

# Untitled Nina Simone

by  
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January 18, 2010 R

ON STAGE

NINA SIMONE sits in front of a piano. We see her in profile, haughty, strong, regal.

We STAY on her, the summer wind just brushing the high turban wrapped around her head.

PULL BACK: Central Park, mid 60's. There are tens of thousands of people sitting on the grass, talking, smoking weed, making out.

FIND a young black girl, 7, 8, a necklace with a small silver fist, raised high, on it--it is her POV we are seeing through--she is totally taken with the woman on the stage--

Just the two of them, still and strong--each waiting for the same moment....

In the audience, a GUY and his GIRLFRIEND looking at the stage.

GUY

What is that bitch waiting for?

GIRLFRIEND

For you to shut up.

GUY

No, that's what you waiting for.

She shrugs, he's right. Still he quiets, and as if they all got it at once, the crowd quiets.

ON STAGE--a slight NOD of her head--Nina begins to PLAY.

CLOSE on her HANDS, moving expertly, without hesitation over the keys, finding them, knowing them, loving them.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

These same fingers furiously rummaging through a drawer.

NINA

Mother fucker!! What the fuck you doing in my house!!

MOVE UP to her face, now years older, eyes burning with RAGE, as she finally finds, and grabs onto a HANDGUN.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NINA (CONT'D)  
What are you doing to me!! What  
are you doing to me!!

Turns to a MAN standing across from her, she points the gun at him as he grabs the phone.

CUT TO:

EXT. CENTURY CITY HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Nice, upscale, quiet.

INT. CENTURY CITY HOSPITAL - CONTINUOUS

Early 90's. Not a black face in sight. White Nurses, white uniforms, white.

Except CLIFTON, black, late 20's, slight, carrying some sheets and towels, moves down the hallway.

Heads toward the PSYCHE WARD, enters a private room.

INT. PRIVATE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Clifton enters, starts making the bed, putting fresh towels in the bathroom, preparing the room.

A NURSE, white, older enters.

NURSE  
You better put the restraints on.

CLIFTON  
Alright.

Clifton goes to the closet, gets thick white canvas STRAPS from the closet, ATTACHES them to the bed, double checks, makes sure they are tight.

RECEPTION AREA

LAPD'S escorting the handcuffed Nina into the hospital.

They are met by two orderlies and a nurse. Cops hand the orderlies a sheet of paper and gladly hand her over.

She is calm and quiet. The cop notices and for a moment is moved by HER.

COP 1  
Sorry about this.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He uncuffs her and just as he turns to leave, and as soon as he does, holding both hands like a bat, Nina takes a SWING and SMASHES the cop in the FACE.

CUT TO:

INT. NURSE'S STATION - LATER

NURSE SHEILA, 40's, a couple of other NURSES, and the rest of the night shift are getting ready for rounds.

NURSE SHEILA

She pulled a gun on her brother.  
The brother called the cops, her  
doctor called us. She's  
unpredictable.

BACK ON NINA, being almost dragged to her room.

NURSE SHEILA (CONT'D)

She wouldn't take her medication,  
she was given a shot. She would  
not sit down.

The ORDERLIES hold Nina's arm, give her a shot.

NURSE SHELA

She would not change her clothes.  
She had a money belt around her  
waist with eight thousand dollars  
in it.

The Orderlies remove her money belt, she has a FIT.

NURSE SHELA (CONT'D)

And had to be restrained.

They force her into bed, restrain her hands and legs, pull the straps tight.

BACK ON NURSE'S STATION

NURSE SHELA (CONT'D)

She is a diagnosed manic-  
depressive,  
(checks her notes)  
Diagnosed alcoholic, diagnosed mild  
paranoid, severe dysfunction when  
off medication, moderate to good  
function when medicated. So.  
(shrugs)  
Crazy blacks and crazy, they're a  
lot of work.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NURSE SHELA (CONT'D)  
I wish I had a hospital full of  
crazy fifty year old white women,  
they're losers and they know it.  
(then, catching herself)  
Right, Clifton?

CLIFTON, the only black in the bunch and very low on the  
totem pole, shrugs.

CLIFTON  
(shrugs)  
Crazy's crazy.

NURSE SHEILA  
Who is she again?

RECEPTION NURSE  
Nina Simone.

NURSE SHEILA  
I know that name. Who is that?

ORDERLY  
(shrugs)  
I never heard of her. She can't be  
that famous, she's fat.

CUT TO:

INT. PRIVATE ROOM - DAY

A NURSE and Clifton enter. The Nurse is holding a tray with  
a needle, alcohol swabs.

The Nurse prepares the needle. Clifton prepares Nina.

He pushes up her sleeve, cleans an area on her arm. Nina  
watches him without a word.

CLIFTON  
(quiet)  
Take your medication. If you do,  
they'll take the flag off your  
file, you won't be restrained for  
meals, showers, recreation.

NINA  
Did whitey send you?

Clifton blushes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLIFTON

I have aunts, a grandmother, I  
wouldn't want to see them go  
through this.

Nina looks at him, right into his downcast eyes.

He looks back at her, her defiance holding him there--pulling  
him in.

NURSE

Let's go.

She walks over with the tray. Turns Nina's arm. Sticks her.  
Puts a band-aid on it.

INT. NINA'S ROOM - ANOTHER DAY

Nina is in bed watching TV. Clifton walks by, looks in. She  
waves him in.

NINA

Where's my money? The money they  
took from me.

CLIFTON

It's in the safe, with your other  
stuff.

NINA

Will you check on it for me?

CLIFTON

Uh huh.  
(then)  
You seem better.

He stands there for a moment, awkward but not wanting to  
leave.

NINA

Do you know who I am?

Clifton shakes his head.

NINA (CONT'D)

(dismisses him)  
You're too young.

INT. CLIFTON'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Clifton is having a cup of coffee, PHONE RINGS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLIFTON

Hello--

(into phone)

Hey, Mom....Good. How's everyone?

CLIFTON'S MOM

Good, baby.

CLIFTON

How's dad?

CLIFTON'S MOM

(pause)

He's fine.

CLIFTON

Whenever you're ready to leave him,  
I'm here.

CLIFTON'S MOM

Oh honey.

(then)

Why'd you call? Everything okay?

CLIFTON

Yeah. Mom, didn't you listen to  
Nina Simone records when we were  
kids, always made you cry?

CLIFTON'S MOM

Yes. But they didn't make me cry.  
I was crying for other reasons.  
Why?

CLIFTON

She's in the hospital, psychiatric  
ward--she's kind of a mess.

CLIFTON'S MOM

Nina Simone?

CLIFTON

Yeah.

CLIFTON'S MOM

Oh, no. Honey, she is a great  
woman. A legend. Respect her,  
take care of her, okay?

CLIFTON

I will.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CLIFTON'S MOM  
Good. And come home soon. I miss  
my baby.

CLIFTON  
Me too.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - ANOTHER DAY

Nina is out of bed, walking the halls with her lawyer.

NINA  
Did you check on my money?

LAWYER  
It's all there. I counted it.

Nina nods.

NINA  
Did you bring my stuff?

He hands her a package, some tapes, papers.

NINA (CONT'D)  
Thank you.

INT. CAFETERIA/HOSPITAL - AFTERNOON

Nina is sitting at a table, watching the door. Waiting. She  
lights a cigarette.

Clifton comes in with some other ORDERLIES.

Nina picks up the videotape on the table, gets up, then sits  
down again. She's nervous. She waits until Clifton gets up  
to get some soda.

She walks over to him.

CLIFTON  
Hello--

NINA  
This is for you.

She gives him the tape--as if she is handing him a diamond  
necklace. And walks away.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

Clifton watches her leave, feeling the strange connection between them.

CUT TO:

INT. CLIFTON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Nondescript but nice, he's made an effort, less for himself more for who he's hoping will walk into his life one day.

Clifton, in jeans and a t-shirt puts the video in. Sits down, lights a joint. Hits PLAY.

A tape of a performance, Nina at the PIANO, mid-70's.

CUT TO:

INT. CLUB/LUSANNE SWITZERLAND 1974 - NIGHT

Nina sits in front of the piano, a small band surrounding her.

She waits until it is silent, and when it is, begins to PLAY.

With passion, discipline and such intense, haunting emotion it takes your breath away.

NINA

(singing)

...black is the color of my true  
love's hair...his face so soft and  
wondrous...the purest eyes and the  
strongest hands...

Her voice, deep, beautiful, almost androgynous, incapable of compromise.

NINA (CONT'D)

...I love the ground on where he  
stands...I love the ground on where  
he stands....I love my lover and  
well he knows....and still I hope  
that the time will come...when he  
and I will be as one...

INT. CLIFTON'S APARTMENT - PRESENT - NIGHT

BACK ON CLIFTON--seeing her for the first time, as are most of us--he doesn't move, doesn't make a sound, just allows her voice and her music to take him.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY/HOSPITAL - AFTERNOON

Clifton moves down the hall, the video in his hand, just about to enter Nina's room.

Nurse Sheila, coming the other way, sees the tape, stops him.

NURSE SHEILA  
What's that?

He shrugs, feels a little uncomfortable.

Sheila gestures for the tape, he gives it to her, she looks at it.

Kind of laughs, hands it back.

She watches him walk away, a little less joy in his step, mission accomplished.

INT. NINA'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Clifton walks in.

NINA  
Did you like it?

CLIFTON  
Yes. Very much.

Nina beams like a little kid.

NINA  
I'm very famous, you know.

Clifton nods.

CLIFTON  
My mother used to listen to you.

NINA  
Your mother?

CLIFTON  
Um...  
(then)  
I hope it's okay for me to say this. You've been here a month. And you're stable and, well nothing is keeping you here, you can leave, you should leave.

BEAT. Yeah, she can leave, but to go where and to who?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NINA  
Do you think this is the first time  
I've been locked up?

Clifton shrugs--

NINA (CONT'D)  
Do you?

--already in over his head.

CLIFTON  
I don't know.

NINA  
Get out of here. Go.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - MORNING

Clifton comes down the hall, in his jeans and t-shirt.  
Sheila is waiting for him.

NURSE SHEILA  
They're in the yard.

EXT. COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

Nina is sitting with her LAWYER and her MANAGER.

Clifton approaches, not sure what is going on.

Nina's MANAGER, short, French, greasy, gets up.

MANAGER  
I'm Henry Edwards. I'm Nina  
Simone's manager.

Clifton shakes his hand.

CLIFTON  
Hello.

NINA  
(to Clifton)  
And this is my lawyer Alan  
Williams.

ALAN  
Miss Simone is going back to France  
and she wants you to go with her as  
her assistant.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Clifton is completely stunned.

Nina sits in a chair, sober, medicated, clear, and formidable.

Seeing her like this, we have a moment, as does Clifton, of clarity. She's a powerful being.

ALAN (CONT'D)

You will be paid two thousand dollars a month plus room and board of course. In return you will take care of Miss Simone's needs, accompany her through out Europe.

Clifton looks at Nina, she smiles at him. Really that's all it takes.

INT. NURSE SHEILA'S OFFICE - DAY

Clifton is standing across from Sheila.

NURSE SHEILA

Of course you can come back, and you will. Because she's crazy, and she's a bitch, and I don't think you know what you're getting into.

CLIFTON

I think I do.

NURSE SHEILA

No, you don't. She likes you because you're black, but she'll shit on you because you're black too, so don't forget it.

CUT TO:

INT. PLANE - DAY

Nina and Clifton in first class. Clifton is on the aisle, Nina is at the window.

Clifton is trying to be cool, but he's excited. First class not his usual mode of transportation.

Nina is drinking hard, she can't get it in fast enough or enjoy it more.

She leans close to Clifton.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NINA  
You're pretty.

Clifton just nods. Not really sure how to react. Nina looks at him a long moment.

CUT TO:

INT. TERMINAL/DEGAULLE AIRPORT - DAY

Nina and Clifton are greeted and escorted through a private Customs section.

Nina is very well known here. She is treated with reverence and some awe by the French.

INT. CUSTOMS AREA - CONTINUOUS

Nina is talking to a CUSTOMS AGENT. She speaks French beautifully. It is very impressive, and though he hides it well, Clifton is more than a little star-struck.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURB OUTSIDE PARIS/NINA'S HOUSE - LATER

A CAB pulls up in front of a stone two story house. Large but a bit of a mess.

The DRIVER opens the car door for Nina, she gets out, Clifton follows.

Nina goes inside, Clifton grabs the luggage, follows.

INT. NINA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Nina heads right upstairs.

NINA  
(over her shoulder)  
Will you get some champagne and  
bring it upstairs?

CLIFTON'S POV as he walks through the house. Goes into the  
KITCHEN

Clifton opens the fridge. Nothing but a couple bottles of open champagne. They're flat but he takes them anyway.

STAIRS/HALLWAY

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Clifton heads up the stairs, but the CAMERA stays downstairs for a moment, registers what Clifton was seeing.

The place is a wreck, very little furniture, hasn't been painted, not dirty so much as bare, like no one really lives there.

INT. NINA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nina is kneeling in front of a bare mattress, holding her money belt. She lifts the mattress, puts her money under it.

ON CLIFTON watching Nina as she lies down on the bed, tired from her journey.

CLIFTON

Uh...this is all I could find.

He pours a glass, hands it to her. She takes a sip, closes her eyes, ready for sleep.

CLIFTON (CONT'D)

Um, do you want me to make the bed.

NINA

No. I'm too tired.

(then)

You want to come be with me.

Clifton looks at her. Doesn't know what to say.

NINA (CONT'D)

(half asleep)

Why not? You don't like me?...you're a nurse...

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Clifton goes through the cupboards, looking for something to make breakfast.

Nutella, crackers, some open boxes of sugar. A few glasses, some silverware, not much of anything.

Nina tired and jet lagged, enters.

NINA

I want a drink. I was clean for thirty days in that goddamn hospital. I want a drink.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLIFTON  
There's nothing here.

NINA  
Well, go get something.

CLIFTON  
You need to eat something first--

NINA  
Listen Motherfucker, I pay you.  
You work for me. I'm not your  
patient. Now, go get me some  
champagne.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

A case of champagne being loaded in the refrigerator.

Clifton finishes, opens a small bag from the pharmacy.

Pulls out Nina's PILLS-- Klonopin, Atavan, Prozac, Lithium.

Another bag full of FOOD, crackers, eggs, bread, cheese--  
something comforting about watching him.

QUICK CUTS:

Clifton trying to get her to eat/ Nina drinking, playing  
music, partying.

Clifton limiting her alcohol, trying to get her to take her  
medication/Nina dodging him.

Clifton doesn't give up/Nina drains a bottle.

Clifton waters the next one down/Nina doesn't notice.

Clifton getting her to eat/Nina trying to get him to drink.

It's the beginnings of a relationship--the push and pull over  
alcohol, food, medication, sleep.

The tricks and tantrums and standoffs creating a foundation--  
a place for them to be with each other.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Nina is upstairs sleeping.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Clifton is going through her mail. There's shit everywhere. A large filing cabinet full of press clippings, memorabilia.

He grabs a stack of CONTRACTS. Some are in German, some in French, some from Africa, Switzerland, Barbados.

CLOSE ON THE CONTRACTS as he FLIPS through them. Nina Simone to paid sum of 250,000 He looks at another, Nina Simone to be paid 100,000 Another, to be paid, 50,000 another, 8,000 -75,000 100,000, 30,000.

Clifton stops, looks around at this shit hole she's living in..

His curiosity getting the best of him, he starts going through her other stuff.

BLACK and WHITE PICTURES of Nina with Dick Gregory, a young Richard Pryor, Lorraine Hansbury, Martin Luther King

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

It's the next night. Nina is passed out upstairs. Clifton can't help himself, is back sifting through her life.

He finds a BIRTH CERTIFICATE. LISA STOWEN SIMONE MOTHER: NINA SIMONE FATHER: ANDREW STOWEN DATE OF BIRTH: OCTOBER 11, 1969

A CARD, "Marry me Nina, please, please, please, please...."

And her answer, written on a sheet of paper, the lyrics to a song, "Tell Him I Love Him."

A PICTURE of NINA with a black woman, bald, scarf on her head, holding up her play, "To Be Young Gifted and Black" by Lorraine Hansbury--with that a TAPE, ON the TAPE: "I love you Nina, always will, Lorraine..."

Clifton puts the TAPE into a boom box.

CUT TO:

INT. BROWNSTONE/HARLEM 1964 - NIGHT

Nina and Lorraine sit drinking in a small apartment. A small upright in the corner.

Lorraine, a playwright who died at 34, and one of Nina's closest friends, is thin, a bit weak. But she is laughing, and joyous.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

A TAPE RECORDER is set on the table.

NINA  
(into recorder)  
Alright, the name of this song is  
To Be Young Gifted and Black--and I  
wrote it for my friend.

LORRAINE  
You didn't write it for me, you  
wrote it because you had to.

NINA  
Yes--it was either write this song,  
or..or what Lorraine? You're the  
writer.

LORRAINE  
I don't know--I just know you came  
running to me to show me this song--  
something must have taken hold of  
you.

Lorraine holds up her glass to Nina, good for you.

NINA  
Okay--

Nina looks at a piece of paper, on it the lyrics she wrote.  
She sits at the piano.

NINA (CONT'D)  
...okay...well...you showed me that  
this was true.

LORRAINE  
Oh...just sing, baby.

Nina starts PLAYING.

NINA  
(singing)  
...young, gifted and black...oh  
what a lovely, precious  
dream...open your heart to what I  
mean...in the whole world, you  
know, there's a million boys and  
girls...

She looks at Lorraine--she nods at Nina, proud of her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

NINA (CONT'D)  
...we must begin to tell our  
young...there is a world waiting  
for you...when you are young,  
gifted and black...your soul's  
intact...

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - PRESENT - NIGHT

BACK ON CLIFTON listening to Nina, and finding his own sense  
of the world into which they both were born.

NINA  
(on tape)  
--oh how I've longed to know the  
truth...there are times when I look  
back, and I am haunted by my  
youth...

The phone RINGS. Clifton practically jumps out of his skin.  
Turns the TAPE OFF.

CLIFTON  
(into phone)  
Hello?

HENRY EDWARDS  
Clifton it's Henry Edwards. Look  
I've managed to book Nina at a club  
in Paris next Friday. It's a very  
good club and they're paying her  
alot of money so make sure she's  
ready.

CLIFTON  
She's not in any condition to  
perform. She's drinking, not  
consistently taking her medication.  
Very volatile--

HENRY EDWARDS  
(interrupts him)  
I know all that--that's what she is--  
--she's a fucked up alcoholic drug  
addict--but she's still here, and  
people will still pay to see her,  
so just get her on stage.

He hangs up. Clifton just gets shit on everywhere he turns.

CUT TO:

INT. BACKSTAGE/CLUB PARIS - NIGHT

Kind of funky, but real. A tray of bad French deli.  
Champagne.

Nina is sleeping on the couch. Clifton is sitting in a  
chair, nervous, and totally out of his element.

XAVIER, guitar player, cool black French guy, comes in,  
approaches Clifton, set list in hand. He's not happy.

XAVIER

Hey man...

CLIFTON

H--

XAVIER

So, fucking Henri hands me this set  
list--he's doing the set list now?  
Since when? Fourteen songs. I  
told that dick and he knows, Nina's  
got five, maybe six songs in her--  
he wants her on stage for an hour  
and a half, and it's not going to  
happen. And I'm not showing it to  
her. She will actually kill me.  
I'm sure he's up there blowing the  
club owner and waiting for his  
money, and we are stuck here trying  
to--

(stops)

You show it to her.

He hands Clifton the set list, walks away.

Clifton shakes his head. Xavier walking out, Nina  
practically passed out on the couch, the club filling up--  
what the fuck is he supposed to do?

INT. CLUB OFFICE - A BIT LATER

Henri and the Club Owner having a drink.

A KNOCK on the door.

CLUB OWNER

Yeah.

Clifton enters.

CLIFTON

Hi.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HENRY EDWARDS

Hi. Nina ready?

CLIFTON

Um...

He looks at them, the room, little glasses of wine, smoke everywhere. What and the hell is he doing here?

Clifton turns to leave.

HENRY EDWARD

What? Is that bitch acting up again?

Clifton stops--for whatever reason, tired of being kicked, nothing to lose, lost and alone, whatever--it kicks in--he turns back.

CLIFTON

The play list is too long for Nina.

HENRY EDWARDS

(quick)

She'll be fine.

CLIFTON

No she won't.

CLUB OWNER

Look, I'm paying for an hour and a half performance. If she can't play that long--

HENRY EDWARD

(to club owner)

She's been performing for thirty years. She can sing ten songs.

Henry gets up, pulls Clifton aside.

HENRY EDWARDS

Don't even pretend you have the balls to stand up to me. Or to her. Take the playlist, put it on her piano, put her in front of the piano, and tell the band to shut the fuck up. What you don't understand is she needs this gig-- don't blow it for her.

CUT TO:

INT. CLUB/STAGE - NIGHT

CLOSE ON NINA as she walks out on stage.

The CROWD sees her, they stand, start clapping, they worship her, revere her.

XAVIER  
Ladies and Gentlemen, Dr. Nina  
Simone.

Nina sits down in front of her piano, tall and straight. As she does, her attention is drawn to something on the piano.

NINA'S POV, the PLAY LIST, 14 SONGS long.

She looks at it, then turns, nods to Xavier, LEANS CLOSE to her MICROPHONE.

NINA  
I haven't played in a while--so  
let's just see what happens.

She takes a beat--a long one until the crowd gets silent.

Then begins to PLAY the classical, complicated, stunning instrumental opening to "Wild is the Wind."

ON NINA, her face remains blank, and yet, somehow, she takes us with her, wherever she goes, and on whatever wings she flies--that is her genius, and we abandon everything and go with her.

MONTAGE

MATCH CUT PERFORMANCES of NINA performing "Wild is the Wind" at different times, different years, different decades.

CHICAGO, LOS ANGELES, NEW YORK, BARBADOS, AMSTERDAM, DETROIT--different hairstyles, different outfits, but always holding the same note, the same passion.

Always at the piano, always putting us on her back, carrying us with her.

The SONG takes us deep into dangerous territory--during it, relationships start, babies born, people die, kids start school. All of it on her face, in her hands, in a single note, all of it while Nina plays ONE SONG.

CUT TO:

INT. CLUB - PRESENT - CONTINUOUS

BACK ON NINA as she finishes, gets up and walks off the stage, the PLAY LIST left untouched, on the piano.

The CROWD claps wildly, Henri and the club owner, in the B.G., confused--waiting, as the crowd is for her to come back.

HOLD ON THE EMPTY STAGE, her absence in a way more powerful than her presence.

ON the PLAYLIST, IGNORED, UNTOUCHED, and we know, before the audience does, she's not returning.

ON CLIFTON, a smile, involuntary, from deep in his soul, starts to spread across his face as he begins to understand what she has done, who she is.

CUT TO:

INT. NINA'S HOUSE - NEXT MORNING

Nina is eating cereal. Clifton is hovering around her. Getting her some more milk, some toast. Fresh coffee, a napkin.

He's nervous, different around her...

NINA  
Clifton. What's wrong with you?

...like a fan would be nervous.

CLIFTON  
Nothing.

He walks away, hurt.

NINA  
What is wrong with you?

CLIFTON  
I've..when you sing--

NINA  
What? When I sing, what?

CLIFTON  
I've never seen anything like it,  
never felt anything like it--it  
made me feel...I...I just....you're  
different.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NINA  
What? What?? No I'm not. No, I'm  
not mother fucker--

She gets up from the table, suddenly, violently--

NINA (CONT'D)  
(ranting at him, at  
everyone)  
Fool! I am not different, I am me,  
I am Doctor Nina Simone, and the  
only way anyone can deal with me is  
when my power is channeled through  
my music.

--just like that, she's off--gone, furious, raging

NINA (CONT'D)  
(raging)  
But that is too fucking bad--I am a  
black woman and I know who I am--

--she heads upstairs--

NINA (CONT'D)  
(screaming)  
Bring me some champagne mother  
fucker!!!

INT. HALLWAY/NINA'S ROOM - LATER

Clifton comes out of his room, heads toward Nina's.

He KNOCKS lightly, opens the door.

Nina is in bed. He goes to her to check on her.

NINA  
(groggy)  
Hi baby.

He sits on the side of her bed.

CLIFTON  
You okay?

She nods, reaches for him. He takes her hand. Gently  
strokes her arm.

A LONG BEAT of tenderness. Kindness.

Nina's eyes open, she looks at his hand on her arm.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLIFTON (CONT'D)

Nina--

She looks up at him, as the OPENING BEATS of "Just Like A Woman" begin to PLAY.

CLIFTON (CONT'D)

(pause)

What happened? Why are you  
sleeping on a bare mattress? Why  
do you have fifteen thousand  
dollars in your mattress and not  
have a bank account? Why aren't  
you performing? Why are you  
playing in front of a hundred  
people and not twenty thousand?  
What happened?

Nina shrugs, groggy, tired, defenseless.

NINA

Too much loss.

(then)

Don't be afraid of me.

The SONG, quiet, beautiful, takes us to:

INT. NINA'S BEDROOM - LATER

Nina is asleep, her head on Clifton's chest.

NINA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

(singing)

...she takes just like a woman, yes  
she does, and she makes love just  
like a woman, and she aches just  
like a woman....but she breaks just  
like a little girl..

He's awake, staring off, as the SONG goes from soundtrack to reality.

INT. NINA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Clifton is sleeping.

Nina wakes up, looks at this boy/man next to her, and she sees someone she doesn't want to lose.

NINA

Hey, hey. Get up.

Clifton wakes up. Sits up as Nina gets out of bed.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

NINA (CONT'D)  
Come on. Let's go to Nice. You  
should see me in Nice. I'm a star  
in Nice. Let's go.

CUT TO:

EXT. SOUTH OF FRANCE - DAY

Beautiful day, the sky is blue blue. A big, black Cadillac,  
regal and old, comes into view.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Clifton is driving, Nina sitting next to him.

For just a moment, the scarf wrapped around her head, him in  
sunglasses, the road, the sea, Grace Kelly and Cary Grant  
come to mind. But that's ridiculous, they are not them, not  
by a long shot.

Nina and Clifton, speeding down the coast, sipping Tequila,  
are much cooler, much more real, way more down than those two  
could ever dream of being.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL BAR/NICE - EVENING

Nina, Clifton, a number of other people are at the center  
table.

Nina is telling a story in French--she speaks beautifully,  
with tremendous sophistication.

A new COUPLE joins them.

NINA  
Arman, Julie, this is my Clifton.

They look at him, no idea who he is, and don't really seem to  
care.

All eyes are on Nina, this is her turf, and she knows it, and  
is happy here.

EXT. PATIO BAR - NIGHT

Nina with a few people from the last bar, a half dozen new  
ones.

They are sitting outside, on a gorgeous summer night. Nina  
is now very drunk, speaking in French and English.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Nina has moved her chair close to Clifton's. There is French salsa/reggae music playing.

She is leaning on him, he's trying not to be uncomfortable, but is. She could care less. She squeezes his thigh, runs her hand up his leg.

He moves, tries to make it look accidental--Nina just smiles at him, knows he's uncomfortable, but also knows what she wants.

CUT TO:

INT. NINA'S HOTEL ROOM - LATER

A beautiful room, French and romantic and open.

Clifton helps Nina, really drunk, on her bed, takes her shoes off.

NINA  
Take it all off.

CLIFTON  
Nina--stop.

NINA  
No. You stop. Stop with this  
bullshit. Fuck me already.

Clifton shakes his head.

And Nina, incapable of dealing with rejection, starts raging.

NINA (CONT'D)  
Then fuck you. Go get me Stephan  
from the bar downstairs. Go on.  
Get out of here faggot. Go. Go  
get me a man.

INT. HALLWAY/NINA'S ROOM - LATER

STEPHAN, older, kind of gross, slips into Nina's room.

CUT TO:

EXT. POOLSIDE/HOTEL - NEXT DAY

Nina is in a bathing suit and a big hat, hungover, drinking.  
Clifton is next to her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NINA

There's a young beautiful black man  
down at the valet. Ask him if he'd  
like to have dinner with us  
tonight.

LONG BEAT

Clifton looks at her. Nina just lays there, and finally he  
gets up, puts his shirt on, goes to the valet.

CUT TO:

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Nina and the VALET GUY are drinking, flirting.

Clifton is the odd man out, and Nina does everything to make  
sure it's as shitty as it can be.

NINA

We need some music. Don't we need  
music? Clifton go tell them to put  
some real music on. Something  
good. Something deep.

CLIFTON

Like what?

NINA

You pick.

Clifton looks at her, right--like anything he does short of  
fucking her will make her happy.

But he gets up, it's his job, goes to the manager.

Nina orders another drink.

The Valet guy kisses her cheek as the beginning SOUNDS of  
"The Beggar" by Mos Def begin to play, funky, dark, sexy.

MOS DEF

....woman you know I love you,  
woman you know just how I feel...

Clifton walks back--Nina looks at him. It's a good song,  
it's right, it's rare, and she's surprised.

He holds her gaze for a moment, then gets up and leaves.

CUT TO:

INT. NINA'S HOTEL ROOM - AFTERNOON

Nina and the boy are sleeping. They're both naked. Judging by the tangled sheets and trashed bed it was a long night.

Nina wakes up. Reaches for one of the champagne bottles. It's empty. They're all empty.

She gets up, her body still beautiful, still strong, walks to the balcony, steps out.

As she does, the MUSIC COMES UP again....

MOS DEF  
...woman I love you, woman I love  
you...

...Mos singing about love, a song Nina could have sang, should have sang.

Nina naked, the ocean, the MUSIC, untouchable beauty, and as the POV shifts

MOVE to CLIFTON, from his balcony, watching her.

It was his POV we were seeing her through--his ears we were hearing with--we see how he sees her, what he feels when he looks at her--it may not be what she wants, but it is stronger and more moving than she could ever hope for.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL LOUNGE - AFTERNOON

Clifton is sitting in the lounge having a drink.

NINA  
Where the hell have you been? I've  
been calling you.

Nina comes up, sits down. She sees Clifton's backpack on the floor next to him.

BEAT.

NINA (CONT'D)  
Already?

Clifton looks down at his drink uncomfortable.

NINA (CONT'D)  
I'm ready to go. Let's go. Tell  
the bellhop to bring my bags down.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLIFTON  
I'm not going back to Paris. I'm  
going home. To Chicago.

NINA  
What? No, you're not.

CLIFTON  
I am.

She looks at him, confused, lost, almost child like in her  
need.

NINA  
You can't. You have a contract.  
You can't break your contract.

CLIFTON  
It doesn't include being your pimp.

NINA  
(angry)  
Pimp? I don't need a pimp. You  
think I need a pimp?

CLIFTON  
No, I don't think you need a pimp.

Clifton pulls out some money to pay for his drinks. He gets  
up, grabs his bags.

Nina watches him go--but he turns back, leans over, kisses  
her goodbye, and leaves her.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM/SUBURBAN HOUSE - CHICAGO - MORNING

A small, neat, lower middle class home. Clifton is asleep on  
the couch in his parent's house.

Clifton's FATHER walks through. He's a big guy with a dark  
engaging presence. Clifton looks nothing like him.

CLIFTON'S FATHER  
You didn't hear the door?

Clifton opens his eyes. Annoyed, his father shakes his head.

CLIFTON'S FATHER (CONT'D)  
Nothing changes does it? Been here  
two days and slept through 'em  
both.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He looks at Clifton. Clifton looks back at him. They don't like each other. Never have. Probably never will.

Clifton's father walks to the door, opens it.

OFF his surprised face,

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Clifton and his two BROTHERS, big like their father, are sitting on the couch. His Dad is standing near them.

It is an awkward family portrait, an even more awkward moment because Nina is sitting in a chair across from them.

NINA

This is where Clifton grew up?

CLIFTON'S FATHER

(half-joking)

Where he tried to grow up. No,  
Clifton's a good boy.

He leans just a little close to Nina, he is confident, sure of himself. Nina enjoys it. Clifton hates it.

NINA

Was he?

But she looks at Clifton, not his father--makes it clear, no one else matters in that room.

She came for him, and she's not leaving without him.

Clifton's MOM, pretty, comes in from upstairs. She is carrying a stack of vinyl.

CLIFTON'S MOM

I just can't believe you are in our  
house. I have so much of your  
music.

She hands Nina a record. "Nina at the Village Gate" Nina takes it. And then another: "At Carnegie Hall" And another, "Nina Simone at Town Hall."

Nina nods, is gracious. There is something these two older women share, some pain, some truth.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLIFTON'S MOM (CONT'D)  
I never took this off my record  
player.

She hands Nina another record, "Four Women." Everyone is  
getting uncomfortable, but she doesn't care.

Nina Simone is in her house and she is going to let Nina know  
what that means to her.

CLIFTON'S MOM (CONT'D)  
Their father gave me this.

She holds up, "The Amazing Nina Simone." With each cover, we  
see the scope and breadth of Nina's career, the sheer volume  
of material.

CLIFTON'S MOM (CONT'D)  
Can I play a song?

CLIFTON  
Mom--

CLIFTON'S FATHER  
Honey--

CLIFTON'S BROTHERS  
(muttering)  
Christ--

NINA  
Play it.

Clifton's mom goes to the stereo--takes out a RECORD, CLOSE  
on the VINYL...

CUT TO:

INT. SMALL HOUSE/MISSISSIPPI - APRIL 4, 1968 - DAY

....the record is being put on a record player.

A bare house, a few desks and chairs, Mississippi rural.

A bunch of STUDENTS, white, black, men, women, are printing  
SNCC posters, answering phones, trying to register voters.  
The nuts and bolts of the civil rights movement.

And there is only one voice they want to hear as they work  
late into the night.

KID  
Turn it up!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

"Mississippi Goddamn" PLAYS LOUD throughout the house.

NINA (O.S.)

(singing)

The name of this tune is  
Mississippi Goddamn and I mean  
every word of it!! Alabama's got  
me so upset, Tennessee made me lose  
my rest, and everybody knows about  
Mississippi Goddamn.....can't you  
see it, can't you feel it, it's all  
in the air, I can't stand the  
pressure must longer, somebody say  
a prayer....this is a show tune,  
but the show hasn't been written  
for it yet....hound dogs on my  
trail, school children sitting in  
jail, black cat crossed my path, I  
think every day's gonna be my last--  
-

--the SONG picks up speed, so do they--she's singing next to  
them, and it inspires the shit out of them.

NINA (CONT'D)

--lord have mercy on this land of  
mine....we're all gonna get it in  
due time...I don't belong here I  
don't belong there...I've even  
stopped believing in prayer...

PHONE RINGS--someone answers it.

KID

(into phone)

SNCC--what? What? WHAT!?

He looks stricken, stunned--OFF HIS FACE as MUSIC continues  
UNDER

CUT TO:

INT. NINA'S HOUSE/BROOKLYN - APRIL 4, 1968 - DAY

Nina, and her husband ANDREW are standing in front of the  
black and white TV.

Nina's face crumbles with despair as she listens to news of  
Martin Luther King's assassination.

A LOUD CRASH, as her glass is thrown against the wall--she  
runs downstairs to the

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

BASEMENT

Nina is looking through Andrew's things. We see a badge, some pictures of him and other COPS.

ANDREW  
What are you doing?

NINA  
I want your gun--

Rage exploding all over her face.

ANDREW  
Nina--

He takes her arms

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
Stop.

Tears start to roll down her cheeks.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
What are you going to do with a  
gun? Do something you know.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Nina is hunched over, writing a song.

LIVING ROOM - MORNING

She's still writing

BEDROOM - LATER

Andrew asleep next to her, sitting in bed, writing the devastation out of her

KITCHEN - DAY

A cup of coffee, a cigarette, a finished song.

Nina in profile-- his death, her life, this song--all of it together destroying her.

CUT TO:

EXT. WESTBURY MUSIC FESTIVAL/NEW YORK - APRIL 1968 - DAY

Thousands of people are gathered for King's memorial.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BACKSTAGE

NINA, quiet, poised, listening as Dick Gregory introduces her.

DICK GREGORY

Ladies and gentleman, a woman, a warrior, a genius--Nina Simone

Nina walks onto the STAGE. She sits in front of the piano to tremendous applause, to people calling out to her from the crowd.

NINA

This whole program is dedicated to the memory of Doctor Martin Luther King--but you know that--you and I

--their grief causing them to reach out, to ask the question, why?

NINA (CONT'D)

(singing)

...once upon this planet earth,  
lived a man of humble birth--  
preaching of and freedom for his  
fellow man...he was dreaming of the  
day....peace would come to earth to  
stay...and he spread this message  
all along the land--turn the other  
cheek, he'd plead, love they  
neighbor was his creed-- pain,  
humiliation, death, he did not  
dread...

And this song, an answer to their question.

NINA (CONT'D)

...with his bible by his side, and  
a truth he did not hide, from his  
foes he did not hide, its hard to  
think that this great man is  
dead....oh yeah....will the murders  
never cease, are they men or are  
they beasts, what do they ever hope  
ever hope to gain...

She bows her head as she sings, and listens to them....crying, calling out....thousands of people mourning what was lost.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

NINA (CONT'D)  
Will my country fall stand up  
for...is it too late for us  
all...and did Martin Luther King  
just die in vain....cause he'd seen  
the mountain top, and he knew he  
could not stop, always living with  
the threat of death ahead...what  
will happen now that he is dead....

And as she sings, she's mourning with every one of them.

NINA (CONT'D)  
He was for equality, for all  
people, you and me, full of love  
and goodwill hate was not his way,  
he was not a violent man--tell me  
folks if you can, just why,  
why...was he shot down the other  
day...

As Nina nods her head, as lost as any of them, we:

CUT TO:

INT. CLIFTON'S PARENT'S LIVING ROOM - PRESENT - NIGHT

BACK ON Nina, a drink in her hand.

Clifton's dad comes downstairs. Showered, dressed, looking sharp. Clifton sees him, is disgusted.

CLIFTON  
(off his father)  
Well--I have to go. Nina, I'll  
take you to your hotel.

CLIFTON'S FATHER  
It's okay. Go ahead son--I'll  
drive her.

Clifton's Mom looks at Clifton's father, gets moody. It's a little drama that's played out before between them.

CLIFTON  
I'll take her. I'm going out  
anyway.

NINA  
(to Clifton)  
Where are you going?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLIFTON'S FATHER  
Going to see Heather, aren't you?

Clifton doesn't say anything.

CLIFTON'S FATHER (CONT'D)  
(explaining)  
Everytime Clifton comes back to town he calls Heather. He's been trying to get this girl for five years. I keep telling him there's more than one girl out there.

Slight beat. An uncomfortable beat.

Very old, very familiar tension between Clifton, his mother, and father.

NINA  
You know where I want to go tonight? Harry's. I played there so long ago. Clifton, bring her. I want to meet her.

CLIFTON'S FATHER  
That might be one thing that gets you a shot with her boy.

CUT TO:

INT. HARRY'S BAR - LATER

Clifton's Mom has made some calls. There's twenty people crowded at the table.

Nina is talking to HEATHER, 20's, very pretty, a little slicker than Clifton.

NINA  
You have a beautiful face. You're beautiful.

HEATHER  
Thank you.

NINA  
Very delicate features. Your hair is so pretty.

HEATHER  
Thank you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NINA

Nice eyes. I'm going to sing a  
song for you two. Clifton, go let  
them know I want to sing.

Clifton gives her a look, I don't work for you anymore.

NINA (CONT'D)

Well, you are my manager.

Clifton looks at her surprised. Heather, his parents all  
look at him.

NINA (CONT'D)

That's why I'm here. I wanted to  
wait until your whole family was  
here to tell you. Clifton is now  
my manager.

CLIFTON'S FATHER

Shit boy.

STAGE

Nina walks on stage. The MUSICIANS all smiling.

She sits at the piano. Her demeanor shifts, something we  
haven't seen before. She is fiercely competitive, a fighter,  
standing long after the last punch.

It is why she has survived all these years, through all the  
shit. She fights for what she wants, and she competes the  
only way she knows how--she begins to PLAY

NINA

(singing)

.....do what you gotta do...come on  
back and see me when you can...man  
I can understand how it might  
be...to love a girl like me...I  
don't blame you much for wanting to  
be free...I just wanted you to  
know...I've loved you better than  
your own kin....

It's insane. Sexy. Shot like a performance. Lit like a  
performance. A full on jam.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NINA (CONT'D)  
...from the very start its my own  
fault what happened to my  
heart....so you just do what you  
gotta do, my sweet love....though  
it may mean I'll never kiss those  
sweet lips again...

She is smart enough to know she needs him to survive and she  
is fighting for him right now on this stage.

And no one can take their eyes off her.

ON HEATHER--watching her, almost shrinking before our eyes,  
crushed like a little ant.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM/CHICAGO - DAY

Clifton and Nina are having lunch. The phone RINGS. Nina  
answers it.

NINA  
Hello.  
(listens for a beat)  
Talk to my new manager.

She hands the phone to Clifton. He takes it.

CLIFTON  
Hello?

HENRY EDWARDS  
(screaming, through phone)  
You want to be her manager? You  
know how much I made in the last  
five years? Fucking nothing.  
You're not a manager. You're her  
bitch. She's a relic man. I  
managed her as a fucking favor.

CLICK. Clifton hangs up the phone. Now what?

NINA  
Lets go home baby.

CUT TO:

INT. O'HARE AIRPORT / TERMINAL - DAY

Clifton carries Nina's luggage as they walk through the Terminal.

CLOSE ON Nina, she's anonymous, unrecognized, just another person going away. No one looks at her, cares about her, knows her.

She let go of America long ago--America let her go too.

CUT TO:

INT. LAX - EARLY 1970'S - DAY

Nina, in a turban and dashiki, walking through the airport with an ENTOURAGE, talking to a young REPORTER.

NINA

What is there not to understand?  
I'm going to Africa. I'm going  
home- just like all these other  
people in here getting on planes.

She continues walking toward the plane. People MURMUR as she passes them, some take PICTURES.

A CROWD of FANS walk along with Nina and her entourage, with pictures and pens, hoping for an autograph.

Nina keeps walking. Then she stops, turns back.

Maybe it's the big 'fro, maybe her beautiful face, but something about the young black WOMAN, holding a newspaper and a pen, makes Nina stop.

Nina stops in front of her--takes the paper and pen she is holding out.

ON PAPER--the Calendar section from the L.A. TIMES: A PHOTO of NINA from the night before playing at the Greek--and a glowing review.

Nina signs it. "*stay free woman. Nina Simone.*"

Nina hands it back to her. As she does she gives the young woman a look--then leaves.

STAY ON the GIRL for just a beat, notice her necklace, a SMALL SILVER FIST, RAISED HIGH, realize that it is the same little girl from Central Park, now eighteen.

CUT TO:

INT. NINA'S HOUSE / PARIS - EVENING

Clifton lugs the last of the luggage in. He looks around the house, can't believe he's back here again.

Exhausted, Nina follows him in, lies down on the couch.

Clifton turns the light on.

NINA  
No, no, no baby, I have a terrible  
headache. All over my head.

Clifton turns the light back off, leaves.

KITCHEN

He opens a drawer, grabs some pills, pulls out a bottle of unopened champagne.

Clifton returns back to the LIVING ROOM, pills in one hand, champagne glass in another.

ON NINA asleep. She looks younger, but also frailer.

Clifton puts the meds down, pulls her shoes off, covers her with a throw.

He looks around at this heavy, haunted house, this heavy haunted woman, and feels the weight of both of them.

INT. CLIFTON'S BEDROOM - DAWN

Clifton wakes up, jet lagged, disoriented. He gets out of bed, walks out of the room.

INT. NINA'S HOUSE / LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nina's awake, manic, tearing through all her luggage. Clothes are strewn all over the place.

Clifton watches her for a moment.

CLIFTON  
What are you looking for?

Nina spins around, faces him.

NINA  
Don't sneak up on me like that!  
(then)  
My earrings.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

CLIFTON

I have them. You gave them to me  
when you went through the metal  
detector. Remember?

Nina nods. She's embarrassed. She doesn't want to be crazy  
in front of him anymore.

She begins to pick up, stuff things back into the suitcases.

Maybe it's the jet lag, maybe it's the moment, but it all  
hits Clifton like a ton of bricks.

CLIFTON (CONT'D)

What am I going to manage?

NINA

What the hell you talking about?

Nina knows what he's talking about. She's had this  
conversation many times--with other managers, with other  
people important to her--but she's never had it with him.

CLIFTON

You don't want to play shows,  
Xavier and the rest of the band had  
to take other gigs, I mean, what  
are we doing? What am I doing?  
I'm back here in France. I just  
left here. And now I just left  
home again.

Nina eyes the full champagne glass Clifton had brought out to  
her when she was sleeping.

She picks it up, takes a big swig--buying time, trying to  
think of an answer, a hook, but all that comes is the truth.

NINA

I won't make it.

CLIFTON

Yes you will, I'll help you.

NINA

You don't understand. Part of me  
died a long time ago. I go back,  
the other part's gonna die.

CLIFTON

It doesn't have to. You think I  
want to go back? Back to Nurse  
Sheila? Being just another nothing?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CLIFTON (CONT'D)  
Spending my days dying away because  
I was too scared to live?

Nina listens, truly listens.

CLIFTON (CONT'D)  
Life's not over. I can do it. I  
can make this happen. But if I do  
you have to help me. You have to  
be there with me.

ON Nina--for once in her life a man has said all the right things.

CUT TO:

INT. NINA'S HOUSE / DINING ROOM - DAY

Clifton's on the phone. He has a LIST of PR firms, AGENTS, VENUES in front of him.

A number of them are crossed out as he makes his way down the list.

CLIFTON  
(into phone)  
She's sober. She's sounds great.  
She's Nina Simone.

Crosses another off. Dials again.

Nina shuffles past him, takes a big swig from last night's champagne glass. They ignore each other.

CLIFTON (CONT'D)  
Hi, this is Clifton Henderson, I  
represent Nina Simone, and  
I....I'll hold--

Clifton looks down at his list, just three names left out of twenty--one of them: ALVIN SCHANKMAN.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Beautiful Paris Town Home filled with guitars, records, and photos of JAZZ GREATS. Clifton sits before ALVIN SHACKMAN.

Alvin is older, healthy, successful. Music has been good to him and he's been good to himself.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALVIN SCHANKMAN

Look, there's a lot of people in this town who want to see Nina. Myself included. There's a lot of people in Europe, in the States, in Japan--all over the world--that want to see Nina. But they don't want to see her the way she is now. I heard she played one song the last time she performed. Not even Nina Simone can do that.

Alan stares at Clifton, waiting for his rebuttal. Clifton just stares back, he's found that silence is more effective.

ALVIN SCHANKMAN (CONT'D)

(laughs)

Look, I love her. The crazy bitch. How did you meet her?

CLIFTON

I...was her nurse.

ALVIN SCHANKMAN

You fucking her?

Clifton shakes his head no.

ALVIN SCHANKMAN (CONT'D)

Alright. Do what I couldn't do, what that fucking asshole Henry couldn't. Get her out there, around musicians, music lovers. I mean, there's nobody who won't be blown away when they hear her--And keep her away from the business, that's your job if you do your job right. But you have to build comfort, so the business will come to you. Get her on stage. That's where she truly is who she is.

Henry starts to take a phone call--stops.

ALVIN SCHANKMAN (CONT'D)

She has to deliver--if she does, she can do whatever she wants. But you have to deliver her. She's Nina Simone--do you even know what that means?

Henry takes the call, Clifton gets up, meeting is obviously over--Henry stops again--feels for him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ALVIN SCHANKMAN (CONT'D)  
(into phone, in french)  
Hold on, hold on.  
(to Clifton)  
Introduce her to people again, get  
her shit played, get her in shape,  
get her healthy, strong, make sure  
she has some stamina, if you can do  
that, call me.  
(beat)  
Then I'll play with her again.

CUT TO:

INT. NINA'S HOUSE - DAY

Clifton comes in, arms full of bags--books, a notebook,  
magazines, TENNIS SHOES.

Nina is just getting up.

CLIFTON  
Hey.

NINA  
Hi. Did you bring coffee?

CLIFTON  
How are you feeling?

NINA  
Fine--

Clifton, shuffles a bit--

CLIFTON  
Um...do you want to go to the gym?

NINA  
(looks at him like he's  
lost his mind)  
What???

CUT TO:

EXT. FRENCH SUBURB / NEIGHBORHOOD - LATER

Nina, wearing tennis shoes, and Clifton are taking a walk  
down the street.

It's a funny sight--the two of them--these two Black  
Americans walking past old French ladies.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Nina doesn't look happy, but she is doing it. And Clifton cannot believe it.

CUT TO:

INT. NINA'S HOUSE - DAY

A KNOCK at the door--Clifton opens it, a WOMAN, French, stern looking, enters.

Nina comes out of the bedroom--the woman looks at her.

WOMAN

Miss Simone, it is great to meet you. It truly is.

Nina nods.

NINA

It's Doctor Simone.

The woman nods.

CLIFTON

So--um, I'm not sure how we get started.

He looks at the woman for some help.

WOMAN

Well--

(to Nina)

Mr. Henderson said you just wanted to get your voice in shape--increase its endurance.

NINA

Who's paying you?

WOMAN

Um...

(looks at Clifton, back to Nina)

Uh...you are.

Nina turns and walks out of the room.

NINA

No, I'm not.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARIS CAFE - NIGHT

Clifton and Nina are at a table, eating. She's giving it to him.

NINA  
Get me money, and I'll play--that  
is what I need.

CLIFTON  
No one will book you Nina.

Two BLACK guys, French Moroccans, thuggy, come up to her. Nina gives them a dirty look--turns back to Clifton.

They stand there a moment--can't decide what to do, but something is pushing this kid.

Nina turns at them abruptly.

NINA  
What?

BLACK KID  
(in English)  
Um...we....you're the shit--I...

The kid holds out his hat, a pen, for Nina to sign.

NINA  
Excuse me? I'm the what? Why are  
you speaking to me in English? I  
speak French.

BLACK KID  
My dad's American.

Like that might impress her.

BLACK KID (CONT'D)  
I....my...dad loves you..and I love  
him....and...

Nina softens, looks past their hip-hop bullshit.

NINA  
Oh--where is your daddy?

The kid shrugs, just another black boy without his father.

NINA (CONT'D)  
Is he cute? Does he look like you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He shrugs again, nods.

NINA (CONT'D)  
What's his name?

KID  
Joe--

She takes the kid's hat, the pen, writes on the hat, "*Joe, you have the finest boy I've ever seen, Nina Simone.*"

The kid reads it, smiles like the 6 year old he was the day his dad walked out the door.

NINA  
(back to Clifton)  
Do you understand? Get me a stage--  
I will take care of the rest.

CUT TO:

INT. STUDIO/SOUNDBOOTH - DAY

An older DJ, American, in front of a mic. From the excitement in his eyes, you'd think he was interviewing God.

DJ  
Here with us today is a great American artist in exile. It's rare that I get to interview someone who's made such an impact on me, and on music. Nina Simone was the soundtrack of the civil rights movement in America, and was the first to blend jazz, classical, blues and pop. She's here with us today and will be performing on the twentythird at Le Caveau De La Huchette. Dr. Simone, thank you for being here today.

Across from him, a mic in front of her, is Nina.

NINA  
Okay.

DJ  
Are you glad to be performing again?

NINA  
I don't know yet.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DJ

Who were your musical influences?

NINA

Of course I was trained as a classical pianist, from the age of three. At Juilliard, I studied Bach, Mozart, Chopin...those are the artists I return to, you see.

DJ

How did you become a club singer?

NINA

After Juilliard I was denied entrance to the Curtis Institute because I was black--I had hoped to continue studying and playing classical music but I was not allowed to do that. So, I went to Atlanta to try and make money and apply again. But they didn't want a black woman to play the piano, they wanted her to sing, because that is what we do, isn't it?

MUSIC begins in the B.G.

DJ

I understand you're going to perform "Just Say I Love Him." You've said it was about one of the great loves of your life--can you tell us a little about that?

NINA

Perhaps you should just listen to the song and form your own ideas.

Nina gets up, moves to the piano--sits down, tall, regal.

And now we understand. As she starts PLAYING that long classical intro, we HEAR her influences, understand her attitude when she walks on stage, waits for silence.

She is a great classical pianist--it is her truth and her heartbreak.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (2)

NINA (CONT'D)  
(singing)  
....Just say that I need him....as  
roses need the rain...and tell him  
that without him...my dreams are  
all in vain...just say I love  
him...

CUT TO:

INT. LE CAVEAU DE LA HUCHETTE - NIGHT

Nina seated at the piano at this small Left Bank club,  
CONTINUING the SONG.

NINA  
..loved him from the start...and  
tell him that I'm yearning to say  
what's in my heart....

But people are talking, laughing.

Nina stops--stops singing, stops playing, waits, but they  
keep talking.

NINA'S POV, the audience. All she sees is people dis-  
respecting her, disrespecting her music.

Her face darkens--there is a glass of water on her piano.

ON CLIFTON, he sees Nina looking at the glass of water.  
Clifton starts to get nervous. The musicians for hire are  
clueless, he wishes Xavier were up there.

ON AUDIENCE, the GUY keeps laughing, keeps talking.  
Oblivious.

Clifton looks back at Nina, sees her staring the guy down.  
Clifton heads over to him. Just as Clifton goes to put a  
hand on him, the GLASS comes WHIZZING from the stage, hitting  
the GUY on the side of the head.

Everybody starts SCREAMING. The Guy is bleeding. And Nina  
gets up and heads off stage.

CUT TO:

INT. NINA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Nina wants to get high. She looks through the fridge--pulls  
out a bottle of champagne, tastes it. Clifton just watches  
her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NINA  
Stop watering down my champagne!

CLIFTON  
You keep blowing it Nina.

NINA  
Stop trying to turn me into  
something I'm not. My time is  
over. I don't want to be who I  
was. If I didn't like myself then  
why would I like myself now? Every  
man has left me. My country has  
left me. Why would I want to be  
that person again?

CLIFTON  
Then why'd you make me your  
manager?

NINA  
So you wouldn't leave me. Dumb  
fuck.

She walks out of the room.

CUT TO:

INT. RICHARD PRYOR'S HOUSE - DAY

RICHARD PRYOR is all shriveled up, totally MS'd out, can barely hold the phone--but he can take a long hit off a joint.

RICHARD PRYOR  
Can you imagine? Lit my shit up  
with a crack pipe and then this MS  
is what gonna fuck me up.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. NINA'S HOUSE / LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nina gulps champagne. It's their talk and get high ritual, it began somewhere backstage a long time ago.

NINA  
Something's gonna get us.

RICHARD PRYOR  
Yeah, but this shit--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NINA

I have a boy with me. I like him.

RICHARD PRYOR

You and the boys. And some girls.

NINA

I like this one. He'll never hit me. He doesn't drink. He won't cheat on me.

RICHARD PRYOR

Doesn't sound like he's fucking you.

NINA

He's not. But he will.

Obviously a conversation they've had before.

CUT TO:

INT. VILLAGE GATE/BACKSTAGE 1961 - NIGHT

A very young Nina and a very young Richard Pryor are waiting to go on. They don't know each other and keep their distance.

Richard is shaking to his bones he's so nervous.

Nina watches him. He just keeps shaking. She's never seen anyone shake so much.

Richard walks in a circle, tries to get it together. But he can't, just keeps shaking.

Finally Nina, wearing a high-necked, gold dress, very regal, walks over to him, puts her arms around him, and holds him tight.

As tight as she can until he calms down just a little bit.

They don't say a word to each other. Two young black kids, got nobody but themselves, and for these couple of minutes, each other.

MC

So, give a hand to a guy, Richard Pryor--

Without a word, he heads onstage.

ON NINA as she watches him from side of the stage.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHARD PRYOR  
Finally. Shit. Almost fell asleep  
back there.

INT. VILLAGE GATE - LATER

Richard comes off-stage--passes Nina who is next.

MC  
Ladies and gentleman--Miss Nina  
Simone.

She's more nervous than we've ever seen here, but still very clear.

She walks onstage, sits in front of the piano--this is the first time she hasn't had to wait for the audience--they wait for her. She starts to PLAY.

NINA  
(singing)  
...birds flying high you know how I  
feel..... sun in the sky you know  
how I feel...breeze drifting on by  
you know how I feel....it's a new  
dawn it's a new day... it's a new  
life for me...and I'm feeling  
good...

Her VOICE is so beautiful, so powerful, Richard stops, turns, watches her as she watched him.

NINA (CONT'D)  
.....when day is done and this old  
world is a new world and a bold  
world for me.... stars when you  
shine you know how I feel oh  
freedom is mine...and I know how I  
feel....

ON the AUDIENCE--mostly white with some well groomed blacks but they all share the same expression.

They understand as the guy in the club didn't, what they are hearing. That's what it takes to create a legend, a two way street between performer and audience.

That's why Nina is always searching for the perfect audience, the perfect relationship. She might be able to fuck strangers but she can't play in front of them.

CUT TO:

INT. NINA'S HOUSE - PRESENT - NIGHT

Clifton is asleep on the couch, his blanket kicked off.

Nina comes out from the dining room.

She looks at him, unlined face almost like a child's.

Strewn around on the floor are BOOKS, MAGAZINES, all about the music industry, music, what is happening-

She picks up his NOTEBOOK.

ON NOTEBOOK--as Nina turns the pages...phone numbers, people to call, contacts, agents.

She sits down, stunned by his effort--dozens of crossed out names, scribbled phone numbers, notes, names of venues--all for her, his huge effort, for her.

She puts the notebook down--looks around.

Clifton's pants neatly folded by the sofa. His socks, neatly folded in his suitcase.

Nina leans over him, pulls the blanket up around his shoulders, tucking him in.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY/ MANAGEMENT OFFICES - DAY

A hallway filled with black and white photos. Miles. Coltrane. Monk. Bird. Nina.

Nina walks through, hat in hand, as she heads to Henry's office.

INT. RECEPTION - CONTINUOUS

The RECEPTIONIST, a young Black French woman, watches as Nina approaches.

RECEPTIONIST  
(into phone, cannot  
believe it)  
Nina Simone is here.

NINA  
Hello. I'm here to see--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RECEPTIONIST

I know. I mean, I know who you  
are, I...I love your stuff...

Nina nods, the girl feels like an idiot.

INT. HENRY EDWARD'S OFFICE - DAY

Henry's office is huge, wood paneled, lots of success.

Nina enters. Henry is waiting for her.

HENRY EDWARDS

Hello.

They hug. It's warm and strong. At each turn she surprises  
us.

Nina sits down. Henry across from her.

HENRY EDWARDS (CONT'D)

So what can I do for you Nina?

ON NINA, an artist talking to a manager, to the person who  
can put her on, or keep her off, the stage.

NINA

I'm broke--

Henry smiles, loves that she's come back to him defeated like  
this.

HENRY EDWARDS

I see, you want me to manage you  
again.

NINA

No.

HENRY EDWARDS

So why are you here?

NINA

For some reason this boy makes me  
want to be who I was again.

HENRY EDWARDS

Come on, Nina. You've sold out a  
lot of shit, but not your music.  
You don't want to play again for  
some kid. This nurse.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NINA  
(searching, then)  
I...yes, I do--

HENRY EDWARDS  
Sorry--I don't believe it.

He waits again, maybe to see how far she'll go, maybe for the truth, whatever, she's had enough.

NINA  
I just want to play. Why I want  
to, is none of your business.

Henry shakes his head.

HENRY EDWARDS  
Yes, it is, because yes, I can  
help, I can make a call--but why  
should I? Last show I booked for  
you, you played one song--and now  
you come back to me and ask me to  
help you--for what?  
(then)  
Life's too fucking short. I don't  
want to be mean but you're a five  
star asshole, Nina.

NINA  
What does that have to do with  
playing music?

HENRY EDWARDS  
Nothing, if you want to play in  
your living room. You can be as  
big of an asshole as you want  
there.

Nina gives him a look, gets up, heads out.

HENRY EDWARDS (CONT'D)  
Hey--I'm not saying no, I'm just  
saying show me you give a shit.  
That you won't walk on stage and do  
one song and walk off. That you  
won't throw a glass at someone--  
show me you can handle it.

Nina walks past his shelf of MEMENTOS and AWARDS, and with  
her long, beautiful black arm, SWEEPS the shelf clean, they  
all go CRASHING to the floor.

Henry jumps up, but stays behind his desk--pussy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HENRY EDWARDS (CONT'D)  
Good thing you never won one.

She ignores him, keeps going. He follows her out.

HENRY EDWARDS (CONT'D)  
Fuck it, I was just testing you,  
where do you want to play?

NINA  
(over her shoulder)  
Forget it motherfucker.

HENRY EDWARDS  
Come on--my fucking priest will  
kill me if I feel this shitty about  
myself.

Nina keeps going.

HENRY EDWARDS (CONT'D)  
Come on, where?

Nina keeps going, never turns around.

NINA  
The Palais De Congress.

Leave it to Nina to say the French Carnegie Hall.

CUT TO:

INT. NINA'S HOUSE - DAY

ON Nina in front of the piano, PLAYING, long, intricate,  
classical pieces--she stops.

NINA  
(off the piano)  
Sounds like shit.

She gets up, walks into her bedroom.

CLIFTON  
Shit.

He sits at the piano--not wanting to deal with her, hits a  
few keys--sounds good to him. He sits there for a moment--

And then, she comes back out--she's MAKING a CHOICE, a  
different one.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

NINA

Get Xavier over here. I don't care  
if he has some gig. Tell him I've  
asked him to come.

INT. NINA'S HOUSE - LATER

Nina sits tall and straight in front of the piano. As many  
ways as we have seen her, not once has she shown anything but  
respect for this relationship.

Clifton watches as Xavier checks out the piano.

He TUNES IT, then hooks it up to an electric tuner.

XAVIER

That will keep you clean.

NINA

Not too clean.

He NODS, gets it. Nina sits down TESTS IT, likes the sound.

Her FINGERS pick up speed, moving faster. Classical pieces,  
what she studied as a child.

MUSIC CONTINUES, becomes the SOUNDTRACK.

CUT TO:

INT. MRS. MILLER'S HOME - SOUTH CAROLINA 1940 - DAY

A 7-year-old Nina, dressed and proper sits in front of a  
piano playing astonishingly well.

An older white woman, MRS. MILLER, Nina's teacher, listens.

MUSIC CONTINUES

EXT. STREET - TRYON, SOUTH CAROLINA 1944 - DAY

Mrs. Miller and Nina's MOTHER go door to door, raising money  
to send Nina to Juilliard.

MUSIC KEEPS PLAYING, more intricate, more talented.

CUT TO

INT. NINA'S CHILDHOOD HOME - 1951 - DAY

A KNOCK on the door.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Nina, 18, opens it, as she has every day for the last week, waiting for the LETTER the POSTMAN is handing to her.

ON THE envelope, "THE CURTIS INSTITUTE of MUSIC."

Nina doesn't wait, can't wait, OPENS it, sure of what it's going to say.

As she reads her rejection letter...

INT. FUNKY NIGHTCLUB/ATLANTA 1962 - NIGHT

Nina is playing the piano in front of a raucous crowd.

She PLAYS as long as she can before she has to SING, and that opening RIFF continues as we:

CUT TO:

INT. REHEARSAL SPACE - PRESENT - DAY

Nina playing the same RIFF as she practices.

Her band, Xavier, a drummer, a guy on horns, is with her.

NINA  
(to Xavier)  
...take it down, baby. Little  
more. Little bit more. That's  
good.

Xavier not used to seeing her in control. He nods, digs it, knows there is nobody better.

CUT TO:

EXT. NINA'S HOUSE/ POOL - NIGHT

Nina is in her bathing suit, walking around the pool.  
Clifton comes out.

CLIFTON  
Nina! We gotta go.

Nina ignores him, pulls her swimming cap down, dives in.

GO UNDERWATER with her--the pool light casting her in a smoky glow.

She resurfaces, looks up at Clifton.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NINA

Come in the water. We been working all day. We need a break.

CLIFTON

No.

NINA

You're such an old man already.

And leaves him. She comes up again--he is standing in front of her.

CLIFTON

We have to leave, we're going to be late.

NINA

Okay.

And she goes underwater again--smiling.

Xavier, other guys in the band come up, beers in hand.

XAVIER

I'm in.

Xavier jumps in, the guys follow.

ON CLIFTON, dressed, at the edge of the pool--alone, ignored--watching and wishing he could jump.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Nina is meeting with some PRESS PEOPLE. She is dressed well, charming them.

NINA

Well, I was from a very strict family. I could not allow my mother to know I was playing music in a bar. A boyfriend of mine called me Nina, and I was a great fan of Simone Signoret. I put them together, and that is who I became--

Clifton is watching her, taken with her, as they are.

CUT TO:

INT. REHEARSAL SPACE - NIGHT

Nina's fingers flowing. Faster. The band, tight, bringing it.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARIS FLEA MARKET - DAY

Tented, cramped stalls.

A cool DJ type with his hipster girlfriend, flipping through vinyl.

Grabs two Nina Simone records. Leaves the other records he had in his hand.

CUT TO:

INT. RECORDING STUDIO - NIGHT

A young black , French Hip Hop PRODUCER opens a NINA CD and inserts it into a PLAYER.

He gestures to the MUSICIANS sitting around, this is it motherfuckers.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON: An AD in Le Monde, 'NINA SIMONE at the Palais Des Congress.'

PULL BACK

INT. NINA'S HOUSE / LIVING ROOM - DAY

Nina is looking at the ad. Clifton is reading over her shoulder. She nods.

NINA  
(without looking up at  
him)  
I like it.

She nods again, happy.

CUT TO:

INT. NINA'S HOUSE / NINA'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Nina is in her slip. Hair still wet from her shower. She takes her sleeveless turban dress out of the dry cleaner plastic. Lays it on the bed. Looks at it. She's excited. And because she's alone, she can show it.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM / SMALL HOUSE - EVENING

A middle aged FRENCH AFRICAN WOMAN, getting dressed for the concert.

Putting on her skirt, stockings, taking rollers out of her hair, looking at several HATS set on her bed.

An older black MAN is sitting on the bed, adjusting his tie, buffing Stacy Adams wingtips.

The care they take, the dignity in their movements, tell us that this is not just a concert--they are going to see their pain, their past, their history up on that stage, and watching them reminds us of just how holy music can be.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Nina and Clifton sit in the backseat as the car drives through Paris.

CUT TO:

INT. PALAIS DES CONGRESS - NIGHT

It's packed. And with a no bullshit group of people.

BACKSTAGE

Clifton, hurriedly walking through with some champagne, some food.

INT. PALAIS DES CONGRESS - NIGHT

The LIGHTS go DOWN.

Xavier and the rest of the band take the stage. ALVIN SCHANKMAN is among them. He straps on his Gibson hollow body and the crowd applauds. It's about to get ill.

INT. ARTIST'S ROOM/BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Nina and Clifton. Nina is drinking champagne. Clifton is up, walking around.

NINA  
Don't be so nervous.

CLIFTON  
Sorry.

Nina leans over and kisses Clifton tenderly on the cheek.

NINA  
For luck.

And heads out.

INT. PALAIS DES CONGRESS - CONTINUOUS

Nina walks out, sits at the piano to APPLAUSE, long and full.

A LONG BEAT as she waits--comfortable, confident, strong.  
You don't need to know who she is to know what she is.

NINA  
Good evening.

She NODS to the band--begins to PLAY the opening MELODY of  
"Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood."

NINA (CONT'D)  
(singing)  
Baby you understand me now.... if  
sometimes you see that I'm mad...

The LIGHTS hit the crowd.

She smiles, not demanding so much from them, leaving them be.

NINA (CONT'D)  
....don't you know no one alive can  
always be an angel....when  
everything goes wrong you see some  
bad....but I'm just a soul whose  
intentions are good....Oh Lord,  
please don't let me be  
misunderstood.....

On her HANDS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Her body pushing the song out all the way to the BACK ROW where we zoom back to find---A GROUP of 20 year olds partying, dancing, locked into it.

NINA (CONT'D)

.....you know sometimes baby I'm  
so carefree, with a joy that's hard  
to hide.....and then sometimes it  
seems all I have is sorrow, and  
you're bound to see my other  
side..... but I'm just a soul  
whose intentions are good.....oh  
lord please don't let be  
misunderstood.....life has its  
problems.....I'm just human, don't  
you know I have faults like  
everyone...

ON CLIFTON in the wings, never taking his eyes off her.

BACK ON NINA. Singing so intimate, so real, it's like she's apologizing to everyone.

NINA (CONT'D)

....if I seem edgy I want you to  
know, I never mean to take it out  
on you....life has its  
problems....and I get more than my  
share but that's one thing I never  
mean to do.... cause I love  
you.....

MIDDLE ROWS--the black women and men are going off, singing along. Their husbands actually know how to dance.

WOMEN

(singing)

Oh baby I'm just human.... Don't  
you know I have faults like  
anyone?.... Sometimes I find  
myself alone regretting---some  
little foolish thing, some simple  
thing that I've done.

ON NINA right up on the mic--one palm raised in the air.

The band circled around her, drawn to her like everyone else.

NINA

...but I'm just a soul who's  
intentions are good....oh Lord  
please don't let me be  
misunderstood.....

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

NINA (CONT'D)  
I try so hard so please don't let  
me be misunderstood.....don't let  
me be misunderstood....

A powerful plea--as she POUNDS the last CHORD.

A wall of applause washing over the stage--Nina softly plays  
a beautiful interlude.

NINA (CONT'D)  
Well thank you. Thank you for  
understanding me.

And starts another song...

CUT TO:

INT. BACKSTAGE - LATER

Post concert party. People are streaming in.

Henry is there, taking the spotlight from Clifton.

He is greeting everyone, making sure there are enough tables,  
etc.

There's no velvet rope or guest list but somehow the perfect  
mix of people is assembled.

The women are beautiful without being trashy, there's no  
actor boys.

Older people, young people, black, and white. It's a rare  
hang.

Nina sits at a booth with Clifton, Henry and others.

Henry introduces Clifton to a bunch of people.

Clifton takes it all in.

He looks over at Nina. She looks at him. They both smile.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL SUITE - LATER

Nina enters, followed by Clifton, Henry, Xavier, a few other  
people from downstairs.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

CLIFTON  
(off the room)  
I...I got it for the night. A way  
to celebrate.

It's a far cry from the house--a suite, all salmon and perfect. Nina loves it.

Clifton pops a bottle of champagne. The party is on.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - LATER

A beautiful black girl talks with Nina on the couch.

GIRL  
It's a fight. I'm just trying to  
play music. Be a musician. Be a  
mother.

NINA  
Pick one--and live with that.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOTEL SUITE - LATER

Clifton walks the last of the people out and shuts the door behind them. He turns back.

He walks over to her. They both crack up laughing.

Nina stands up, hands him his glass. Starts dancing.

NINA  
Dance with me. You wouldn't swim  
with me, will you dance with me.

He does.

They dance together, smiling and laughing, not speaking.

And as their faces come closer their lips come together effortlessly and without any thought.

They stand together, kissing for a long time, tenderly, uncertain but not wanting to go back.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL SUITE BATHROOM - LATE MORNING

Nina is in the shower, humming and singing.

INT. HOTEL SUITE BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Clifton, still asleep in bed, is woken by a RINGING PHONE.  
He picks it up.

CLIFTON  
(into phone)  
Hello?

MAN (O.S.)  
(French accent)  
Hello, I am looking for Nina  
Simone.

CLIFTON  
Who is this?

MAN  
Doctor Jean Coueser. Is she there?

CLIFTON  
Can she call you back?

DR. COUESER  
Well, she was supposed to call me  
back a week ago and did not. And  
it's important.

CLIFTON  
I take care of all Nina's affairs--  
You can talk to me.

INT. HOTEL SUITE BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

ON NINA, her eyes closed, the water rinsing the soap from her  
hair and body.

She looks younger, vibrant, new.

INT. HOTEL SUITE BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nina walks in from the bathroom in a white robe, a white  
towel wrapped around her head turban style.

Clifton stands at the small desk, jotting notes on hotel  
stationary.

Nina gives him a kiss--not platonic, not sexual, somewhere in  
between.

Clifton turns to her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLIFTON

Nina, what the--why didn't you tell me?

NINA

Tell you what?

CLIFTON

Are you kidding?

(off the phone)

That was your doctor. A doctor I didn't even know you had. He said he talked to you in Chicago, I didn't know that either, and that you are supposed to come back in for further FUCKING tests.

Clifton is so angry and so scared he's shaking. Nina just shakes her head.

NINA

It's my life Clifton, it always has been.

Walks out of the room.

CUT TO:

INT. HENRY EDWARD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The house is beautiful, huge.

Strange how the people who make the music never have as much money as the ones who sell it.

A dinner party in progress--for Nina. Casual but super fancy at the same time.

Henry, Clifton, Nina, a few other people are sitting on the couch.

HENRY EDWARDS

(to Nina and Clifton)

You did everything right--everything you're supposed to do.

NINA

I did everything I wanted to do.

HENRY EDWARDS

Everything I could never get you to do.

(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HENRY EDWARDS (CONT'D)

But together, the three of us,  
we'll go the next stop. Record a  
new album, get you back on the  
road, do the festivals, get back to  
the States. I want you to do the  
concert in Central Park in June.  
You walk on that stage, in the city  
where you started, it would be  
intense--right?

Nina and Clifton lock eyes, their eyes so intense they're  
burning each other.

NINA

I'm going to take a break. Take  
care of some things.

Henry looks at her, and then Clifton, like they just slapped  
him in the head.

HENRY EDWARDS

Well, that's ridiculous--that's  
exactly the wrong thing to do.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARIS/DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Clifton and Nina exit, head down the street, Clifton a little  
rocked.

NINA

If thirty years of drugs, alcohol,  
and mental illness hasn't killed me  
this won't.

Clifton looks at her.

NINA (CONT'D)

What?

CLIFTON

I just...I don't get it Nina. I  
mean, I've seen you go ballistic  
over your pasta not being al dente.

NINA

Would it make you feel better if I  
did? I'm tired Clifton. And in  
all honesty, my pasta matters more  
to me than this bullshit.

CUT TO:

EXT. NINA'S HOUSE / POOL - NIGHT

Nina walks outside, a big sweater wrapped around her long, beautiful body, her face in profile, like a priestess, smoking a cigarette, bottle of champagne in the other hand.

She sits in a lounge chair--pours a glass, smokes, watches herself watching.

OFF her FACE, dark, diffuse, beautiful...

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM/LATE 60'S - DAWN

NINA giving birth to her DAUGHTER.

Her HUSBAND, ANDY, is with her. A DOCTOR, couple of NURSES--Nina is sweating, working hard--there is tension in the room, not sure what it is from...

DISSOLVE TO:

NINA, in a DOCTOR'S OFFICE, legs in a stirrup, she is bleeding, he is checking her, shakes his head...she lost this baby.

NINA in HOSPITAL, at least three months pregnant, in pain...and this one too.

NINA, in a CLUB, ready to go on, throwing up, nauseous, she sits down, the CROWD is restless, they want her--she is alone, a CRY of pain...despair, as it is happening again.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL/LATE 60'S - DAY

Nina, her DAUGHTER being put in her arms--she SMILES, a smile we've yet to see, holds her close, her dark, beautiful daughter.

CUT TO:

INT. NURSERY/HOUSE - EVENING

Nina, dressed, stares at her sleeping, baby girl. Gives her a kiss, walks out of the room.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Nina gets in a cab as her luggage is loaded into the trunk. She doesn't look back as the car pulls away.

CUT TO:

INT. THEATER - NIGHT

Packed and hot. The crowd deep in it. Nina, drunk, sweating, plays powerful last chords as the audience applauds.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The Nanny lays the baby in to her crib.

NINA  
(to tremendous applause)  
Thank you. Thank you. Good night.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

Nina and musicians smoking and drinking. Everybody's wasted. Nina and a handsome musician kiss.

CUT TO:

EXT. AMPHITHEATER - DAY

Nina playing a jazz festival. It could be anywhere. Montreaux, Hollywood Bowl, Chicago. The road, the stage, is home.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Nina, tore back drunk, crawling towards to bathroom.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Baby LISA, now six months, crawling, sitting up.

CUT TO:

INT. RECORDING STUDIO - NIGHT

Nina tracking. The drummer fucks up and she snaps at him, throws her headphones.

CUT TO:

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - MORNING

An exhausted, hung over Nina and band sit waiting to board their flight.

A toddler girl seated with her family stares at Nina. Nina looks at her, looks away.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

A cab pulls up outside Nina's house. Nina gets out as the cabby unloads her luggage.

Andy comes outside with Lisa to greet her. Nina reaches for her daughter.

From Lisa's size, her longer hair, it's been months since Nina's really been home.

Single NOTES on a piano, the OPENING of "Brown Baby" begins as

Nina takes Lisa in her arms and Lisa begins to cry.

NINA (O.S.)  
...brown baby...brown baby...as you  
grow up...I want you to drink from  
the plenty cup....I want you to  
stand up tall....

She doesn't know her mother....

NINA (CONT'D)  
..and I want you to speak  
up...clear and loud...brown  
baby...brown baby...

...and her mother doesn't know her.

NINA (CONT'D)  
...as years go by...I want you to  
go with your head up high...

CUT TO:

EXT. NINA'S HOUSE / POOL - PRESENT - NIGHT

NINA sitting by the POOL, hours later, tears, more like tracks, down her cheeks.

Regret, loss, love, all of it in her beautiful face, her beautiful HANDS as they hold her cigarette, hold her glass--start TAPPING on the glass.

NINA (O.S.)  
 ...I want you to live by the  
 justice code..and I want you to  
 walk down freedom's road.....so fly  
 away, fly away safe in my arms...

TAPPING out the beats to "Brown Baby" as it CONTINUES

CUT TO:

INT. OPERATING ROOM/HOSPITAL - AFTERNOON

A steel SCALPEL runs along BLACK skin, little drops of BLOOD trailing the line.

NINA  
 ..till your daddy and your mama  
 protect you...and keep you...safe  
 from harm...

The CUT continues around her breast--the sure white HANDS of the surgeon, CUTS through muscle, tendon. CUTS away the lump, her breast--removing it, putting it in a TRAY.

NINA (CONT'D)  
 ..it makes me glad you're gonna  
 have things that I never  
 had....you're gonna live in a  
 better world....

He finishes. Another SURGEON comes in, starts GRAFTING skin to lay over the exposed part of Nina's chest.

CUT TO:

INT. PRIVATE ROOM - LATER

Nina is in bed, sedated, but kind of awake.

Clifton gets her water, checks the monitors. Checks the IV, the entry point of the shunt in her hand--it's a little red, touched it, feels the heat.

He goes to the closet, looks for some antiseptic.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

A NURSE comes in, 30, young, pretty, but serious.

NURSE

Excuse me.

Clifton turns.

NURSE (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

CLIFTON

There's a slight infection starting  
from the IV, it's okay, I want to  
watch it.

The Nurse goes to Nina, checks her hand--lightly presses it.  
Clifton comes over--watches her. She turns to him.

NURSE

It's slight. But worth watching.

CLIFTON

I know.

A moment between them.

NURSE

How do you know this?

CLIFTON

I'm a nurse.

She smiles, she likes that.

CUT TO:

INT. CAFETERIA - LATER

From a distance, almost as if Nina is watching them, Clifton  
and OLIVIA, the nurse.

No sound, just them, surprised and a bit in awe that they are  
sitting across from each other.

CUT TO:

INT. NINA'S HOUSE/FEW DAYS LATER - EVENING

Nina is up, walking around.

Clifton is checking the skin on her absent breast. Checking  
to see how it is healing. It's very intimate, very close.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Their bodies close, his hands, gently touching her scar.

Nina looks at him--he doesn't meet her gaze.

NINA

It is a good thing we slept  
together before this.

He looks at her--then just nods.

Even if they're talking about two different things, she's right.

Clifton gives her a kiss, turns to leave--she gestures for him to come back--kiss her again, he does.

CUT TO:

INT. CAFE - NIGHT

Clifton and Olivia are eating, drinking wine.

CLIFTON

I mean, I didn't know what to think  
at first, had no idea what I was  
getting into--but there was  
something about her, something you  
just can't turn away from. And we  
got close in a way I've never  
really felt before, not sexual,  
but, something....and when Nina  
plays you can't deny it. I've been  
on stage with her. I've seen  
people crying, laughing, change.  
It's---

Olivia puts her finger to his lips. Looks at him, he touches her hand.

CUT TO:

INT. OLIVIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Clifton and Olivia having sex.

CUT TO:

INT. NINA'S HOUSE / LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Nina on the couch, home alone. It's the first time he's never come home.

CUT TO:

INT. OLIVIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Clifton and Olivia having sex again.

CUT TO:

INT. NINA'S HOUSE / LIVING ROOM - DAY

Phone RINGS. Nina, coming in from upstairs, lets it ring. The answering machine picks up.

CLIFTON  
(on machine)  
If you need anything, I mean just  
call me. I can be there in fifteen  
minutes...I just..um..I'm at  
Olivia's--and---it's....well, her  
number is six four seven, eight  
nine, nine, nine...okay?

Nina nods--if she knows anything, she knows what the sound of love sounds like.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Nina walks in like she's visiting the most foreign territory.

Opens the fridge. The fridge is neat, and organized and clean.

She closes it, opens her CUPBOARDS, her PANTRY, sees signs of him everywhere. And doesn't like it.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Nina gets her keys, her coat, walks out the door.

CUT TO:

INT. PARIS CLUB - LATER

Nina is hanging with a bunch of people, speaking French, drinking. And drinking hard. And fast.

CUT TO:

INT. OLIVIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Clifton and Olivia cooking, laughing.

CUT TO:

INT. GROCERY STORE - NIGHT

Nina Simone, a little drunk, grocery shopping.

Tall and haughty, like a queen, a turban wrapped around her head, she heads down the cereal aisle.

CUT TO:

EXT. NINA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Nina in her big, black Cadillac driving home. She pulls up close to the house--gets out.

Drops her clothes--one breast exposed, the other gone, and jumps into the pool.

CUT TO:

INT. OLIVIA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Clifton and Olivia in bed, talking.

Clifton looks at the phone--waits for it to ring. Waiting for Nina to call.

Olivia looks at him--he catches himself, turns toward her, smiles.

CUT TO:

INT. NINA'S HOUSE - MORNING

Nina comes downstairs, looking for coffee.

She sees a stack of MAIL waiting for Clifton. Looks away, but then looks back, something catches her eye.

A yellow MANILLA envelope, handwritten address. Nina pulls it out. Almost looks like a kid's handwriting.

She opens it, a TAPE, with a NOTE, and a newspaper CLIPPING.

Nina looks at the CLIPPING. It is the Calendar section from the L.A. Times, 1972, a PICTURE of Nina, a glowing review of her performance the night before.

Across the PICTURE, Nina's AUTOGRAPH, the one she gave to the BLACK WOMAN with the necklace that day at the L.A. Airport, "*stay free, woman...Nina Simone.*"

Nina smiles, remembers. She puts the TAPE in the BOOM BOX.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A PIANO starts playing, beginning notes.

YOUNG GIRL (O.S.)  
My mom loved you. This is her  
favorite song.

A young girl starts singing.

YOUNG GIRL (CONT'D)  
(through boom box)  
...my skin is black, my arms are  
long, my hair is wooly...my back  
is strong, strong enough to take  
the pain, inflicted again and  
again...

A ten year old black girl, signing Nina's most personal song.

YOUNG GIRL (CONT'D)  
(singing)  
...my skin is yellow, my hair is  
long, between two worlds I do  
belong...

ON NINA as she listens to her legacy, her legend, her future  
all in this girl's voice.

Then Nina starts singing with her.

NINA  
(singing)  
...my skin is tan, my hair is fine,  
my hips invite you, my mouth like  
wine, whose little girl am I?  
Anyone who has money to buy...

A DUET, Nina and the daughter of the woman we first saw in  
Central Park.

YOUNG GIRL (O.S.)  
....my skin is brown, my manner is  
tough...

NINA  
.... my life has been rough...I'm  
awfully bitter these days because  
my parents were slaves...

CUT TO:

INT. NINA'S HOUSE - DAY

Clifton walks in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLIFTON

Nina? Nina?

He walks through the house UPSTAIRS--to her room.

Keeps looking, with each empty room realizing how much he missed her.

CLIFTON (CONT'D)

Nina!

BACK DOWNSTAIRS, sees her medicine on the counter, her coat, her things, her life, her stuff, without him.

He sits down on the edge of the couch.

NINA (O.S.)

Sex with me didn't make you that sad.

Clifton turns to her, as Nina enters.

CLIFTON

I'm not sad.

NINA

You look like you are.

She sits next to her.

CLIFTON

How are you?

NINA

Good. Good.

CLIFTON

How are you feeling?

NINA

Fine.

CLIFTON

How's your arm? Any pain, any swelling?

NINA

Don't be a nurse right now. I'm not in the mood. I'm hungover and sore from sex. Just like you--

INT. NINA'S BEDROOM - LATER

Clifton is sitting next to Nina. It is quiet and dark and we can HEAR the SOUND of their breathing.

NINA

Are you in love with her?

CLIFTON

I don't know. I think so.

NINA

I want you to be--because if you  
can be in love with someone else,  
and still come back to me, well,  
that is more than any man has ever  
given me.

They stay there together, and in this tiny moment realize how much they love each other.

NINA (CONT'D)

Call Henry. I want to do a record.  
I want to sing some new songs.

CUT TO:

INT. STUDIO - DAY

Nina, Xavier, Clifton, a couple of cool BLACK cats, a full band.

Nina comes in, takes a seat in front of the PIANO.

NINA

(into mic)

Well--what shall we sing?

And of course she already knows.

She begins PLAYING a long, complicated, intense INTRO to "I Shall Be Released"

The BAND jumps in, working to catch up.

NINA (CONT'D)

(singing)

....they say everything can be  
replaced...they say every distance  
is not near....so I remember every  
face of every one who put me  
here....

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Her PIANO--strong, bluesy, fast takes us to:

MONTAGE

HOSPITAL--Clifton with Nina as she gets her CHEMO

NINA'S HOUSE - Clifton sitting with Nina, trying to get her to eat

OLIVIA'S APARTMENT - Clifton rushing in to see Olivia.

HOSPITAL - Clifton and Nina, laughing as she gets her treatment

RESTAURANT--Clifton meeting Olivia's PARENTS, upper class French

NINA'S HOUSE - Clifton getting out of bed to go check on Nina. Clifton watching her sleep.

INT. STUDIO - DAY

BACK ON, Clifton watching Nina sing.

NINA  
(singing)  
....they say every woman needs  
protection....they say every one  
must fall....

She looks at him, is singing to him.

NINA (CONT'D)  
...I swear I see my very own  
reflection....somewhere inside  
these walls.....I see my life come  
shining...shining...from the west  
down to the east...any day  
now...any day now...I shall be  
released...

She finishes, nods, she's done.

Nina gets up, walks out--Clifton follows.

CLIFTON  
I..uh...

NINA  
Take care of your business baby.  
It's okay. Go.

Nina grabs Xavier.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

NINA (CONT'D)  
(to Xavier)  
Take me home. I'm tired.  
(to Clifton)  
I'm fine. Go.

Nina follows Xavier out. Clifton is off to see his girl.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAFE - AFTERNOON

Clifton and Nina having lunch. Clifton wants to tell Nina, but doesn't want to tell her.

CLIFTON  
Um...

NINA  
What, baby--

CLIFTON  
The record sounds good.

NINA  
Yes, it does.

CLIFTON  
Henry said they're playing you a lot in L.A., New York. On the radio.

NINA  
Yes.

CLIFTON  
We did good.

NINA  
What do you want to say? Are you getting married?

CLIFTON  
(quick)  
No.  
(then)  
I...I'm going to move in with her.  
Is that okay?

Nina nods.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NINA  
I have too much to face to worry  
about not waking up with you.

CLIFTON  
Nina--

NINA  
Why don't you ever say what you  
feel? What are you afraid of?

She waves him off--done with him, done with this  
conversation.

CUT TO:

EXT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Nina gets out of a CAB.

INT. WAITING ROOM/DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Nina enters, goes up to the little window.

NINA  
Is Doctor Coueser here?

NURSE  
Yes he is.

NINA  
May I see him?

NURSE  
Do you have an appointment?

NINA  
No.

OLIVIA, in her surgery scrubs, sees Nina--stops to say  
something, but doesn't, keeps going.

CUT TO:

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - LATER

The Nurse ushers Nina in. DOCTOR COUSER, Nina's surgeon  
enters.

DOCTOR  
Hello. How are you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NINA

Good. Can I travel--am I ready to travel?

The Doctor nods.

DOCTOR

Yes. When would you leave?

NINA

Next week.

DOCTOR

You will miss your next treatment.

NINA

Does it matter? Really?

CUT TO:

INT. NINA'S HOUSE - LATER

Nina comes in. Clifton is there.

CLIFTON

Where were you?

NINA

Just out.

Clifton has a bunch of his stuff with them--taking it out of the house.

An AWKWARD BEAT.

CLIFTON

Uh....there's some mail for you.

She nods. Things have changed, they both know it.

CLIFTON (CONT'D)

Well--I'll see you tomorrow.

Clifton leaves.

On the table, is the mail Clifton left for her.

She looks at it, stops, picks up a letter--hesitates for only a moment longer than she did forty years ago.

NINA'S VOICE

(reading)

Nina Simone.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NINA'S VOICE (CONT'D)

We would like to correct a mistake that was made forty years ago when you were rejected by this institute despite your prodigious talent and your commitment to your art.

EXT. NINA'S HOUSE / POOL - NIGHT

CLOSE ON NINA now sitting by the POOL. A cigarette, a glass of champagne, the blue water.

NINA'S VOICE

This institute rejected you because of the color of your skin and we would like, at this time, regardless of how small the gesture may seem, to offer you a position at this institute, and to acknowledge how great was our error, and how tremendous was our loss in denying you admittance.

As meaningless a gesture as it is, Nina accepts it. Allows it to wash away what is left of her anger, her pain from being denied the chance to do the one thing she loved.

CUT TO:

INT. OLIVIA'S APARTMENT - LATER

Clifton enters. Gives Olivia a kiss. Puts his stuff down.

CLIFTON

Hi.

She kisses him, happy to see him.

CLIFTON (CONT'D)

How was your day?

OLIVIA

(pause)

Um..good. Good.

(then)

My parents want us to go to the country next week--for the week. Can you?

CLIFTON

I don't know. I don't want to leave Nina, it's hard enough on her, me moving in. I think I should stay close for awhile.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OLIVIA

She is very strong. She lived a long time without you. You must start living without her.

EXT. CHATEAUX - DAY

Clifton and Olivia driving up the driveway on a beautiful day.

CUT TO:

EXT. AIRPORT - SAME

Nina walking through the terminal, heading to New York.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHATEAUX PATIO - DAY

Clifton sits at a long table, eating lunch with Olivia's extended family.

No one is black, none speak English, but even if they did, Clifton would still be wondering what he was doing there.

Olivia feels his distance, his unease.

OLIVIA

What's wrong with you?

CLIFTON

Nothing--I'm just--I don't know...  
I'm going to go lie down for a while.

Olivia nods. Clifton leaves the table, heads inside.

INT. CHATEAUX / BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Clifton lies on the bed, stares up at the ceiling.

He's a million miles from home--a million miles from Century City hospital--a million miles from who he was and was going to be.

Olivia enters, stares at him, knows he is not hers.

OLIVIA

She went to New York.

Clifton sits up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLIFTON

What?

OLIVIA

She went to play a concert. She came in to the office to make sure she could travel.

CLIFTON

Why didn't you tell me? Why didn't she tell me?

OLIVIA

Because you would go.

CUT TO:

INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Nina is dressed--turban around her bald head. She looks tired, a little weak. And alone.

She tries to fit the prosthetic breast on--struggles, it doesn't look right.

Slender black hands reach around her. Nina turns, Clifton fits it quickly, quietly.

He wraps her in his arms.

CLIFTON

Why didn't you tell me?

NINA

Tell you what?

CLIFTON

Nina.

He turns her to him, this young, tender guy, somehow stronger than any man she has ever been with.

A PA pokes her head in.

P.A.

Less than two minutes Miss Simone.

Nina nods, P.A. leaves.

NINA

How did you even know?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLIFTON

I was so unhappy at Olivia's  
parents house, so moody, she  
finally told me she saw you at the  
doctor's--and that she found out  
you were leaving--that's why she  
wanted to take me away.

NINA

She didn't want you here.

CLIFTON

No, she didn't.

(then)

She thinks it's time I have a life  
that doesn't center around you.

NINA

Hmmm--that's quite a tall order.

CLIFTON

Yeah, it is.

She smiles and walks away from him, yet again.

CUT TO:

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - NIGHT

To APPLAUSE Nina walks on STAGE, sits in front of a piano.

We see her in profile, haughty, strong, regal.

We STAY on her, the summer wind just brushing the high turban  
wrapped around her head.

PULL BACK: There are tens of thousands of people sitting on  
the grass, talking, smoking weed, making out.

FIND a young black girl, 9, 10, with her father--it is her  
POV we are seeing through--she is totally taken with the  
woman on the stage.

Just the two of them, still and strong--each waiting for the  
same moment....

HIP HOP KID

What is she waiting for?

GIRLFRIEND

For you to shut up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He shrugs, like he cares, but still, he quiets, and as if they all got it at once, the crowd quiets.

ON STAGE--a slight NOD of her head--she begins to PLAY.

NINA  
(singing)  
...here comes the sun....little  
darling...here comes the sun...I  
say...it's alright....here comes  
the sun little darling...I  
say...it's alright...

ON CLIFTON watching her

NINA (CONT'D)  
.....little darling, it's been a  
long, cold and lonely winter...it  
feels like years since you've been  
here....here comes the sun little  
darling.... I say, it's alright,  
it's alright...

She PLAYS a sweet INTERLUDE, but she can't help it--brings in the blues, jazz, classical, pop, rock, everything--everything is in her hands.....as we HEAR, soft, sweet...

NINA (CONT'D)  
Let's go to Nice.

EXT. COAST OF FRANCE - DAY

Beautiful day. A big, black Cadillac, regal and old, comes into view.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Clifton is driving, Nina next to him.

Sunglasses, scarf, water, blue sky, bright sun.

EXT. COAST - CONTINUOUS

As the car PASSES US.

NINA  
I want to go to the water.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH - LATE EVENING

Two FIGURES walk down the sand.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

Nina stops once in awhile to get her breath, she's much thinner, weaker.

Clifton waits, looking off, understanding the personal nature of these moments.

They walk along the water's edge---no music, no words, just the water, slight wind.

NINA

It is as if my life didn't  
happen...as if all there is is  
these moments....huh..

She looks out, past the horizon, past what any of us can see--  
and it is only now we hear her breathing, shallow, almost as  
if its already outside her body.

NINA (CONT'D)

...I wish everyone knew---I wish I  
knew long before this...ah well...

Clifton looks at her, knows how close death is--he has seen  
it, been around it. What he didn't know is how brutal her  
leaving him would be.

CLIFTON

Nina....

She puts her hand up--to quiet him, but instead he takes it.

CLIFTON (CONT'D)

I have always loved you. I will  
always love you.

He kisses her--holds her close--

CLIFTON (CONT'D)

When you leave I will love you and  
I will love you when you return.

--and kisses her again-

CLIFTON (CONT'D)

You took my life and turned it  
around, changed it, changed me and  
I will never be the same.

--unbuttons her shirt--she never takes her eyes of him as he  
lies her down on the blanket-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CLIFTON (CONT'D)  
Everything I do is you. When I  
wake up, when I eat, when I get in  
the car, you are with me. When I  
make love to someone else it is you-

--runs his hands along her breast--her arms--her face--

CLIFTON (CONT'D)  
You have inhabited me--when I hear  
you laugh, when I see you dance,  
when I watch you sing--

--takes his shirt off-

CLIFTON (CONT'D)  
You are the most magnificent woman  
I have ever seen, you are the most  
beautiful creature to walk this  
earth--

--makes love to her...

CLIFTON (CONT'D)  
Every moment of your life was  
wonderful, every heartache was  
beautiful, every loss lives in your  
hands, your voice...

She never takes her eyes off him--never takes her arms from  
around him as he whispers to her.

CLIFTON (CONT'D)  
...goodbye...thank you...don't  
leave me....

BEACH

The sun is just coming up--that place between, some people  
see morning, others still see night-

Clifton, Nina in his arms, standing in the water, holding her  
in the place she loved the best, tears running down his  
face....

NINA  
...little darling...it's alright...

FADE OUT:

As Nina begins her next song...