

MIC CHECK; KARAOKE LOVE

Written by

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"A widowed sales exec rediscovers her love of singing through a Karaoke App while igniting a romance with a studio exec that could jeopardize her career."

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FADE IN:

EXT. CARLA'S HOME, BEDROOM, ATLANTA, GA - MORNING

CARLA KING, 30's, assertive, funny, decisive, stirs in bed, reaches her arm over an empty space.

She glances to a picture of her late husband on nightstand. It has candles and flowers around it. She half smothers self with a pillow.

CARLA
Good mornin', Babe.

ALARM CLOCK SCREAMS, flashes 7:30 am. Earth Wind & Fire's 'YOU ARE A WINNER' fills room, door bursts open. In comes EPIPHANY KING, 5, cute in pajamas, singing, "air mic" in hand.

EPIPHANY
Wake up, Mom! Whohooo! *Ch-ch-cha-
chaa, ch-ch-cha-chaa!*

She dances circles to the funky beat that fills the room. Carla jumps out of bed, "air-mic" in hand, joins her.

CARLA
*When you're feelin', that you're
movin' up...*

EPIPHANY
*Always someone tryin' to make you
stop!*

CARLA KING
*When you're fillin', fillin' up
your cup...*

EPIPHANY
*Aye, someone come's 'round, spill
every drop!*

MONTAGE:

They dance, sing and get ready for the day. Both select outfits from respective closets. Carla holds up two pairs of shoes; One is Nike - Epiphany grabs 'Saysh' by Alison Felix.

Both brush teeth while trying to sing the EWF song, bubbles grow from frothing mouths as they brush and sing in mirror, gargle, and rinse. At the front window, they stand, waiting.

INT/EXT. CARLA'S HOME, LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Carla looks impatiently out her bay window, then at her watch; it shows 8:02 am - no Camp bus. Epiphany stands ready at the door with a backpack.

EXT. CARLA'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

A DAY CAMP BUS pulls off 5-minutes late. Carla in doorway, waves to Epiphany, she waves back, other kids wave. Bus pulls off, Carla eyes the driver, sternly taps watch. Driver honks.

INT. CARLA'S BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Carla in the mirror, fluffs hair, opens her perfectly organized makeup kit, gazes into eyes.

CARLA

Hello Young Lady. Ya know you're bad-ass, right? Hmm? Ya know you're fully capable, fully-equipped and ya *kick major ass*? Did ya know that, hmm? Well, ya' do!

She pumps fist, smirks, smiles, and applies lipstick.

EXT. CARLA'S HOME, OVERVIEW - MOMENTS LATER

EWF's 'YOU ARE A WINNER' continues as her garage door rises. A Black Mercedes Benz convertible backs out, revs engine, drives off.

Overview at a red light. Carla's POV: Male driver in next lane glances over, smiles, raises sexy eyebrow. "Tail pipes" as Carla revs engine, pulls off sharply on the green light.

E/I. GAB ENTERTAINMENT OFFICE BLDG, OVERVIEW - MOMENTS LATER

Carla pulls into SPOM (Sales Person of the Month) parking space. Follow black heels and stockinged legs as they swivel out and stride up stairs, through a lobby, into an elevator.

INT. GAB ENTERTAINMENT OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The 5th floor elevator doors open and in strides Carla "The Closer"; stylish business attire, "Black Girl Magic" emanating, she walks down the isle separating cubicles.

A nerdy co-worker on phone, SETH, 20's, tall, Jewish Afro, young Howard Stern type, nods, watches her walk by.

 SETH
Morning.

 CARLA
Mornin'.

He sniffs for her perfume as she passes, and loses it.

 SETH
Whoaaa, Duuude!!

DAYDREAM/SLOW MOTION. He sees Carla pass in full sexy KISS GEAR: guitar, heels, face paint. She strums, sticks out long KISS tongue, kicks a leg with KISS boot; he snaps out of it.

 SETH (CONT'D)
Umm, hmm...

END DAYDREAM.

A frumpy co-worker, AMY, 20's, drops her pencil when she sees Carla walk by.

 AMY
Morning.

 CARLA
Mornin'.

SLOW MOTION. She looks her up and down as she picks up her pencil, sees shoes, legs, skirt, jacket, purse. Murmurs to self.

 AMY
Oh my, those shoes, she's killing
it...

Carla hears, turns, hair "slow-motion flows" as she looks back and gives her "face".

END SLOW-MOTION.

INT. CARLA'S CUBICLE - CONTINUOUS

Carla at desk, clicks on her computer, takes sips of coffee from her "COFFEE is for CLOSERS" Mug, settles in. Phone rings, she almost dribbles on herself, takes the call.

CARLA
 Thank you for choosing GAB
 Entertainment, this is Carla King.

A pause of silence.

CARLA (CONT'D)
 Hello?

INT. IICHI-KUUCHI (ITCHY-COOCHIE) COMPANY, TOKYO - INTERCUT

FUMIKO SUZUKI, 25, *Japanese Accent*, Marketing coordinator,
 sits at her computer, a calendar and U.S. Map on the screen,
 a Starbucks coffee cup on her desk.

FUMIKO
 Oh, ha! Hi Carla, you, you sound
 just like
 (beat)
 I thought you were a recording, ha!

CARLA
 Oh, yeah, yeah, I get that a lot,
 ha! How can I help you?

FUMIKO
 Yes, yes, um, I am Fumiko Suzuki
 with the Iichi-Kuuchi Group and we
 are coming to--

CARLA
 --I'm sorry, excuse me. Wha, what
 did you say? Which group??

FUMIKO
 Oh, yes, yes--the Iichi-Kuuchi
 Group? We are largest manufacturer
 of Feminine products in Japan. We
 desire a quote for our Las Vegas
 tradeshow; we are "coming to
 America" you can say, hehe.

Carla stops herself from laughing out loud, giggles with
 phone to chest, regains composure.

CARLA
 Ahem, very good, very good Fumiko,
 I'll be happy to assist you.

INT. GAB CUSTOMER SERVICE DEPT., ANDRE'S CUBICLE - SAME TIME

ANDRE CONNER, 29, types between sips of coffee, his computer shows e-invites to his 30th Birthday party to people in a Karaoke App, including "Nikkita-matata".

He glances up, sees buddy, CSR Rep TOMMY JONES, late 20's, sharply pressed shirt and tie, approaching; a ritual fist bump.

TOMMY

A.C.! Happy Monday, Baby, what's crackin'?

ANDRE

Hey now, T! Yeah it is. Dog, my Birthday week in *full effect!*

TOMMY

Oh, yeaah, that's right! It's ya' Birthday Friday, huh? Let's get it poppin' then fool, what's up??

ANDRE

Dog, I'm just sending out invites to Mic Fest at Double-Tree riiight now!

Clicks the mouse, sends out E-invitations.

TOMMY

Whaaa? You doin' that Karaoke thing again? Dude, you be serious about that singing shit, huh?

ANDRE

I'm tellin' you, T, the Ladies love it, Bro. They lucky I ain't single cause--

TOMMY

--Yo' ass single as a Dolla' bill. Ya' betta quit dreamin' and get that ass! Ya' can't sing, no-way!

ANDRE

Please, I be throwin' down. They call me "Mr. Smooth"!

TOMMY

Quit beggin', fool, you ain't Keith Sweat, bahaaa...

Leans in.

TOMMY (CONT'D)
 Hey, speaking of "The Ladies", you see your girl, Carla, come through?

ANDRE
 Aww, mannn, damnnn! I missed my mornin' ray of sunshine?? I know she lookin' good, Dog?

TOMMY
 Bro, you did. She is. Walking 'round here lookin' like Gabrielle Union, *shiiit!* Waitin' on Seth for the perfume report right now. I got \$5, on Chanel No. 5, hahaa!

ANDRE
 What's today, Monday? I got D & G!

TOMMY
 I'm waitin' on my girl Nikki to walk through now. I need my mornin' ray of Chocolate.

ANDRE
 Aye, I was too busy listenin' to baby-girl saaang. She bad though, check her out!

TOMMY
 Sing? Who, where, let me see...

Andre shows his screen, a beautiful girl sings Karaoke on a Karaoke App.

TOMMY (CONT'D)
 Ohh, snap, she sound good! Who 'dat, A?? You cheatin' on Carla's ass already? Bahahaa--

ANDRE
 --Watch ya mouth, now. I ain't tryin' to date her, just hear her sang!

INT. CARLA'S CUBICLE - MOMENTS LATER

Carla wraps up her sales call as "Bestie", Account Exec and all-around Glam Doll, NIKKI NELSON, late 20's, walks up to her cubicle, waits.

CARLA

Very good, Fumiko. I'll work to get a proposal over to you quickly. Yes, yes. Okay, will do, Bye now-- Sayonara now, haha!

Hangs up, laughs, greets Nikki.

NIKKI

Hey, Girl, what's upper? You sold another event?

CARLA

Tricky-Nikki, what's up? No, not yet, but if I pull this one off; cha-ching in Vegas, baby. What up with you?

NIKKI

Funny you should ask! You bring lunch today?

CARLA

Uhh, nooo.

NIKKI

Good, come with me, then, my treat.

CARLA

Huh? Uh ohhh, wait a minute--what are you up to?

NIKKI

Whaaat? Nothin'. I just want you to, um, meet somebody.

CARLA

Oh, no. Nooo.

NIKKI

What? C'mon, I'm treatin'--

CARLA

(British accent)

--Umm, that's gonna be a strong "no" from me, Ryan Seacrest, thank you though, Luv!

NIKKI

Girl, bye. He's for me this time, daaang! It ain't always about yo' "single" ass, Boo! I just need backup.

They both laugh.

INT. STARCHILD RECORDING STUDIOS, LOBBY - DAY

R & B Music, Urban Studio setting, monitors, video screens dotted around lobby walls. Well appointed leather seating, furniture. Wall of Gold, some Platinum CD's.

INT. SOUND BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

An R&B ARTIST in sound booth hitting smooth, melodic notes. An ENGINEER nods to the beats.

INT. RECEPTION AREA - CONTINUOUS

Receptionist CYNDI, 20's, Gatekeeper to the Studio, steps quickly behind semi-circle desk to answer as phone rings.

Studio Head, STERLING JAMES, 30's, "Denzel" good looks with a Voice to match, escorts Singer, GAIL JACKSON, late 20's, through the lobby.

STERLING

--No, yeah, we're definitely well updated, and I really like your voice track. You sound great, but I'm pretty sure we can make you sound even better.

GAIL

Well, thank you, Mr. James. You definitely seem fully equipped to handle my needs here

(beat)

You don't seem to be lacking in *any* respect, Sterling. Oh, can I call you Sterling?

STERLING

Oh, yeah, sure. Thanks, uh, Ms. Jackson.

They stop near the reception desk, Cyndi hangs up call, takes in their conversation. He seems oblivious to Gail's flirtatious tone as she proffers her hand.

GAIL

Gail. You can call me, Gail.

Handshake, Gail gives a slightly flirtatious look, Cyndi takes notice and grabs a MIC FEST flyer off her desk.

STERLING

Well, Gail, thanks for the tour request, I hope we can win your recording business.

CYNDI

Oh, Boss, perhaps Ms. Jackson would be interested?

Cyndi hands him a ON SCREEN flyer showing MIC FEST.

STERLING

Ah yes, thanks, that's right, good lookin'-out.

STERLING (CONT'D)

Gail, you should come to our Karaoke event Friday. There'll be plenty of other vocalists there singing their hearts out, sooo...

Offers flyer, she reads, looks interested.

GAIL

Ah, this does look like fun. This Friday, huh?

STERLING

Yeah, hope to see you there. Bring that golden voice of yours, show us what you're workin' with, huh?

GAIL

Well, if you're going to be there I'll stop by, Sterling.

He shyly laughs, finally notices her flirting.

STERLING

Okaaay. Well, uh, have a nice afternoon, Gail.

She walks to the door and turns to see if he's checking her out; he is, they both are. She exits.

CYNDI

Aye, that's a good lookin' chick right there, Boss!

STERLING

Yeah, yeah, she's gorgeous, true that, but--

CYNDI

--She was feeling you, too! I can't believe you didn't

(beat)

If I wasn't straight I'd be all over her!

He glances her over.

STERLING

Yeah, well, sometimes I wonder, Cuz.

(laughs)

No, I told you, there's a method to my madness. I was playin' clueless on her ass. Her skirt's already fallin', ha! She probably got gold-digger panties on under all that, anyway.

CYNDI

Gold-digger? Shiiit, I'll be a prospectin' muthafucka, then!

STERLING

Ahh, not if you ain't gotta dig for it though, Baby-girl, feel me? I told you, Folks, I don't love these Diggers! Though I certainly will do the dance for that ass, you feel me?

CYNDI

Humph, you think you bad.

He throws up hands, smirks.

STERLING

Aye, that's what they tell me! All I'm sayin' is they after money, stature, power, and let's face it, Booty. Same as me, and until I put a Ring on it, only one of us can win at the game, sooo--

CYNDI

--Well, yo' ass better start lookin' for the "real ones", Cuz. You keep smashin' these thirsty-ass "projects", drainin' that bank of yours, yo' ass gonna wish you had a real rich one! You ain't gettin' no younger, neither.

STERLING

Oh, great, thanks, Cuz. Believe me,
I ain't stoppin' till I meet the
"show-stoppa", until then, I'm
slayin' all comers!

Cyndi tosses his mail up on her desk.

CYNDI

I know you saw the books last
month; you ain't gettin' no richer,
and the bills keep comin'. I'm jus'
sayin' Cousin, I need my job
security.

STERLING

Hey, the company's good! I mean, we
a'ight

(beat)

Okay, okay, we a lil' short on
account of gettin' the App up and
runnin', but, we're there now. Just
a matter of Marketing, and--

CYNDI

--You know we got Mic Fest Friday,
that's like, 5-Grand, you got
another 5 for--

STERLING

--I know, I know. I just need
another good account to get through
Quarter-finals. We're outta Beta-
mode and going live in a couple
days

(beat)

It's all gravy from there, Cuz.
Believe me, 'erybody's gonna sing
on our App.

INT. FUSION BAR & GRILL - LATER

The restaurant is full of Business people having lunch. Carla
and Nikki at a table with a WAITER.

NIKKI

--And I'll have two Rose' Spritzers
with that, please.

Waiter gives a sexy smile, walks off.

CARLA
 Alrighty, then, you really are
 treatin' today.

Nikki smiles, checks watch, looks around at Bar entrance. She
 looks nervous, anxious. Carla notices.

CARLA (CONT'D)
 What's wrong with you? Why you
 looking like--

NIKKI
 --Okay, listen. In a minute, I
 expect a tall, fine-ass, chocolatey
 hunk of man to walk right through
 that doorway, just fa' me.

CARLA
 What?? Who? Who is it? What'chu
 mean "just for you"? It ain't your
 Birthday?!

NIKKI
 Ohhh, just somebody I met recently
 (beat)
 I just hope I recognize him, hard
 to see 'em with the dark background
 and shit--his ass better be tellin'
 the truth.

CARLA
 What?? That don't make no sense,
 Nikki! Whatchu you mean you met
 'em, but you don't--

Suddenly, Bar doors open, in walks TAD JOHNSON, late 20's, a
 portly, "chocolatey" man in conservative business attire,
 glasses, Bowtie, Clef Note lapel Pin, he's got a single Rose.

NIKKI
 Ohhh shiiit, I think that's him!!

CARLA
 Who? Him? Haha! I don't think so.
 He is *not* "Tall and Fine", Girl,
 though he is quite Chocolatey.

NIKKI
 I know, I knowww, but--hey, heyyy!
 Don't look over there!! Nooo!!

INT. IICHI-KUUCHI INTL. SALES OFFICE, TOKYO - SAME TIME

Fumiko in front of a whiteboard, her Manager and Uncle, MR. ICHIKAWA, 55, *Japanese Accent*, Hearing Aid, and other MALE SALES REPS pay attention.

MR. ICHIKAWA

--I mean I want our booth filled,
just filled with Americans!
Everywhere--Americans, Americans,
Americans! Understood, Fumiko??

FUMIKO

Yes, yes, Bucho Ichikawa. May I
propose after a long day of
Tradeshaw, perhaps the Americans
will enjoy a great big party on Las
Vegas Strip? I have--

MR. ICHIKAWA

--Oh-hoho, Strippers?? Las Vegas
Strippers?? Yesss!! Very good,
Fumiko! Yes, please, approved!
Please book twelve--

FUMIKO

--No! Bucho Ichikawa, I meant--

The Reps begin chanting and clapping.

SALES REPS

--Oh-hoho! American Strippers!!
Strippers! Strippers!

Fumiko grabs a ruler, smacks hard on the table and looks around, sternly pointing the ruler. Sales reps quickly recoil.

FUMIKO

No! No Strippers!
Strip!! "Las Vegas Strip!"

MR. ICHIKAWA

No, no Strip Club?? I, I thought
you said Strippers...

Taps hearing aid.

FUMIKO

No, I have something better than
Strippers, Oji
(beat)
Singers!

They all mumble their disagreement.

MR. ICHIKAWA

That's not better than Strippers...

FUMIKO

Karaoke Contest at our Booth in Las Vegas, Oji!! The Americans will love, love!

MR. ICHIKAWA

Ohhh, Karaoke! That's good, Fumiko! That's Shacho Kuuchi's favorite, you know? Karaoke and Saki! Though, he can't sing worth a shit, haha-ohho!

FUMIKO

Yes, yes, Oji, I dooo know. I have good connections working on it in America, right now!

INT. FUSION BAR & GRILL, ATLANTA - SAME TIME

Tad scans the room, zeroes in on Nikki's table. Sees Carla smiling and heads that way, a big smile on his face.

CARLA

Ohhh, shit, I think he's

(pause)

Oh, he is, Girl, look! He's coming over here!

NIKKI

No!! Look away! Look away!!

Tad arrives, proffers his Rose to Carla.

TAD

Well, uh, hello! You, you must be, uh...

Not sure, struggles to pronounce the name.

TAD (CONT'D)

Uh, Nikki-ta-ma-tata? Is, is that how you--

NIKKI

--Yes! Yes, that's right! Very good! *She's* Nikkita-matata and I'm Carla, her Bestie!

Nikki shakes his hand, Carla looks on in shock. Tad offers his rose again, to Carla.

TAD

Oh, great, I, I really couldn't tell from your profile picture on the App, I thought she was
(beat)
I'm really glad to meet you, uh, Nikkita-matata.

CARLA

Oh, I, I'm glad to meet you, too, uh, uhh??

TAD

Oh, Tad, err, sorry, "TAD-OOWWW", I should say. You know, like "Tadaaaaa!"? It's, that's my stage name.

Carla looks confused, Nikki quickly facilitates the confusion.

NIKKI

Ohhh, that's what you meant by your stage name, Nikkita-matata, that's, that's really cute, Girl!

Nikki begs Carla with pleading eyes. Carla shyly accepts his rose.

CARLA

Oh, uh, thank you, "Tad-oww". Um, can I call you, Tad?

TAD

Sure, sure, you can call me anything you want, pretty Lady.

Tad smiles hard, Nikki tries to keep from laughing, Carla tries to play along.

CARLA

It's, uh, nice to meet you, finally, Tad. Thank you so much for the Rose, but--

NIKKI

--Tad! Uh, "Tad-doww", I'm uh, also Nikkita-matata's Secretary, and I need to apologize, I totally forgot...

She gets up, gently puts her arm around his and walks him away from the table, toward the doors.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

Nikki, Nikkita-matata, has to get to an emergency meeting right now, and--

TAD

--Emergency meeting? When? When'd she get the call? She's right here, uh, right there! I'm actually lookin' at her, she's, she's right over there, --what'd you mean?

NIKKI

Yes, yes, she is, and you'll allow me to reschedule her for you very, very soon, right?

EXT. EN FUSION BAR & GRILL, SIDEWALK - CONTINUOUS

They exit the Bar arm in arm, Tad tries to object as they walk down the sidewalk a bit.

TAD

--That was really rude of her to, to--

NIKKI

--I'm really sorry, Tad-oww. My bad on the scheduling snafu! It's, it's my fault. I'm, uh, still kind'a new on the job, you know, huh? But, hey, hey, keep those fires burnin' mannn, that's sooo cute!

TAD

But, but--

NIKKI

Just hit me up--hit her up on the App, and we'll get you rescheduled, really quick. I gotta get back to lunch, err--get her to a meeting, but, we'll see you soon!

He looks at her closely.

TAD

Hey, wait a minute, are you two Cousins or something? You look, you kind'a look just like--

NIKKI

--Uh, yeah, umm, she thought you were a little taller, too. I gotta get back to the office, good to finally--good to meet you Bro, see you soon!

She scurries back into the Bar, shakes head.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

I gotta do better on that damn App!

INT. EN FUSION BAR & GRILL - MOMENTS LATER

Carla at the table, mouth open, half laughing as Nikki returns. Behind her, Tad's head bobs, looks in through the Bar door windows, then walks away.

CARLA

What was that? Nikki, what was that??

Nikki laughs hard, sits.

NIKKI

I'm, I'm sooo sorry, Girl, I had to. I couldn't help it--once he thought I was you! Bahahahaha!

Laughing, Nikki takes sip of her drink.

CARLA

Don't laugh, it ain't funny!

NIKKI

(still laughing)

Okay, okay. I met him online, on an App.

CARLA

What? Wait, a dating App? You, you couldn't tell what the hell the man looked like in a dating App, Nikki??

She tries to stop laughing.

CARLA (CONT'D)

And what's yo' ass doing on a dating App, anyway? Not enough Brother's around here for you?

NIKKI

Nooo, it's a Singing App! You know,
Karaoke? Here...

She pulls out her cell phone, swipes for Apps, logs into a
Karaoke App.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

My last Boo got me on it, you know,
cause he liked to sing, and, well,
I like men who sing, sooo, ha!

CARLA

What? You sing Karaoke on a stage,
live, Carla. The hell you talkin'
'bout?

NIKKI

Not no mo', Baby. He said it's some
kind'a alpha beta App thingy, but
it's gonna work for everybody real
quick, but hun-ty it works fa me,
now!

She logs into App, shows Carla sexy male singers' profile
pictures, shows her own profile.

CARLA

Hey! What is this, Nikki? Why the
hell is there a picture of me and
you on your profile?! The hell they
supposed to--

NIKKI

--Um, because sometimes I'm me,
but, sometimes I need to be you.
I'm jus' sayin'...

EXT. SIDEWALK, OUTSIDE FUSION BAR & GRILL - MOMENTS LATER

A WALK & TALK, as they exit the Grill and head back to the
office. Passerby's on either side take notice of the two
striking Women as they stroll down the sidewalk.

CARLA

Okay, wait, wait, you're telling me
you can sing Karaoke on this App,
but you're not tellin' me how that
turned into a friggin' "date" with
yo' Boy Tad, there, Nikki? C'mon!

NIKKI

Welllll, you get to see the singers' profile picture, and their video, if they put it up, but sometimes they don't be puttin' up their real pictures, Girl, and--

CARLA

--Wait, wait, so, lemme get this straight; you sing with other people, whom you don't know, and then hook up with 'em based on their looks, which may or may not be real? Is that right?

NIKKI

And the voice, don't forget the voice, but yeah, pretty much.

CARLA

Hmmm, how original. No, creative. No-no, how about *crazy!*?

A car honks, Nikki smiles, blows kisses as it passes by.

NIKKI

Nooo, normally you just sing Duets and shit, but when I filled in my profile, put up a picture and hit a few notes--shiiit, them dogs started comin' out, Hun-ty! I got all kinds of hits and shit, and, well--

CARLA

--You do *not* actually hook up with them, Nikki!?

NIKKI

Whaaa? I'm tired of being alone. I mean, one thing led to another, and another, and well, most recently, uh, Tad-owwww!

CARLA

Most recently?? Daaang, you're such a Hoe, Girl!!

Another car honks, they both laugh.

NIKKI

Whaaa?? A girl's gotta use *everything* to get a *leg up* on the competition!

(MORE)

NIKKI (CONT'D)
 You even *know* the "Man-to-Woman"
 ratio 'round here?? It's Atlanta!

Both laugh and walk into the office building.

INT. GAB ENTERTAINMENT, CARLA'S OFFICE - LATER

Carla paces around desk, Nikki checks Karaoke App messages on cell phone as she sits across.

CARLA
 --So, how does it work? I mean, how do you sing duets if you're not in the same studio?

NIKKI
 I don't know, Girl, I just "sang and look cute", cause it's a live video thingy goin' on.

CARLA
 What? Video? They can see you sing?

NIKKI
 Yep, videos and pictures. How you think I be gettin' 'em hooked, Boo? Once they hear the voice that go with this face, or yo' face, or whatever face I put up there, shiiii! Doin' my first video tonight.

Carla sits, logs into computer and googles Karaoke. ON SCREEN shows HISTORY OF KARAOKE IN JAPAN. She reads, then leans back in her chair and lights up with an idea.

CARLA
 (to self)
 Japan. Hmm.

NIKKI
 You should come with me to the Mic Fest. They be all-in, it's a whole Karaoke culture thang they got going on. 'Course, I'm just there for all the fine-ass single men, especially if they sang, 'namsayin?

Carla ponders this, gazes at Google results.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

You know you need to unwind. You been buryin' yourself in work, for how long? I see you, and it ain't healthy. Ya need to come out and let me introduce you to my Karaoke boys.

CARLA

I, I don't know--

NIKKI

--You ain't had fun in years, Carla, and you know thiss. Bless yo' Husband, R.I.P., but you gotta let go to get ahold a somethin' new, Boo. Just because you're a Widow, doesn't mean you--

(pause)

You know that old sayin', get busy livin' or get busy dyin'.

CARLA

I know, I know--

NIKKI

--He wouldn't want you just workin' and goin' home everyday--

CARLA

--Okay, okay! Yeah, I, I think I will hang with ya'

(beat)

If I ain't gotta listen to yo' ass sing all night, ha!

NIKKI

Please, girl, I slay!

Both laugh.

INT. NIKKI'S CONDO - LATER THAT NIGHT

Nikki in red Lingerie, lights candles in her bedroom. She spritzes perfume in the air, checks self in mirror, takes a couple drags off a joint, pours a drink, and grabs cellphone.

NIKKI (V.O.)

Okay, fellas, Nikki-matata is back in the mothafuckin' house, err, online, whatever'...

Hops on bed, puts on headphones, logs into Karaoke App. Sees new messages, new Invites for Duets.

NIKKI (V.O.)

Uh, huh, a couple of cuties on here tonight, I see...

Clicks on random "cute guy" picture, video of singer singing Lionel Richie's 'Hello', in a dark silhouette. She sits back with wine.

NIKKI (V.O.)

Ahh, okay, now! That's what I really need. Hello, Mr.

(pause)

Who is this?

Clicks into profile, dark silhouetted video continues.

NIKKI (V.O.)

Don't be shy, Mr., 'Hot Chocolate', huh? Soundin' real good, Mr. Chocolate Mannn! I can't see whatcha look like, but I'm a bookmark yo' ass, and...

The App buzzes, interrupts song; ON SCREEN a message from "Dre-Day" pops up, shows a reminder about Mic Fest.

NIKKI (V.O.)

Aww, that's sweet, Boo. You ain't gotta remind me, my little workplace Crush-Crush, I'm a be there. I hope Mr. Hot Chocolate is in the house, too, see what his ass look like!

INT. ANDRE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

5-year-old KENDRICK runs to the door as the doorbell rings. He puts chair next to door, hops up and peeps through the peephole. Andre in the bathroom adjusting shirt, hair.

ANDRE (O.C.)

Is that the Baby-sitter?

KENDRICK

No, it's uncle Tommy, Dad! Want me let him in?

ANDRE (O.C.)

Let him in!

Kendrick opens door, Tommy comes in, rubs his head. Kendrick locks the door.

TOMMY
What's up, Nephew?

KENDRICK
Hi, Uncle Tommy. You guys going to sing tonight!

TOMMY
Naw, yo' Daddy is, your Uncle Tommy going to catch him a fine-ass--

ANDRE (O.C.)
--Tommy! Watch ya mouth around my boy!

TOMMY
Sorry, sorry, dog!

INT. ANDRE'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Andre in mirror, primping.

ANDRE
Told yo' ass 'bout that shiii
(beat)
That stuff!

INT. DOUBLETREE HOTEL, CLUB FEZ - LATER

There's a party going on. R & B Music fills Club with beats that make your body move. Beautiful, upwardly-mobile people wear vibrant colors, sip colorful drinks.

Dance floor full of sexy patrons, dancing, mingling, drinking, conversations all around perimeter tables. The D.J. works the turntables.

Carla and Nikki turn heads from guys and girls as they enter the room and follow the Host to their booth.

HOST #1
--And you'll find all your International "peeps" here tonight for Quarterfinals. You got your Chinese peeps over there, Japanese and Korean peeps over there.

He points to large party tables full of Asian singers and party-goers.

NIKKI

Damn! That's half the room!

HOST #1

Not quite. You got your Finns over there. Now they--

CARLA

--Finns? As in, Finland??

HOST #1

Yep, the Finns actually host the biggest Karaoke shows in the whole world. Who knew, right?

They're seated and given a menu. The Host starts to walk off.

NIKKI

Uh, excuse me, Monsignor! We're ready to order, now, thank you very much. Just hold it right there...

He backpedals to the booth.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

We'll have two LIT's, two shots of Patrone, and
(to Carla)
Whatchu' want, Girl, I'm treatin'?

CARLA

Dang, Girl, you fixin' to get your drink onnn!

NIKKI

Huhh? You see this sea of people in here?? You better get your order in now, or find yo' ass swimmin' to the bar later! Shiiit, I get my drinks delivered on intervals, Baby.

Pulls a \$100 bill out of her bosom, kisses it, hands it to Waiter, who gingerly accepts it with two fingers.

CARLA

Okay, I'm a go with a Long Island Ice Tea, too.

NIKKI

Make that 6 LIT's, then, keep the change, and keep the drinks comin' every hour, and don't make me come look for yo' ass!

Pulls another \$50 bill out, the Waiter's eyes go big, he snatches it and runs off with their order. Carla tries to relax, to get into party mode.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

Alright, "Nikkita-matata", you better warm up them chords, I'm gettin' your ass on the Mic tonight.

CARLA

What? Ha, no way! I'm not getting up there, no thank you. You're the real Nikkita-mataata, you go right ahead.

NIKKI

Girl, please, look around you--see all these guys in here? They can't sang!! Well, half of 'em can't, anyway. They're looking to score, just like I am! And ya better watch half the women in here, too, okaaay?

Both laugh.

CARLA

I'm not "looking to score". I told you, I'm okay. Now, you got me out here, what the hell do you expect to show me I haven't seen before, huh?

The Master of Ceremonies, "MC SUCH & SUCH", 20's, on Mic. The Club's panel of Big Screen TV's come to life around the room, showing Karaoke booths hidden behind a big curtain.

MC SUCH & SUCH

Ladies and Gentlemen, and Mic Fest Fans from around Atlanta, It's yo' boy, MC Such & Such, and it's time, "Let's get ready to SAAANNNGGG!!"

Club goes wild with applause, lights go down, confetti streams everywhere as the competition begins.

NIKKI

Okay, Girl, here we go.

CARLA

Huh, what? Here we go, where?? Whatchu you talkin' 'bout, Nikki?

MC SUCH & SUCH

Here we go, now! Can we get all our
Quarter-Finalists to come on up to
the stage when I call your names.

INT. ANDRE'S BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

In a booth across the room, Andre and Tommy sit drinking,
scoping out Ladies. Birthday Cake, cards, glitter, and Drinks
scatter the table. Andre, Tommy with Birthday Cone hats on.

TOMMY

Aye, Dre', look! Is that? Is that
Carla and Nikki over there?

ANDRE

Yeah, baby, it better be! I invited
Nikki, hoping she'd bring Carla,
too, and she did!

TOMMY

Whaaa? Boy, you know "good 'n
t'well" you can't hit that.

ANDRE

I ain't tryin' ta hit that, I'm
tryin' get that. She the kind ya
keep, T, feel me? She a "hit it and
keep it".

MC calls names for the competition. Tommy takes off his hat.

MC SUCH & SUCH

"Dre'-day"

ANDRE

Okay, here I go, Bro. Check your
boy out.

TOMMY

What? That's you? Dre-day??
Bahahaha!! You can't sing, fool! I
gotta hear this!!

MC SUCH & SUCH

Nikkita-matata.

INT. CARLA'S BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

Nikki gets up, primps.

NIKKI

Okay, here I go, let me show you
how I get down--

CARLA

--Wait, is that "Dre-day" guy
Andre? Our Andre from work??

NIKKI

Yep, he's the one who invited me,
it's his Birthday today. Girl, he
been tryin' to get at me for the
longest time but I don't date co-
workers, uh, uhh!

Gets up, heads to stage. Carla watches just as Sterling
enters the club, is escorted to stage, right past her table.
He glances her, she almost gasps as she watches him pass.

CARLA

(to self)

My goodness--who the hell is that??

Host returns with first round of drinks, startles Carla out
of musing, places drinks on table.

HOST #1

Oh, that's Mr. James, his Studio
sponsors our competitions every
year, and--

CARLA

--Oh shit!! I didn't even see you!!

HOST #1

Oh, sorry, I tend to just pop up
like that, it's my job, hehe.

CARLA

Well, unless you wanna lose it
(beat)
Don't do that shit again!

Tommy walks up to Carla's booth, takes Nikki's seat.

TOMMY

Hey now, Carla! I didn't know you
was into Karaoke. You sing?

CARLA

Hey, Tommy, what are you--oh,
that's right, you and Andre, Uh,
"Dre-day" celebrating his birthday,
huh?

TOMMY

Yeah, yeah! Shit, half the office
is here celebratin'! Seth and Amy's
table's over there somewhere, too
(leans in)
It's the only way he could get us
to listen to his ass sing, ha!

MC calls for attention.

MC SUCH & SUCH

Now, as y'all know, the winners
here tonight will be into the
Semi's, and next week could win a
Finals trip to Vegas for the
Championship, so pull out your
sanging hats, and ya' betta blow us
away--or in Atlanta yo' ass will
stay, hahaaa!

Applause from crowd, lights go down, Sterling steps out
front.

MC SUCH & SUCH (CONT'D)

But before we get started tonight,
how 'bout a huge round of applause
for our "money-man", ha-ha! Mr.
Sterling James and his StarChild
Studios, our sponsor for Mic Fest
for the last five years running!!

Big applause from crowd, Sterling modestly waves. Nikki takes
him in from behind, up and down, glances to Carla, who sips
her drink, wide-eyed, and takes him in from the front.

MC SUCH & SUCH (CONT'D)

Mr. James, a word or two, please?

STERLING

Yes, yes thanks, uh, Such & Such.
Thank you, everybody. We're happy,
again, to help highlight the
incredible talent we have in our
beautiful city, and I just want to
take this opportunity to make a
very special announcement here,
with you, our loyal singers and
musicians.

Carla takes a good listen and long look at Sterling, takes
more sips of drink.

STERLING (CONT'D)

We've been in Beta mode for a couple of weeks, but I'm now happy to announce that we've partnered with a software developer and we're going live with our Worldwide Karaoke App next week, you'll be able to sing with Karaoke singers all over the world!

Crowd roars, loudly claps approval, Andre, Nikki are excited, Carla takes note of Sterling.

STERLING (CONT'D)

So, soon you'll be singing Karaoke wherever you want to, whenever you want to; on your cell phone or your computer, in your car, in your bathroom, anywhere, anytime, 24/7, 365!

INT. CARLA'S BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

Tommy sits with Carla, sees her pondering Sterling.

TOMMY

So, hey, does that mean I could be singin' while I'm...

She immediately gives him a look that says, don't you dare ask me that.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Uh, uh

(beat)

Workin' out! Yeah, yeah, just wanna stay in--shape, top shape while singing, you know, hehe.

CARLA

Tommy, why are you here?

TOMMY

What? I told you we was celebratin' my boys'--

CARLA

--Why are you here, at my booth?!

Sterling leaves the stage to loud applause, Carla's eyes follow him as she sips. He's met by Gail, Carla watches as they talk briefly, then walk off.

MC SUCH & SUCH

Alright! Let's get this party started! Our first Vocalist tonight hails from the great state of Pennsylvania, USA, let's here for Ms. Nikkitaaa-matataaa!!

Applause as camera follows Nikki into booth, zooms in for big screen TV's to broadcast throughout club.

All fall silent, lights drop, camera zooms on Nikki, curtains pull back to show her in booth with Mic. Suddenly, the rhythmic beats of Adina Howard's 'FREAK LIKE ME' ring out.

Mic in hand, she begins a slow gyration dance out of booth, onto stage like a veteran, paces around dancefloor, catches eyes. She slays her performance.

NIKKI

*I need a freak in the mornin',
freak in the evenin', just like me!*

She glances at Sterling.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

*I need a rough-neck Brotha' that
can satisfy me, just fa me!*

INT. CARLA'S BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

Tommy ogles Nikki as she sings, looks shocked.

TOMMY

Whaaa? Did she just sing that??

CARLA

No! Evidently, she just SANG THAT,
wow!!!

Carla claps hard as Nikki struts back to the booth, looking around to make sure she's catching eyes, sexy-walkin' as she goes.

NIKKI

Did I slay, Biaaatch? Whaaa?

TOMMY

You friggin' murdered, slayed, beat that shit up, Girl - you sang like a pro, moved like a hoe, lookie- here, I--

NIKKI

--What are you doing here, Tommy?!

TOMMY

Whaaat? You know we're celebratin'
my Boys'--

NIKKI

(threatening)

Well, make sure yo' ass do it from
over there! I ain't forgot that
shit, Nugga.

TOMMY

That, that was, like, 10 years ago,
Nikki, daaamn! I told you I didn't
know that shit was...

She reaches for him, he quickly hops out of seat.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Okay, okaaaay! I'm outta here,
anyways. Peace out, Carla.

NIKKI

Yeah, that's right, keep it movin',
with yo' sick ass!
(to Carla)
Don't ask, Girl.

MC SUCH & SUCH

And nowww, we bring to the mic,
hailing from the golden state of
California, by way of Memphis,
Tennessee, it's Dreeey-daaay!!

Big applause as Andre enters booth, camera zooms in. All fall
silent, lights drop as smooth R&B sounds of Babyface's 'WHIP
APPEARL' fall. Carla's eyebrow raises as she hears him sing.

Andre glimpses Nikki's booth, see's Carla paying attention,
he slowly moves around the room, over to Seth and Amy's
table, they cuddle as he sings to them.

He leans in to sing to the couple just as Amy exhales a cloud
of marijuana smoke from a bowl she holds; he waves smoke
away, staggers past the table, keeps singing.

CARLA

Awww, look at them! I didn't know
those two were an item, that's sooo
cute!

Andre moves around the room, towards Carla's booth.

INT. CARLA'S BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

NIKKI

Okay, here he come, Girl, he gon'
be tryin' to serenade a bitch after
that performance. He been crushin'
hard, but he ain't my...

Andre walks up to Carla, looks her in the eyes, singing
soulfully, directly to her, totally ignoring Nikki.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

What the?...

ANDRE

*Aye, youuu, got that whip appeal,
so come on and work it on me...*

Carla looks at Nikki, Nikki looks at Andre, smirks.

NIKKI

Well, happy birthday to you, too!
Ain't this a bitch.

Carla blushes as Andre sings directly to her a moment longer,
ignoring Nikki.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

(to self)

Really? Really?? Shiii, she don't
even want no dick! I'm losin' to a
celibate bitch that don't even want
the dick, damnnn!

INT. SETH AND AMY'S BOOTH - MOMENTS LATER

Tommy sits with Seth and Amy checking out the performance.
They pass the self-contained 'Bowl of weed' stealthily around
the table, puffing, passing among each other.

TOMMY

(exhales)

Damnnn! My Boy's really doin' the
damn thang...

SETH

(blows smoke)

I didn't know he could sing like
that...

AMY

I didn't know he was after The
Closer!

(MORE)

AMY (CONT'D)
 (puffs)
 That's sooo cute!

Andre ends his song at the next table, singing to that couple, as if he was singing to just everybody. Carla takes notice of him, dismisses the thought.

INT. GAB ENTERTAINMENT CONFERENCE ROOM - NEXT DAY

Carla adamantly pitching her Iichi-Kuuchi project to Boss, MR. MORGAN, 45, WHITE. Nikki, Sales Exec KAREN MORGAN, WHITE, 35, and other REPS take notes as she paces near whiteboard.

MR. MORGAN
 --I just don't think *Karaoke* is going to cut it, Carla, I mean, it's, it's *Karaoke*--

CARLA
 --And I don't think you're looking at the big picture, here, Chief-- their Culture! I--

MR. MORGAN
 --But, it's Vegas. It's, it's a \$100,000 budget, in Vegas, Carla! How the hell is *Karaoke* gonna guarantee--

CARLA
 --An ROI? Foot traffic? Engagement for our Client? Boss--there's fewer things in Vegas that draw a bigger crowd than the casinos, fights, shows--

NIKKI
 --And strip clubs, don't forget those, plenty of traffic there, I'm jus' sayin'...

CARLA
 Thanks, Nikki, but after that, drunk people, singing *Karaoke*, will always bring traffic to your booth! And, with this kind of budget, Chief, we can build out...

She rips a page off the whiteboard, shows diagrams, sketches, of a two-story "*Karaoke Box*" structure, separated into four rooms.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Thissss!

All take in the visuals. Karen rolls her eyes, gets up, walks to the board, Carla eyes her sharply.

KAREN

What, what the hell is that, a, a--

CARLA

--It's a Karaoke Box, Karen!
Each room is soundproof and
operates independently, with
microphones and control panels for
Karaoke machines in each room!

Nikki stands up, claps.

NIKKI

Wow, Girl! You really nailed this
one, well done! Well, Mr. Morgan,
looks like Vegas, it is, huh??

MR. MORGAN

Well, hold on now, hold on--

KAREN

--Yeah, just hold on there--

MR. MORGAN

--Silence, Karen.

KAREN

O-okay, Uncle, okay.

CARLA

Listen, I've done the research,
Boss, I'm practically an expert.
Karaoke is like, a national pastime
in Japan! I mean, it's the
birthplace of Karaoke, for goodness
sake!

Carla at whiteboard, everyone eyes her diagram, Karen looks closely.

KAREN

Is that, is that a
(pause)
Bar??

CARLA

Yes! Very good, Karen, finally
something you recognize.

NIKKI
 (mumbles)
 AA meetings are free...

CARLA
 It even has a self-service drink
 Bar out front for plenty of Saki,
 or whatever you swig these days,
 yes.

Mr. Morgan looks over the paperwork.

MR. MORGAN
 Well, looks like you've certainly
 done the work on this, Carla, I'm
 impressed. You do realize we only
 have one shot at this proposal, and
 I have to say it's probably the
 biggest we've had in our two years
 of operation--

CARLA
 --It *is* the biggest, Sir.

The Sales team all glance at Mr. Morgan, he ponders.

CARLA (CONT'D)
 I promise you; this will win them
 over. I mean, "Saki and Karaoke" in
 Vegas? What could be more fun and
 engaging after a long day on the
 tradeshow floor?

He ponders a moment more. Silence as he looks over paperwork,
 then resigns.

MR. MORGAN
 Okay, okay, we'll go with your
 proposal.

CARLA
 Yes!!--

MR. MORGAN
 --Unless somebody else has a better
 looking plan, with better margins
 for the budget?

Carla looks around the table, at Karen with that "don't dare
 raise your hand" look. Everyone dips heads to avoid her gaze.

MR. MORGAN (CONT'D)

Okay, then, it's a go. Let's get this drawn up and ready to submit first thing Monday. Carla, you're on point on this; you're showing some great potential here, and I don't have to tell you the kind of commission you'll earn if we pull this off. Make sure we've got every detail covered on this!

CARLA

Yes!! Thank you, Chief! You won't regret this. I'll get everything going and lined up for submission!

MR. MORGAN

And, Carla, I want you to personally check that Karaoke Box thingy out. We can't afford any mistakes, problems, or anything on this; get it done, ya heard?!

She slowly turns to camera, smirks at his "ya heard" comment, then laughs and winks at Nikki. Nikki mouths back, "VEGAS BABY!" pumps fist.

INT. CARLA'S HOUSE - THAT EVENING

Carla on phone with Mother, on couch with a plate of Spaghetti, Fried Fish, and side salad, nibbles at plate.

CARLA

--I guess so, Mama, but I gotta tell you, I'm not excited about trying to invite anybody, I'm probably just gonna come alone, you know? I mean, it's the 4th of July, everybody's got family plans, I don't wanna--

INT. DOROTHY MAE'S HOME, KITCHEN - INTERCUT

DOROTHY MAE, 58, dry's dishes as she talks on phone.

DOROTHY MAE

--Baby, you can bring anybody you want, or not, it's going to be a blast either way, you know how we do 'round here. We got fireworks, BBQ, even got a DJ with Karaoke, baby...

CARLA
 (mumbles)
 Karaoke? Again?

DOROTHY MAE
 Ya need to get outta that office,
 Baby, have some fun for a change.
 Oh, that handsome boy you went to
 College with is gonna be here,
 what's his name, uh, uh--

CARLA
 --You know his name, Mama, don't
 play--

DOROTHY MAE
 --Donte', that's that boy's name,
 ain't it, honey? Oh, ya'll were so
 cute singing in the Choir, and he
 sang like a dream
 (beat)
 You know your Daddy liked that boy.

CARLA
 That's supposed to make me wanna
 come, Ma? Donte'? Really? You know
 he doesn't really sing well, I was
 the one--

DOROTHY MAE
 --Oh, Baby, before I forget, can
 you run me to the store tomorrow,
 honey, if it's not too much outta
 your way?

CARLA
 Of course Mama, I got a Doctor's
 appointment, after that I'll pick
 up Piff and we'll swing by.

DOROTHY MAE
 Doctor's appointment? You alright,
 Baby? What's goin' on?

Carla frowns. Suddenly, ON SCREEN her phone buzzes with an incoming call from her office relay.

CARLA
 Ma, I, I gotta take this call, I
 don't know who's calling the office
 this time of night on a Friday, but
 I'll see you tomorrow, Love you!

DOROTHY MAE

Oh, okay, Baby, I love you. Tell my
Granddaughter I love her and I'll
see you two tomorrow, bye for now.

She quickly answers call.

CARLA

Hello, this is Carla King.

INT. IICHI-KUUCHI INTERNATIONAL LTD, TOKYO - INTERCUT

Fumiko is reviewing Las Vegas nightlife on her screen.

FUMIKO

Hii, Ms. Queen!

CARLA

Fumiko?

FUMIKO

Yes, yes, Ms. Queen, I--

CARLA

Actually, it's Ms. King, Fumiko,
but--

FUMIKO

Oh? How? You are Woman, you cannot
be King, must be Queen. I call you,
Ms. Queen, no?

Carla does a slow turn into the camera, raised eyebrow.

CARLA

Uh, no, Fumiko, I'm
(beat)
Why are you calling me now?

FUMIKO

Oh, I sorry, I forget time
difference; I have good news I wish
to tell you!

CARLA

Okaaay, what do you want to tell
me, Fumiko?

FUMIKO

Yes, yes, I tell you good news; we
have selected your Company proposal
for our Las Vegas event, Yaaay!

CARLA

What?? I mean, the budget and all was approved, everything?

FUMIKO

Yes!! Everything approved, my Boss loves Karaoke! You will send final contract for signature on Monday, no?

CARLA

No! I mean, yes!! Yesss, Fumiko, Thank you! Well, I'll, I'll get to work on this immediately.

FUMIKO

Thank you, Ms. Queen, I go now, bye, bye.

CARLA

No, Fumiko, it's "King", not...

A sudden click on other side ends the call. Carla looks at phone, shocked, then elated.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Yes, yesss, Ms. Fumiko! You can call me whatever you want, as long as that contract is signed, sealed and delivered, Baby! Cha-ching! Hey, heyyy!

Slides off couch, does a little happy dance.

INT. DOT'S COFFEE HOUSE - MORNING

Carla next in line at counter, prepares to pay for order, hears a familiar voice behind her.

STERLING

I've got hers. My treat for the Lady today, if she'll allow it?

She turns to see Sterling, her mouth drops open, she quickly shuts it.

CARLA

Oh, goodness, thank, thank you, uh, Mr., uh?

STERLING

James, Sterling James, but please, call me Sterling.

Turns to clerk to keep from blushing, then back to Sterling.

CARLA
Thank you, Sterling.

Grabs coffee, Bagel, turns to walk out, nods to Sterling, suddenly sidetracks to an open table, sits rigid, back to counter, he notices. She talks to herself, frantically.

CARLA (V.O.)
What am I doing? I don't know this man from Adam! OMG, if he walks by me, I swear, if he doesn't recognize a real Queen when he--

STERLING
--Hey, uh, you look familiar, have I met you? I don't know, maybe at Mic Fest or something? I usually don't--

CARLA
--Yes! Yes, Uh, I was there Friday, supporting a friend. I don't recall seeing, uh, meeting you, but yes, I was there.

STERLING
I thought so. I won't often forget a face like yours.

CARLA
(blushing)
Oh, I--

He pulls up a chair.

STERLING
--Can I sit? I mean, you waiting on someone? I don't want to--

CARLA
--No! I mean, no. I'm, uh, just on my way to work, this is my usual stop, "Coffee is for closers", you know, ha!

STERLING
Closers, huh? So, what do you do, if you don't mind?

Sips coffee, looks at her with interest. She relaxes a bit, sips coffee.

CARLA

Well, uh, I'm in Entertainment
Productions.

STERLING

Oh? What kind of productions? You
make films, Act, Sing, what?

CARLA

Ha! You said sing. You don't know
how many times that's come up this
week, ahh, man!

STERLING

What, you sing?

CARLA

Well, truth be told, I do a lil'
somethin' somethin' on the mic, you
know, but--

He hands her a business card.

STERLING

--Really, well, you should come by
the Studio sometime. We're right
here, downtown Atlanta. Launching a
new Karaoke App this week.

They eye each other.

INT. FUMIKO'S HOUSE - TOKYO - NIGHT

Fumiko in pajamas, with Udon, Rice Cakes, and Saki, watching
T.V., which is interrupted by a Weather Report.

WEATHER LADY

--Where Tropical Storm Wanda Jean
is actually strengthening in the
North Pacific and is expected to be
unprecedented in strength, a direct
result of global warming.

Fumiko's face goes aghast.

WEATHER LADY (CONT'D)

We're going to watch for your
travel plans from Japan to the West
Coast of the U.S. for the next
several days and keep you
updated...

FUMIKO

What?? Nooo! Las Vegas!!

She drops Udon, runs to computer table, logs in, types direct message addressed to Carla.

INT. GAB ENTERTAINMENT SALES OFFICE - SAME TIME

Carla at desk, ON SCREEN gets incoming DM from Fumiko, reads.

CARLA (V.O.)

What? I don't--a storm? What the hell's she talking about?

Types back ON SCREEN: "NOT A PROBLEM, WE GET STORMS ALL THE TIME, COME ON OVER!".

Fumiko frantically types back ON SCREEN: "NO, CARLA QUEEN, THIS BIG GLOBAL WARMING STORM, NO AIR-TRAVEL FROM JAPAN NEXT WEEK, MAYBE!!"

CARLA (V.O.)

Oh, shiiit; that can't be true, Fumiko! Drop the Saki, back away from the computer.

Types back ON SCREEN: "I'M SURE IT'S NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT, I WILL CHECK ON THIS AND GET BACK TO YOU ASAP!". She closes DM. Ponders.

She opens a new Window to the Weather Channel website. Clicks into Regional Weather Forecast, the North Pacific. A look of concern as Hurricane Wanda Jean simmers ON SCREEN.

CARLA (V.O.)

Nahh, no way. It's, It's just not gonna do that

(beat)

You wouldn't do that to your Girl, would ya', Wanda Jean? Hm? Nahh.

A look of hopeful worry on her face.

INT. GAB ENTERTAINMENT - BREAK ROOM - LATER

Andre enters, stops in doorway when he sees Carla at Coffee station. Checks himself, looks around, walks up to pastry table, Carla notices, walks over.

CARLA

Andre! Heyyy, so, I was like, totally shocked to hear you sing Friday night, I mean, c'mon guy, you been holdin' out!

ANDRE

Oh, thanks, thank you, Carla. I uh, really enjoy tryin' to sing--

CARLA

--Trying? Ha! Babyface himself would've loved that performance. Sooo, did it work? You think she noticed?

ANDRE

Huh? Did what work? Who notice what? Whatchu--

CARLA

--I thought it was very creative; Nikki doesn't always pay attention to every guy, but if you totally ignore her, ha! That was brilliant.

ANDRE

Ohh, oh, yeah. Yeah, she's, uh, she's pretty good at ignoring--

CARLA

--Mannn, it must be nice having someone who really wants to get with you, I mean, in a real way, you know what I mean? It's so hard to find real men, sincere men. Someone who wants to work together, build up some stuff together--

ANDRE

--I know what you mean.

CARLA

She's really lucky you're feelin' her like that, I mean, most men just wanna hit-it-and-quit it, you know? Somebody serious like you? I would live for that.

ANDRE

Yeah, live for that. Well, I feel like she never even noticed I was really singing to her, you know, so-

-

CARLA

--Oh, I think she noticed, alright. Did you see the look on her face when you sang to me and not her?! Ha! Fire! You guys are gonna make me get back on the Mic, I tell ya, you both were sooo good!

ANDRE

Thanks, Carla. Yeah, the App makes it pretty easy to practice, so--

CARLA

--Hey, speaking of Apps, that Sterling guy from the Studio invited me for a tour. Maybe I can use them for my project. He's launching a new Karaoke App, right?

ANDRE

Who? Oh, *that* dude, the wanna be Denzel? That one? He probably got 'em lined up around the corner, nahmsayin'.

CARLA

Hmm, well, be that as it may, I've decided I'm gonna check it out today. I need to stay on top of my project. If they can provide Sound Service and video coverage, in Vegas, I might actually be able to enjoy myself while we're there. And, he is hella good lookin', so, who knows, maybe I'll get lucky and find a guy that's crazy for me, ha!

He stumbles at saying more.

CARLA (CONT'D)

'Aight, look, I gotta get back to work, I'll see ya, "Dre-day!"

She walks out with coffee, he eyes her, drops his head in resignation.

ANDRE (V.O.)

Mann. How's a brotha' suppose to compete?

INT. STARCHILD RECORDING STUDIOS - LATER

Cyndi scopes Carla pull into the Studio lot through the big window. Carla parks and enters, Cyndi greets her.

CYNDI
Hello, welcome to StarChild
Studios, how can I help you?

CARLA
Hi, yes, I'm Carla Queen--King!
Sorry, I'm here for Mr. James?

Cyndi takes Carla in, likes what she sees, looks in her book and mumbles to self.

CYNDI
Yes, yes you are.

CARLA
I'm sorry, excuse me?

CYNDI
Oh, sorry, my bad, yes, I do see
you here, Ms. King, with an open
invitation, no less, hmm. Please,
have a seat and make yourself
comfortable, I'll make Mr. James
aware of your arrival.

Excited, she scoots off around corner, down hall, enters STERLING's office, interrupts a meeting with Tad and KARAOKE APP REP, ALAN, 30, Asian, all laughing, just kickin' it.

CYNDI (CONT'D)
Boss! Boss, She's here! She's
here!!

STERLING
Who? Who's here?? My Ex?? Friggin'
Gabrielle Union?? Who? Who's here??

CYNDI
"SHE'S" here. Dots' Coffee House
Girl!?

STERLING
Oh, shiiit!

He startles in seat, fixes tie, shuffles papers, straightens desk. Cyndi straightens his tie, turns to Tad and Alan, who are amazed at his response.

CYNDI

I'm gonna need you guys to do a hard exit once she's in, no goofy shit, you hear me?

Both sit up in chair, recoil, nod heads in agreement.

TAD

Who, who the hell is this Lady? You guys jumpin' like the Queen's come a' callin', or something?

Cyndi grabs his arm, stands him up, turns him to look out interior window to Lobby, Alan gets up to look, too, she points .

SHE

Her!

ALAN

OMG

(beat)

It is Gabrielle Union!!

STERLING

Don't be silly, she's not Gabrielle. But I gotta tell ya, she may as well be.

Cyndi smiles, scoots out to get her. Tad gets up, starts walking out.

TAD

Uhh, I got a, uh, call to make. I gotta go--

ALAN

You, you don't wanna see Gabrielle up close?

TAD

What? Naw, I, I saw her in the movies, I'm good - gotta get this call in.

STERLING

What?! Okay, okay, whatever. You guys just give me some space, here.

ALAN

What the hell you all excited for, J?? Whatcha got going here, huh? A date?

They all look again at Carla through the window as Cyndi brings her over, Tad glances Sterling, quickly exits room, heads down the hall.

INT. IICHI-KUUCHI INTERNATIONAL LTD, TOKYO, JAPAN - MORNING

Fumiko at desk, dialing quickly, gets a recording on Carla's office phone, hangs up, ponders. Her phone rings, flashing her Uncle. She picks up.

FUMIKO

Good morning, Oji Bucho.

MR. ICHIKAWA

Ah, Fumiko! Good morning, Mei, I'm checking to make sure the Las Vegas plan is progressing well?

FUMIKO

Yes, yes, Oji, um, nothing to worry about, we are going to have great time in Las Vegas!

MR. ICHIKAWA

Very good, Niece! Shacho will notice your good work. You make your Oji very proud. After this, Mei, I think you should be promoted to Shunin!

FUMIKO

Ohh, that, that would be a great honor, Oji Bucho.

INT. STARCHILD STUDIOS - SAME TIME

Cyndi, stepping quickly with Carla pacing behind, opens door for Carla's entry, Alan prepares to exit, takes in Carla.

ALAN

I'll, uh, I'll get that locked down by Friday, Sterls, I'll send paperwork
(to Carla)
Good day, Miss.

STERLING

Thanks, Alan, see you for lunch next week, Bro.

(MORE)

STERLING (CONT'D)

(to Carla)

Ahh, Carla, come on in, please.

Offers Carla a seat, Cyndi and Alan at door, smiling.

CYNDI

Boss, can I bring Lemonade,
anything?

STERLING

No, no, Cyndi, thanks--

CARLA

--Yes! Yes, actually, Cyndi, my
throat is a little parched today,
thank you.

Cyndi smiles, leaves door open, Sterling re-seats.

STERLING

So, wow, Carla, to be honest I
didn't think you'd take me up on a
visit, I--

CARLA

--Oh, why's that Sterling? Why
wouldn't I?

STERLING

Well, I just thought maybe you'd be
too busy, or maybe you had a studio
already, or--

CARLA

--No, I don't, actually. I'm
Producing my very first Karaoke
event and, well, I thought I'd see
if I can get some professional
pointers on a Sound System for a
Karaoke Box--

STERLING

--So, you don't have a studio? Hey,
if you're producing a Karaoke event
that's something we do very well
here.

CARLA

Yes, yes, so I understand.

INT. ANNIE NELSON SUMMER DAY CAMP - DAY

TEACHER, 35, at desk with kids around her. Epiphany on the floor with three other KIDS, 5-7. A huge Playhouse in the center, kids all around swoop up different Play Figures.

KID #1
I'm the "Real State" Man!

EPIPHANY
I'm the Mom, she's the Boss!

KID #2
Well, I'm, I'm the Daddy, he's got
the money, and, and a job, and, and-
-

EPIPHANY
--No! You can't be my Daddy, he's
gone to Heaven already...

Kid #2 pauses a moment.

KID #2
Well
(pause)
Well, I'm the Boss, then. You can't
be both! Teacher!!

EPIPHANY
No! Mommy is the Boss! You can't...

She begins to well up, tears forming in her eyes. Teacher arrives.

TEACHER
What's going on, huh? Ohh, playing
house, are ya? Well, that's fun!

EPIPHANY
He, he's trying to be the Daddy,
but he can't be, Daddy is gone
already!

Teacher takes it in, careful with her words.

TEACHER
Ohhh, your Daddy is gone already,
Epiphany?

Epiphany calms down.

EPIPHANY

Mom says he's already waitin' in
Heaven for us when we get there.
He, he drove his car there to wait
for us!

TEACHER

Aww, yes, yes, he is
(leans in)
Can you just imagine the big house
he's got for you? Wowww!

KID #2

Your, your Dad's in Heaven already?
My, my Grandpa's in Heaven, too!
Okay, okay, but can I still be the
Boss?

Teacher glimpses Epiphany.

EPIPHANY

Okay, okay, you be the Boss--you
can be Boss at work, but, I'm the
real Boss at home, Mom says.

Teacher smiles, pats her heart, adoringly.

INT. STARCHILD STUDIOS - SAME TIME

STERLING at his desk with Carla.

STERLING

--I mean, no one's gonna know the
Karaoke Box sound system better
than we are. You really should let
me draw up a proposal, I'd love to
win you
(gasp)
I mean, win *your business*--I, I'm
sorry, I--

Carla glances him.

CARLA

--Are you flirting with me, Mr.
James?

Eye contact, silence.

Cyndi returns with Drinks, sets them both up, smiling
knowingly.

CYNDI

Boss, is there anything else I can do for you here?

STERLING

Uh, no, Cyndi, thank you, I appreciate it.

She smiles at Carla, takes the tray, exits room and closes the door. Carla sips lemonade, clears her throat.

CARLA

Whew! Needed that, my throat's been a little sensitive, sorry. So, what's this, now, you want to bid on the Sound System for my Vegas event, you say?

STERLING

Well, I'm just sayin' no one's going to do you better than me
(gasps)
Oh my God! I mean, no one's goin to give you a *better deal* that we are, here at StarChild!!

Carla takes note of STERLING, he sweats at the brow, straightens his tie.

CARLA

Sooo, do you "do" all your clients better than the competition, Sterling?

INT. ICHI KUUCHI INTL. ROOFTOP, TOKYO - DAY

A 30 Story building's Rooftop Putting Green, surrounded by 30ft high plexiglass walls. SHACHO KUUCHI, 55, listening to Rap music, bobs head, sets up for a 20 foot put shot.

Bucho Ichikawa enters during his backswing.

BUCHO ICHIKAWA

Shacho Kuuchi!

His swing is radically errant, balls shoots off plexiglass, rolls back toward hole.

SHACHO KUUCHI

Iyeee!! Bucho!! What the fff--

BUCHO ICHIKAWA

--Hey, look, Shacho!!

The ball rolls slowly back, drops right into hole for a perfect shot. Shacho Kuuchi does a funny "Pop-lock" dance

SHACHO KUUCHI
Ayyeee!! Look at that!!

BUCHO ICHIKAWA
That was amazing, Shacho! You are the man! I don't know how you do it!

SHACHO KUUCHI
Practice! Practice makes perfect, Bucho.

Bucho hands him an itinerary, showing Las Vegas on the front.

BUCHO ICHIKAWA
May I suggest you keep practicing your singing, also, we have big Karaoke Contest at booth in Las Vegas coming up soon!

SHACHO KUUCHI
Oh-hoho, you know I like it like that, Bucho! Karaoke! Well done!

BUCHO ICHIKAWA
Yes, yes, you can even sing with Elvis, Ole' Blue Eyes, yes! I want to sing with Rat Pack, haha!

SHACHO KUUCHI
Screw raggedy-pack! Shiii, I want Cardi B! Oh-oh, Alicia Keys!! Give me Timbaland! Yeezy--Before Kim, before Kim--not after!

INT. STARCHILD RECORDING STUDIOS, HALLWAY - DAY

Sterling walks Carla to front lobby. Tad peeks out his office window blind as they walk past his office.

TAD (V.O.)
She's got some nerve.

INT. STARCHILD LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

Sterling walks behind Carla, checks her legs and ass out, makes comical faces of astonishment, joy, as they walk into Lobby.

STERLING

Yeah, I, uh, really appreciate you coming in, Carla. I'm sure you're gonna love my proposal, I mean, I'm fully equipped to handle you
(gasps)
I mean--Ugh!

Carla stops, glances him sharply, shakes head.

CARLA

My needs, Sterling? I'm sure that's where you were going, right? That may be true, but your contract better be tighter than your conversation today, Playa. Good day.

Sterling and Cyndi watch her walk to the exit. She does not turn back to check if he's watching.

CYNDI

She didn't look back! Now see, that's a sign of a classy chick right there, Boss
(beat)
You prob'ly leave her alone, Bahahahaaa!

He's stuck-like-Chuck, watches Carla get into her Mercedes through Lobby window blinds. Cyndi shakes her head.

STERLING

What? You crazy, I ain't trippin' on her, I--

CYNDI

--Shiiit, you still stuck-on-stupid, look at'cha! Alllll out the window like a little puppy. If ya had a damn tail, it'd be waggin' right now! Bahahahaa!

STERLING

Yeah, yeah, I'm just tryin' to get us paid. Just pull up my contracts, will ya?

He watches her drive off.

INT. GAB ENTERTAINMENT - BREAK ROOM - SAME TIME

Andrew and Tommy at table, eating.

ANDRE

--I'm tellin' you, dude's got a gang o' Women, T! He can't be tryin' to, to really make her his Woman--

TOMMY

--Yeah, but what the hell you gon' do, Dre, go up and just tell her he a skank-ass, man-hoe
(beat)
Who happen to be rich and look like Morris Chest-nuts, by the way?

ANDRE

I don't know, dude--

TOMMY

--and you got a Kid, dog. She ain't gon' want no baby-daddy.

ANDRE

Hey, I'm a damn good Father. Even if she don't, I ain't fixin' to let him add her to his stable, bet that!

TOMMY

Ya' better keep singing to her then, "Face", break through that "Denzel" shit! Aye, maybe we should go to his studio, snoop around 'n shit.

Andre stops eating in the middle of a bite, looks at Tommy, a big smile breaks out.

INT. CARLA'S HOME - EVENING

Carla carries a sleeping Epiphany into her bedroom, tucks her into bed, kisses her forehead, and mumbles a prayer. Epiphany stirs.

EPIPHANY

Good night, Mama.

CARLA

Good night, my little Princess.

EPIPHANY

Mama

(beat)

(MORE)

EPIPHANY (CONT'D)

I prayed you catch a good Man for us. I want you to be happy, Mama.

Carla's heart melts, it shows on her face.

CARLA

I am happy, Baby! You make me very, very happy, sweetheart.

EPIPHANY

That's not what I mean, Mama.

CARLA

Thank you, Baby. I think Mama is getting close, but they gotta be really special, Sterling, to get introduced to you.

She kisses her again, reaches and turns off the light.

INT. CARLA'S HOME, LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Carla at computer, glass of wine, cheese and crackers. Logs into Karaoke App, hits a few buttons, sees the profiles, singers, songs.

CARLA (V.O.)

Okaaay, let's see how this all works. Build a profile, huh? Wow, this *is* world-wide!

Sees profiles with flags from different Countries. She types "Nefertiti31" for stage name, clicks "upload profile picture", ponders.

CARLA

Well, I'm certainly taking a cue from you tonight, Nikki...

ON SCREEN: Selects a beautiful headshot of Actress Gabrielle Union.

CARLA (CONT'D)

There, that oughta throw 'em off, leave 'em hangin'...

ON SCREEN: She clicks on available songs, then "Recommended Songs". She dons her headset, sips wine.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Well, might as well get on with it...

ON SCREEN; scans song from the playlist.

CARLA (CONT'D)
 Hmm, a variety of singers on the
 same song, okay. Let's try this
 one.

Clicks, the music of Alicia Keys' 'IF I AIN'T GOT YOU' fills
 her headset with piano and dulcet tones. She relaxes, lays
 back, hums.

CARLA (CONT'D)
*Some people live, for the fortune,
 some people live, just for the fame*

She relaxes more, belts out an emotional rendition. She grabs
 picture of late Husband off the wall, dances kisses picture.
 Tears well in her eyes by the end of the song.

CARLA (CONT'D)
 I love you, Baby. I'll learn to
 love again, I hope, but this song
 is dedicated to you, Baby.

She saves and posts the song on her profile.

INT. IICHI-KUUCHI INTL. TOKYO - NEXT DAY

Fumiko looking at Company Chart of execs, circles "SHUNIN",
 smiles, looks worried, picks up phone, dials.

INT. CARLA'S HOUSE - INTERCUT

Carla, watching TV with Epiphany on couch, both eating
 Popcorn.

ON SCREEN; her cell phone rings with company relay showing,
 IICHI KUUCHI. She picks up.

CARLA
 Fumiko?

FUMIKO
 Yes! Yes, Mrs. Queen! It is I,
 Fumiko, I am sorry for calling,
 but, I am worried, Queen.

Carla leaves the couch, walks over to kitchen. Epiphany
 watches her walk away, then goes back to watching TV.

CARLA
 What is it, Fumiko?

FUMIKO

Mrs. Queen, mm

(pause)

I get very big promotion if I plan good Karaoke event for my Shacho in Las Vegas, but, the storm, I don't think-

CARLA

--I, I'm sorry, your what hole??

FUMIKO

My Shacho. Oh, shit,

(gasps)

So sorry, Ms. Queen, mm, my President! My Shacho!

CARLA

Shacho

(beat)

N-nn, Nacho! Okay, okay, I got that! Look, I've been meaning to get back to you, Fumiko, I think, I think we may need to pivot till the storm passes.

FUMIKO

Pivot? I cannot dance, Ms. Queen, I can sing, a little, but--

CARLA

--Nooo, I mean, you know, change the plan. I was thinking, we can't beat Mother Nature, She's kick-ass, and She's pissed from all the Global Warming, no doubt, but, maybe we can get around Her with technology!

FUMIKO

I like Tech, Ms. Queen! Please, please, go on.

CARLA

Well, I was thinking, we can take this event online, you know, Global, through the web, until the storm passes.

FUMIKO

You mean, like, streaming platform?

CARLA

An App! Fumiko, I can arrange to take our little show to the internet, open it up to every American, hey, why not everybody? Worldwide! Iichi-Kuuchi will be the talk of the Karaoke world when we're through!

FUMIKO

You mean, every American Woman will see our show on the internet?

CARLA

Not only that, we can run your Feminine Product Ads to the whole world during the Semi's! And, if the storm gets worse, we can just do the Karaoke competition online till it passes and meet in Vegas for the Finals! I can send you an email with the link to the App!

FUMIKO

Awhh! You are brilliant, Ms. Queen!! Fumiko is very happy. I must run it through my Bucho, but--

CARLA

What?? Did you say it had to go through your--

FUMIKO

--Bucho! Buch-o, my immediate Supervisor, he is also my Uncle, hehe.

I/E. ANDRE'S CAR - AFTERNOON

Andre driving, Tommy, with headphones on, boppin' head and shoulders to Karaoke from Andre's cellphone, watching female singer on the screen.

ANDRE

T, look, I'm tellin' you we gotta do this shit right or they gon' run us up outta here
(glances)
You, you aint' even listenin', T!

TOMMY

Whaaa? I'm listening
(beat)

(MORE)

TOMMY (CONT'D)

To the beats, haha! Shiii, I might have to try this singin' shit out, A! Uhh, uhh, yeahhh...

Andre swerves over to the side of road, snatches headphones off his head.

ANDRE

Listen, T. We gotta go up in here like, like we gonna practice for the Semi's. They already know I'm competin', we just want to practice, okay? Got it?

TOMMY

Yeah, yeah, I got you, I got you. What are we actually doin' here? What we lookin' for?

Andrew pulls back onto road.

ANDRE

We gotta find dirt, dirt, you feel me? I know dude's dirty. I know he got bitches everywhere, probably in every city. We gon' go up in here, act like his biggest fans, and get his ass to--

TOMMY

--Yeah, yeah! Get his ass all talkin' 'n shit, braggin' 'bout that fine-ass Sista he walked out with Friday! Did you see that girl? She was finer than a mutha--

ANDRE

--T! Focus, focus!

TOMMY

Okay, okay, Dre, sorry, sorry, I'm listenin'.

I/E. STARCHILD STUDIOS PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Andre pulls in, parks near front entrance, shuts off car.

ANDRE

Okay, look, follow my lead in here. We need to find out who this nigga datin', who he smashin, and who he playin--

TOMMY

--Okay, okay, okay. Who am I?

ANDRE

You're my
(beat)
Manager, and you be like--

TOMMY

--Oh, snap, yeaaaah! And you be
like, like you're all nervous and
shit, 'cause of the semi's, and you
wanna practice cause--

ANDRE

--No! That's stupid, T! I'm Mr.
Smooooth, I been doin' this shit
for years. Look, I'm a just go in
here, act like, like, now that I'm
in the Semi's, I'm a little
nervous, okay, you know, and, and I
wanna book a practice session,
aight? Now, c'mon, Dog.

He hops out. Tommy sits, looks slowly into the camera, flabbergasted, shakes head, and gets out.

INT. STARCHILD RECORDING STUDIOS - SAME TIME

Sterling at front desk going over contracts with Cyndi. Tad enters Lobby.

TAD

Boss, you guys seen the news??

STERLING

Ahh, shit, what the hell did 45 do
now?

TAD

No, no, it's some kind a Global
Warming superstorm or hurricane or
something over the Pacific. I heard
about it on the news 'couple days
ago, but it was, like, a tropical
storm, but now...

Cyndi tunes the big screen in lobby to Network News. Screen shows headline news, bottom scroller reads "Hurricane Wanda Strengthens".

CYNDI

Shit! Is it gonna be like a
Tsunami, or somethin'? I can't be
havin' to reschedule all these
flights in for Mic Fest!

Panic comes over Sterling' face.

STERLING

The show!! Shit!

He turns, dashes off, down the hall to his office. Cyndi and
Tad return to the TV Weather Report as Andre and Tommy enter
the lobby.

CYNDI

Oh, hello, welcome to Starchild
Studios, I'm Cyndi, how may I help
you, Gentlemen?

Both take her in, up and down, glance at each other.

ANDRE

Hi, we're uh--

TOMMY

--Hello there, Queen, my name is
Tommy, I'm Andre's, uh, Dre-Day's
Manager, it's a sincere pleasure to
meet you, Lady.

He proffers hand, she accepts, he kisses her hand, she
smiles. Andre looks surprised.

CYNDI

Ohhh, a Gentleman, I see. Oh yeah,
Dre-Day! I heard you killed it at
Quarterfinals! Congratulations!

ANDRE

Oh, thank you, I really--

TOMMY

--Yeah, yeah, um, Miss Cyndi, my
Boy needs some studio time to
practice, and uh, we're wondering
if Denzel, uh, Mr. James, is
available for a tour?

TAD

(laughs)

A tour? Sterling? Haha, I don't
think so.

(MORE)

TAD (CONT'D)

Mr. James doesn't do tours, uh,
that is, unless your skirt is about
"yea-high", haha!

Andre and Tommy turn to each other.

INT. STERLING'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Sterling logs onto computer, hits a couple of strokes, picks
up phone.

INT. NOAA HEADQUARTERS, MARYLAND, USA - INTERCUT

Phone rings at desk of TIFFANY JAMES, 25, she sits at
computer typing away, hits headset button, answers, still
typing.

TIFFANY

Good morning, Tiffany.

STERLING

Hey, Tiff, it's Sterl.

TIFFANY

Hey, cuz', what's going on? Wait,
Everybody okay??

STERLING (O.S.)

Oh, yeah, yeah!

TIFFANY

'Erybody, Cuz?

STERLING

Yeah, yeah, what? Ohh, Grandma?
No, she's *fine*. She, she still
drinks, a little, but no, no,
she's, she's fine, she's good!

She types again.

TIFFANY

Okay, cool, then! What's upper?
What's good?

STERLING

You tell me? What's this I'm
hearing about a freakin' storm, or
something comin' this way?

TIFFANY

Ohhh, snap, hell, yeah! This is freakish, Cuz, some of that global warming shit. They ain't never seen it like this before. It's already huge, and still growing!

STERLING (O.S.)

What's huge? What is it, exactly??

TIFFANY

It's comin' in from the Pacific, somewhere. NOAH put out a bulletin on it, like, two days ago--

STERLING (O.S.)

--Who?

TIFFANY

NOAH.

STERLING

Noah?? Sooo, you goin' Biblical on me right now, Tiff?

Tiffany laughs, he does not.

STERLING (CONT'D)

Who the hell is this Noah, and what's he puttin' *bulletins out on*? We about to have a flood or something?!

TIFFANY

(laughs)

You so silly, Cuz!! No, the *National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration* is "NOAA"--get it? Our Acronym??

STERLING

Damn, just say that, then, Tiff! I ain't got time to keep up with your Acronyms, I got my own *Acronyms* to keep up with!

She laughs, he does not.

TIFFANY

Man, you crazy. Look, this storm is serious though, you can see this shit on our Satellites. They been preparing to cancel flights on that side of the World, it's a first!

STERLING (O.S.)

Whaaa?

TIFFANY

I'm tellin' you! When we got word we might reschedule some of our flights, I was like, uh, uhh, this shit gotta be the biggest freakin' storm or somethin', cause we don't stop flying for nothin'!

A look of shock comes over his face.

INT. STARCHILD LOBBY - SAME TIME

Andrew and Tommy with Cyndi and Tad.

TOMMY

Sooo, Ms. Cyndi, who's butt do I need to kiss, then, to get a tour?

CYNDI

Oooh! Usually mine, Shuga, but today you gonna have to kiss, uh, ask, Tad, here. Mr. James isn't available.

TAD

Who, me? I, I guess, I guess I could do it, I got like, fifteen minutes, sooo--

TOMMY

--Uh oh, wait a minute, big man, I was hoping Cyndi here would--

ANDRE

--We'll kiss it! Uh, take it, err, take you, Tad, thanks.

Andre smiles, Tommy frowns, mumbles.

TOMMY

Cock-blockin' ass...

Cyndi smiles at him, Tad leads both men through the lobby.

INT. STERLING' OFFICE, - SAME TIME

Sterling paces office, on the phone.

STERLING

Shit, Tiff! We got people flying in here for Semi's Friday! Finals scheduled a week later in Vegas, damn!

TIFFANY

That's right in the middle of this beast, Cuz, I'm just sayin'.

STERLING

How am I suppose to hold an international event for this Iichi-Kuuchi of hers, when they can't even get over here for--

TIFFANY

--For who?? Who's Coochie??

STERLING

Nooo, it's my new client's client in Japan. They're suppose to fly into Vegas for Mic Fest Finals!

TIFFANY

Well, they better have flight insurance 'cause the way this is lookin' even our planes are gonna be gettin' outta the way of 'Wanda Jean'...

Sterling's cell phone buzzes, shows 'CARLA-\$\$\$' on screen.

STERLING

Shit, I gotta go, that's my client, uh, and my latest conquest...

TIFFANY

What?? Wait, hold on, who the hell you playin' this time?

(beat)

Don't make me come down there, hurt none of them trifling-ass--

STERLING

--I gotta go, Cuz, I gotta go. Yeah, yeah, come to one of the shows, will ya! Love you!

INT. CARLA'S DESK, GAB ENTERTAINMENT - INTERCUT

Carla stares at cell phone's headshot of Sterling as it rings.

CARLA
C'mon, Sterling, pick up, pick up--

STERLING (O.S.)
--Hey Carla, eh, what's up?

CARLA
Heyyy, Sterling! Just checking in, makin' sure we're all set for the Sound Demo?

STERLING
Uhh, um, about the Semi's--

CARLA
--Yeah, I just wanna be sure we're on top of this, I can't give my boss any reason not to promote me next Quarter.

STERLING
Uh, yeah, I gotta talk to you about the Weather.

CARLA
What? Weather? It's Summer Time, it's Atlanta, it's Vegas, it's gonna be hot, I don't know what else to--

STERLING
Carla, listen--there's a freakishly huge storm building in the Pacific and, and, I don't know, according to Noah, uh, the weather service, it may mess up flights in for the Vegas Finals, it's suppose to be that big, but--

Carla starts to crumble a bit.

CARLA
--Nooo! Don't you tell me that, too!! Are you serious?? If Iichi-Kuuchi can't get over here for the show, what the hell are we gonna do, Sterling?

STERLING
I don't know, I don't know. I got my cousin keeping tabs on the weather, but--

CARLA

--Nooo! My Boss is going to kill me
if we don't

(beat)

If we lose this account, have to
cancel, if we have to *refund* this
job?

STERLING

I know, I know, but, it's a storm
shutting down travel--

CARLA

--It doesn't matter, can't you see?
We already allocated, we rented, we
spent, hired you...to my Boss, it's
still gonna look like I cost the
company, I failed to "foresee" the
weather or something, that's all I
need--

STERLING

--Bullshit, they can't blame you
for a storm!!

CARLA

They will!! Somehow, I know his
Niece will find a way to pin it on
me. Shit, I'll be friggin' "Wicked
Witch of the Weather" before she's
through pumpin' him with Hater-Ade.

STERLING

I don't know what they expect from
you, but--

CARLA

--Heyyy! Can we go online with your
App? I, I, was just telling my
client--

STERLING

--You mean, do your Karaoke event
on our new App?

CARLA

Yeah, yeah! You're launching this
week, right? We can just do online
competitions till the weather
clears, no? You think we can do
that?

STERLING

Wow! That's actually brilliant!
We've been in Beta for a month now,
but we're launching. We can host it
online, get my Engineer to launch
your competition on the new
platform, even use the studio if we
need--

CARLA

--To open the competition up to the
world!!

Sterling looks amazed.

STERLING

You are an amazing Lady! Can we
talk about it over drinks tonight?

CARLA

Yes! Yes we can, Mr. James.

INT. STARCHILD STUDIOS - SAME TIME

Tad, with Andre and Tommy trailing behind, walking down a
corridor, sound booths are on either side, past the control
rooms.

TAD

--Yeah, when we launch this week,
this place 'll be booked solid, so,
glad you guys came in now.

ANDRE

Cool, cool. So, seems like a great
place to work, huh? How is it here?
Boss must treat you guys good, huh?

TAD

Who, Sterling, uh, Mr. James? He
'aight, no complaints. Of course,
he gets all the ladies, but hey,
when you roll like he does, well...

ANDRE

Yeah, he must have a harem, huh?

TAD

Pfhh, heck yeah, I mean, have you
heard the man sing? That man sound
like Luther--well, almost. I mean,
it is Luther--big Luther, big
Luther, not little Luther!

(MORE)

TAD (CONT'D)

Yeah, he's definitely got some cuties, but you should 'a seen the one he had in here yesterday, ho-hoo, mannn!

TOMMY

Really, was she bad? What she look like, like Cyndi out there? That girl works for me!

TAD

Well, if you like the "Gabrielle Union-type", you know, she was the one. I think she stuck up, though.

ANDRE

Stuck up? Ah, one of those high-society bitches, huh?

TAD

Well, no, not really. I actually met her on our Karaoke App Beta test. Well, kinda met her, we were suppose to have lunch but--

TOMMY

--Wait, you said she looked like Gabrielle Union? That's our girl! Dre, that's gotta be Carla!

TAD

Carla? Nooo, her name was Nikki, Nikkita-Matata, on the App, actually.

Andre and Tommy slowly turn heads, look at each other.

INT. CARLA'S DOCTOR'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Carla pages through an Entertainment magazine. RECEPTIONIST, 22, headphones in ear, pops gum-bubble, bobs head to music, checks Carla out. Carla sips water from water bottle.

RECEPTIONIST

Hey, so, you in the business? You look like an Actress or Singer, or somethin', you look so glamorous, you know?

Carla peers over the top of magazine.

CARLA

Uh, no. But, if I was, I'd be an Actor, not Actress. And as far as singing--

RECEPTIONIST

--You, you'd be great in one of those Tyler Perry joints, you know? You should--

CARLA

(annoyed)

Actually, I'm quite great at my Corporate "joint", thank you. Not to mention as a Mother. And further, I--

DOCTOR ELLIS, 45, walks into the reception room.

DR. ELLIS

--Ah, Ms. King, good to see you, come on in.

Carla, glances Receptionist, leaves magazine, follows Doctor into office.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

They both sit, Doctor grabs folder.

DR. ELLIS

Sooo, how's your throat feeling today?

CARLA

It feels better, but still kinda sore, lil' scratchy.

DR. ELLIS

How's the swallowing?

CARLA

I swallow good, Doc--just can't sing. Still stomach cramps, a little.

Doctor opens file.

DR. ELLIS

Well, we got the results back, at least you're not pregnant, ha!

CARLA

Ha! As if!

DR. ELLIS

I'm going to give you an antibiotic; seems you have a mild case of Streptococcus pyogenes...

CARLA

What?? What the hell is that? What's it from?

DR. ELLIS

You have Strep Throat.

CARLA

Strep throat? Damn! Ya gotta just say that, Doc! Got me all scared 'n shit, least I know what that is!

DR. ELLIS

Okay, okay, my bad. Good thing is, it's not serious, but I do want you to take these.

Hands her two pills, and a prescription.

DR. ELLIS (CONT'D)

Now, these are prone to cause gas and a little diarrhea after an hour or so, so make sure you're home by then--

CARLA

--I'll be fine, just taking my Mom to the Store, so I'll just take these now, get rid of these cramps.

She pops pills, swigs water bottle. Dr. Ellis tries to stop her, too late.

DR. ELLIS

I, I wouldn't have taken those now if you're not going home.

CARLA

Oh, I'm good, Doc, I won't be long.

DR. ELLIS

You may also lose your sense of smell for a couple of hours, but, at least you won't have to smell any gas you may develop. You'll be back to normal after that.

CARLA
Great, thanks, Doc.

EXT. DOROTHY MAE'S HOME - LATER

Carla and Epiphany pull up to Dorothy Mae's home. Both their jaws drop as she comes strolling out of the house, dressed to the nines. She hops in the car as they eyeball her, shocked.

DOROTHY MAE
Hi, Babies! How's my granddaughter today?

CARLA
Ma--what, what store we goin' to where you gotta dress like that??

DOROTHY MAE
Safeway, today, Baby.

CARLA
Safeway?? Did you take your meds this morning? There's no dress code at the supermarket, Ma!

DOROTHY MAE
Don't chu' worry about it, Chil', you just drive Ms. Dorothy, okay
(beat)
You ain't the only one need a good man. It's been a good 5 years since your Father passed. Mama needs to get a little action, and I--

CARLA
--Mom!

EPIPHANY
Granny, you look awesome!!

DOROTHY MAE
Thanks, Baby! Yo' Grandmama know how to clean up a little.

INT. SAFEWAY GROCERY STORY - MOMENTS LATER

Carla, Epiphany follow Dorothy Mae to store entrance, she turns to them both before entering.

DOROTHY MAE
Now look, I want the both of ya to give Big Mama some space, now.
(MORE)

DOROTHY MAE (CONT'D)
 I gotta see my Produce Man, so
 y'all go on, get some shopping
 done, I'll catch up with ya.

EPIPHANY
 But Granny, don't you need a cart?

DOROTHY MAE
 Uh uhh, not for the shoppin' I'm
 doin', Chil', now go on, get from
 here, the both of ya!

CARLA
 What?

Dorothey Mae strolls off. Carla and Epiphany are left with mouths open. Carla grabs a cart, nudges Ephiphany, they both follow behind her, lag a bit.

INT/EXT. SAFEWAY GROCERY STORY - DAY

Carla and Epiphany trail 20 paces behind Dorothy Mae as she enters the store and heads to the Produce section. Carla's stomach begins to rumble a bit, she takes notice.

The Produce Man, ALVIN, 65, picks through peaches, rearranges fruit and suddenly stops, sniffs, smiles and whirls around to find Dorothy Mae with a big smile.

DOROTHY MAE
 Heyyy, Mr. Produce Mannn!

ALVIN
 Dorothy Mae! Ain't you a sight for
 sore eyes, look at ya', Girl!
 Come 'ere, give me a big 'ole, long
 hug!

Carla and Epiphany stop in their tracks, astonished, as they watch Dorothy Mae and Produce Man basically maul each other.

EPIPHANY
 (to self)
 Grandmaaa...

Carla covers her eyes, notices her Mom suddenly stop smiling and glare over Alvin's shoulder. Across room. MS. MINNIE, 62, walks stately, dressed to the 9's, locks eyes with Dorothy Mae.

CARLA

Ohh, shiii--we in trouble, Piff.
That Lady right there, that's "Mini
the Mooch", your Granny's main
competition since high-school
Cheerleading.

EPIPHANY

They had cheerleading back then?

Her stomach rumbles strongly, she farts. Epiphany lurches
back.

EPIPHANY (CONT'D)

Daaang, Mom!!

CARLA

Ohh! I--

EPIPHANY

--What the, heyyy??

CARLA

I'm sorry, Baby, Mama had to take
some meds and--oh, just come on.

She pushes their cart over and interrupts Dorothy Mae's
groove.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Oh, hello there, Sir, I don't think
we've met.

ALVIN

Oh, no. I don't think I've had the
pleasure, young Lady. I'm Alvin,
and you must be--

DOROTHY MAE

--A pain-in-the-butt Daughter right
now, I'm tellin' ya...

Carla stomach rumbles and rolls, loudly, she farts, again.

EVERYONE

Ohhh!!!

Carla, embarrassed, offers a hand to Alvin, he looks at it,
slowly shakes hands. Epiphany waives the smell away.

CARLA

I'm so sorry, Mr. Alvin, I'm, I'm
on medication and it's got me a
little--

DOROTHY MAE

--What kind'a medicine got you
doing all that rootin' 'n tootin'
'round here, chil'?

EPIPHANY

Yeah, Mom! You could 'a stayed in
the car!

CARLA

What? I don't, I don't actually
smell anything, I--

ALVIN

--Uhh, it's a, a, pleasure to meet
ya, there, uh, Miss, Miss?

Her stomach rumbles, boils loudly before she can answer. Her face twists, she holds her stomach. Everyone watches her, she looks back, acts unconcerned...and quietly shits her pants.

CARLA

--Umm, Carla, Carla. So nice to
meet you, Alvin--

Minnie the Mooch walks over, Dorothy Mae eyes her sharply as she meanders over to Alvin. Carla tries to act as if there's no puddle in her pants.

MINNIE THE MOOCH

--Excuse me, Mr. Produce Man, could
a Lady possibly get some help with
her Melons?

Dorothy Mae steps over, grabs a peach and tries to step to The Mooch, Carla steps in to interfere, farts again as she does. Ms. Minnie hears it, gets a whiff, waves hand.

CARLA

Mom! What are you
(beat)
Nice to see you, Ms, uh, um, Mooch?

Minnie reservedly shakes hands.

MINNIE THE MOOCH

My goodness, Dorothy Mae! Whatchu
feedin' yo' chil'ren', got 'em
smelling up the place like that?

EPIPHANY

Not me!

Carla sniffs, smells nothing. The Mooch backs away, then scoots off as Dorothy steps her way, calls after her.

DOROTHY MAE

Look, here, Mooch, that child's on meds! She ain't right, she--

CARLA

--Wha, what're you talking about??
(sniffs)
I don't smell anything.

EPIPHANY

(waving)
Mom, you heard of "clean gas"--well yours must be like, fossil fuel, cause--

DOROTHY MAE

--Be nice now, Grand Daughter, ya' Mama on Drugs, today.

Dorothy Mae turns to Alvin, who covers his nose, and mouth quietly.

DOROTHY MAE (CONT'D)

I'll be back for my squash, Mr. Produce Man.

She turns and sashes off quickly as Alvin watches her, half-smilin' at Carla and Epiphany.

DOROTHY MAE (CONT'D)

(over shoulder)
Both ya'll, c'mon here. Carla, bring yo' stinkin' ass on, you sittin in the backseat!

EPIPHANY

Yeah, Mama, and put the windows all the way down!

Epiphany walks off waving hands in front of her face.

EPIPHANY (CONT'D)

How you gonna catch a man smellin' like that, Mama?

Carla incredulous, glances Alvin and walks off after them shaking her head. Alvin looks, sees a big "spot" on Carla's pants, shakes his head.

INT. CARLA'S HOME, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Carla hums, cell phone raised overhead, earplug chord dangles down. Two fingers straighten the chord from the top, all the way down, left and right speakers separated. No tangles.

CARLA

Perfect.

She dons earplugs and pushes "Live Join" on her selection. 'CAN YOU FEEL IT' from The Jacksons streams from her phone. She dances. She Hums. She grooves. She sings as she moves.

CARLA (CONT'D)

*If you look around, the whole
worlds coming together now, Baby...*

She sees herself in the video. She sings, then notices a "Join" from another Singer. The Video screen splits, and a beautiful Black face pops up, grooving, waiting to sing.

CARLA (CONT'D)

*Can you feel it? Can you feel it?
Can you feel it?*

Singer, STEPHANIE B. 30's, from the U.K., dreamy eyes that flutter with each note, huge Afro, a Siren, hums in the background. Carla takes note when she is joined.

CARLA (CONT'D)

*Feel it in the air, the wind is
takin' it everywhere, yeah...*

STEPHANIE B. & CARLA

*Can you feel it? Can you feel it?
Can you feel it!?*

Stephanie B. sings as the video solo's on her. She SLAYS! Both sing, dance, and twirl to the beat.

STEPHANIE B.

*All the children of the world,
should be lovin' each other
wholeheartedly. Yes it's all right,
take my message to your Brother and
tell it twice!...*

INT. FUMIKO'S APARTMENT, TOKYO - NIGHT

Fumiko singing as she cooks, belts out her rendition of 'I TRY' by Macy Gray, dances around kitchen.

She sits in front of computer, reads email from Carla with ON SCREEN link to the Karaoke App, logs into App.

FUMIKO (V.O.)
Okaaay, let's see who's on this App.

She types in a bogus name "KIKU", and puts up a profile picture of a Chrysanthemum flower.

FUMIKO (V.O.)
There, that will do. Now, let's see what the Americans are singing.

She strolls through the profiles, sees different singers, sees R & B tab, clicks, profiles of Black singers pop up.

FUMIKO (V.O.)
Owww, that's what I'm talkin' about! Fumiko loves Chocolate, mmm!

She clicks on a handsome profile picture of a Black Singer.

INT. ANDRE'S APARTMENT - SAME TIME

Tommy sits in Andre's chair at his computer scrolling through Karaoke App. Andre and Kendrick in the kitchen, make a plate of snacks.

TOMMY
--You gonna hook me up with a profile, right, A? I ain't really tryin' to sang, but these fine-ass singers on here, oh yeah, they gonna need my special attention!

ANDRE
Aight, aight, I'm a hook you up, but dog, don't be stalkin' nobody, I'm tellin' you. Why you even want a profile? Ya can't sing so you ain't gettin' no flow from the Ladies anyway, I'm jus' sayin'--

TOMMY
--Please, fool, you may have a golden voice, but I got a golden tongue
(wiggles tongue)
I do other thangs, haha, ya feel me?

ANDRE

Man, you crazy. These girls are all over the place, this app is worldwide.

TOMMY

Worldwide? Hey, hey, they got Asians on here??
(excited)
That's my shit, A! I love me some Sushi.

ANDRE

You love all of 'em, T! Chocolate, Sushi, Mexican--

TOMMY

--This a dating app, too, Dog?

ANDRE

No, fool, you sing. You sing--

TOMMY

--Get they panties soakin' wet, and then try to ring 'em out, huh, huh?

ANDREW

But, here's the thing, Tommy; yo' ass can't sing no way, so you already assed-out, potna'.

INT. FUMIKO'S APARTMENT, TOKYO - SAME TIME

She clicks on the profile of 'Tad-owww'. ON SCREEN; pulls up a picture of IDRIS ELBA in a sexy shirt, grabs Saki and sips slowly.

FUMIKO (V.O.)

Ohh, Chocolate Mannn! Sing to Fumiko, Baby!

She clicks on a duet Tad did with another female singer on All-4-1's 'I CAN LOVE YOU LIKE THAT'. A video shows split screen of both Tad and the Singer as they sing soulfully.

FUMIKO (V.O.)

Ohhh, my Chocolate' Gummy Bear--I can love you like that!

On the video, Tad gets soulful and sexy with it when it shifts to a full screen for his parts. Fumiko sips Saki and hums along.

INT. ANDRE'S APARTMENT - SAME TIME

Tommy, Kendrick, both with tears in eyes as Andre belts an emotional version of the Commodores' "OH NO". Andre sings soulfully into his camera phone.

ANDRE

*--Ohh, no. I can't sleep anymore
baby, ohhh, no. I'm goin' crazy
with love, over you.*

Kendrick sniffs, looks at Tommy, sees him whimpering, too.

KENDRICK

That, that was, that was beautiful,
Dad.

ANDRE

Thank you little man, I was--huh?
You, you cryin', T?

TOMMY

Naw, naw, Dog. I, I got somethin'
in my eye, I got somethin' in my
eye--

KENDRICK

--No, he's crying, Dad.

ANDRE

--Dog, you, you cryin'? You cryin'!
Yesss!

TOMMY

Wha, what?

He grabs Tommy by the shoulders, excited.

ANDRE

Know what that means, T?? If yo'
ass cryin' I know good 'n t'well
next time Carla gonna be ballin',
ready to fall in love with a
brotha'!

INT. FUMIKO'S APARTMENT, TOKYO - SAME TIME

Fumiko hums with Tad as he sings, sits her drink down.

FUMIKO (V.O.)

Okaaay, Mr. Chocolate Gummy Bear--
Fumiko's turn. I sing with you...

Clicks his invitation, a split screen pops up, sees self in the video next to Tad's video. The music begins and the lyrics scroll across her screen.

FUMIKO (V.O.)
 Oh, shoot, no video and no picture.
 I sing sexy for you, but noobody
 know Fumiko like Chocolate, ha, ha!

She searches google, downloads a picture of Japanese Fashion Model, Tao Okamoto, and uploads it to her profile picture.

She belts out a sexy version of his song. She twirls around, headphone and cell phone in hand. Takes another sip.

FUMIKO
*I can love you like that, I can
 make you my world...*

She slays it, saves the video to her profile, and invites Chocolate Gummy Bear to listen.

FUMIKO (V.O.)
 Now, my turn to open a song. Let's
 see. Ah, I like this one, yesss!!

She clicks the video and up pops her Tao Okamoto picture on the screen.

FUMIKO (V.O.)
 Get ready, Chocolate Gummy Bear,
 Fumiko sings for you tonight!

INT. GAB ENTERTAINMENT - BREAK ROOM - DAY

Andre and Tommy posted near the Coffee machine.

TOMMY
 Why we don't just jam her butt up,
 I ain't scared 'a her? You scared
 of her, A?

ANDRE
 Aw, hell naww, Mannn! I ain't
 scared of no--

Nikki walks in mid-sentence, they both freeze.

NIKKI
 --Scared of who? Who you scared of,
 Dre? You need me to jack a bitch up
 for you, what?

ANDRE

Heyyy, Nikki! Naw, naw, Tommy just scared of

(beat)

His Grandmother. She old school gangster-style--

TOMMY

--What?? Man, you crazy.

Nikki pours coffee.

NIKKI

Hey, gotta watch them Grandma's, I'm tellin' you, mine's a straight killa'. She'll pop yo' ass from across the room with her shoe, and then make you walk it back over to her.

ANDRE

Yo, Nikki, I forgot to ask you what you thought of "Tom Slick", that Sterling, from the Studio, the one look like he been under the knife a few times?

NIKKI

Who? That big hunk of Chocolate sponsorin' the show? Shiii, what's not to like?

ANDRE

But what if I told you he a player, Boo?

TOMMY

Yeah, yeah, he after yo' Girl, Carla--

ANDRE

--He tryin' ta "smash 'n grab" on her, invited her to the Studio and all, got her karaoke project money--

NIKKI

--What? Whatchu talkin' bout, Dre?

ANDRE

I'm sayin', he tryin' to add her to his list of conquest!

NIKKI

Whaaa? That shit ain't okay! I'm a
have a talk with--

ANDRE

--No, no, no, don't--she don't know
yet, she don't know yet!

Nikki looks surprised.

NIKKI

How the hell do yo' ass know,
then??

TOMMY

Cause his boy told us she was at
the Studio he was all up in her
grill, checkin' out her fat ass,
and he got a harem, and--

ANDRE

--T! Okay, we get it! Okay, so
look, Nikki, we need you to help us
help your Girl out, let's pull the
covers on this mofo?

NIKKI

Uh, huh, he think he gon' play her
like that? I don't care how fine
his ass is--kinda

(pause)

No, no, I don't care, I ain't gon'
let my Girl get played like that.
I'm a tell her--

ANDRE

--No, Nikki, she ain't gon' believe
you if you tell her, we gotta show
her. I got a plan, but we gotta
sing.

TOMMY

Sing? Oh, I ain't got a problem
with that, Bro, cause--

ANDRE

--Yeah, ya do, Tommy.

(to Nikki)

Nikki, you gotta sing on the App
tonight--and then you gotta go see
his ass at the Studio tomorrow.

NIKKI

Whaaa?

EXT. NORTH PACIFIC OCEAN OVERVIEW - NIGHT

Hurricane Wanda Jean seen from RADAR VIEW. 90 MPH winds whip the Seas, Lightning and Thunder flash and roll through the night.

INT. DOUBLETREE HOTEL, CLUBE FEZ - THAT NIGHT

Sterling in a booth, surprised, as the Waiter leaves another dish. Carla talks and eats voraciously as he watches in amazement with a simple drink in front of him. She pauses.

CARLA

--Am I talking too much? I feel like, I'm just jabberin' away here, I guess I feel comfortable with you, I--

STERLING

--No, no, you're good. I, I did say drinks, though, right?

CARLA

--We've got so much to do, I, I just need--

Carla finishes the last Wing, slides her plate to the side and primps before going into complete business mode.

CARLA (CONT'D)

--Eh, hem. Sooo, okay. Just to go over things, Mr. James--through your Studio, we're pivoting for the Semi's, going online in three days to boost my Client's Brand awareness, and hosting everything on your platform, is that right, Sterling?

STERLING

Uh, yeah, yeah. I--

CARLA

--And if the storm persists we'll be able to negotiate you completing the Finals, online, right?

STERLING

Yeah, yes--

CARLA

--And, barring that, completing the Audio service for our Karaoke Box, in Vegas, IF the storm lets up and allows my clients to travel as planned, with no penalties if the Karaoke Box thing doesn't happen?

Carla leans in, raises eyebrow. Sterling takes a sip of his drink and takes her in.

STERLING

Yes.

She leans out, speaks softly, smiles sexily at him.

CARLA

Well, then, my only question to you, Sterling, is--what are we waiting for?

INT. GAB ENTERTAINMENT, CARLA'S CUBICLE - NEXT DAY

A busy office. Carla is on the phone with Fumiko.

CARLA

I'm telling you, It's on, Fumiko, we just need to come up with a couple of songs, you know, get the world in on at least two classic songs everybody knows, and then--

FUMIKO

--And then the real R&B takes over, Ms. Queen??!

CARLA

What?? Did you just say R&B?

FUMIKO

Yes, of course. Um, my people, my Boss, really like the Rap and R&B, and Fumiko is huge fan, Ms. Queen. It would very much please my Bucho, my Boss, to sing your Music; he no-like Rock & Roll so much.

Carla looks amazed and is pleasantly surprised.

CARLA

Wait a minute--you're telling me you don't want any, any 'Backstreet Boys', you know

(MORE)

CARLA (CONT'D)

(sings)

I want it that way...

FUMIKO

No.

CARLA

No? No, no, 'Idina Menzel'

(sings)

Let it go, let it go?

FUMIKO

Oh-hoo, you can sing, Ms. Queen!!
Please, you must sing for my Bucho,
this will be fantastic!

CARLA

Me? No, I can't, I'm not gonna sing
for your "Buch-ho", Fumiko--

FUMIKO

-Yes, yes! Can you sing Alicia
Keyes? Umm, Erykah Bad-hooo?

CARLA

Badu. It's Ba-du

FUMIKO

That's what Fumiko said.

CARLA

I, can't, I

(beat)

Yeah, yeah, I guess I can--

FUMIKO

--Yesss! I tell my Uncle Bucho we
are all set for live, online
auditions and our ads run, world-
wide, no?

CARLA

No. Yes! Yes, Fumiko, now go, run
tell that!

FUMIKO

Huh, Ms. Queen?

CARLA

Run, tell that. You know, Martin,
Lawrence? Sorry, go tell your boss
to warm up those vocal chords,
Fumiko, ha!

I/E. NIKKI'S CAR, CITY STREETS - DAY

Hard funky beats as Nikki's Lexus bails down the street, heads boppin' to the beat. Andre in the front seat, peeps Tommy bouncing in the back, shakes head.

He turns to Nikki, who's dressed like she thinks it's Friday Night, head bobbin', ready to turn heads in her "Stunna" outfit, shoes and a Blonde wig.

ANDRE

Okay look, Nikki, remember the plan up and in there, don't try to--

NIKKI

--Boy, bye. I don't need no instructions from you on thiss. All y'all alike! Show ya a little T&A and shiii--

ANDRE

--Nikki, please--

NIKKI

--Then wanna be a Homie after ya hit it, I mean, damn--

ANDRE

--Nikki! Please, just stick to the plan.

Nikki pulls into the StarChild parking lot.

INT. CARLA'S CUBICLE, GAB ENTERTAINMENT - SAME TIME

Carla is on the phone with Sterling.

CARLA

--So I need your engineers to get those two songs on the platform today, so we can start the online auditions tonight--

STERLING

--To get the Ads in front of the masses for your client to see you're delivering?

CARLA

Hmm, completing my sentences already, Sterling? How endearing-- but I need that engineer's work done, today.

STERLING

I'll get it right over to him,
they'll be on the App tonight.

CARLA

Good, because there's also a \$5000
Prize to the top two performers of
each song.

STERLING

What?? That's \$10K! Shiii, that's
gonna get me--uh, a lot of people,
singin' in this competition!

CARLA

Yes, yes, that's the idea! I want
everyone, everywhere, in every
Country, singing and uploading to
the App!

STERLING

I'll get right on this.

Sterling hangs up, gets a greedy gleam in his eye.

I/E. STARCHILD STUDIOS - SAME TIME

Nikki struts up the walkway and into the Studio Lobby. Cyndi
at desk with a CLIENT as she enters.

CYNDI

(to Nikki)

Hello, I'll be right with you.

NIKKI

Not a problem, Shuga.

Nikki browses the CD's on the wall while Cyndi finishes with
her client. Sterling bursts into the lobby, startling Nikki.
She looks him up and down, dreamily.

STERLING

Where's Thaddeus??

CYNDI

He's due back in a few. Can you
help this Lady out, please?

NIKKI

Shiii--my name is Thaddeus, right
now...

He sees Nikki, does a double-take, looks her up and down.

STERLING

Yes, yes, I believe I can, My
goodness! Look at you! Exactly how
can I do you today
(stutters)
Err--HELP you? Sorry.

Nikki gives him a very sexy smile, bats her eyes.

INT. GAB ENTERTAINMENT CONFERENCE ROOM - SAME TIME

Carla on a Video call with Fumiko and her Uncle/Bucho, Mr. Ichikawa. He stares blankly at the screen, as if frozen in time with his mouth open, trance-like.

CARLA

--And now, we're able to feature
singers from all over the world!
Your Brand, Mr. Ichikawa, will be
world-wide to the Karaoke community
tonight!

MR. ICHIKAWA

(to Fumiko)
Can I sing with her, please?

FUMIKO

Yes, Uncle, yes, she is available
on the platform. You can sing with
her tonight!

CARLA

Who, who, me? Uh ,yeah, yeah, sure.
I'd, uh, love to sing with your,
Bucho, sure, ha.

Mr. Ichikawa is transfixed on Carla's Beauty and presence.
Fumiko takes notice, waves hands in front of his eyes.

FUMIKO

Oji?

MR. ICHIKAWA

Oh-ho-hoo, I want to sing with
Gabrielle Union--I'm a Bad Boy,
two! Get it, huh, huh?
Bahahahahaaa!

FUMIKO

Uncle!!

MR. ICHIKAWA

She's sooo beautiful...

Carla blushes, smiles, then laughs.

CARLA

That's so cute! Yes, Mr. Ichikawa, I would be honored to sing with you. The main thing is, storm or not, we'll see you in Vegas when the storm blows over, agreed?

MR. ICHIKAWA

Yes, yes, Gabrielle, agreed.

Carla smiles, Fumiko laughs.

INT. STARCHILD STUDIOS - SAME TIME

Nikki flirting hard with Sterling, who's wide open to her sexual connotations.

NIKKI

--And I'm gonna need some 'private instructions', now and again, Mr. James, do you offer that service?

STERLING

Hell yeah, I can service you! I mean--of course! Of course I do. My private lessons, though, are not for the timid, I must warn you, Ms?

NIKKI

Ahh, warning taken. Oh, uh, um, Minaj.

STERLING

Oh, like, Nikki, right?

NIKKI

Yeah, yeah, but, she can't drop it like I can.

She swivels around and drops all the way to the floor, jiggling all the way back up.

Sterling's jaw drops as he makes a face at Nikki's butt, pumps fist before she turns back around. He glances to Cyndi at her reception desk.

STERLING

Uh, hold my calls for the next 35-45 minutes, please.

He turns and offers his arm to Nikki, she accepts and they walk down the hall. He whispers in her ear, Nikki giggles. Cyndy shakes her head as they disappear down the hall.

Tad enters the studio and sees Sterling walking down the hall with his arm around a sexy woman's backside.

TAD

Hmph, he got another one, huh?

CYNDI

Yep, another one bites the dust...

INT. GAB ENTERTAINMENT CONFERENCE ROOM - NEXT DAY

Carla at the helm of her big Launch meeting. Nikki, Mr. Morgan, Karen and the rest of the SALES TEAM at the table.

CARLA

--Sooo, I'll be going over the platform later today at StarChild, so get those vocal chords warmed up, we're going live tonight!!

KAREN

Did, did you say you actually need Karaoke singers?! Cause I love to sing, Carla! I, I can belt out a mean 'Muskrat Love'! You gotta let me on the Mic! I wanna sing!

NIKKI

Karen, uh, I don't care what you sound like, personally, but this competition is for real singers. I mean, there's big bucks on the line, so don't even--

CARLA

--No, no, let Karen sing! The more singers, the better! Everyone, just log onto the App tonight, I don't care what you sound like or look like, we need "traffic" on that site!

NIKKI

And I get to keep the money when I win?

CARLA

Yes! As long as you're not an employee of Starchild Studio, you can win and keep any prizes and monies.

Nikki nods her head, smacks her lips.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Now, I've picked two generic songs everybody should know for the competition, but you can sing anything you like!

Chatter spreads around the table.

MR. MORGAN

Alright, alright everyone, you heard her: I want everybody, and your Grandparents, on that App tonight, singing your hearts out! Let's give Carla our full support on this project, and maybe, just maybe when this is over, we'll really have a big party in Vegas, Babyyy! Ya heard?!

INT. GAB ENTERTAINMENT, HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Nikki corners Carla outside the conference room.

NIKKI

Girrrl, I need to talk to you!

CARLA

Ookay, can we talk later? I gotta get to StarChild for my--

NIKKI

--That's what I'm talkin' about! That Sterling dude, he--

CARLA

--Yes, yes, I'm really feelin' him, now, he's awesome,! He's waiting right now, I gotta get this done--

NIKKI

--But, but he ain't so--

CARLA

--I gotta go! Call me tonight!

NIKKI

He ain't so "sterling", Carla!

Carla scoots off, hurries down the hallway.

CARLA

Call me tonight!!

INT. IICHI-KUUCHI INTL. TOKYO, CONF. ROOM - SAME TIME

Shachou Kuuchi backs away from a tripod with his cellphone mounted on it as the beats of Terror Squad & Big Joe's 'LEAN BACK' fill the room. He begins to dance.

Bucho Ichikawa joins him, shadows his "lean". Fumiko, in control room with an ENGINEER, clicks a button on the control board. They groove, throw up hands, and dance.

SHACHOU KUUCHI

Yeah! My Peeps, aha-hah! Throw ya hands up in the air right now, man!

BUCHO ICHIKAWA

Feel this shit, right here, ha!

A 20ft video backwall runs the music video behind them as they dip, gyrate and sing. Fumiko, in Black, dressed like "Missy Elliot" steps into the frame, popin' and lockin'.

FUMIKO

I said my Peeps don't dance, we just pull up our pants, ah, and do the rockaway--

KUUCHI & ICHIKAWA

(together)

--Now lean back, lean back, lean back, lean back...

EXT. STARCHILD STUDIOS PARKING LOT - DAY

Carla pulls in and parks, gets out, and heads into the Studio.

INT. STARCHILD STUDIOS. LOBBY - SAME TIME

Sterling speaks in the lobby, employees all stand around listening.

STERLING

--And, while Tad is finishing up the tech stuff here, you guys go home, get on that App tonight, sing your freakin' hearts out. Call ya' peeps, call ya' cousins', hell, even call ya' Grandma, just get 'em on that app! The more singer we get this week, the more money I, err-- "we" make.

Employees mumble amongst each other, doubtful, hesitant.

TAD

I'll have everything done in an hour and--

Tad sees Carla enter the studio lobby, freezes up. She sees the gathering and stops in her tracks when she sees Tad, her mouth drops. Everyone responds to Tad's stop, looks around.

STERLING

--Ah, the Lady of the hour is here! Everybody, I want you to meet our very special client for this project; this is Carla King!

Various head nods, smiles at Carla. A handclap breaks out from a starry-eyed employee. Everyone joins in.

STERLING (CONT'D)

Carla, c'mon over, I want you to meet my Engineer. This is Tad, he'll take good care of the Platform. Tad, this is the special Lady I told you about. Let's get her all caught up, shall we?

Carla glances Tad, face flush with embarrassment. She tries to hide it.

CARLA

Oh, Tad, uh, Nice to, uh, meet you.

She shakes hands vigorously. He gingerly shakes, eyeing her with distrust.

STERLING

Listen, why don't you two get updated in my office. I'll be right in soon as I finish up here.

CARLA

Uh, oh, no. I, I don't mind waiting
for you, Sterling, I--

STERLING

--nonsense, Tad's the man, he won't
bite ya!

Tad and Carla glance at each other.

INT. GAB ENTERTAINMENT - BREAK ROOM - LATER

Nikki with Andre and Tommy at a table sippin' coffee, leaning
in.

NIKKI

--Nigga, please, if I tell you he
'a man-whore, he 'a man-whore. He
don't care 'bout Carla! He don't
care 'bout nothin' but "Dickie and
his Ducats". His ass got a profile
on Carla's App! He tryin' to win
the Scrilla!

ANDRE

Whaaa? I knew it! This mothafu--

NIKKI

--He on the App, King Luther--

ANDRE

--This fool trying to smash; grab
on the booty, the account, and the
prize money!

NIKKI

You don't known how hard it was
(pause)
Literally, to get through that
mission. Y'all owe me, I--

TOMMY

--So, you tellin' me you didn't
give-in to 'em, Nikki? Morris
Chestnuts didn't make you wanna--

NIKKI

--Whaaa? Of course not, daaang. I,
I was on a mission
(pause)
A mission to smash his assss!!

ANDRE/TOMMY

What??

NIKKI

Hahaaa! I had that fool dancin' in his chair, he was butt-naked on the couch, I was--

ANDRE

--You lyin', Nikki.

She winks at Andre, turns to walk out, Tommy trails behind her, wanting to know.

TOMMY

Nikki--You, you didn't--

NIKKI

--Totally smashed his ass!

TOMMY

No. No! You didn't, you--

NIKKI

--Broke his desk, too!!

TOMMY

Nooo! Don't, don't tell me that!--

NIKKI

--Broke the chair, first!

She walks out, laughing. Tommy looks back to Andre, who shakes his head.

ANDRE

Man, you beefin' one day and tryin' to get in her panties the next. You ain't gon' never get that, Dog.

INT. STARCHILD STUDIOS - NIGHT

Carla with Tad. They are not meshing.

TAD

--Naw, uh, helllll naw. Why should I? You guys--

CARLA

--You gotta believe me, Tad! I, I didn't mean to diss you, I really was helpin' my girl, uh, Nikkita-matata out--

TAD

--And you expect me to just, just
roll over? See, see

(beat)

This is the very reason Brotha's
like me turn to White girls.

Carla does a slow, slow turn to the camera.

CARLA (V.O.)

--'The Fuck he just say??

INT. ANDRE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Andre on his Laptop, Tommy on his cell phone, earplugs in,
boppin' to a beat.

ANDRE

Mannn, I gotta get her to see this
fool for what he is. I mean, he
ain't all that, right? He act like--

TOMMY

(to the beat)

Um, hmm...

ANDRE

He act like he in love with her,
but, he just wanna smash and grab,
but--

TOMMY

--Um, hmm...

ANDRE

We gon' bust his ass wide open.
Once Carla see's em for what he is,
then--

TOMMY

--Um, humm...

ANDRE

Tommy!! C'mon, Dog! You ain't even
listenin'--

TOMMY

Naw--I hear you, Dre', but, damn

(beat)

I'm hearin' her a lot more!

Tommy walks over and sees his phone screen. He's got a picture of a beautiful Asian Singer on screen; he pulls out the headphone. 'SUKIYAKI' by A Taste of Honey streams out.

INT. FUMIKO'S APARTMENT, TOKYO, INTERCUT - LATER

Fumiko sings her heart out, belting a soulful rendition of the classic. She doesn't realize her "Live" collaboration is on. They both look with wide eyes, Tommy drools.

TOMMY

"It's all because of you"...
Now, see, Dre, that's what I'm
talkin' about!

ANDRE

What happened to
(beat)
I thought you was into Nikki?

TOMMY

Oh, I am
(beat)
But not right now, Dog, I got fresh
Sushi on tap.

INT. STARCHILD STUDIOS, STERLINGS OFFICE, INTERCUT - EVENING

Carla is eye-to-eye with Tad, a stalemate. ON SCREEN Her cell phone goes off, flashing Nikki's headshot. She glances Tad.

CARLA

Uh, I gotta take this call, it's
Nikki--Ooops!

TAD

That's her? That's her?? You tell
her I said I don't appreciate--

CARLA

--Ex-excuse me, Tad.

Carla gets up and walks out the office, takes Nikki's call in the hallway.

EXT. STARCHILD STUDIOS, HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Carla posts her back against the door outside Sterling's office.

NIKKI

--I'm tellin' you, his ass ain't
shit! He after yo' Scrilla, Carla!
How he gon' try to win the prize
when you payin' him to put on the
show? He a player, Girl, don't let
that smooth taste fool you! He--

CARLA

--Wait, wait--how the hell do you
know all this??

NIKKI

What?? I, I
(pause)
Uhh--

CARLA

--All of a sudden you know all
this? How the hell? You never even
met the man, Nikki! Or have you?!
Have you, Nikki??

NIKKI

Uhh, I uhh. You see--

CARLA

--Yeah, yeah, I think I do see;
you're jealous! I finally find
somebody I'm feelin', I might want
a relationship with, and you can't
handle it! You want him for
yourself?

NIKKI

--Whaaa?? No! Hell, naww--

CARLA

--I saw the way you checked him at
Mic Fest--

NIKKI

--I do not want his skank ass,
Carla, I'm tryin' to protect you
from--

CARLA

--Well, then, how do you know all
this??

Nikki pauses.

NIKKI

Okay, okay! I went to see him--no,
no! I mean, I went to the studio to-

-

CARLA

--Ah, ha! I knew it! You do want
him for yourself! What's wrong, not
enough dates for you on your
freakin' singing App, Nikki??

INT. STERLINGS CONDO - NIGHT

Sterling at his computer, frantically typing, re-doing his
profile on the Karaoke App, renaming himself 'BIG LUTHER'.

STERLING

(to himself)

C'mon, c'mon!! She'll be on here
any minute!

He quickly finishes editing his profile, puts up a fake
profile picture, a young Denzel Washington image, and clicks
save.

STERLING (V.O.)

Hahaa! Yes, now we're cookin'.
Between my Luther and Denzel
profiles, they ain't never gonna
know who's makin' those panties wet-
-and winnin' that damn prize money,
haha!

INT. ANDRE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Tommy drooling over Fumiko's video-song. Andre over his
shoulder, checking her out. ON SCREEN His cell phone rings.

ANDRE

Hold up-Hold up, Dog; it's Nikki!

INT. NIKKI'S CONDO, LIVING ROOM, INTERCUT - CONTINUOUS

Nikki, with headset on, connected to her cell phone. She is
not happy.

NIKKI

Hey! You guys ready to blast this
muthafucka's scandalous ass??

ANDRE

--Whoaa, whooaa, hold up, hold up,
Nikki! You okay? What--

NIKKI

--This trick-ass nigga done got me
and my girl all twisted! Fuck that;
his ass gotta go!

ANDRE

What happened, Nikki??

NIKKI

Her ass blind! She think I want his
skank-ass

(beat)

I mean, I, I did--but that was
before I knew he was playin' my
girl, fuck that!! His ass gotta go!

INT. STERLING'S CONDO - EVENING

Sterling sings on the App and ends a soulful rendition of
Luther Vandross' 'If This World Were Mine'; he slays it. He
saves it on his profile and shares it to the world.

STERLING (V.O.)

Hahaaa! That's gonna score big-
time! Now, who can I invite to the
dance?

He clicks "Invite" and searches the database for the GAB
Page. He clicks in, see's all the singers logged in from the
company, including Carla's Nefertiti profile.

STERLING (V.O.)

Ah, there you are, my little Money--
I mean, Honey-pot! Yes, I know your
profile name, haha! It's good to be
the boss.

He clicks and invites her to the song, just as his cell phone
rings and flashes Carla's Headshot.

STERLING

Damn, that was quick!

INT. CARLA'S HOUSE, INTERCUT - CONTINUOUS

Carla paces the floor as the phone rings, trying to remain
calm. Sterling answers.

STERLING

Yello'!

CARLA

Heyyy, Sterling! Sooo, how are you?

STERLING

Carla! I'm, I'm doing great!
Getting ready to sing--I mean,
watch people sing on the app! Uh,
how, how are you?

He leans back at his desk with a beer, takes a swig.

CARLA

Good, good. Listen, I wanted to let
you know our Client has upped the
prize money for the contest, we're
adding a new category! Best two
duets can win up to \$10,000 each,
now!

He chokes, spits beer out all over his computer screen, gags!

STERLING

Wha, what?? Ten, ten thousand, did
you say, each??

CARLA

Yes. Are you okay, Sterling? You
sound a little choked up--

STERLING

--No, no, I. I just uh--

CARLA

--Okay, great! Well, listen, I
gotta get on the platform, check
the stats and stuff, so we know who
wins all this cash. But, here's the
kicker; nobody's gonna know about
the extra \$10K, until we spring it
on them at the Finals, ha! Whoever
wins the most votes for any Duet
will get a very big surprise!

STERLING

Wow! Yeah, yeah. Okay, well, uh,
let's catch up on this tomorrow,
then, shall we? I gotta get some
paperwork done.

He's got that greedy gleam in his eye again.

CARLA

Okay, sounds good, I'll see--

A sudden click on Sterlings' side abruptly ends the call. Carla looks at her phone in disbelief.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Daaang!

INT. CARLA'S HOME, LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Carla logs into the App platform and checks the stats. Sees the graphs and charts, everything is up.

CARLA (V.O.)

Alrighty, then, looking good! Now, let's see who's singing.

She clicks over to the App's GAB feed, shows live-streaming performances from all over the world. She clicks the official Song Selection tab. Her eyes widen to see all the uploads.

CARLA (V.O.)

Oh, my goodness, wow!! All these singers!

She clicks a video and up pops a MALE SINGER #1, 35 from Manilla, the Philippines. 'CAN YOU FEEL IT' by MJ streams out. He's got filters, and dances to the beat. He slays it.

She clicks another video; A Russian FEMALE SINGER #1, 25, with a heavy Russian accent, pops up with a baseball cap on, backwards, and a 49ers sweatshirt. She sings, it's funny.

FEMALE SINGER #1

*If you look around, the whole world
is coming together, yeah! Can you
feel it, can you feel it, can you
feel it!*

CARLA (V.O.)

Ohh, this is gonna be good!

INT. NIKKI'S CONDO, INTERCUT - SAME TIME

Nikki on phone with Andre. She's got her headset on, App open, and a glass of wine. An unlit joint sits in her ashtray.

NIKKI

--And Imma find out all his stage names, too, I'm a bust his ass while he singin'--

ANDRE

--But how you gon' do that if he got a bogus profile up?

NIKKI

Ohh, you let me handle that shit. Like I said, y'all alike! Didn't you say this Thaddeus dude runs the App?

I/E. STARCHILD STUDIOS - NIGHT

Nikki pulls into the parking lot, walks with purpose into the lobby. Cyndi is just closing up the lobby as Nikki walks in.

CYNDI

Oh, hey, I remember you! Mr. James is not in right now--

NIKKI

--Oh, that's okay, shugga, I'm here to see, uh, Mr. Thaddeus, he here?

Carla looks at her curiously, picks up her phone and dials.

INT. STARCHILD STUDIOS, TAD'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Tad works on the GAB Platform as his phone rings, he answers.

TAD

Hey, Cyndi, you outta here for the night?

CYNDI (O.S.)

Yeah, I am, but I don't think you are. You got company up front.

TAD

What? At this hour?

CYNDI (O.S.)

Yeah, and you better come get her cause I'm leavin'.

TAD

Her?

INT. GAB RECEPTION DESK - CONTINUOUS

Cyndi glances Nikki as she hangs up and grabs her purse, begins to walk out.

CYNDI

Make yourself comfortable, he'll be right out for you. Bye.

Nikki tries to fluff herself in the lobby window. Tad walks in all cheerful, then freezes when he see's Nikki. Nikki's mouth drops to see Thaddeus is Tad.

TAD/NIKKI

You kiddin' me??

He pivots around, walks off. Nikki scurries after him.

NIKKI

Oh my God, wait, wait, wait! Mr. Tad, err, Tad-oww!

TAD

What, you don't have enough heartstrings to tug, Nikkita-matata?? Huh? You need some more Brotha's to play?

She catches up to him.

NIKKI

Oh, goodness, no, no, I--

TAD

--Why are you here?

He looks at her, seriously. She pauses, dips her head, gets serious.

NIKKI

I'm here
(sighs)
I wanna apologize. I don't know what came over me that day. I, I just been, just, I'm just lonely...

Tad relaxes, becomes more approachable, even sympathetic. She steps closer to him. He relaxes.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, I really am. You just don't know what it's like out here!

(MORE)

NIKKI (CONT'D)

Mannn, I'm single, in my 30's--err, late twenties--and tryin' to find somebody who--

TAD

--Who cares for you? Who loves you? Tryin' to find somebody who can recognize his Backbone when he meets her?

She looks at him, surprised. He puts his hand on her shoulder.

TAD (CONT'D)

Naw, I don't know what that's like. I'm 30, I'm single, got a few things goin', but naw, I wouldn't know about that stuff--

NIKKI

You, you actually know what I mean, Tad--err, Tadow?

TAD

You, you can call me Tad. Yeah, I do. You know how hard it is to find a good woman these days?

They look each other in the eyes.

TAD (CONT'D)

C'mon, maybe I can help you out. Step into my office.

She smiles and follows Tad, checking his booty as she goes, smiling.

INT. STERLING'S CONDO - SAME TIME

Sterling typing frantically at his computer, creating a third profile.

STERLING (V.O.)

There, that oughta do it. Three different profiles, one distinct voice, I can't lose! Cha-ching! Now, let's bust a note!

He clicks the Feed, sees several Female singers, scrolls, see's Carla's Profile and headshot.

STERLING

Whoaa! Hey there, Miss--
Nerfertiti31, huh? I know good and
well Gabrielle ain't doing Karaoke,
but...

He clicks on her video and Carla's rendition of Alicia Key's
'IF I AIN'T GOT YOU' plays.

STERLING (CONT'D)

Wow, she got pipes, too! I'm just
gonna bookmark you, Miss
Nefertitties--err, Nefertiti. I'll
get back to you later, I gotta bust
a note with the King of Pop right
now.

He selects the official song and 'CAN YOU FEEL IT STREAMS
OUT'. He nails a perfect rendition of the song and saves it
under his BIG LUTHER profile.

STERLING (CONT'D)

Now, just two more, and I'm all
set!

INT. NIKKI'S CONDO - LATER

Nikki, in front of her computer, in her red lingerie, exhales
a cloud of smoke from a fat joint. She sips from her wine
glass as she loads the App on her computer.

NIKKI

(to self)

--You ain't seen nothin', Playa.
Play with my girl like that, got us
at each other's throat over yo
trifflin' ass, huh, Mr. King slash
Big Luther, slash phony-ass exec,
slash wanna be Boris Kodjoe-ass. Uh
huh, just hold on.

She clicks into the app, to GAB's Platform and sees the
official songs. She clicks over the submissions and videos,
see's Denzel's headshot.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

This muthafucka...

She clicks his version of 'CAN YOU FEEL IT'.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

Oh, shiiiiit, this fool can sing,
damn!

She listens to the song while looking at Denzel's headshot on the screen.

INT. STERLING'S CONDO - SAME TIME

Sterlings exits his bedroom and heads back to the desk. He wears a sexy bathrobe and nothing else. He pours a shot of Tequila and chases with a beer. He shudders.

STERLING (V.O.)
Blagggh! Ta'Killya! Now, where's
she at...

He types Nikkita-matata in the search field, her profile comes up, and he settles in to give her a sexy show and tell.

INT. FUMIKO'S APARTMENT, TOKYO - SAME TIME

Fumiko on the app, a look of astonishment as she sees a "Love" notification on her Sukiyaki song.

FUMIKO (V.O.)
Whaa?? Wow, somebody really like
Fumiko's voice!

She reads a comment left by a fan, a "Tommy-Gun".

INT. ANDRE'S APARTMENT - INTERCUT, SAME TIME

Tommy at Andre's computer, talks and types back and forth to Fumiko. Andre pacing back and forth in background.

TOMMY
(typing)
--I think Fumiko is beautiful. Your
dark hair, your smile!

Fumiko sees that her song upload included a "live video" of her recording--not her profile picture!

FUMIKO
(to self)
Oh my goodness!! Oh, my goodness!!

She reads on.

TOMMY
(typing)
--Your creamy skin--

She clicks on the comment and is sent to the profile of "Tommy-Gun".

INT. ANDRE'S APARTMENT - SAME TIME

Tommy types away on Andre's computer. Andre paces back and forth, animated, hands talking.

ANDRE

--So, Nikki is settin' his ass up right now! She gon' get our boy, Thaddeus, to record Sterlings' nasty-ass duet for Carla to see, and she gonna know fo' sho' he ain't the one for her, Dog!

TOMMY

--Umm, hmm...

ANDRE

I'm a go on there, do my M'Baku thing, sing my special song to her, and then invite her to join me--

TOMMY

--Umm, hmm...

ANDREW

Dude! What're you doin'?? You ain't even--

TOMMY

--Dog, not now! I got Sukiyaki on the line! She want a Brotha's info! I'm fixin' to get the digits!

He types back a comment to Fumiko: "Heck yeah, I see you, and I feel you, my little Sushi Baby! You like Chocolate?"

INT. CARLA'S HOME, LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Carla continues clicking on random performances. She clicks an upload from India who sings the second Official Song of the competition, Montel Jordan's 'THIS IS HOW WE DO IT'.

PUNJAB-JAMMIN, an Indian Male, 27, decked out in all white, dances and moves like he's from L.A. He's got two Indian Girls behind him, adorned with jewels and colorful garb.

He slays the song with a strong Indian accent, and brilliant dance moves from him and the girls as they all dance together.

PUNJAB-JAMMIN

*This is how we do it! It's Friday
night, and we feel alright, the
party's here on the West side...*

Carla laughs and smiles hard to see them working it.

CARLA

(to self)

Shiiit! Bollywood in the house!!

She clicks another submission, this one from the U.K. The SINGER, 28, lights up 'THIS IS HOW WE DO IT'. Carla is delighted and clicks again. This time from Atlanta.

The video loads and plays a submission from M'Baku.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Really? M'Baku, as in Wakanda?
Okay Mr. M'Baku, let's see what ya
got!

His performance of Luther Vandross' 'IF ONLY FOR ONE NIGHT' sends Carla swinging. She glances her late husbands' picture on a table and stops herself from remembering, from crying.

She walks over and turns the picture's gaze away from her, walks back and puts on her headset, with purpose.

CARLA (CONT'D)

(to self)

It's, it's time to move on, Girl.

She joins M'Baku's invite to sing, pours out her soul, matching his amazing performance, note for note.

INT. STARCHILD STUDIOS, INTERCUT - SAME TIME

Nikki and Tad at his desk checking the site stats. He stares hard at Nikki, clicks the override button, feeds Sterling's naughty performance directly to Carla's timeline. She smiles.

INT. CARLA'S HOME, LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Carla's duet with M'Baku ends as she notices a personal invite pop up on her screen.

CARLA (V.O.)

What's this? Who the hell is Big
Luther?

She clicks on the invite, ON SCREEN a picture of Denzel fades as the funky sounds of Genuine's 'PONY' start up; the submission is a video!

A dark silhouetted figure is on camera, bath robe open at the waist, dark lighting. You can tell he's Black, and in shape, but not much else. Carla is curious, watches as he grinds.

CARLA

Wow, what the? Who the hell is this??

INT. ANDRE'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Andre paces the floor. Tommy tries to warm up his vocal chords in the background.

ANDRE

--She should be kissin' Tad's ass right about now. If he don't hit the switch on potna', Carla ain't never gonna believe none of this shit.

TOMMY

You think big man's really gonna accept her apology, Dog?

INT. STARCHILD STUDIOS, TAD'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Nikki and Tad lip-locked in his office, kiss frantically.

NIKKI

I never knew you felt like this about me...

TAD

You didn't give me a chance to show you, I--

NIKKI

--Well, you got the chance now, big daddy!

They kiss and embrace, madly. He stops, looks at her intently.

TAD

Wanna break my desk?

Nikki kisses him passionately, squeezes his buttocks, and backs him to the desk. Her cell phone goes off, ON SCREEN she see's "Dre-Day" flash.

NIKKI

Oh, shiiit! I'm supposed to be--
Hello?

ANDRE (O.C.)

Nikki! What are you doin'? Are you there yet? Did he do-the-do on ole' boy, yet? Did you tell her? What? What?

NIKKI

Yeah, yeah, uh, we was just--let me call her now.

She sits on Tad's lap and calls Carla.

INT. CARLA'S CONDO, INTERCUT - SAME TIME

Carla is riveted to the screen as Big Luther gyrates to 'PONY' and sings. Her mouth drops when he opens his robe completely.

CARLA (V.O.)

Oh--my--goodness!!

Her cell goes off, shows Nikki.

CARLA (V.O.)

Shit! Now, Nikki ,really??

She answers, irritated.

CARLA

Yes, Nikki??

NIKKI

Carla, listen, I know you think I want yo' Man, but I don't, I got my own Man now. Yo' boy Sterling is a sterling silver hoe. I would never betray you for some dick, anyway, and you should know that--

CARLA

--It's not that I don't--

NIKKI

--No, no. I tried to tell you, but now I gotta show yo' ass. Tad?

She hands the phone to Tad.

TAD
 Uh, hello, Nikkita--uh, Carla, this
 is Tad. Listen--

CARLA

--Tad?? I, you mean, you--Nikki
 came to you?

TAD
 Yeah, yeah, she did. She told me
 everything. Listen, Nikki is my
 Woman, now...

Nikki sits on his lap and kisses his cheeks as he talks.

TAD (CONT'D)
 I'm only doing this for her--

CARLA
 --Wha, what? You and Nikki--

TAD
 --That's right, Boo. I don't want
 you no more, I'm good. I'm only
 doing this for my sugar-pie. Shit,
 I'll tell 'em it was a glitch in
 the matrix or somethin', he don't
 know no better.

CARLA
 For what? What are you two up to?

Nikki snatches the phone from Tad.

NIKKI
 Listen, Bitch, just open your App,
 look on your timeline, and tell me
 what the hell you see right now?

Carla goes back to her App, her timeline. Big Luther still
 dances in the dark.

NIKKI (CONT'D)
 You should be lookin' at Morris
 Chest-nuts' ass dancing in the
 dark.

CARLA
 What? Who? How, how do you know--

NIKKI

--Cause his ass think he singing
and dancin' fa' me.

CARLA

Who?? Whatchu mean? Who's dancing
for you? How could--

NIKKI

--Just hold on, keep watchin'...

Tad hits the button, nervously.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

Wait for it, wait for it...

Suddenly Big Luther is illuminated to the full on Carla's screen and on the App feed for everyone to see. He's almost butt-naked in a speedo, gyrating, but doesn't know it.

Carla sits flabbergasted at Sterling. ON SCREEN Nikki types in the comments section on her phone and the text appears on Carla's screen: NOW, TELL ME YOU LOVE ME, BABY, HOW MUCH MONEY WE MAKIN' OFF THIS CONTEST?

Carla's ON SCREEN shows Big Luther's reply; I LOVE YOU AND YOU ONLY, TWO SONGS, WE SPLIT \$15k, NOW, TAKE OFF YOUR CLOTHES! YOU PROMISED. Carla dips her head in disappointment.

CARLA

Does he know I can see him?

NIKKI

No, he think the filter is still on. He think it's "Nikki Minaj" he's dancin' for, with his stupid-ass. I'm sorry, Carla, I just had to show you who you dealin' with. I been tryin' to tell you, I--

CARLA

--I, I kinda' believed you. I just
(beat)
How did you find out? How--

Nikkitt hits 'facetime' on her phone, her live feed shows on Carla's phone, she accepts, they are face to face.

NIKKI

--Dre-Day'--err, Andre, Boo. He's the one feelin' you. He's the one who knew this fool was a fake all along, he--

CARLA

--Andre?? He did this? For me?

NIKKI

Yep. Evidently, he been feelin' you for a while, Girl. That's why he was serenadin' yo' ass at Mic Fest, ignoring me. I knew it was somethin' cause, hmph...

CARLA

Wow, I, I feel like, like shit, I--

NIKKI

--You better quit shittin' around and get with that Man!

INT. GAB ENTERTAINMENT - BREAK ROOM - NEXT DAY

Nikki and Tommy stand near the door eyeing Carla and Andre as they sit at a table.

TOMMY

--I think he's doin' the damn thing--
-

NIKKI

--Yeah, yeah, she looks pretty relaxed, too. This is looking good!

EXT. STARCHILD STUDIOS PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Cars swerve into the lot, screeching tires. Angry husbands and boyfriends get out, some with sticks and bats. A JEWISH guy, 28, looks around, sees WHITE and BLACK GUYS (40's).

JEWISH GUY

--What, what are you guys doin here? Are, are we--is, is this the guy?, I--

BLACK GUY

--You, too?? Yeah, that's his ass. Let's see if he wants to dance butt-naked now...

INT. STARCHILD LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Sterling looking out the bay window to the parking lot. Cyndi next to him shaking her head as she packs her belongings, exits down the hallway.

CYNDI

Um, hmm--told yo' ass, Cuz...

Sterling is left "stuck on stupid, watching the parking lot fill with protesters. A local Atlanta NEWS VAN pulls in. A CAMERAMAN and REPORTER hop out, begin to report.

Sterling runs to Cyndi's desk, puts on the local news to the big screen.

EXT. STARCHILD STUDIOS PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

A REPORTER, 30, prepares to go live as the angry mob grows. He pulls over a bat-wielding protester to interview.

REPORTER

--And, evidently, you are not fans of Mr. James?

PROTESTER

--Fan?? Hell naww, he's been singing and dancing to our girls, so, we come to do a little dance with him.

INT. STARCHILD LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Lobby big-screen shows a video capture from the App, Sterling, dancing in his thong.

STERLING

Ohh, shiiit!!!

INT. GAB ENTERTAINMENT - BREAK ROOM - SAME TIME

Andre and Carla having coffee. Andre glances the door, sees Nikki and Tommy turn away like they are not interested.

ANDRE

--I figured I had to stop him, Carla. You don't deserve being treated like that, played like that-

-

CARLA

--No. No I don't. Nobody does.
Listen, Andre, I'm sorry. I never
even guessed you had interest in
me. I, I guess I was so focused on
business, I, I'm sorry I didn't
recognize, I--

ANDRE

--Look, none of that matters now.
The storm is passing. We'll all be
in Vegas next week, and I just need
you to know that, that--I'd like to
hang out with you if there's time.

Carla's heart melts, it shows on her face.

ANDRE (CONT'D)

I, I really wanna to get to know
you, I--

CARLA

I would like that, very much,
Andre.

She leans over to kiss him softly on the lips. A hushed
"Wooo" reverberates around the room. She looks to see all
eyes on them, gives the eye; the room quickly falls silent.

Andre is stuck with his eyes closed, lips still puckered. She
leans back over and continues the kiss.

Amy sits in the corner with Seth.

AMY

Ohhh, he kissed The Closer--

SETH

--Nooo, she kissed him. Sorta like
this
(kisses her)

Tommy and Nikki watch Carla and Andre from the doorway. He
begins a slow clap, several join, then all join in the
applaud.

NIKKI

Awww, will you look at that?

TOMMY

Yeah, yeah, they look like two
little puppies. I'm happy for my
Boy

(MORE)

TOMMY (CONT'D)

(beat)

Say, any chance you and I can--

NIKKI

--No! I'm taken. Me and Tad got a thang goin' on. He coming to work for us now, we don't need Sterlings fake ass. My Tad's gonna finish the competition for us in Vegas soon as the storm passes.

She turns to leave the room, he follows.

TOMMY

What?? Tad?? Naw, naww, nawww, Nikki! How the hell did big man get the--

NIKKI

--Yep, met him at the studio, had him butt-naked in his office before his door closed--

TOMMY

--What?? No you didn't--

NIKKI

--Yes I did! Broke the man's desk, too--

TOMMY

--No! Nooo!!

NIKKI

--Broke his chair, first...

FADE OUT.