

VICIOUS, NINA

START

VICIOUS. (*calling after her*) Astrid? ASTRID?! (*Wheeling around to NINA*) What is this, some kind of ambush?

NINA. Oh, calm down. It's not an ambush. I didn't even know you'd be in Boston.

VICIOUS. I'm the reigning National Champion. I could be anywhere.

NINA. I haven't seen you at any of the other qualifiers.

VICIOUS. How many of these competitions have you been to?

NINA. All of them. All over. Facebender's victory in San Diego last week? I was there. I helped him pick his new song. We're *friends* now.

VICIOUS. Stop. Stop talking. You made fun of me for a *solid year* for playing air guitar. And now you're suddenly *on* the circuit?

NINA. My persona is "The Nina."

VICIOUS. THAT'S THE STUPIDEST NAME I'VE EVER HEARD. (*a realization*) Are you—are you trying to get me back?

NINA. No.

VICIOUS. This is about my Sprite commercial, isn't it?

NINA. NO! That stupid commercial was only online, anyway! And nobody likes Sprite!

VICIOUS. EVERYBODY loves Sprite!

NINA. You didn't win the freaking Nobel Prize!

VICIOUS. And yet, you're following me. You never wanted me to do this, you made fun of me to your friends, your parents, anyone who would listen, you NEVER came to a SINGLE show, but now that I'm the champion, oh, suddenly, here you are. Now you care, and you're at every qualifier. I'm suspicious, I gotta tell you. But I shouldn't be. You can't just be supportive, you always know better.

NINA. Oh, I have problems with being supportive? Says the guy who bailed out of nowhere.

VICIOUS. Oh, yeah. We had a perfect relationship and no problems and I just bolted. Sure, you go ahead and tell yourself that.

NINA. I came home one day, and all your stuff was gone. No call, no note, just "You Give Love a Bad Name" blaring on repeat.

VICIOUS. There was no point in having another fight when you had stopped listening.

NINA. When you started to get good at air guitar, you checked out of our relationship.

VICIOUS. Maybe I did, Nina. Because I suddenly remembered what it was like to be around people who *wanted to be around me*.

NINA. I loved you! I loved our band and our apartment and our life. I loved you.

VICIOUS. It was impossible to feel that. *(short pause)* I don't want our old life, and I don't want you. You're just awful.

NINA. *(discovering this)* Oh, this is your *favorite*. This moment when I feel stupid and say too much and you have all the power. You *love* this.

VICIOUS. Oh, that is so typically your move. You act like you don't need help from anybody, but blame everyone else when you fail.

(A hit. A palpable hit.)

NINA. *(pause)* I'm not doing this to get you back.

(Unseen by NINA, GOLDEN, FACEBENDER, and SHREDDY enter the green room. As soon as they see what's happening they stop short, and quietly eavesdrop.)

VICIOUS. Then why are you here, Nina??

NINA. Because. When someone breaks your heart, you find out what they love most in the whole world. Then you take it from them.

VICIOUS. *(short pause)* You are very dark inside.

NINA. Yeah. You're right. And whose fault is that?

VICIOUS. Your terrible parents?

NINA. You broke up our REAL band, you broke up our REAL relationship, for what? To mess around with somebody else's wife and spend every night with people who think you're cool because you're the best at IMAGINARY GUITAR? To play PRETEND with a gaggle of second-rate UNDATEABLE LOSERS who couldn't be contributing members of society if they tried? THIS is your kingdom? THIS is where you're god? You ruined my REAL LIFE, and you get to be happy in PRETEND LAND? Absolutely not. It may be second-rate, it may be imaginary, but I'm here to take it from you.

(VICIOUS nods his head in the direction of the new arrivals. No one says anything. NINA is mortified; SHREDDY, GOLDEN, and FACEBENDER are crestfallen.)

VICIOUS. Yeah. Good luck with that. *(short pause)* See you in New York.

(VICIOUS exits. NINA turns to her friends, desperate to apologize.)

————— STOP