

Shreddy, Nina, Golden, Facebender,
Cannibal Queen

Airness (High School Edition)

31

NINA. But?

GOLDEN. But what else you got, that's a little more original? That sends a message to the *crowd*, instead of being just fun for *you*?

NINA. Last but not least, I've been working on some choreo for "American Girl." Tom Petty.

(There are two possibilities for the following exchange. The second can be used if the actors playing NINA and GOLDEN are both actors of color, as they were in the original production.)

(Option 1)

GOLDEN. *(unenthusiastic)* I get it.

NINA. Because I'm . . . I'm an American girl. I guess.

GOLDEN. No, no, it makes sense.

(Option 2)

GOLDEN. Were you raised by white people?

NINA. Hey!

GOLDEN. No, no, I get it.

NINA. But?

START

SHREDDY. *(piping up)* But, why are you the *only* person who could perform "American Girl"? Or "Smells Like Teen Spirit"? Or "Two Princes"? How is sixty seconds of one of those songs an extension of your soul, and *only your* soul?

NINA. Dude, how is "I Don't Wanna Grow Up" an extension of YOUR soul?

SHREDDY. Nina, that song is *my entire life*.

NINA. Yeah, yeah, yeah. How?

SHREDDY. You got bigger things to worry about than why I play what I play. What about your persona? Been working on that?

NINA. Oh yeah.

SHREDDY. And?

NINA. What do you think of *(putting on a British accent)* "Kate Middle Finger"?

SHREDDY. Who is she?

NINA. *(British accent)* My persona! *(she drops the accent)* It's like a play on the royal family.

SHREDDY. No one in the royal family plays rock guitar.

NINA. Okay, what about "Ruth Slayer Ginsburg." Get it? It's a pun!

SHREDDY. Is it?

GOLDEN. It's not the roller derby. You don't get points for puns.

NINA. Oh shut up. I think it's harder for girls. Who are my role models?

SHREDDY. Cannibal Queen.

NINA. I hope she breaks her neck.

SHREDDY / GOLDEN. *(in unison, interrupting)* Whoa!

SHREDDY. What is that violence about? Did CQ do something to you?

NINA. SILENCE!

(They wait. She clams up.)

GOLDEN. Well, fine, because now that Shreddy's here, I have some gossip for the group. Guess what I heard. Guess.

SHREDDY. Um . . .

GOLDEN. You won't guess. *(dramatic pause)* Facebender's kid is coming tonight!

SHREDDY. Facebender has a KID?

GOLDEN. Yeah, a daughter, he had her when he was like sixteen. And he always invites her to the San Diego finals, and she never comes. Until *tonight*, you guys.

NINA. Whoa.

GOLDEN. Yeah. Whoa. So we gotta do everything we can to pump up the crowd. His charisma marks have to be off the charts.

(SHREDDY points to NINA to prompt her to recite a lesson he has taught her about charisma.)

NINA. *(proud of herself)* Oooh! It doesn't matter if the crowd loves you or hates you, as long as they're making a lot of noise. Like TV wrestling!

SHREDDY. *(proud of NINA)* Exactly, Grasshopper.

GOLDEN. Charisma marks are always high for villains. Cannibal Queen, for one—

SHREDDY. *(interrupting, to NINA)* Your fave gal. We're gonna come back to that, by the way.

GOLDEN. *(continuing)* And D Vicious, who won the National Championship last year. He does this thing where he makes the crowd love him, then hate him, then love him again. In sixty seconds. Surely you've seen his routine?

NINA. Oh. I've seen it. Up close.

GOLDEN. But Facebender's not a villain. He's like . . . your sad uncle . . .

SHREDDY. . . . from another century, or a story . . . or . . .

NINA. He's Don Quixote. A man out of time. He dreams the impossible dream.

SHREDDY. *(nodding in agreement)* Uh-huh.

NINA. Is he gonna play "Simple Man" for the freestyle round again?

GOLDEN. He's been playing it all season.

NINA. That's why he hasn't qualified yet.

(SHREDDY and GOLDEN look at her sideways, affronted on their friend's behalf.)

NINA. He's Don Quixote, playing, like, a Huckleberry Finn song.

GOLDEN. She's right. I'm impressed.

SHREDDY. Nina's got a great eye for what's going on under the hood of a routine.

NINA. *(smiling at SHREDDY)* I have a good coach.

(FACEBENDER enters. Very nervous.)

GOLDEN. Facebender Lender! Don't be nervous! This is your night, my dude!

FACEBENDER. You are a true and loyal friend, Golden Thunder. I wish I shared your optimism.

SHREDDY. We heard about your daughter, man.

GOLDEN. I told them. Hope it wasn't a secret.

FACEBENDER. A secret? Indeed no. My . . . my Sophia. She's never seen me play before. I haven't always been . . . the ideal patriarch. Of our little kingdom.

GOLDEN. And you're gonna melt her face off!

(They all look at him sideways.)

GOLDEN. Nope. Weird to say about a man's daughter. Now I say it, I hear it.

SHREDDY. She's gonna love it. How old is she? Doesn't matter. She's gonna love it.

FACEBENDER. *(dropping the façade for a moment)* I can't screw this up in front of my kid. The only way this is anything at all is if I'm good at it. If it's not utterly amazing, I'm . . . I'm just . . . I've already let her down a thousand times.

GOLDEN. Hey? Hey, Facebender? What are you always telling me?

FACEBENDER. To spray-paint your costumes in well-ventilated areas.

GOLDEN. No. Yes. No. What are you always telling me when I start to doubt my awesome sauce? Huh, buddy? What's the greatest thing about air guitar?

NINA. Oh, I wanna know this.

GOLDEN. What does air guitar teach? *(pause)* "Everything we need to rock, is already inside us."

(SHREDDY and FACEBENDER nod sagely. NINA is moved, unexpectedly.)

FACEBENDER. *(recovering his persona somewhat)* The greatest truth of this, our chosen art form. Sage of you to remind me, Golden Thunder. But . . . I have a dread in my bones.

NINA. A dread?

FACEBENDER. A real dread. That the ode I have selected for my freestyle contribution, will do me no favors. It has won me no accolades thus far. Why should I expect it to triumph this night?

NINA. You think the song will fail you?

FACEBENDER. Or I, the song. And my Sophia.

(CANNIBAL QUEEN enters. She has the worst timing. She looks at their anxious faces.)

CANNIBAL QUEEN. Ugh. Who died in here?

FACEBENDER. Cannibal Queen, even your lovely disposition cannot retrieve me from the funk into which I have fallen. But thank you for trying.

CANNIBAL QUEEN. Yeah sure. My pleasure. *(looking around)* Has anyone seen Vicious?

(NINA inhales sharply.)

SHREDDY. He coming tonight?

CANNIBAL QUEEN. Maybe. He said he might.

GOLDEN. (*teasing*) Aw, you need your BF to hold your hand? Since you haven't qualified yet?

CANNIBAL QUEEN. Next week. Boston. Home turf. Mark my words, I'm going home with first. And Vicious is not my BF. I'm married. Come on. He's just, we're just, whatever.

NINA. You're married?!

CANNIBAL QUEEN. Who are you, again? I'm usually the only female in the room.

NINA. I'm . . . um . . .

SHREDDY. She's still working on a persona.

NINA. The . . .

SHREDDY. She's not competing again until NYC, so she has some time.

NINA. Nina!

CANNIBAL QUEEN. The Nina? Are you backed by the Pinta and the Santa Maria?

NINA. The Nina.

GOLDEN. Righteous. I love that.

CANNIBAL QUEEN. It has . . . a ring. I guess. Cool. Anyways, if any of you see D Vicious, tell him I'm looking for him.

SHREDDY. Your "not-boyfriend."

GOLDEN. With whom you "just whatever."

CANNIBAL QUEEN. Exactly.

(CANNIBAL QUEEN *exits*. NINA *looks at* SHREDDY, *almost frantically*.)

NINA. He's not really going to be here tonight, is he? David Cooper?

GOLDEN. She knows his *full* name.

SHREDDY. Let me guess, you saw his Sprite commercial.

NINA. No. I mean, yes, I saw it, I just . . . do you really think he'll be here?

(FACEBENDER *slowly and sadly begins to remove his wig*.)

SHREDDY. Probably not. He hasn't come to a single qualifier this year, and he bailed on that Staten Island halftime show. That dude used to be a friend, but now he's just . . .

NINA. The competition?

STOP

