

“Shut up, Spider!” He looked a bit crestfallen. “Come on, you soft git, that sounds cool. Let’s get on with it.” And I started running toward the Tube, and then he was there next to me, long legs easily beating me in our race to the ticket booth.

“It’s a fucking rip-off, man, that’s what it is. Sixteen quid to go up in that thing.” He flipped his arm toward the London Eye Ferris wheel, anger fizzing through his body right down to his fingertips. We’d spent most of our money on Oxford Street on stupid sunglasses and hats and Big Macs. Sixty quid doesn’t go very far in London.

People were starting to stare at him. I suppose when you weren’t used to him, he was something to stare at: a six-foot-four black guy, ranting in the street. The queue was gawping at him, like he was a hired clown—just there for their entertainment. I thought, *They’ll start chucking coins at him in a minute.* Some of them were elbowing each other, saying things out of the corners of their mouths, laughing. Disrespectful, like Jordan had been to me.

“Forget it, then,” I said, trying to defuse the situation. “I don’t want to go on the poxy thing, anyway. Let’s go somewhere else.”

But he was off on a rant now. “Everything’s for sodding tourists in this town. What about us? What about normal people, ain’t got sixteen quid for a poncey carnival ride?” Some of his audience were starting to look uneasy, shifting slowly a bit farther away from him, exchanging worried glances.

I was enjoying their reaction now. He was shaking them up a bit.

My eyes ran along the line—yeah, they were getting pretty uncomfortable. A couple of Japanese tourists, wearing matching blue parkas, woolly hats, and gloves, glanced in our direction. In that split second it took for them to look across and look away, I clocked their numbers and got a jolt like an electric shock. They were the same. Weird, I thought, matching death dates—what were the odds? Then the actual numbers registered, like a punch to my head. 12082010. That was today. What the hell . . . ?

I looked back across at them, but Spider's antics had become too much: They'd turned their backs on us, probably hoping that we'd go away. *I must have made a mistake*, I thought. I needed to check this out. I started walking toward the queue, thinking I'd go 'round to the other side, have a look at them again. Spider didn't even notice I'd gone—I could hear him cursing away to himself, cocooned in his outrage.

The line was pretty dense. I made for a slight gap between a young guy in a tracksuit with a rucksack on his back and an old lady with a thick tweed coat on, carrying a straw bag.

“Scuse me,” I said as I walked toward the lady. I needn't have said anything, she was backing away, anyway. “Ta,” I said as I squeezed through. She smiled thinly, clutching her bag to her body, and I caught the worry in her face as our eyes briefly met. I caught her number, too, and stopped in my tracks. I stared at her, I couldn't help it. 12082010.