

THE BASTILLE INVITATIONAL

Congratulations on your acceptance into the qualifying draw of the Bastille Invitational! It is a thirty-two-player single-elimination tournament played on red clay. Four players will earn entry into the main draw.

Qualifying check-in will take place on Wednesday, July 5, from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. Please note that if you are not checked in by the deadline, you will be replaced by an on-site alternate. Competition will begin on Thursday, July 6, with the quarterfinals taking place on Saturday, July 8.

Should you be one of the four players to qualify for the sixty-four-player main draw, Sunday, July 9, is a rest day. Competition will resume on Monday, July 10.

Enclosed in this package, you will find a rulebook along with your room assignment. One of the time-honored traditions of the Bastille Invitational is having players room together in the villas on-site. Parents/guardians and/or coaches, should you travel with one, will be housed in a separate facility. We hope you enjoy this experience and that the connections you form here will be lasting.

The winners of the 12U, 14U, and 16U singles draw will earn both USA Tennis and ITF points, as well as a possible spot at the BJK Cup. The winner of the 18U singles draw will earn a wild card into a WTA 125 tour event, as well as USA Tennis and ITF points.

We look forward to a great tournament. Please route all questions through the main office to be directed as necessary.

Aces!

Dick Duncan
Director, The Bastille Invitational

***WEDNESDAY,
JULY 5TH***

*DAY BEFORE THE
BASTILLE INVITATIONAL*

ALICE

"DID YOU MAKE IT TO THE BASTILLE?"

I am so busy staring at my bizarre surroundings that I barely hear my brother's question through the phone. I hadn't expected central Florida to look so . . . French.

"Hello? Alice? Can you hear me?" David's voice strains with tension, as though I might have simply vanished without a word.

"I'm here," I confirm, giving a wary look at the imposing wrought-iron letters that have been twisted and dropped immediately upon entrance to the campus.

Bastille.

Not *the* Bastille. Just *Bastille*.

I'd known the place would be French-like. What I did not anticipate was stepping directly into a non-French person's fantasy of what France would look like. Right down to the cobblestone paths, I am in the middle of the scene in *Beauty and the Beast* where Belle insults everyone around her and visits the library in a town where no one else reads.

“We’re so proud of you. I hope you know that.”

My older brother clears his throat, surely giving himself more time to think of things to say as I wander through plaza after plaza of villas, each with a different Joan of Arc fountain in its center.

They’re not called dorms here, these villages of miniature structures that burst out in all directions from their central gathering point. Each house in this plaza, marked *Place de la Concorde*, has four doors, all painted pale blue to contrast with the pinkish color of the building itself. The upper-level rooms have tiny balconies out back, the villas cleverly arranged so that they open into tall cypresses and other green shrubbery instead of each other. It gives the illusion of privacy, even as the buildings are crammed so close together you can nearly span the distance between them with your hands.

I’m accustomed to the dense housing of an urban environment, with San Francisco’s mere forty-seven square miles housing nearly a million people, but the number of players Bastille is able to squeeze into these little villages is impressive even to me.

I shift the strap on my shoulder, thinking of the hot-pink sleeping bag inside the bag I’m carrying. Surely the color alone will mark me as an outsider here—a kid’s color—borrowed from the little sister of one of David’s friends. I see a few players towing carts of proper bedding from their cars, apparently unsatisfied at the prospect of living the actual camp experience. Everyone here moves with such assurance of where they’re going and what they’re doing.

I'm stalling.

Finding my assigned villa will lead to my going inside, which will lead to making this entire thing real. As it is now, I am simply a visitor, wandering the grounds in admiration.

My eye snags on a familiar face. With thick, glossy brown hair and a smile that would make dentists weep with joy, Violetta Masuda is unmistakable. So is the man next to her—with the wavy blond hair and dimples that vaulted him onto posters across America, it's Cooper Nelsen. He was once considered "the next big thing" in American men's tennis, until multiple knee injuries forced an early retirement.

So this is where he ended up.

They turn my way and, without thinking, I fling myself behind the closest Joan of Arc. Here, she is spitting gracefully into a concrete basin while proudly holding the French flag. In this sculpture, unlike the painting that clearly inspired it, her breasts are covered. It's perhaps the one detail that finally pulls me back to the reality of the moment.

Crouched behind a fountain with sweat trickling down my back and into my pants, I am hiding from people who have no idea I exist. From my low post, I have an almost unobstructed view of them. It's clear they are close by the way they interact, easy bumps and touches without hesitation—like they've had a lifetime of knowing each other. Funny then that he's never made an appearance on her social media.

I'm so immersed in watching them that I forget I still have my phone held to my ear, David waiting for me on the line.

"Alice? Are you still there?" he asks.

I grunt my agreement, not wanting to draw the attention of those crossing the plaza—this one marked *Place du Capitole*. No one seems to even look at the trees or the statues around them as they scurry to their villas. Perhaps they have all been here before.

“How are your hands?” David asks. “Did they survive the flight?”

I flex my left hand, watching each finger stretch out in front of me, pretending I don’t know what he’s really asking. In spite of his teasing tone, I know there’s worry behind his question. “Present and accounted for.”

He lets my sarcasm go without a response. He never used to do that.

I watch Violetta and Cooper hug goodbye, her arms lingering just a fraction longer than his, then stand and stretch my legs with relief once they’re out of sight. My entire body is slick with sweat, my curly hair uncomfortably plastered to the back of my neck and my phone screen fogged from my body heat.

“Listen,” David continues, not bothering to ask my permission for this unsolicited pep talk. “I know this is scary, but you can do this. We believe in you. You’re going to be great and we’ll be cheering you on the whole way.”

We. He keeps using the plural pronoun, as if he speaks for the rest of the family.

I drag a finger through the water in the fountain, hoping it might cool my body and therefore my mind. But it’s warm, like everything else here.

“Is Ma there?” I ask.

David awkwardly clears his throat. “She just stepped out to run some errands. She wanted to talk to you, I know she did. She’s

just busy with it being summer and all. You know how it is, people wanting their houses deep cleaned while they're on vacation. I'm sure she'll call you when she can."

A cloud passes over and temporarily darkens the sky and I wonder if it's a sign David is lying, like a penance for trying to keep light where there should be none. He's always been the upbeat one, cracking jokes and prying smiles even from the grim lips of Ahma, who smiles less now than she did in the *before*.

I hear David's faint breath through the receiver and I wish I could extend this conversation, maybe forever—anything to keep me from having to actually find my villa and go inside. But David and I have nothing else to talk about; nothing except the one thing we *never* talk about.

"How's the weather down there? You have everything you need? Have you met your roommates yet?" His voice is brimming with false cheer.

I wander into Place de l'Étoile, where another Joan of Arc fountain awaits, this one of her in full armored glory and wielding a sword. Instead of Joan herself spitting water, this one spouts out the tip of the sword. I wish my villa was in this plaza—I could use a battle-ready Joan of Arc on my side. Instead, I'm like the Joan in the previous courtyard, all soft and vulnerable and exposed to the elements, spitting water uselessly while the troops around me fight.

Yeah, yeah, she's an inspiration or whatever. I'm tired of being inspirational.

"It's a thousand degrees and the air is so muggy I could squeeze it for drinking water," I reply, checking the temperature of this fountain's water. It, too, is warm.

“You pack your hand sanitizer?” he asks.

He’s trying so hard. I can almost *feel* his effort through the phone. But no matter how hard he tries, he can’t replace what I’ve lost.

“I’ll be fine,” I reassure him. It’s comforting to know I still have the ability to lie.

“I just don’t want you to get sick,” he frets. “Who knows what kind of germs you’re touching? It’s *Florida*.”

I almost let out a snort of laughter, but I don’t want to let him off so easily. His questions aren’t about Florida any more than they are about germs. But if he won’t simply come out and say it, neither will I. I’m tired of being the only one who refuses to pretend everything is okay.

We are not okay. *I* am not okay.

“I’d better go.” The unfinished parts of my sentence stick in my throat, grasping for air I’m unable to give.

“Give ’em hell, Alice.”