

BRING US NINA

"Pilot"

Written by

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INT. WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - DAY

OPEN ON a large desk - walnut, imposing. A plush chair is turned towards a massive window, looking out on the manicured lawns of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. We're in the seat of power.

The chair swivels around, revealing a WOMAN in her mid-30's. She certainly doesn't look like the President - ruffled suit, hair straining against a scrunchie - but she's so magnetic we sort of just go with it. She starts to sing, with feeling.

WOMAN

*The name on everybody's lips is
gonna be: Nina. The lady rakin' in -*

The door swings open. A young, irritable AIDE interrupts.

AIDE

You fix it yet?

NINA

Uh-huh!

She immediately scrambles, hiding under the desk. She grabs a stray cable and snaps it in to place.

NINA (CONT'D)

Yep. Shouldn't give him any more
trouble. Just give it a quick try -

She turns the desktop on. We see a CNN BROADCAST on mute: an aerial helicopter shot of a cornfield. Written in the corn, like a crop circle, is an ominous message: **"BRING US NINA"**.

AIDE

Turn it up.

We start to hear pundits' commentary when Nina's I.T. MANAGER knocks on the door -

I.T. MANAGER

Nina.

She whips her head around, speechless.

I.T. MANAGER (CONT'D)

We need you.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - WEST WING HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

A young STAFFER tries to organize an unruly crowd of women, lining the hallway with shitty folding chairs.

STAFFER

Nina...Fremont. Nina Fremont?

WOMAN #1

I think she went to the bathroom.

WE FOLLOW Nina and her manager as they pass. Nina rubbernecks.

NINA

What's going on?

I.T. MANAGER

In here.

He pulls her in to a tiny door hidden in the beige hallway. As she heads in, she hears -

ADVISOR (O.S.)

Right this way, Mr. President.

Nina turns. The severely handsome PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES rounds the corner in SLOW-MO. Nina melts, head over heels. They're about to lock eyes, when she's YANKED in to -

INT. WHITE HOUSE - CONTROL CENTER - DAY

The temperature drops ten degrees. This is the heart of all things digital at the White House: cramped, crowded and... weirdly damp. I.T. PERSONNEL hunch over their tiny monitors.

I.T. MANAGER

We're uploading a shit ton of video. Hours of it. Can you make sure it gets over to Oval?

NINA

Is this about the cornfield? What was that?

They reach her desk. He pulls up a live feed, an INTERVIEW:

VOICE (O.S.)

State your name and occupation.

TRASHY JERSEY GIRL

Nina Caputo, and I'm a hair extension aah-tist.

Back to Nina, stunned.

NINA

They're looking for Nina.

I.T. MANAGER

I know you cover West Wing, so -

NINA

I'm a Nina!

I.T. MANAGER

So I need you to keep it cool, ok?

VOICE (O.S.)

Have you had any experiences with
extra-terrestrial contact?

Nina gasps, then off his look, covers her mouth.

NINA

Cool. Yeah. Keep it cool. All good.

He walks away, eyeing her. After a beat, she silently screams
"OH MY GOD!" A viscerally gross coworker, WESLEY, sidles up.

WESLEY

So when are they gonna beam you up?

She covers, settling in at her desk.

NINA

I have a very important *task*, okay
Wesley? So I'm busy.

WESLEY

I bet they're looking for you.

She looks at him - it's so hard to keep this one secret.

NINA

I...don't know what you mean.

WESLEY

C'mon. Nina who works at the White
House, who works for the
President's office? Why not?

She can't resist -

NINA

Do you really think so?

Wesley bursts out laughing. His laugh is the worst.

WESLEY

Ohhhhh, man. Oh, that's good.
You're even crazier than I thought!

NINA

(beet-red, mortified)
Get out of here! I have work to do!

Still laughing, Wesley produces his phone.

WESLEY

Okay, but seriously, I do need to show you something. It's important.

Annoyed, she takes his phone, only to find HERSELF pulled up on YOUTUBE: "THE VOICE AUDITION - NINA GAFFNEY."

NINA (ON-SCREEN)

Hey guys, Nina here! Today I'll be singing "All I Ask of You" from Andrew Lloyd Webber's smash hit -

She throws the phone at him.

NINA (CONT'D)

Why are you like this?!

WESLEY

You make it so easy. How could I not be?

Wesley exits, cracking himself up. Nina buries her head in her hands, mortified, as we PRE-LAP "All I Ask of You".

INT. METRO BUS - EVENING

The lush opening strings score Nina's bus ride home. They pass a mass of PROTESTORS holding up signs like "TELL THE TRUTH" and "WE ARE NOT ALONE!" Then, a big one: "NINA WILL SAVE US." She stares out the window, wanting to believe.

INT. NINA'S SAD APARTMENT - NIGHT

The Webber continues, now on Nina's stereo. She clutches a jug of Carlo Rossi. It's the big finale, and she's trashed.

NINA

(singing)

ANYWHEEEERE YOU GO, let me go too.

She's belting her heart out to a unseen framed picture.

NINA (CONT'D)

Love me. That's all I ask of you.

The song ends. She kisses the picture. As she hangs it back up over her bed, we see it's a headshot of the President. She looks around - drunk, a little sad, with nothing to do.

NEWSCASTER (V.O.)

There are still numerous questions surrounding the pair of messages -

She sits up like a shot, turning to the TV. A breaking news bulletin reads: "NEW MESSAGE RAISES MORE QUESTIONS" In a different cornfield, the message blazes: "**THE VOICE**".

NINA
"The Voice"...

It dawns across her face - first confusion, then euphoria, then determination, then she barfs.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - CONTROL CENTER - NIGHT

ON A SCREEN we see Nina set up a recording, then stumble off-camera. She re-enters, attempting a slow saunter. She's going for coy, but it's just kind of aggressive.

NINA
Well, hello. My name's Nina. Nina Gaffney. You may not have heard of me yet, although I *imagine* you will soon. Some of you might think I'm just "the computer girl" or, or "the internet lady" or whatever little gadget's got you down. *But* I know something you *don't*. A secret. A little secret I'd like to share with you, which is...
(Vegas comedian)
Usually when it freezes, you just gotta restart it.

A single dry laugh.

NINA (CONT'D)
No but seriously. Seriously folks, what I think you do need to know is I *auditioned* for *The Voice*.
(pause for effect)
...Right? RIGHT? "Bring Us *Nina*"? "The *Voice*"? Two messages, two *urgent*, unprecedented messages; one me. And while some people might not believe me, like my *Uber driver*, Janelli, I thought you should know that somebody out there -

She stops for a moment, suddenly overcome.

NINA (CONT'D)
Wants me. Needs me. Whoever they are.

She steel herself again, sort of, and walks towards camera.

NINA (CONT'D)
 And I think you need me too.
 (beat, breathy)
 Let me know.

She turns it off, then starts uploading. She rests her head on the desk as she watches, dozing off.

NINA (CONT'D)
 1%...2%...I hate this
 desk...cold...metal...

INT. NINA'S MIND - OUT OF SPACE AND TIME

Nina, radiant, glides through a pure white dreamscape.

VOICE (O.S.)
 Nina...Niiina...

NINA
 (old Hollywood)
 Who is it?

REVEAL the President, in white pajamas, on a polar bear rug.

PRESIDENT
 I'm the President of the United
 States. And this is a fur rug.

NINA
 Oh, Chris! You're so bad.

PRESIDENT
 And you're so good. At singing, I
 mean.

He snaps his fingers and a SMOOTH LISTENING TRACK comes on. The vocalist is clearly Nina.

PRESIDENT (CONT'D)
 Dance with me?

She plays coy, absolutely loving it. They begin a slow waltz.

NINA
 You're the one, Nina. You're the
 one that they want.

NINA (CONT'D)
 Why, I'm just a lowly IT girl.

PRESIDENT
 So was Edward Snowden.

NINA
 He's an enemy of the state!

PRESIDENT

But you're not. You're a hero. All
you have to do...is wake up.

Nina cocks her head, confused. He starts shaking her rapidly.

PRESIDENT (CONT'D)

Hello? Hellooo?!

She squirms as he shakes her violently, and we MATCH CUT TO -

INT. WHITE HOUSE - CONTROL CENTER - MORNING

Wesley, roughly shaking Nina, who's conked out at her desk.

WESLEY

Hello?! Jesus! You *manatee*.

With a big shove, he wakes her. She stirs, drowsy.

NINA

No. Nooo, I want to go back.

WESLEY

He's calling for you. Get your ass
over there.

NINA

Who is?

WESLEY

The President!

She freezes. Then she's gone like a bat out of hell.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - ANTECHAMBER - MORNING

Nina strides along, on cloud nine, ushered by a SECURITY
ESCORT. He recites protocol, but we can't hear him. She's
fixing her hair, confident, determined. He leads her in to -

INT. WHITE HOUSE - THE SITUATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

NINA'S POV: CABINET MEMBERS huddle in grave discussion. She
strides in, chest out proudly, waiting to be noticed. She is -
by the president's aide BERNARD. He's a young, shell-shocked
assistant, always one Xanax away from a panic attack.

BERNARD

Excuse me, who let you in here?

NINA

I'm here. I'm Nina.

BERNARD
 (confused, then-)
 Oh, thank god. With I.T.

NINA
Formerly, mhm. Do I look alright?

BERNARD
 Look, we don't have any time.

She looks ahead, preening, in her own world. The sea of people parts and, again in SLOW MOTION, she sees the President. We HEAR a BALD EAGLE "SCREEEE" as he looks up.

CHIEF OF STAFF (O.C.)
 Mr. President, we have Nina.

Nina beams. But the President turns away, shaking ANOTHER NINA's hand: tall, drop-dead gorgeous, skin like caramel.

PRESIDENT
 Ms. Kazempoor. It's an honor to meet you.

NINA KAZEMPOOR
 (oozing sensuality)
 Likewise.

Our Nina is floored. Bernard whispers frantically in her ear.

BERNARD
 You need to fix this *now*. The A/V's not working.

NINA
 I...what?

BERNARD
 Now! We're about to make first contact!

His tone is urgent, but Nina can't quite compute.

CHIEF OF STAFF
 Folks. Your attention, please.
 We're going to get started.

Bernard, panicking, shoves her forward. The President looks over, confused. She looks down sharply and shuffles to the A/V station. She's unfamiliar with the setup.

NINA
 Sorry, just...ahem. One sec here.

She fiddles - it takes much longer than it should. People start to take out their phones. The President sighs audibly. Nina could die. Then, out of nowhere -

ALIEN LEADER (V.O.)
GREETINGS.

Everyone jumps in their seats. The screen is all static.

PRESIDENT
H-hello? Can you hear us?

ALIEN LEADER (V.O.)
YOU ARE AUDIBLE, YES. I ASSUME YOU
RECEIVED OUR MESSAGES?

CHIEF OF STAFF
(to Nina, furious)
What are you doing? Get the video.

NINA
I'm try-

ALIEN LEADER (V.O.)
WE WILL NOT BE SEEN. *HAVE YOU
RECEIVED OUR MESSAGES?*

PRESIDENT
(under his breath)
Jesus Christ with this guy -

ALIEN LEADER (V.O.)
WHAT WAS THAT?

PRESIDENT
Nothing! Just that we are...*humbled*
and honored to present to you: Nina
Kazempoor, host of NPR's "Now
Global". I believe some of our
radio waves may have made their way
into your, uh, stratosphere?

NINA KAZEMPOOR
(pure radio voice)
Hello.

Silence on the other end. The President chuckles nervously.

PRESIDENT
Is this the good kind of
speechless?

ALIEN LEADER (V.O.)
SHOW HER TO ME.

PRESIDENT
I'll show you mine if you show me -

ALIEN LEADER (V.O.)
SHOW HER TO ME NOW!!!

PRESIDENT
Got it, yep, showing now -

Nina, heart racing, hits a RECORD button. The President and his trophy Nina appear on screen.

ALIEN LEADER (V.O.)
NO! NO NO NO!! WHERE IS SHE? SHE OF
THE VOICE?!

ANGLE ON Nina - she of *The Voice*.

PRESIDENT
This is - I, uh, um...
(re: hot Nina)
Have you *heard* her voice?

ALIEN LEADER (V.O.)
IT IS NOTHING LIKE OUR SUPREME'S!

PRESIDENT
Ooookay. Is this, uh - could you
tell us what she *looks* like, or?

ALIEN LEADER (V.O.)
WE KNOW HER FROM THE *VOICE*!

Back to our Nina, eyes wide, emboldened. She steps forward - for the sake of her planet.

NINA
Does she sound like...this?

Everyone whips around, aghast. She unleashes her full soprano.

NINA (CONT'D)
*Saaaay youuuuu'll stay with me, one
love, one lifetime -*

ALIEN LEADER (V.O.)
WHOOOOO IS THAT?!

Nina goes deer in the headlights, now on screen with the President. He's about to blow a gasket.

PRESIDENT
I have *absolutely* no idea.

ALIEN LEADER (V.O.)
WHO DARES TO INSULT OUR SUPREME! IT
IS THE HIGHEST OFFENSE, PUNISHABLE
BY ONLY THE MOST PAINFUL DEATH. AND
WHAT ARE THOSE CROWN MOULDINGS?!

CHIEF OF STAFF
(sotto)
What the fuck's a crown moulding?

ALIEN LEADER (V.O.)
THIS IS ALL WRONG. SHE BELONGS IN
THE PAST! ONLY IN THE PAST!!!

Nina, crouched in submission, tries to stem the fury.

NINA
Just tell us who you're looking for!

ALIEN LEADER (V.O.)
YOU.

Silence. It's unclear who he's referring to.

ALIEN LEADER (V.O.)
DEMONSTRATE.

WE HEAR another ALIEN whimpering over the speaker, terrified.

ALIEN LEADER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
YOU KNOW MY FAVORITE.

ALIEN #2
(voice cracking)
BIRDS FLYING HIGH. YOU KNOW HOW I
FEEL. SUN IN THE SKY. YOU KNOW HOW
I FEEL. BREEZE DRIFTIN' ON -

LASER SFX. Grisly noises. The room screams in shock.

ALIEN LEADER (V.O.)
THERE ARE MUCH WORSE TOOLS AT OUR
DISPOSAL. THE POWER WE WIELD IS
AWESOME AND TERRIFYING. NOW. I
BELIEVE WE HAVE MADE OURSELVES
CLEAR. YOU HAVE ONE WEEK TO OBEY
OUR COMMAND: BRING. US. NINA.

The feed cuts out. More static. A long silence.

PRESIDENT
...So just to recap.
(beat)
There's an alien race that wants us
to resurrect Nina Simone or, or go
back in time or something...and
send her in to space.

After another silence, timid murmurs from the CABINET.

VARIOUS STAFF
That's correct. / It appears so, sir.

He stands - he's got to get out of here. As he turns to
leave, he looks down at Nina.

PRESIDENT

You step foot in the White House
again, and I will *personally*
waterboard you.

Off her shell-shocked face, we CUT TO BLACK.

INT. NINA'S SAD APARTMENT - TIME UNCLEAR

FADE UP on Nina's living room, illuminated only by the TV.
She's catatonic on the couch. KNOCK KNOCK. Nina doesn't move.

NINA

Just leave it.

Insistent knocking, until -

NINA (CONT'D)

JUST LEAVE THE FOOD!

Silence, save for Guy Fieri. Nina trudges over and opens the
door, catching an eyeful of sunshine. It's 2 PM on a gorgeous
day. Newspapers are piled up from the week. She frowns,
annoyed to find the world still spinning. Guilt sets in.

EXT. KENNEDY CENTER - NIGHT

Establishing the evening's marquee: *Just Goosin'!*

INT. KENNEDY CENTER - SIMULTANEOUS

Nina sits in the back, watching the opening number - a big
ensemble tap piece. She's unshowered, unkempt, but kind of
radiant: this is what she loves. She mouths along, childlike.

Then the grand dame, AUDRA MCDONALD, bursts onstage; one of
those entrances where she gets a zinger in before the
applause.

AUDRA MCDONALD

When you get 'em ya got 'em, and
when you got 'em ya can't lose 'em!

The audience goes wild, Nina included. Audra begins to sing.

AUDRA MCDONALD (CONT'D)

(in a rich alto)

*I just keep tellin' myself / he
ain't worth the dirt on my shoes -*

Nina watches, enraptured, when suddenly there's a FLASHBACK -

INT. WHITE HOUSE - THE SITUATION ROOM - FLASHBACK

ALIEN LEADER
THE VOICE!!!

INT. KENNEDY CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Eureka moment.

NINA
Oh my god...Audra McDonald. Audra
McDonald. Audra MCDONALD. AUDRA
MCDONALD!!!

A BITCHY GAY COUPLE in front of her turns around.

THEATER QUEEN
Look, we all love Audra, okay, but
take a fucking Xanax, please!

Nina stuffs the sleeve of her cardigan in her mouth as she squeals with joy. She starts recording on her phone.

INT. KENNEDY CENTER - DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Audra sits at her vanity, removing her fake eyelashes.

AUDRA MCDONALD
And so I told her, "Thank you very
much, *ma'am*, but it's simply not
for sale!"

Her young, fawning assistant, JEFFREY, eats it up.

JEFFREY
And what did Tyne Daly say?!

Timid knock at the door. Nina pokes her head in, sheepish.

NINA
Excuse me? Ms. McDonald?

JEFFREY
Who are you? That's *my* name for her.

AUDRA
Jeffrey. Silence.
(to Nina)
How did you get back here?

NINA
Oh, I actually remember the trap
door from when Hugh Jackman came to -
y'know what, it doesn't matter. I'm
actually here on some fairly urgent
business. From the White House.

(MORE)

NINA (CONT'D)
 (small beat)
 The President needs to meet with you.

Beat. Audra bursts in to a perfect stage laugh. Jeffrey nervously joins. EXTREME CLOSE UP: he's putting away a taser.

AUDRA
 You're all so creative these days.

JEFFREY
 Could we see some form of
identification? From the White
 House?

Nina goes to grab her badge, then, remembering -

NINA
 Shoot. I - funny thing, I actually
 don't have my badge anymore.
 (covering)
 I mean, on me. I do have this pen
 that I stole from the building -

JEFFREY
 Theenk you!

And before she knows it, the door's in her face.

JEFFREY (CONT'D)
 I am. So. So. Sorry.

AUDRA
 (with a sigh)
 The lesbians really do have a
 strange fascination with me...

EXT. INDUSTRIAL FARM (VIRGINIA) - NEXT DAY

The President addresses reporters and rural Virginians.

PRESIDENT
 Was I concerned at first? Did I
 think, just for a moment, we had
 experienced first contact?
 (beat, flashes a grin)
 I know, you want answers from me,
 not questions.

Polite chuckles.

PRESIDENT (CONT'D)
 I'll admit I was. But the fact is,
 we now have definitive proof that
 this was all one big hoax. The same
 thing we've seen with crop circles
 for decades. And tonight, Trudy and
 I will sleep a little bit easier.

First Lady TRUDY BOWEN stares ahead, frigid as all hell.

NINA (O.S.)
I found her!

The President looks out, confused. Nina rushes towards him from across the field, waving her phone above her head.

NINA (CONT'D)
The voice! She has the voice!!

SECRET SERVICE
EVERYBODY DOWN!

Everyone screams, hits the deck. The President is whisked away. Trudy clucks, annoyed she has to crouch in this dress.

NINA
No! Trust me! Please!!!

The Secret Service tazes her, and she falls. Hard.

INT. PRESIDENT'S LIMO - DAY

Nina, passed out, slowly comes to in a limousine. She looks around, disoriented. The President, Trudy, and their Chief of Staff are all silent, staring at their phones.

PRESIDENT
Who is this?

He's on *Nina's* phone, watching her video of Audra.

NINA
Audra McDonald - did you drag me unconscious in to your limo, and *no one* said anything?

PRESIDENT
Uh, I'm the President, so...yeah?
(back to the phone)
Is this who you meant? "She has the voice"?

NINA
Yes! She does. It has to be her!

CHIEF OF STAFF
Sir, we've been over this. We can't use a celebrity. We don't know what media they've consumed, and if they recognize her, it could be ugly.

PRESIDENT
Right, right. Shit. Let me think...
(wit's end)
Ugh! First gay president, now this?

NINA
 ...I'm sorry, what?

ANGLE ON Trudy, re-applying lipstick, completely stoic.

CHIEF OF STAFF
 Sir, I thought we decided not -

The President rolls down the partition.

PRESIDENT
 'Ey! Get me some Twizzlers.

A bag of Twizzlers sails across the limo, in to his lap.

NINA
 What is going on?!

PRESIDENT
 Look, she can't be *that* famous,
 I've never heard of her.

NINA
 Anyone who knows theater adores her!

PRESIDENT
 (to Chief of Staff)
 See? I feel like we're fine.

NINA
 Let me bring her in. Help her.

PRESIDENT
 Hmmm, that's gonna be a no from me.

NINA
 Why not?! I found her.

PRESIDENT
 Because you have nothing to do with
 this? You can have your old job
 back. Aren't you like a...janitor
 or something?

NINA
 No. And I don't want my old job
 back. I'm good with computers,
 yeah. I always have been. But when
 I go to sleep at night, I don't
 dream about IP addresses. I see the
 Great White Way. I see my name in
 lights. And getting to do this?
 Saving the world through the power
 of song?

(MORE)

NINA (CONT'D)
 This is literally *all* I've ever
 wanted, okay? I'm begging you. I
need this.

CUT TO:

INT. WHITE HOUSE - CONTROL CENTER - AN HOUR LATER

Nina stands at a Xerox machine, fuming.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - SIMULTANEOUS

Audra sits across from the President and Chief of Staff.
 Trudy lounges in the background, eating grapes.

AUDRA MCDONALD
 Oh, Chris. I can't *believe* it's
 taken us this long! Why, it must've
 been the night after the
 inauguration that Barack and
 Michelle had me over for Cranium.
 (hammy aside)
 And *lost*.

PRESIDENT
 Ha! Well, the pleasure is all -

Jeffrey enters quietly, carrying a giant tote that says "NO."
 The President looks him up and down, noticeably. Sparks.

PRESIDENT (CONT'D)
 Mine.

CHIEF OF STAFF
 If we could move to the matter at
 hand -

AUDRA MCDONALD
 Ah, yes. So about this benefit
 concert you're planning.

PRESIDENT
 Benefit - ?

CHIEF OF STAFF
 (jumping in)
 Yes, the benefit concert. It's
 really a tribute: remembering Nina
 Simone. An American icon.

AUDRA MCDONALD
 I see. Alright. So I'll prepare a
 cover or two?

CHIEF OF STAFF

Well, we were thinking something more...immersive. An entire performance of you as Nina Simone.

PRESIDENT

Yeah yeah, exactly. We thought you'd appreciate it. A chance to show your range, really dive in to a role. Not just song and dance.

Under the impression that he was being generous, he's confused by the silence. Audra lets out a mirthless laugh.

AUDRA MCDONALD

Mr. Bowen, are you familiar with the show *Carousel*?

PRESIDENT

Sure, like the movie.

AUDRA MCDONALD

(ice cold)

Yes. Like the *movie*. It's also the show for which I won my first Tony.

Jeffrey produces a Tony from his tote. [He will do this each time they list an accolade.]

JEFFREY

Tony #1, 1994.

AUDRA MCDONALD

I played a simple millworker who falls in love with an ambitious fisherman. Two years later, I played an aspiring opera singer.

JEFFREY

Her second Tony: *Master Class*.

AUDRA MCDONALD

A woman who buries her own child alive: Tony #3. A bereaved matriarch struggling to get by: Tony #4! After my fifth award, Oprah flew me to St. Bart's to thank me personally!

PRESIDENT

(cowering a little)

For what?

AUDRA MCDONALD
Everything! And if you think I should be humbled, should be *grateful* for the chance to imitate an "American icon", you must've forgot I played BILLIE HOLIDAY HERSELF. That's right: Tony #6, mother-fucka!

Silence. Jeffrey bursts out laughing, saving her ass. They all join, Audra loudest of all. She tries to feign innocence.

AUDRA MCDONALD (CONT'D)
 You thought I was! He thought I was!

PRESIDENT
 Too funny. Toooo funny...

CLOSE ON: he's pinching himself so hard he's bleeding.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - EAST WING HALLWAY - LATER

Nina scans herself out, bumping right in to the President.

PRESIDENT
 Hey, great job finding that trainwreck, was Lindsay Lohan busy?

NINA
 Oh, what's wrong? You need help now?

PRESIDENT
 Shut up. I could *deport* you.

NINA
 What'd she say when you told her? About the aliens?

The President looks around, paranoid.

PRESIDENT
 Jesus! It's bad enough I have to deal with you, you think I'm gonna tell her shit? No. It's a "benefit concert."

NINA
 Soooo, you don't think we should clarify that the fate of the world hangs in the balance?

PRESIDENT
 Uh, we're not gonna clarify anything. I don't want you anywhere near her.

He starts to walk away.

NINA
 Why? Just let me explain the
 situation!

PRESIDENT
 HARD pass.

NINA
 I can't believe I had your picture
 over my bed!

PRESIDENT
 Eww!!

Off an incensed Nina, we -

BEGIN MONTAGE - INT. WHITE HOUSE - CONTROL CENTER - DAY

Nina prints out a picture of the "BRING US NINA" message.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - BALLROOM - DAY

Audra autographs a stack of headshots, handing them to Jeffrey one by one. She flips one over - the picture of the cornfield is taped to the back, with the word "NINA" circled in red. Jeffrey's eyes narrow.

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - LOBBY BATHROOM - NIGHT

A bathroom attendant fluffs the hand towels, then turns around: it's Nina in disguise. She hears a flush. She rolls MORE MESSAGES up inside a towel. Audra emerges from a stall.

Nina hands her the towel, but as she dries her hand, the paper falls, sticking to Audra's heel. She exits, oblivious.

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - 10TH FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

Nina, dressed as a French maid, lurks outside of Audra's hotel room. She stuffs MORE PAPERS under her door. A CONCERNED GUEST stares from across the hall. Nina holds up her duster - "housekeeping."

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - ROOM - NIGHT

Nina dusts the Concerned Guest's kitchenette, scowling, as they watch TV.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - BREAK ROOM/KITCHENETTE - DAY

Nina folds a piece of paper in to an ice cube tray.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - BALLROOM - DAY

Audra finishes a song. She downs the rest of a watery bourbon. She starts choking, gasping.

Jeffrey runs in and performs the Heimlich. WE FOLLOW the paper as it shoots out of her mouth and lands in the trash.

END MONTAGE - EXT. WHITE HOUSE - GARDEN - DAY

Jeffrey and Audra take a stroll with matching parasols.

AUDRA MCDONALD
Right here maybe. Unless you think
the sun's too direct?

Nina pops up from behind a bush, feigning surprise.

NINA
Oh my go- you guys? Hey! How are
you? So crazy to see you.

AUDRA MCDONALD
(tight smile)
Oh, it's you.

Jeffrey just glowers.

NINA
What are you up to out here? Just
strollin', huh? Talking about the
show? About Nina?

AUDRA MCDONALD
Yes. I was saying it might be nice
to bring the performance out on to
the lawn tomorrow night. Give the
people a show for a change.
(mischevious aside)
Don't tell anyone, but I'm going to
start as Nina, and then, costume
change: it's me! Classic Audra.

NINA
NO don't do that you can't do that.

Audra scoffs, taken aback.

AUDRA MCDONALD
I don't know *where* you got your
tone, but -

NINA
This whole show is a secret!
There's no audience, *no one* knows
about this. Did you read *any* of the
material I brought you?

JEFFREY

No *audience*? Would you ask Michelangelo to paint without a canvas? Would you ask Shakespeare to write with no words?!

AUDRA MCDONALD

Jeffrey! Silence.

(beat)

I have the exact same questions.

NINA

Look, do you remember that message a few days ago? In the cornfield? "Bring Us Nina"? That's you! Okay? That's Nina Simone. There are aliens out there and they love Nina Simone and they think she's alive and you need to play her on Skype so they don't destroy our planet.

Silence. Audra smiles, puts her sunglasses back on.

AUDRA MCDONALD

You know what. I'm out. Y'all are crazy, your president's never even heard of me, now I've got some... janitor or something yelling at me about aliens.

NINA

The aliens are *real*!

AUDRA MCDONALD

I don't care *who* they are, Audra McDonald does not perform for an empty room! Jeffrey and I are going back to New York, where I can have a four martini lunch with Nathan Lane and never. See. The bill.

Audra and Jeffrey walk away proudly, decisively.

NINA

But you can't! The planet!

Audra keeps walking, snaps open her parasol in response.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - LATER

The President sits at his desk, playing Cat's Cradle. He makes the Eiffel Tower with his teeth, when Nina bursts in.

NINA

She did it. She walked. She walked *right away* from me.

(MORE)

NINA (CONT'D)
 I didn't mean to tell her, I
 thought she *knew*, holy shit this is
 bad, this is really really really -

PRESIDENT
 Woah woah woah woah woah, hold on.

Bernard runs in, panting.

BERNARD
 I'm sorry, sir. She ran right in.

PRESIDENT
 (perfectly calm)
 Got it. Well how about this? How
 about you take that piece of a shit
 tie you wear every day, wrap it
 around your neck, and give me a
 little dance from the rafters,
 'kay? Before I come out there and
 choke your ass myself. Sound good?

BERNARD
 (beat, hollow voice)
 Absolutely, sir, right away.

He exits, lips trembling. The President looks back at Nina.

PRESIDENT
 Stop panicking. We're fine.

NINA
 But we don't have a Nina! What are
 we going to do?!

PRESIDENT
 Again, you keep getting this "we"
 from somewhere, why is that?

Soft knock at the door. Bernard snuffles, tearful.

BERNARD (O.S.)
 Sir. Mr. Noguchi is here.

The President stiffens - there's new urgency here.

PRESIDENT
 You gotta go.

NINA
 But -

PRESIDENT
 If you want your job, you'll leave.
 And shut up about everything. Now.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - PRESIDENT'S OUTER OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Nina walks out, devastated. Bernard whispers covertly.

BERNARD
Hey. Remember that name. Noguchi.

NINA
No, I'm...I'm done, Bernard. I think I'm really done.

BERNARD
(welling up)
I wish we could cry together but I can't be seen with you.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - CONTROL CENTER - LATER

Nina sits down at her desk. Looks around. This place is soul-crushing. Wesley eats yogurt; it dribble down his sweater.

Nina boots up her monitor. She slowly types "Noguchi" in to GOOGLE. Too generic. She pulls up the list of visitor passes. "YOMI NOGUCHI" is one of them.

She searches his name. CLOSE ON headlines like "Robotics CEO Accused of 'Playing God'" and "Back From the Dead? DNA Robotics May Lead to Cloning".

CLOSE ON Nina as she reads deeper, then the lightbulb moment.

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - 10TH FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

Urgent knocking at the door. Audra opens it.

AUDRA MCDONALD
I ordered this Moscato an hour ago!

She sees Nina, red-faced, panting.

NINA
Corpse. Body. They want her body.

AUDRA MCDONALD
What on Earth are you - ?

NINA
They just need her body, and they're going to make a robot.

AUDRA MCDONALD
You're scaring me. Where's Jeffrey?

INT. WHITE HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

The President fucks Jeffrey from behind. Jeffrey is incredibly vocal.

JEFFREY

Ya? You like that, Mr. President?

PRESIDENT

(through gritted teeth)
You're so annoying.

JEFFREY

Ya? Am I your annoying little
whore? Ya?!

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - 10TH FLOOR HALLWAY - SIMULTANEOUS

Audra is clutching at her robe, frightened.

NINA

Forget Jeffrey! We don't have time.
They're going to dig up her body
and make a robot. They don't need
us anymore.

AUDRA MCDONALD

This is thrilling, truly, but it
has nothing to do with me.

NINA

You need to do this. *I* need you to
do this. You were born to play her.

AUDRA MCDONALD

No, I was *born* to be on stage. Not
doing secret concerts for a bunch of
ungrateful aliens!

NINA

Ungrateful -
(beat)
What if I told you it was an entire
planet full of people who
worshipped you?

AUDRA MCDONALD

What are you talking about?

NINA

When they asked for Nina, they
called her their "Supreme". "The
one." "The one voice." I don't know
how many of them there are, but I
can promise you, whoever they are,
they're ready to *make you their God*.

AUDRA MCDONALD

...Go on.

NINA

Think about it. Tonys are one thing, but real power? Followers who treat your word like gospel? Wouldn't that be incredible? And, on top of that, you could literally save the world as we know it!

AUDRA MCDONALD

I could, couldn't I?

NINA

Yes! You deserve this!

AUDRA MCDONALD

I deserve this!

NINA

So you with me?!

AUDRA MCDONALD

I'm with you, baby!

NINA

Good! Then let's destroy Nina Simone's grave!

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - LATER

The President fumes beneath an icy calm.

PRESIDENT

So. I don't know if it was you who moved the bodies or not, but I suppose it doesn't matter.

Nina and Audra sit side by side, wearing sunglasses, poker-faced. Nina's covered in dirt, scratched up head to toe.

NINA

That's good, because we're not telling.

PRESIDENT

Well it's 2 in the morning, so you can take off your sunglasses now -

CHIEF OF STAFF

As you both know, time is of the essence, but before we get this show up on its feet, we'll need you to sign a contract.

AUDRA MCDONALD

Contract?

CHIEF OF STAFF

Yes. Non-disclosure. Agreement to deliver the full services, no matter how...heated our audience might get.

AUDRA MCDONALD

Well now that I know I'm saving the world, we're going to have to negotiate, mister. Line by line.

The President's phone rings. He picks up.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD RESTAURANT - INTERCUT

VIVICA A. FOX speaks in to her cell, sipping Prosecco.

VOICE (O.S.)

Chris? Baby! It's Vivica. Heard you're looking for a Nina Simone.

PRESIDENT

(extra loud, for Audra)
Vivica! So glad you called, we are looking -

Out of nowhere, Audra has stolen the cell phone, bellowing.

AUDRA MCDONALD

Vivica?! It's been BOOKED.

She hangs up. Tosses the phone. Signs the contract.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - UNDERGROUND - MINUTES LATER

The Chief of Staff leads the President, Nina and Audra down a dingy staircase. It feels like the bottom of a missile silo.

NINA

Where the heck are you taking us?

CHIEF OF STAFF

We don't have time for security clearances, but to say this is top secret is...an understatement.

He unlocks a submarine door. They enter cautiously in to -

INT. WHITE HOUSE - BUNKER - CONTINUOUS

They've stepped in to Stepford. Deep under the White House, they're standing in a perfect replica of a 1960's SUBURB.

NINA

Oh my god.

AUDRA MCDONALD

Where are we?

CHIEF OF STAFF

We built it in the 60's, during the missile crisis. Everything we need to live underground. If we have to.

AUDRA MCDONALD

Oh, so it's like your secret white people bunker for when the real shit goes down?

NINA

(remembering)

"She belongs in the past. Only in the past!"

PRESIDENT

Ding ding ding.

NINA

This is amazing! You're a genius!

PRESIDENT

Damn right I am.

CHIEF OF STAFF

Definitely my idea.

AUDRA MCDONALD

So how exactly do you expect me to perform here? No lights, microphone-

The door creaks open. A few TERRIFIED AIDES, including Bernard, enter with recording equipment, extension cords.

PRESIDENT

Non-union labor. The backbone of America.

NINA

How much time do we have? We gotta get all this set up.

PRESIDENT

I mean, we've made 'em wait this long, we might as well -

CHIEF OF STAFF

(checking his phone)

Sir. There was just an unexplained "explosion from the sky" on an island off Tanzania.

PRESIDENT

(beat)

Now's feeling like a great time.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - BUNKER - TWO MINUTES LATER

Nina sets up her A/V booth in the corner. Audra sneaks up, taps her on the shoulder.

NINA
What are you doing?! You need to be in costume!

AUDRA MCDONALD
I know, I just - I wanted to thank you. For believing in me.

NINA
Of course. You're Audra McDonald.

Audra laughs demurely.

AUDRA MCDONALD
Yes, well -
(suddenly fragile)
But...what if they don't like it? Don't believe me? Are they really going to destroy the planet?

NINA
(smiling)
It'd be a hell of a finale.

A tender moment between them, until -

ALIEN LEADER (V.O.)
HELLO? HELLO?

NINA
Go go go!

Audra sprints towards two aides waiting with a red gown.

ALIEN LEADER (V.O.)
HELLO? ANSWER ME!!

The President starts to dash over, but Nina handles it.

NINA
H-hello, sir. How are you tonight? Can you see the stage alright?

She TURNS ON the camera, points it at a classic prefab house.

ALIEN LEADER (V.O.)
IS THIS HER HOME? IS THIS WHERE THE SUPREME RESIDES?!

NINA

Yes, sir. She'll be out in just a moment. She can't wait to meet you.

ALIEN LEADER (V.O.)

I TREMBLE. THIS IS A MOMENTOUS OCCASION. I AM AVAILING MYSELF OF SOME SPARKLING CIDER.

NINA

We're very excited too.

She closes her eyes, takes a deep breath.

NINA (CONT'D)

(announcer voice)

Ladies and gentlemen: miss Nina Simone.

Audra enters in her gown. She's ravishing. Nina motions for everyone to applaud. Two aides place gauze over the work lights, dimming them. Audra begins to sing. It's uncanny.

AUDRA MCDONALD

I put a spell on you, 'cause you're mine. You better stop the things you do. I ain't lyin'.

The President and Chief of Staff watch nervously in the back.

AUDRA MCDONALD (CONT'D)

No, I ain't lyin'.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - PRESIDENT'S BEDROOM - SIMULTANEOUS

Jeffrey lounges in a silk robe in front of a roaring fireplace. He lotions himself slowly, luxuriously.

AUDRA MCDONALD (V.O.)

You know I can't stand it babe, you're runnin' around.

In her room across the hall, Trudy appears in her nightgown. She and Jeffrey lock eyes, sizing each other up as foes. So much is said between their eyebrows. She closes the door.

AUDRA MCDONALD (V.O.)

You know better, daddy.

INT. ALIEN SPACESHIP - SIMULTANEOUS

A massive throne sits between us and a projection of Audra.

AUDRA MCDONALD (V.O.)

I just can't stand it, 'cause you put me down.

PULL BACK SLOWLY to reveal hundreds upon hundreds of aliens, all in silhouette, watching their Supreme.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - BUNKER - CONTINUOUS

Back on Nina watching Audra intently. She's really doing it.

AUDRA MCDONALD
*I put a spell on you, because
 you're mine.*

PUSH IN to the RED LIGHT of the camera transmitting her in to space. A medley of NINA SONGS scans by, like flipping through radio stations, and we PULL BACK OUT on Audra's final line.

AUDRA MCDONALD (CONT'D)
I want a little sugar in my bowl...

Audra finishes, beaming from ear to ear. Everyone applauds, exchanging looks of relief - they did it!

AUDRA MCDONALD (CONT'D)
 Thank you all so much. You're too kind. Too kind. Now I'd better mosey on offa here before I -

ALIEN LEADER (V.O.)
 SUPREME. OUR DEAR SUPREME. OH GREAT ONE. PLEASE GO ON.

Audra laughs, even flirts a little.

AUDRA MCDONALD
 Oh, y'all have gotten too spoiled now. Ain't twelve songs enough from an old woman like me?

ALIEN LEADER (V.O.)
 (plainly)
 NO.

The President looks at Nina, concerned.

AUDRA MCDONALD
 Now I *know* you ain't trying to tell me I haven't earned a little nap.

ALIEN LEADER (V.O.)
 OF COURSE! OF COURSE. SLEEP FOR US. WE WILL WATCH YOU. AND THEN YOU WILL SING FOR US ONCE MORE.

The President tries to steer the ship.

PRESIDENT
 Now, we're *thrilled* you enjoyed everything -

ALIEN LEADER (V.O.)
 NO! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?! THIS
 IS THE PAST! LEAVE ME ALONE!!!

PRESIDENT
 Sir -

ALIEN LEADER (V.O.)
 ENOUGH! ENOUGH!!

PRESIDENT
 No, you enough! We've given you
 everything you asked for -

ALIEN LEADER (V.O.)
 FOOLISH HUMAN! YOU ANGER ME! I'LL
 SHOW YOU WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU
 ANGER - !!!

His voice cuts out. Static. Nina tries to troubleshoot.

NINA
 I don't know what happened! I swear!

ALIEN #1 (V.O.)
 HELLO? HELLO?

New voices! Everyone gasps.

AUDRA MCDONALD
 H-hello? Who's there?

ALIEN #2 (V.O.)
 WE DO NOT HAVE MUCH TIME. WE CAN
 NOT SUBDUE HIM FOR LONG.

ALIEN #1 (V.O.)
 OUR LEADER IS FURIOUS.

PRESIDENT
 Yeah, we noticed. Real great guy
 you got there.

ALIEN #1 (V.O.)
 HE IS VERY UPSET THAT YOU KEEP
 INTERRUPTING HIS BROADCAST.

PRESIDENT
 Interrupting? We just gave him a
 whole goddamn concert! For free, I
 might add!

ALIEN #2 (V.O.)
 HE WANTS MORE.

AUDRA MCDONALD
How much more?

ALIEN #1 (V.O.)
ALL OF IT.

ALIEN #2 (V.O.)
FOREVER.

Uncomfortable silence.

AUDRA MCDONALD
...Forever?

PRESIDENT
We're squatting down here in a
bunker, okay? Pretending it's 1965.
I don't really feel like -

ALIEN #1 (V.O.)
HE CAN NOT BEAR TO SEE YOUR WORLD
NOW, THE WAY IT IS.

ALIEN #2 (V.O.)
YOU USED TO BELIEVE IN PEACE AND
LOVE. POWER TO THE PEOPLE. JOHN
LENNON. NINA SIMONE!

PRESIDENT
Those people were called hippies,
okay, and they lost. They all own
Subarus now.

ALIEN #1 (V.O.)
HE DOESN'T WANT TO HEAR THAT. GIVE
HIM WHAT HE WANTS. GIVE IT TO HIM
OR HE - OH NO. HE'S COMING!

ALIEN #2 (V.O.)
REMEMBER! NO MORE INTERRUPT-

Back to static. They're gone. No one moves for a moment.

PRESIDENT
John Lennon? What the shit?! He
wants us to do this for-

The Chief of Staff starts shuffling forward, in a daze.

CHIEF OF STAFF
Forever. And ever. Forever and
ever. All of this. All the time.
Forever. And ever and ever. And -

He faints. Everyone screams, goes in to a tizzy.

NINA
Oh my god!

She rushes to his side. She looks to the President.

NINA (CONT'D)
What are we gonna do? Seriously?

He starts backing away slowly, fear in his eyes.

PRESIDENT
...Everyone, this has been great.
Thank you all for your hard work.
Feel like I'm leaving things in
very capable hands!

He's heading right for the door.

NINA
You can't leave us down here! You
have to help!!

PRESIDENT
I'll just be right upstairs! Just a
holler away.

BERNARD
S-sir, should I come with you?

PRESIDENT
Nope! No. Stay here. Help out!

NINA
You can't leave!

She comes towards him, and he bolts. Locks the door. CLINK.
Silence. Nina, Audra, and the trembling aides are all alone.

BERNARD
I'm going to lose consciousness.

AIDE #1
What's going on? Who's in charge?

Nina stares off in to space for a moment, then snaps back.

NINA
I am.
(beat, gathering steam)
Now I don't know you all yet. I
don't know what you're capable of.
But I do know live theater.
(MORE)

NINA (CONT'D)

And when you forget your lines, or
they don't play your song, and
you're just standing there,
onstage, wanting to die...you wing
it.

AUDRA MCDONALD

Wing it? Excuse me, I -

NINA

(from deep within)
NOT NOW, AUDRA!!!

Audra is stunned - and kind of turned on. She submits.

NINA (CONT'D)

Now we're gonna need to think on
our feet. We're gonna need songs.
Impressions. We'll need to put our
heads together. Because when it
comes to the future of this planet -
the show must go on. Right?

The aides join in weakly, Audra with new confidence.

ALL

Right...

NINA

Right. Okay. Now say it with me on
three: BRING...US...!

TITLE CARD.

END OF PILOT.