, sitting upward. “Why would I be afraid of her?”

“She came really close to snatching your perfect win record last race. How do you know she won’t sneak up on you, again?”

“Well, to be honest with you mate, I think the only reason people even like her is because she’s cute and mysterious. She is overhyped. Too many racing fans get caught up in the style of racers instead of their performance. Her specialty is drifting, so what? That worked out for her *once* in Rio, and that’s only because I was driving on sand, I hate sand. She’ll know her place in the next race.”

“That’s our Nigel, the epitome of British wit and charm. Now, Orien Santiago has been beginning to gain traction in the racing after a huge improvement in his performance. Tell me, has your opinion on him changed at all since New York.”

Orien paused, the fork full of brownie stopping inches away from his lips.

“Not at all. One race is hardly enough to say he ‘improved’ as a racer. All he can scrounge up in three races are local rat holes people drive by. My senile grandmother can still race better than he can.”

Orien clenched his teeth. "What a..." He hissed, slamming the fork down on the plate. He glanced at Tetsuko. Her whole body was still. Almost still. He noticed that in her hand, she held a metal fork. Her fingers were vibrating with the fork, almost trembling. The fork actually managed to bend a little between her fingers.