#### **BENCHED**

Written by

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Directed by

Michael Fresco

10.29.13: FULL PINK REVISED 10.25.13: FULL BLUE REVISED

10.24.13: WHITE

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# CAST LIST

NINAELIZA COUPE
PHILTBA
TRENTCARTER MACINTYRE
BURTJACK MCGEE
CHERYLMARIA BAMFORD
CARLOSOSCAR NUNEZ
MICAHTBA
JUDGE NELSONTBA
BAILIFF MORRISCEDRIC YARBROUGH
KEITHJIM CASHMAN
BLYTHEMICHELLE NOH
ALEXANDERLAIRD MACINTOSH
YNES GUTIERREZMINERVA GARCIA
JOHNCASEY SMITH
DEBBIETBA
WORKMAN #1
MRS. DESILVA (LADY WINO)HELEN DUFFY
HECTOR VASQUEZTBA

## SET LIST

LAW FIRM LOBBY
NINA'S OFFICE
ELEVATOR
PUBLIC DEFENDER'S BULLPEN
BURT PLASCHKE'S OFFICE
COURTROOM 3
DON GUARDO'S BAR

# 1 <u>EXT. ESTABLISH SHOT: SKYSCRAPERS/INT. ELEVATOR DOORS/LAW</u> 1 FIRM LOBBY - DAY

ELEVATOR DOORS OPEN AND AN OFFICE CART LOADED WITH CHAMPAGNE ROLLS INTO A SLICK, OPULENT LOBBY FULL OF SMARTLY-DRESSED LAWYERS. THEY HELP THEMSELVES TO WHAT WE PRESUME WILL BE A TOAST. OTHERS FILE IN FROM OFFICES. WINSTON ALEXANDER, 50'S, HEAD OF THE FIRM, STROLLS IN, LOOSENING HIS TIE.

#### ALEXANDER

Hey, we're still on the clock. So everybody drink two glasses.

(polite chuckles)

Is everybody here? Where's Nina? Probably on the phone with three countries at once, having her way with them.
TAKE IT EASY, NINA! GET IN HERE!

## 2 <u>int. nina's office - continuous</u>

2

CAMERA PANS OVER A WALL OF HONORS AND DEGREES TO FIND **NINA WHITLEY**, FOREHEAD ON DESK, PHONE PINNED TO HER EAR, DOING A POOR JOB OF STIFLING HUGE SOBS. SHE'S A PRETTY WOMAN IN HER 30'S-BUT JUST NOW LOOKS LIKE A TRAIN WRECK. A GREAT LAWYER, THE REST OF HER LIFE DOESN'T COME AS EASILY.

TRENT (PHONE V.O.)

I'm sorry if this upsets you. I just wanted you to hear it from me.

HER SECRETARY BLYTHE ENTERS WITH CHAMPAGNE FOR NINA.

BLYTHE

You ready to make partner or what?!

NINA LIFTS HER HEAD. BLYTHE SEES THE MASCARA TEAR TRACKS. TRENT CAN STILL BE HEARD TALKING ON THE OTHER END.

NINA

(mouths)

Trent.

(indicating ring finger)

Engaged...

BLYTHE

(mouthing a scream)

Oh my God!

NINA SLAMS THE CHAMPAGNE THEN PANTOMIMES TAKING HER HEART OUT OF HER BODY, CRUSHING IT, AND THROWING IT AWAY.

BLYTHE (CONT'D)

(mouths)

No no no!

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2 CONTINUED:

2

BLYTHE PANTOMIMES PUTTING HER HEART BACK TOGETHER. IT'S "STRONG" LIKE HER BICEP. HER PANTOMIMING GETS CONVOLUTED.

NINA

(mouths)

Huh?

**BLYTHE** 

(out loud, exiting)

I'm not a mime. Come on!

NINA

(into phone)

Trent, I have to go. They're announcing who made partner. Your timing, as usual, is impeccable. And by impeccable, I mean colossally shitty.

## 3 **INT. LOBBY/FOYER - DAY**

3

NINA ENTERS, POCKETING A TEAR-SOAKED TISSUE. SOMEONE HANDS HER A CHAMPAGNE AND SHE POUNDS IT LIKE A SAILOR.

ALEXANDER

There's Nina. Let's do this. I want to take a minute to talk about what sets this person apart from everyone. It's more than just a work ethic...

DEBBIE, A YOUNG, ATTRACTIVE WOMAN, SIDLES UP TO NINA.

DEBBIE

(whispers)

Are you just bursting at the seams?

NINA MANAGES A SMILE, THEN SWITCHES GLASSES WITH DEBBIE--HER EMPTY FOR DEBBIE'S FULL ONE. SHE TAKES A GULP.

ALEXANDER

Oh, screw it. The newest partner of Schuster-Alexander is... Debbie Mathersons!

EVERYONE TOASTS AND CLAPS. NINA AND DEBBIE STAND SHOCKED.

DEBBIE

Me?

NINA

No.

DEBBIE

Wow-- Me?

3

I/3.

3

DEBBIE TIMIDLY LOOKS TO NINA, WHO'S SHELL-SHOCKED.

NINA

(attempting graciousness)

Wow, Debbie. Uh, congratulations. I'm... happy for you.

DEBBIE

Really, Nina? Because this probably feels like a surprise, huh?

NINA

It is a surprise. I mean, I don't think I'm the only one that's surprised. Keith, are you surprised?

KETTH

Oh, um... sure. A pleasant surprise.

NINA

Very diplomatic, Keith. A *pleasant* surprise. Debbie, we are so pleasantly surprised for you. Congratulations.

DEBBIE

Thank you, Nina.

(to the others)

I just want to say--

NINA

I mean Debbie's a good lawyer, right? She's not a bad lawyer. A good lawyer.

DEBBIE

Thank you.

NINA

A good lawyer, with great breasts.

EVERYONE REACTS, TRIES TO LAUGH.

NINA (CONT'D)

Whereas with me, you would just go ahead and flip that. My breasts aren't gonna win any awards... that was my lawyering. Lots of awards.

(then)

Sorry! I'm making this about me, it's not about me, this is your moment. Woo hoo! Yea, Debbie! Up top!

NINA GIVES DEBBIE AN AWKWARD HIGH FIVE.

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3 CONTINUED: (2) 3

DEBBIE

So anyway, I just want to say--

NINA

(to MR. ALEXANDER)

SERIOUSLY, though? I haven't slept more than 2 hours a night for the last 5 years, and you pass me over to make DEBBIE partner?

EVERYONE IS STUNNED, AWKWARD. NINA WALKS AMONG THEM.

NINA (CONT'D)

I can see why it's not Nancy, she failed the bar twice. Rick has yet to win a case, plus he steals toner and sells it on eBay. But DEBBIE?! I kick Debbie's ASS. I KICK ALL YOUR ASSES!

NINA REACHES THE RECEPTION DESK AND STARTS KNOCKING OFF OBJECTS AS SHE RANTS.

NINA (CONT'D)

I... had... a FIANCÉ. But I gave my best years to THIS PLACE instead of HIM, and he BROKE UP WITH ME. And 3 months later, he's engaged to SOMEONE ELSE!

DEBBIE

(happy, oblivious)

Trent's engaged?! That's fantas--

A CANDY DISH SOARS PAST HER HEAD AND SHE DUCKS.

NINA

I gave you EVERYTHING for NOTHING.

SHE REACHES THE END OF THE DESK, WHERE A BEAUTIFUL VASE IS MOUNTED ON A STAND. THE CROWD GASPS.

ALEXANDER

Nina--

TOO LATE: SHE FLINGS IT OFF THE DESK, THE VASE SHATTERING HORRIBLY ON THE MARBLE FLOOR.

ALEXANDER (CONT'D)

That was a gift from Elton John!

NINA ADVANCES ON WINSTON AND DEBBIE.

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CONTINUED: (3)

3

3

NINA

SHUT YOUR CAKE HOLE, WINSTON! You with your halitosis and your obvious affection for Debbie's tits.

NINA WALKS BY DEBBIE AND FLICKS HER TITS. DEBBIE RECOILS.

NINA (CONT'D)

Enjoy them. Don't think I don't know you haven't already.

NINA ENTERS THE ELEVATOR AND PRESSES SOME BUTTONS.

NINA (CONT'D)

Cuz me and my tiny little tits are going to the bar to get toilet-huggin' drunk. SO ALL OF YOU CAN GO PISS UP A ROPE!!!

SHE CLEARLY EXPECTS THE ELEVATOR DOORS TO CLOSE. BUT THEY DON'T. BEAT. SHE PUSHES THE BUTTON AGAIN.

DEBBIE

It's after 5, you have to use your card.

NINA

Oh, right. Thanks.

NINA FISHES OUT HER PASS CARD, SWIPES IT. PRESSES BUTTON.

NINA (CONT'D)

GOODBYE FOREVER YOU SHIT-EATING, MOUTH-BREATHING DOUCHE NOZZLES!!

NOTHING. NO ONE MOVES. NOT EVEN THE STUPID ELEVATOR DOORS. OH GOD. A NEW CALM COMES OVER NINA IN THE PAUSE.

NINA (CONT'D)

Wow. I was so angry earlier. I'm sorry. I got upset. C'mon guys, haven't any of you gotten upset before? Nancy? John, I saw you crying in your car.

JOHN

I have cancer.

NINA

Okay.

SHE SWIPES THE CARD SEVERAL TIMES. FURIOUSLY PUSHES THE BUTTON. DOORS START TO CLOSE RIDICULOUSLY SLOW. STARES.

ALEXANDER

You realize you'll never work in corporate law again.

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3 CONTINUED: (4)

3

NINA

Is that right? Watch me! The next job I get will be TEN TIMES better than this ass carnival! SAYONARA, MOTHERFUCKERS!!!

WITH THAT, SHE GIVES A DOUBLE BIRD SALUTE AND HER MIDDLE FINGERS TRIGGER THE DOOR OPEN. NINA HOLDS BACK A SOB.

#### 4 INT. ELEVATOR DOORS - CONTINUOUS

4

CHYRON: "6 MONTHS LATER." "DING" OF AN ELEVATOR. DOORS OPEN TO REVEAL NINA, DONE UP NICE IN DIFFERENT SUIT, CRAMMED IN WITH SEVERAL OTHERS, HOLDING BRIEFCASE AND PURSE. SHE AWKWARDLY WEDGES HERSELF OUT.

#### 4A INT. PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE, AKA "BULLPEN"

4A

NINA APPROACHES A DOOR LABELED "OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER," TAKES A BREATH, AND ENTERS. THE OFFICE IS OVER-PACKED WITH CLIENTS, FAMILY, AND LAWYERS -- POLAR OPPOSITE OF HER OLD FIRM. THE ONLY SEPARATION BETWEEN DESKS ARE GIANT STACKS OF FILES. A LATINO DEFENDER, CARLOS, TRIES TO KEEP TWO CLIENTS -- SHAVED-DOWN, TATTED-UP CHOLOS -- FROM FIGHTING. THEY CONVERSE HEATEDLY IN SPANISH. NINA SEES THE BOSS' OFFICE THROUGH THE BEDLAM AND HEADS TOWARDS IT.

#### 5 INT. BURT PLASCHKE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

5

BURT PLASCHKE, A 50-ISH ROCK OF A BALD MAN WITH A THICK MUSTACHE, TALKS HURRIEDLY ON THE PHONE. NINA ENTERS TENTATIVELY AND TRIES TO GET HIS ATTENTION.

NINA

Hi there...

BURT

Cheryl!

(then, into phone)
I understand, Henry, but she's a public defender, not a corrections officer-(yelling off)

CHERYL!

CHERYL CHURCH, A 40-ISH, DOLLED-UP BLONDE STRAIGHT OUT OF "REAL HOUSEWIVES OF SAN BERNARDINO," ENTERS.

CHERYL

What?!

BURT

You should be in here explaining to the warden how you lost his prisoner!

CONTINUED:

#### CHERYL

My explanation is apparently when you leave your client to go pee, you have to tell the guard or they won't guard, which you'd think they do automatically, since they're guards, but apparently not, so the guy escaped.

(to NINA)

Great suit! That ain't from Penny's.

NINA

No, it's not.

(to BURT, cheerfully)

Sir, I'm Nina Whitley. Sorry to interrupt, if you could just show me to my office--

CHERYL

Nina Whitley? The crazy lady that smashed a vase over Elton John's head? You're a legend!

BURT POINTS TO ONE OF THE STACKS OF FILES ON HIS DESK.

BURT

That's you. You got five minutes.

(back to phone)

Yeah, Hank, I'm still here.

NINA

I'm sorry, five minutes to what?

BURT

(annoyed)

Court. These are your cases. Session starts in five, shake it.

NINA

Sorry, again, so, these are my-- Court? I haven't even met my clients.

BURT

(more annoyed)

You'll meet 'em in court.

NINA

Wait-- WHAT?! That's insane, I need substantially more time to review the case files -- I mean... yes sir. No problem.

BURT

I heard about you. Just keep a lid on the temper tantrums, we don't do that here--(into phone)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

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5 CONTINUED: (2)

BURT (CONT'D)

HENRY, WILL YOU LISTEN TO ME, YOU GOD DAMNED POLACK--?

FROM PLASCHKE'S POV: THERE IS AN OUTBURST OUTSIDE THE OFFICE -- THE CHOLO FIGHT HAS ESCALATED INTO A SHOVING MATCH, SEVERAL LAWYERS, FAMILY MEMBERS, ET AL, IN A SCRUM OF POSTURING AND YELLING. BURT BOLTS PAST THE WOMEN.

BURT (CONT'D)

CUT IT OUT! TAKE THAT SHIT OUTSIDE!

#### 5A INT. PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE, AKA "BULLPEN" - CONTINUOUS 5A

BURT WADES IN, TRYING TO GET PEOPLE APART. AS NINA STANDS THERE WITH HER HUGE STACK OF FILES, THE MASS OF PEOPLE IN FRONT OF HER GRADUALLY PARTS TO REVEAL--

PHIL QUINLAN, RECLINING CALMLY AT HIS DESK IN THE MIDDLE OF THE MAYHEM, COFFEE IN ONE HAND AND FOLDED NEWSPAPER IN THE OTHER. TALL, DARK, AND SLACKY. HANDSOME, COULD USE A SHAVE. HIS EYES LOOK UP FROM HIS PAPER AND LOCK ON NINA.

PHIL

There's the new gal.

(as Nina smiles, coy)

I heard you went all Gary Busey and smashed a lamp in George Michael's face.

NINA

What? No, it was Elton--Look, that was an isolated incident, I'm just here to--

PHIL

--pay some dues, play nice, slum it for a while, in six months earn your way back into money law?

NTNA

Nice to meet you too, I'm Nina. And I'm hoping it's more like 3 months. You are..

NINA LEANS IN, READS A SHINY CARD ON HIS CLUTTERED DESK.

NINA (CONT'D)

... Phil Quinlan. Card-carrying member of Chumango Casino Gold Club. This how you augment your fat county salary?

PHIL

You should see the rims on my Corolla. (they share a smile)
In fact, I'll win a bet right now.

5

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CONTINUED: 5A

5A CONTINUED:

NINA

Yeah? What's that?

PHIL

You're gonna be late for court.

NINA

Shit. I mean...shoot. Shit.

#### 6 INT. COURTROOM 3 - DAY

6

NINA BOLTS THROUGH THE DOUBLE DOORS OF THE COURTROOM, FILES SLIPPING OUT OF HER HAND, GETTING HER BEARINGS. THEN THE SMELL HITS HER. SHE SEES MANY PEOPLE HOLD HANDKERCHIEFS, ETC. OVER THEIR NOSES. NINA HEADS FOR THE DEFENSE TABLE.

NTNA

Oh dear Jesus, what's that smell?

MICAH, A YOUNG WOMAN WITH PIXIE HAIR AND MANY PIERCINGS, IS AT THE DEFENSE TABLE, QUICKLY SORTING THROUGH FILES.

MICAH

Last time a possum died in a vent, but my quess is the sewer exploded. You Nina?

NINA

Yeah, who ar---

MICAH

Get over here, you got arraignments: you gotta get pleas before--

BAILIFF

(bellowing)

All rise! Court of the County of Los Angeles now in session, Honorable Don P. Nelson presiding.

JUDGE NELSON

Jesus H. Christ, it smells like baked shit in here. Trent, did you hit a deer in the hallway?

TRENT

(chuckling)

They don't let me drive my Audi in the hallway, Your Honor.

NINA FREEZES. SHE KNOWS THIS VOICE TOO WELL. SHE TURNS.

NINA

Trent?!

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6 CONTINUED:

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NINA GOES CATATONIC. TRENT IS AS SHOCKED AS SHE IS.

TRENT

Nina?!

NINA

Trent.

TRENT

Nina.

JUDGE NELSON

Trent. Nina. Judge. Court. Plea. NOW.

NINA

Sorry Your Honor, it's just... see, Trent and I used to--

TRENT NINA

Date.

Be engaged.

NINA (CONT'D)
Date? Is that all it was? Dating?

JUDGE NELSON

Well, Trent? Is that all it was?

TRENT LOOKS CAUGHT, STARTS TO SPEAK...

JUDGE NELSON (CONT'D)

I'm kidding, I don't give a shit. This is court, people, not "Maury Povich."
Defense, how do you plea?

NINA

Your Honor, short recess? I just need to go resign.

#### END ACT I

#### ACT II

## 7 INT. COURTROOM 3, LA COUNTY COURTHOUSE - DAY

7

NINA IS PACKING UP HER STUFF. MICAH APPROACHES.

MICAH

Can you function? What's the deal?

NINA

I'm quitting, that's the deal. I'm gonna go home, open a nice bottle of wine, and bludgeon myself to death with it.

(CONTINUED)

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7 CONTINUED:

MICAH

Impressive. Quick question: were you a giant pussy at your old job?

> NINA \*

(stopping)

Who are you?

MICAH \*

Micah, intern, second year law student, and the only one here besides you that doesn't want to throw all your clients in a dungeon.

NINA

Cool, cool-- quick question: what the hell is my ex-fiancé doing here?

> \* MICAH

Trent's the new Deputy DA. Came here six months ago, charms all the judges' panties off--

NTNA

That is in his skill set...

MICAH \*

--yeah, and if you leave now, all your clients go right back into the sardine can 'til they're reassigned counsel. Which could take days. Or weeks. So maybe do us a solid and finish the day?

NINA LOOKS TO THE PRISONER PEN AND RECONSIDERS.

NINA

You're one spirited little lesbian.

MICAH

Who said I'm a lesbian?

NINA

No one? Me. I mean not me. Nice eye ring--

JUDGE NELSON

ARE WE STILL ON THE PAYROLL HERE?

NINA

Yes, thank you Your Honor.

THREE WORKMEN ARE POKING AROUND BEHIND THE JUDGE.

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7 CONTINUED: (2)

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JUDGE NELSON

(annoyed, to workmen)

Am I being assassinated?

WORKMAN #1

We're trying to find the poopy smell.

JUDGE NELSON

Well it's NOT ME. Ms. Whitley? PLEA.

NINA GOES INTO HUSTLE MODE, LOOKS AT FILE MICAH GIVES HER.

NINA

Okay. Hector?

HECTOR

Yes?

NINA

(reading file)

Charged with... ohhh, you stuffed your wife in the chimney?

HECTOR

I don't have a chimney.

Did you stuff your wife in someone else's chimney?

HECTOR

I don't have a wife.

NINA

Because... she's dead in a chimney?

HECTOR

No. I'm loitering. Hector Galindo.

MICAH QUICKLY HANDS NINA ANOTHER FILE.

MICAH

Here, the file's mislabeled.

NINA

Sure, why wouldn't it be?

JUDGE NELSON

(bellowing)

Let's boogie! How does defendant plead?

NINA

Not guilty, Your Honor.

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7 CONTINUED: (3)

JUDGE STOPS WRITING AND LOOKS UP AT NINA. SO DOES TRENT.

NINA (CONT'D)

What? Maybe he's not guilty. It happens. (reading)

Let's see -- defendant was picked up outside Home Depot, looking for day labor. Request he be released on own recognizance. 'Cause, duh.

TRENT

Your Honor, defendant was harassing patrons, causing a public safety threat.

NINA

Oh, please. Mr. Galindo, can you show us how you were "harassing" people?

HECTOR

(screaming/arms akimbo)
TRABAJO! TRABAJO! POR FAVOR! TRABAJO!

NINA O-kayyy. A tad theatrical, but he wants to paint your shed, not rob and kill you.

TRENT
Your Honor, if he did that in front of
your house at Christmas, would the kids

feel safe caroling?

JUDGE NELSON

Good point. Bail set at \$1,500. Next!

NINA

Wait, he can't afford that! I mean, I didn't get to say stuff yet...

JUDGE NELSON

(as if talking to a puppy)

Sorry. How you doin'? You hanging in there?

NINA

Thank you, I just--

JUDGE NELSON

NEXT CASE.

QUICK CUTS NOW, AS NINA SCRAMBLES THROUGH HER PLEAS. A LADY WINO STANDING BESIDE NINA--

NTNA

Mrs. DeSilva poses no threat, she is--

(CONTINUED)

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CONTINUED: (4)

7

WINO

I'M GONNA KILL MERV GRIFFIN!

JUDGE NELSON

Already dead, boss. Bail \$10,000. Next!

CUT TO: AN EVIL-LOOKING SKINHEAD WITH SWASTIKA TATTOOS--

(looking from guy to file) Okay, yeah, I got nothing--

SERIES OF QUICK CUTS OF NINA'S DEFENDANTS BEING DENIED BAIL AND LED BACK TO JAIL. WE END WITH NINA SLUMPED, EXASPERATED, NEXT TO A SLIGHT LATINO MAN, VASQUEZ.

TRENT

This is the defendant's 3rd DUI offense.

JUDGE NELSON

Not cool, bail is revoked. Next ca--

NINA

What about treatment options? (off TRENT SCOFFING)

Eh, you're scoffing. I used to hate that. So condescending. I just thought we might actually address Mr. Vasquez's disease, as opposed to re...jailing him.

TRENT

And I just thought jail might keep him away from booze and cars, so he doesn't kill people, you know, that whole public safety thing.

NINA

You didn't do time after you got sloshed at the Sullivan wedding and drove the car onto the lawn and declared yourself the "King of Awesome."

TRENT'S EYES WIDEN. THE WHOLE COURTROOM STARES AT HER.

NINA (CONT'D)

...Sorry, that's not, uh, cool, making it personal... it's not relevant to this. I don't remember much about that night, anyway... only because I rarely think about Trent anymore, if at all -- We can totally strike this from the--

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CONTINUED: (5) 7

JUDGE NELSON

Aaand I'm bored. Bail is revoked. I'm going to get some oxygen. Reconvene 2 pm.

EVERYONE GETS UP TO LEAVE. NINA SAGS, DISPIRITED.

NINA

Well. I batted a thousand. Did I even need to be here?

TRENT STEPS OVER TO THE DEFENSE SIDE.

TRENT

Nina...

7

STARTLED, NINA SPINS AROUND. SHE TRIES TO PLAY COOL, BUT HE STILL MAKES HER WEAK IN THE KNEES.

TRENT (CONT'D)

I know this is strange. And I'm sorry if that phone call upset you. I was trying to do the right thing -- if I'd known it was going to instigate you bashing Michael Bolton with a bowl--

NINA

Elton Jo-- Nevermind. Why do you think I care? I so, so don't even care about any of this...

TRENT

Well it looks like we're gonna be working together a lot, so if there's anything---

NINA

If there's anything what? I don't have anything. For you. From me. Anymore. Maybe your fiancé does. Is that what you meant? Okay. Good talk.

#### 8 <u>INT. PUBLIC DEFENDER BULLPEN - DAY</u>

THE BULLPEN IS PACKED WITH PD'S WORKING ON BRIEFS, EATING, ETC. NINA LOOKS AROUND, BUT THERE'S NO FREE DESK.

PHIL

Somebody just survived their first public defender massacre! Congratulations!

THE OTHERS REACT WITH UNENTHUSIASTIC CHEERS. NINA GOES TO DESK ACROSS FROM PHIL AND, FINDING NO CHAIR, RETRIEVES ONE FROM THE FILE ROOM.

(CONTINUED)

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8

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8 CONTINUED:

PHIL (CONT'D)

This calls for a toast.

HE PREPARES TWO COFFEE CUPS.

NINA \*

A toast? I just left the city's \* impoverished out to dry. \*

NINA STARTS TO OPEN A SMALL YOGURT.

PHIL \*

If you got that from the vending machine on 5, I wouldn't even open--

NINA SMELLS IT AND RECOILS. PHIL PRODUCES A FLASK.

NINA \*

\*

Thanks. Guess I'll go get salad.

PHIL

We got salad here...

HE PULLS A JAR OF MARTINI OLIVES OUT OF THE DRAWER.

NINA

It's 12:15, I don't want a drink. I want a quick bite so I can review my cases.

PHIL

Slow it down, Erin Brockovich. Anyone ever tell you it's rude to turn down a drink?

NINA

Anyone ever tell you you talk like a date rapist?

PHIL

(pointing to OLD PD)

See that guy, Alan? He used to burn real hot, like you...26 years old.

NINA

And you've avoided this fate by... drinking and gambling?

PHIL

(while making drinks)

Think of it this way: the system is just like a dinosaur. It's not interested in justice or change, it just wants the docket cleared, the paperwork done, and—

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8 CONTINUED: (2)

NINA

Sorry, how is this like a dinosaur?

PHIL

It's... big. But we've only got tiny little T-Rex arms and then HERE COME THE VELOCIRAPTORS--

NINA

Wait, are we the dinosaurs, or --?

PHIL

--and you wind up like those little proto shrew mammal things, laying low under the jungle's natural canopy, using your instincts, *surviving*.

NINA

So "don't try"? That's the wisdom of your metaphor, which isn't even a real--?

CHERYL AND OSCAR ENTER THE OFFICE AND SEES NINA.

CHERYL

OH MY GOD, YOU SLEPT WITH TRENT BARBER!

CARLOS

(looking up from phone game)
Already? Damn, first day? Ambitious...

NINA

Is there any Nina gossip about my good qualities? "Nina speaks business Mandarin... Nina has small pores..."

PHIL

I don't think Square Jaw's gonna be around long. Trent's shoring up his resume before he runs for office.

CARLOS

Do some "tough on crime" time, throw some minorities in jail, you get elected.

CHERYL

Yep. If you're brown, you're going down.

CARLOS

(to Cheryl)

No, see -- you don't get to say that. I can say that, but you cannot say that. Ever.

CHERYL SITS, PROPS HER FEET, AND UNBUTTONS HER PANTS.

(CONTINUED)

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II/18.

8

CONTINUED: (3)

CHERYL

(oblivious, to NINA)

Phil was like Trent once. Remember, Philly?

PHIL

Yep. Before I lost 27 thousand cases.

CHERYL

Yeah, we were like "Oh, Phil!" And now we're like "Awww, Phil..."

(to Nina, rubbing bunions)

Don't worry about Trent dumping you. I can't keep a man around to save my life.

BURT

(ENTERING BULLPEN)

Especially if he's a prisoner in your custody.

CHERYL

Oh, drink your prune juice. He can't get far, he's got itty bitty Latin legs.

CARLOS

I am gonna stab this bitch.

BURT

You better hope that guy turns up in an ICE raid or a dumpster, or you're gonna be the one in front of the grand jury explaining how you lost him.

CHERYL

Thousand bucks he turns up in 24 hours.

BURT

You're on. Have it in cash.

THE OTHERS REACT TO CHERYL AND BURT SHAKING ON IT. BURT HEADS INTO HIS OFFICE.

PHIL

Hell-ooo, I got twenty on Burt. Nina, you want in on this action?

NINA TAKES IN THE SCENE, THEN HEADS FOR THE DOOR.

NINA

No thanks. I don't have a drinking or a gambling problem... just a social, romantic, and living-my-life problem.

\*

9

II/19.

PHIL

Where you going, Cap'n No Fun?

NINA

I'm gonna go talk to my clients. I'm not gonna look like an ass in court again.

PHIL

I'll look at your ass in court again.

NINA

Wow. You spun that into gold.

## INT. COURTROOM 3, LA COUNTY COURTHOUSE - DAY

9

\*

COURTROOM BUZZES WITH ACTIVITY. OUTSIDE THE PRISONER DOCK--NINA APPROACHES THE BAILIFF, MORRIS, A ROBUST BLACK MAN.

NINA

I need to see Ynes Gutierrez. She's got an arraignment and she's not in the pen.

MORRIS

I do not know her present location.

NTNA

I'm her attorney, I need to see her. Now.

MORRIS

Ma'am, you do not run this place. I run this place. And I decide who you see and whom you do not see.

NINA

I guess it's "retrieve-your-own-prisoner day." Budget cutbacks and all.

NINA REACHES AROUND MORRIS AND PUSHES A RED BUTTON ON THE WALL. THE HALF-DOOR OF THE PRISONER PEN OPENS AND NINA STRIDES TO THE LARGE IRON DOOR THAT LEADS BACK TO THE JAIL AND PULLS. IT DOESN'T BUDGE.

MORRIS

Yeah, that's a security door. Also works on a buzzer. Bzzzz. Try it now. Bzzz. Not working? Bzzz. Must be broken.

NINA STARES AT HIM, NOT AMUSED.

NINA

I'm sorry. I was rude. I missed lunch. I have issues. Pretty please? Open sesame?

9 CONTINUED:

MORRIS

Yeah, see the thing is, it leads back to a jail, so we gots to keep it locked.

NINA WALKS BACK TO THE HALF-DOOR AND FINDS IT IS ALSO NOW LOCKED. SHE'S TRAPPED IN THE HOLDING PEN.

NINA

Could you hit that button, sir?

MORRIS

Apparently it's not my job anymore. As you showed me before. It's your job now.

THEY STARE AT EACH OTHER. NINA RESORTS TO CLIMBING OVER THE HALF-DOOR... IN A PENCIL SKIRT. SHE GETS STUCK ON THE TOP AS HER SKIRT RIDES UP, EXPOSING THE TOP OF HER PANTYHOSE.

MORRIS (CONT'D)

Nice Spanx.

NINA

They are NOT Spanx, sir, they're Control Top. Big difference. I don't generally wear Control Top either, and the irony of that name is not lost on me, but they mislabelled the package—

MORRIS

ALL RISE!

THE CHAMBER DOOR FLINGS OPEN, JUDGE NELSON ENTERS. NINA, FREE FROM THE HALF-DOOR, STORMS UP TO THE BENCH.

NINA

Judge, I need to see my client and---

JUDGE NELSON

IF YOU EVER approach my bench again without permission, I will ship you to Pelican Bay in a Hefty bag. Love you, mean it, best friends. NEXT CASE.

NINA SLINKS BACK TO THE DEFENSE TABLE. PHIL IS SEATED JUST BEHIND IT, SMILING. HE HANDS HER A FRESH YOGURT.

PHIL

Told you I'd look at your ass in court again.

\*

\*

\*

END ACT II

ACT III

#### INT. COURTROOM 3, LA COUNTY COURTHOUSE - DAY 10

10

SEVERAL PUBLIC DEFENDERS ARE SEATED BEHIND THE DEFENSE TABLE WHERE CHERYL ADDRESSES THE COURT, AN ORNATE SILK SCARF TIED AROUND HER FACE LIKE A BANDIT. BURT SITS A COUPLE ROWS BACK CONFERRING WITH A FAMILY.

WORKMEN IN COVERALLS AND POLLEN MASKS ARE USING A LONG WOODEN POLE TO TAP THE CEILING. THE LOUD TAPPING CAN BE HEARD THROUGHOUT THE PROCEEDINGS.

NINA IS SEATED BESIDE MICAH, LEAFING THROUGH A FILE.

CHERYL

So the prosecutor's argument that my client, Mr...

SHE TURNS BACK AND READS THE NAME OUT OF THE FILE.

CHERYL (CONT'D)

Gardner? Garnier? was deliberately trying to run over... the other guy... is a lie.

Trent.

Objection: Bias.

JUDGE NELSON

Sustained. Continue.

TAP-TAP-TAP... PHIL ENTERS, SITS BESIDE NINA. TRENT, SITTING COOLLY AT THE DA'S TABLE, STEALS A GLANCE BACK AT NINA. THE GHOST OF A SMIRK. PHIL TAKES NOTICE.

PHIL

Let me ask you something. Why him? He's got about as much empathy as a mako shark. What made you say "me want that"?

NTNA

Look at him. He's a Trent. When a Trent likes you, you just like him back.

Ohhhh. So it's a reflex. Like gagging.

CHERYL LIFTS HER SCARF, TAKES OUT GUM, PUTS IT ON A FILE.

CHERYL

My client is not only innocent but owed, like, a huge apology. For real.

TRENT

Objection: That's just stupid.

JUDGE NELSON

Overruled. Agreed, but overruled.

TAP-TAP-TAP...

PHIL

I'll be honest: that guy chaps my ass. The Trent. It's the Trents that make this system so jacked up. I'd love nothing more than to see you wipe that smirk off his face.

NINA

It's not a smirk, he's just handsome.

PHIL

Whatever. I just wanna see you destroy that douche. Guys like that keep us down.

MICAH

(leaning in)

FYI, the reason Phil's mired in mediocrity is because he used to be as good as Trent. Then he got his ass handed to him a few times, got scared, and quit.

PHIL

I'm sitting right here.

NINA

(to Phil)

You said don't run too hot, or try -- but I should destroy Trent? Lots of conflicting advice today. I'm losing track.

PHIL

Well, I guess I'm just surprised, you know? You're this sharp, gorgeous woman... and he owns you.

NINA SHIFTS UNCOMFORTABLY.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Not because he's a better lawyer or he thinks he's too good for you, but because you think he's too good for you. You wear it like a hat. What is it with women in their 40's?

NTNA

I'm 32.

(CONTINUED)

\*

\*

BENCHED "Pilot" Full Pink Revised - 10.29.13 III/23. 10 CONTINUED: (2) 10 PHIL \* (exiting) Whelp, I gotta bolt. NINA \* So on my first day I get humiliated by my ex-fiancé, chewed out by Marylin Manson's niece, and a pep talk from a guy who drinks his lunch. This day officially could not get more surrea --CRAAACK-CRASSHHHHHHHH. THE CEILING EXPLODES AND DEBRIS SHOWERS DOWN INTO THE GALLERY. GASPS, SCREAMS AROUND THE COURTROOM. THROUGH THE DUST, WE REVEAL WHAT HAS FALLEN: A DEAD GUY IN AN ORANGE JAIL JUMPSUIT. BURT LOOKS ON IN DISMAY. HE KNOWS WHAT THIS MEANS. CHERYL THERE HE IS! MY PRISONER! (mouths to Burt) \* Pay up, motha-sucka! INT. COURTROOM 3, LA COUNTY COURTHOUSE - LATER 11 11 NINA AT THE DEFENSE TABLE. BEHIND HER IS A WEB OF YELLOW TAPE AND CONES AROUND A FIELD OF DEBRIS. YNES, A LATINA WOMAN, IS LED UP TO THE DEFENSE TABLE. JUDGE NELSON Okay, people. Almost martini time. People vs... Ynes Gutierrez. Shoplifting. Plea? NTNA (reading file, to Ynes) Shoplifting diapers? So you have kids. Who's watching them right now, husband? YNES No, he left...he say I work too much. NINA I know that song. SHE LOOKS OVER TO TRENT, WHO COOLLY GOES ABOUT HIS PAPERWORK. SHE LOOKS TO YNES'S PAPER WORK. JUDGE NELSON \* Miss Whitley, what's the plea? NINA (to Ynes) \* How long have you been in detention?

BENCHED "Pilot" Full Pink Revised - 10.29.13 III/24.
CONTINUED:

11 CONTINUED:

<del>-</del>

YNES Since last Friday?

JUDGE NELSON \*

PLEA???

NINA GETS A LIGHTBULB... SHE SHUTS THE FILE, PLOPS IT DOWN.

NINA \*

You know what? From the looks of her... she's probably guilty.

YNES

Como?!

JUDGE NELSON

Very well. Bail?

TRENT

Request bail of \$2,500. Defendant has a Failure to Appear and is a flight risk.

NINA

See, I knew you were gonna say that. Nothing slips by you. Good hustle.

JUDGE NELSON

Defense satisfied with bail amount?

NINA

Satisfied? Oh no, Your Honor. This woman is clearly a public safety threat.

JUDGE NELSON

Counsel, get to the point. Bail amount.

NINA

Seventy. Million. Dollars.

YNES LOOKS AGHAST. PHIL LOOKS AT MICAH. OH SHIT. EVERYONE STARES AT NINA. TRENT RISES SLIGHTLY.

TRENT

The People have no problem with that.

JUDGE NELSON

Shut up, Trent. Miss Whitley, you're not about to have one of your little episodes are you? Should I duct tape the windows?

NINA

Oh right! 'Cause I'm craaazy. Not at all. Hell, this job is easy-peasy, lemon squeezy.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BENCHED "Pilot" Full Pink Revised - 10.29.13 III/25.

11

#### CONTINUED: (2)

11

NINA (CONT'D)

I don't need to actually TALK to these people before I decide their fate.

(to Ynes)
I mean, you're guilty, right?

YNES

Um, can I talk to a different lawyer?!

NINA

Your Honor, we can throw this one back in the pokey. Plenty of room. It's not like people are dying to get out of there---

(looking at ceiling hole,
 pretend grimace)

Whoops. Too soon?

JUDGE NELSON

(no longer amused)

Miss Whitley, it's your first day here. But I will hold you in contempt.

NTNA

Your Honor, seriously? We're treating a mom who allegedly stole diapers as a violent menace to society and locking her in jail? Call me crazy, but at least where I came from we were practicing LAW. This is like a slow motion hate crime.

PHIL

(to Micah)

Man, she really knows how to quit a job. Blaze of friggin' glory.

NINA

Ms. Gutierrez previously failed to appear. Why would she do that? Ynes, why?

YNES

Because--

NINA

Sh! No one cares.

BURT PLASCHKE STANDS IN THE BACK. COVERS HIS FACE. SHIT.

NINA (CONT'D)

Because if my esteemed colleague had checked the date of her violation, he'd have noticed that she *couldn't* appear in court last Friday because she was ALREADY IN JAIL. Awaiting THIS bail hearing. Durrrr.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED: (3)

11

NINA (CONT'D)

But you're right: by god, let's get this violent, diaper-stealing nutjob off the street. 70 MILLION DOLLARS! Ynes, can you afford 70 mil?

YNES

No.

NINA

Can you afford 70 dollars?

YNES

If I had 70 dollars I'd buy diapers.

NINA

(to Judge)

THEN WHAT'S THE DIFF?

JUDGE STARES KNIVES INTO NINA. SHE STARES RIGHT BACK.

JUDGE NELSON

Gimme a number.

NINA

One dollar.

JUDGE NELSON

One dollar. For bail.

JUDGE NELSON LOOKS AT HER. TENSE BEAT.

JUDGE NELSON (CONT'D)

Okay, Ms. Whitley. Considering a dead man fell out of my ceiling today, I'm feeling generous. We'll do it your way. But when Ms. Gutierrez winds up back here in three weeks for the same thing, we're gonna do it my way. Bail is set at one dollar.

NINA

YES!!!

NINA QUICKLY FISHES INTO HER POCKET, PULLS OUT A CRUMPLED DOLLAR BILL, AND SLAPS IT DOWN ON THE TABLE--POP!

NINA (CONT'D)

PROFFERED. BOOYA KASHAAA! Unhitch her!

MORRIS

She's not handcuffed.

BENCHED "Pilot" Full Pink Revised - 10.29.13 III/27.
CONTINUED: (4) 11

Perfect! You are going HOME tonight, muchacha! VAMOS A CASA! Slipped one past the goalie, Trent-o. You. Don't. Own. Me.

SHE MUSSES TRENT'S HAIR. TRENT RECOILS. PHIL CAN'T HIDE HIS SHIT-EATING GRIN. MICAH GUFFAWS, BURT ROLLS HIS EYES.

JUDGE NELSON

(exiting)

Looks like your job just got very interesting, Trent-o.

OFF TRENT TRYING TO SMILE, BUT CLEARLY PISSED.

## 12 INT. DON GUARDO'S BAR - NIGHT

11

12

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\*

NINA, CHERYL, BURT, AND OTHER DEFENDERS ARE AT A TABLE.

CHERYL

(in Burt's face)

THOUSAND BUCKS, BUDDY! You can make a down payment by buying everyone a drink.

BURT

We shouldn't be celebrating. Somebody died today.

(then, to Nina)

And you, service your clients and go home. We don't need the histrionics--

(to Cheryl)

DON'T DRINK MY GOD DAMNED SCOTCH.

EVERYONE LAUGHS AND TOASTS. ANGLE: GLASSES PART TO REVEAL PHIL SITTING AT THE END OF THE BAR. NINA HEADS OVER WITH HER BEER.

NINA

You sulking? Bad bet on Burt, there.

(OFF HIS SMILE)

Why are you smiling? Oh, do I have a bat in the cave?

AS SHE CHECKS HER NOSE, CARLOS WALKS OVER AND PLOPS A STACK OF CASH IN FRONT OF PHIL.

**CARLOS** 

Sweet parlay, muchacho.

PHIL

(off Nina's confused look)

I doubled down that you'd get one over on Trent today. I had a hunch about you.

BENCHED "Pilot" Full Pink Revised - 10.29.13 III/28.

CONTINUED: 12

NINA

A hunch? What am I, the #6 horse at the Santa Anita?

PHIL

I gotta say, watching you up there gave me something to believe in again. Reminded me why we're all here. To fight for people who need us. Thank you.

HE SMILES. SHE CAN'T HELP BUT RETURN IT.

12

NINA

(realizing)

--Wait, are you screwing with me? Was that what your pep talk was all about??

PHIL

You should have seen your face! "Oh, I inspired you? Oh, oh..." That was fantastic! I could make a lot off a mark like you--

\*

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\*

NINA

(laughs, good-naturedly)
Yeah, yeah. I walked right into that. You
know what I just realized? You have that
one thing Trent doesn't.

PHIL

What's that?

NINA

Soul. I mean when a woman sees Trent she starts thinking of China patterns. A woman sees you and they think...how soon can I get back to his apartment?

PHIL IS CAUGHT OFF GUARD.

PHIL

...Really?

NINA

Nope. But you should seen your face.

NINA GRINS AS SHE WALKS AWAY. PHIL MANAGES A SMILE...

END OF SHOW