

It was 1986 when, with the conclusion of their night schooling, Mr Ezinwa Chukwu and Mr Josek Abramowicz were granted their accountancy accreditations. In those days, the *City of London Polytechnic* was most unaccommodating to immigrants; a student who spoke only Pidgin English was, as the professors resolved by way of unanimity, "wholly backward, indeed." And so, while Ezi and Josek certainly enunciated poorly—comprehended miserably—there was no, what we might call nowadays, 'support' for our two foreigners.

But they were entrepreneurially driven and mathematically competent; thus, within two years of their graduation, *E&J Accountants* sprang up on a dual carriageway in Hayes, West London. The Ashkenazi Jew, always in his patterned bow tie; the Nigerian African, his trilby hat.

Little consideration was ever given to the office's furnishings: a (formerly) white sofa was scavenged from a local skip, two aluminium desks donated from a neighbouring deli's back-of-house, and a map of Israel (Mr Abramowicz had, at one time, hung the 'piece' in his apartment) found itself Blu-Tack'd lopsidedly to one of the smoke-stained, stucco walls. From the first, miscellaneous papers piled up on every available surface. Henceforth—well, from 1989, to be exact—business did, remarkably, boom for the gents. The two became, to an emerging class of Pakistani shopkeepers, the go-to for "de number business, isn't it."

In 2001, Ezi's son Prince conceived a child with Jo's daughter Ella. (All a bit incestuous, if you ask me.) Nonetheless, that rarest of breeds—a Nigerian Jew—was born: Eliza Chukwu-Abramowicz, at Hillingdon Hospital, 21 February 2002. As she grew, there developed a rambunctious sort, a 'wild child', tattooed and pierced: a burgeoning Indie Rock singer. This—one of my rather more peculiar tales, I admit—is an account of the 22-year-old's most recent visit to *E&J Accountants*, August 2024.

The *TR-808*'s bass drum deafened Eliza as her AirPods crooned (in autotune, of course):

*"She's a different breed, made her my favourite hoe. I got a house everywhere, but I ain't got a favourite home."* Ms. Chukwu-Abramowicz, our mixed-race, *Carhartt*-dungaree-garbed heroine—the walking, talking result of progressivism *vis-à-vis le boudoir*—mentally noted her tolerance for illiberalism (only if the rapper raps it right, mind you), as she stepped off the SL8 bus, an unlit rollup clenched between glossed lips.

"So now we are smoking? Oy... Of all the *farkakteh*, no good..."

Utterly beside himself was Grandpa Josek, checked shirt perfectly tucked—there to guarantee Eliza's bloomin' safety, he was! The old man snatched the rollup from Eliza's glossed lips and raised his hand in a mock pre-slap windup motion. And were there an antonym for 'flinch'—well, I'd use it; indeed, she looked ready to sock the old man.

"I love you too, Grandpa. But please stop meeting me at bus stops."

"And have my granddaughter be groomed? There are many groomers about, you know!"

"Groomers?" She couldn't help but laugh.

"Oh yes! And racists!" He regarded her smile oddly. "Perhaps antisemites! This I read in *Financial Times*!"

Eliza was hungover. And, as Grandpa Josek continued his sanctimonious waffling—*Priuses* honking intermittently—Eliza's mind, quite naturally, drifted to the debauched origins of her current worse-for-wear. She had, but ten hours prior, been sniffing ketamine with a flamingo-looking white boy; the two had talked candidly, intimately, betwixt the bricks of a North

London house party. It was the kind of home that televisual journalist parents might own. Lots of unread hardbacks; speakers in the ceiling, chorizo in the fridge.

“Music has become so corporate,” said the flamingo, studying Eliza’s every facial tick.

“What kind of stuff you into?”

The skinny boy thought long and hard. “Mostly New York Drill.”

“Okay,” Eliza elongated the ay. “I was fucked up when Pop Smoke died.”

“I felt that loss.”

“Really shaped me as an artist.”

“You spit?” The young man could hardly contain his excitement.

“All black people rap, huh?” She was flirting.

“Well, I don’t season my food.”

The two then sniffed another key—but Eliza was no dummy; she had even read some Veblen:

*“Abstention from labour is the conventional evidence of wealth and is therefore the conventional mark of social standing.”*

Flamingo boy in the *Trapstar* hoodie was so leisure-class coded. But Eliza was bound, *a posteriori*, to fuck him anyway.

Presently, Mr. Chukwu sat in the office smoking a machine-rolled cigar, unable to focus on the paperwork in front of him; such was his anticipatory excitement. (His granddaughter had, from the first, been “a blessing from Jesus Christ almighty.”) Laying his *King Edward Imperial* cigar against the edge of its box, he eyed the printed portrait of the monarch—Ezinwa too had royal blood, you see: he was a direct descendant of Eshugbayi Eleko, the once King of Lagos. In 1912, the monarch had visited Parliament to discuss a Water Rate Bill and—after considerable petulant insistence (!!!)—he was begrudgingly granted a meeting with Prime Minister Asquith.

“The Prime Minister will see you shortly,” squawked an effeminate aide, desperate to calm the Nigerian. “In the meantime, a refreshment?”

“One a dem Mr. R. White’s ginger beer. Hurry now, slave.” The King clapped his hands.

As the pink-cheeked assistant departed with an unnoticed rolling of his eyes, Eshugbayi, full of that uniquely Nigerian masculine pride, stood and admired his reflection within the giltwood-framed mirror. The white Carrara marble fireplace, the button-tufted leather armchairs of forest green, the crystal chandelier—its glorious illumination caught on perfectly polished oak wainscoting: none of it was good enough for our dark-skinned demigod.

The door creaked ajar; and before the King could even begin to unsour his face, the Prime Minister spoke, saccharine and disingenuous:

“I see now an apology is in order, Your Highness. You ought never have been kept amongst such... tired surroundings.”

But before the King could hasten a reply, the aide burst back in (sans ginger beer).

“The Jews *are* striking, sir. The garment district’s gone completely hurly burly.”

“Bloody, avaricious...” And just like that, the Rt. Hon. Asquith had vanished.

Though the accountant’s historical fancy was not without degrees of veracity, he knew well enough that Josek regarded it “a load of old bollocks”—a source of much chagrin for the Nigerian. And so, when the old Jew arrived, questioning mockingly the intruded-upon daydream, he claimed to have been crunching a client’s numbers.

“So use a calculator,” harrumphed Josek. “Enough now anyway; granddaughter is here.”

Eliza sheepishly poked her head out from behind Josek, grinning like a simpleton. Grandpa Ezi took in Eliza oddly. He kissed his teeth.

"What is this?" he gestured to her septum. "We are not tribal people these days."

"I love you too, grandpa—"

"Smoking!" Josek interrupted, gesturing to Eliza.

"No!" came Ezi, rising from his chair, brushing the ash off his corduroy trousers. He limped toward Eliza (his leg had fallen asleep), arms wide—then jerked sideways, aborted the hug, and thrust a wagging finger at her nose superciliously. "It is no good to smoke, my angel. No, Eliza! No, no." He then hugged her. "You, *abebe*, must live a long and prosperous life."

And Eliza had all but dissolved into the familiar embrace when—

"Oh my god. Is that a map of Israel?"

"Of course! *Baruch Hashem al Yisrael!*" celebrated Josek, clapping his hands slightly.

"Cute," Eliza smiled, "but the optics..." Eliza searched for a way to not hurt her grandfather.

"The optics?"

"You could upset someone," she tried.

"Upset someone?"

"Grandpa..." She knew he knew.

"Who is upset?"

"Maybe I'm a little upset." Eliza touched her nose ring.

"You are a Jew!" He again clapped, though this time bitterly.

"We're from Poland, Grandpa!"

"Vey iz mir..."

The Prime Minister, overwrought, wheeled to face the Chancellor. "For God's sake, man—something sensible!"

"It was Marlowe who put it best—"

"Marlowe?!" Asquith deflated into his Morris & Co. back cushion. "Are you quite finished?"

"Quite," replied Mr. Lloyd George, adjusting his cuffs smugly.

The Prime Minister stood. "Plainly Europe can't stomach them, yet here they remain. What is to be done? Peaceful, inexpensive solutions—" he puffed his *King Edward Imperial* cigar, "not *Jew of Malta* theatrics..."

"I rather like the Jews!" chirped Viscount Grey.

"Indeed, they are, largely, an agreeable bunch," came McKenna.

The Chancellor cleared his throat. "Parenthetically," said Lloyd George, raising his hand to silence McKenna's next 'brilliant insight,' "might I ask, Prime Minister, however did that Water Rate Bill resolve with your... African potentate?"

"Gosh," sighed the Prime Minister, "a day of Hebrews and Negroes..." Asquith once again puffed his great stogie.

Beside her, Eliza's cracked iPhone screen lit up atop the sofa's arm. Talk of Middle Eastern borders had long ceased. Only the guttural slurps of milky tea abode. The WhatsApp read:

*Flamingo: hard rn.*

Expressing total satiation with only a deep breath, Josek then bellowed "you know, Eliza, one day..." he gestured to his surroundings cartoonishly, "this will all be yours."