

Cannibal Queen, Nina

Scene 3: Boston, MA—Mid-Atlantic Conference Finals

(Lights up on a medium-sized, still dingy, venue in Boston. It is the next week. It is late afternoon, and there are no patrons here yet.)

NINA sits in the green room, drinking a beer and working on her computer. This goes on in silence for a moment, until CANNIBAL QUEEN enters.)

START —

CANNIBAL QUEEN. Oh, good, you're here. The Nina, right? I wanna talk to you.

NINA. *(a little panicky)* What? Why? Can't you see I'm working?

(Genuinely curious, CANNIBAL QUEEN gets momentarily derailed from her original purpose.)

CANNIBAL QUEEN. What kind of work can you do from the back of this gross place?

NINA. *(hostile)* I build websites. I can do it from anywhere.

CANNIBAL QUEEN. Oh. Cool. You don't have to quit your job for the season.

NINA. People quit their jobs to play air guitar?

CANNIBAL QUEEN. Yeah, that's half the fun. There's always another bartending job. Or an Uber to drive. No one's leaving their job at the Pentagon or anything.

NINA. And what job did you quit to be here tonight?

CANNIBAL QUEEN. I've got a Masters in classical guitar. So, I mean, I guess I'll teach eventually, when I'm like fifty. Mostly right now, I just do air guitar. And I'm married.

NINA. So it's *his* money that keeps you in leather pants and hair extensions?

CANNIBAL QUEEN. Number one, this is my real hair. Number two, yes, it's his money, and he doesn't care what I do with it as long as I'm happy. *(refocusing)* And number three—I want to talk to you, woman-to-woman. I can really help you, you know. If more of us, who are competent, join the circuit, eventually they'll have to let one of us win.

NINA. I don't want your help.

CANNIBAL QUEEN. You one-a those mean girls who can't be friends with other ladies?

NINA. I'm friends with plenty of girls.

CANNIBAL QUEEN. Good. So let's get down to business. I don't know what the scarecrow, the tin man, and the lion have been telling you, but it's different for us. You have to be really careful not to give the crowd everything.

NINA. What does that even mean?

CANNIBAL QUEEN. Don't let them use you as entertainment.

NINA. Entertainment?

CANNIBAL QUEEN. Okay, so like, costume for one thing. You'll see girls who do the whole short skirt, pigtails, slinky boots thing—they never win. The organizers love when they enter, because they give the crowd something to drool over. But they never place. They'll tell you to smile, jump around, give 'em a show, but don't listen to that garbage. I don't give them anything but the music. You have to fight for every second of stage time, and that starts with not dressing like a groupie

(NINA is silent. CANNIBAL QUEEN decides to continue being helpful, in her own special way.)

CANNIBAL QUEEN. And you need a better song. Your freestyle round in Staten Island was nonsense.

NINA. I'm working on something new.

CANNIBAL QUEEN. What?

NINA. Heart.

CANNIBAL QUEEN. Heart?! Oh, barf. Come on, it's so cliché.

NINA. *(very defensive)* Hey, Nancy Wilson's guitar playing basically defined the sound of the 70s and 80s. *(short pause)* But I'm also working on some Joan Jett.

CANNIBAL QUEEN. You don't have to do a female guitarist because you're a girl. If you want to play with the boys, think like the boys.

NINA. Or, you know, think for yourself.

CANNIBAL QUEEN. Yeah, just don't give them any excuse to write you off, is all I'm saying. If you're gonna do this, actually *do it*. The right way.

NINA. Joan Jett made me want to play guitar! *(short pause)* Anyway, why do you care? Why are you lecturing me?

CANNIBAL QUEEN. This is how mean people make friends—we instruct.

STOP