

Orkideh and President Invective

In "Orkideh and President Invective, Martyr!", the narrative unfolds in a dreamlike mall where two figures, Orkideh and President Invective, engage in poignant interactions. Cyrus dreams of Orkideh appearing bald yet vibrant, her expressive bushy eyebrows and oversized sunglasses creating an intriguing visage. Accompanying her, President Invective struggles to keep pace, donning a noticeably oversized blue suit, evoking both humor and discomfort.

Their stroll exposes the suffocating ambiance of corporate excess within the mall—fluorescent lights and high-end stores—contrasting sharply with Orkideh's ease and amusement, while Invective pantingly questions the purpose of their presence, revealing his discomfort in their unusual setting. As they walk, Orkideh shares memories of her first English joke, showcasing her charm and deeper reflections on identity through language, hinting at her past life in New York.

Their path leads to art, notably an encounter with the iconic Mona Lisa. While Invective revels in its beauty, Orkideh highlights the painting's historical significance, pointing out the nuances of its fame. The contrast between Invective's superficial appreciation and Orkideh's insightful perspective depicts a deeper commentary on art and culture.

Tension escalates as they reach a store featuring significant pieces of art, where Orkideh's knowledge contrasts sharply with Invective's superficiality. After revealing her interest in Bruegel's "Landscape with the Fall of Icarus," she subtly critiques its themes, causing Invective discomfort. His disdain towards the deeper narrative of struggle encapsulated by Icarus reveals his fear of being overshadowed.

The climax unfolds dramatically when Orkideh decides to purchase the Bruegel, leading to a shocking and visceral act as the cashier forcibly amputates a finger to finalize the transaction. President Invective, overwhelmed and terrified, bolts from the store, showcasing his complete detachment from the grim reality of the scene. Orkideh, uncowed and even amused, adorns her finger's stump with a handkerchief and confidently exits with the painting, maintaining her agency amidst chaos. The contrasting reactions of both characters underscore themes of fear, identity, and the nature of perception in art and experience, leaving readers questioning the implications of their actions and interactions.