

## **BETWEEN 2 WORLDS**

By

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**BETWEEN 2 WORLDS**

FADE IN:

EXT. DENKALI, EAST AFRICA - SPEED BOAT - NIGHT

Princess NIA, 30, British boarding school accent peppered with street, snorts coke off the leather dash. She hikes up her sequin minidress. Wraps her legs around a dashing DUTCHMAN. Grinds it.

DUTCHMAN

Oh, Nia.

NIA

Say my name, you animal.

The Dutchman's eyes drift towards the looming shoreline.

DUTCHMAN

Nia!

The Dutchman drops Nia on her beautiful butt.

DUTCHMAN

Look!

Nia cranes her neck. Spots the frightened faces of people dining at a seaside cafe.

NIA

Shit!

Nia jumps behind the wheel.

Fishtails the speed boat.

The water spray drenches the diners scrambling for cover.

A wave of middle fingers flip off Nia and her boyfriend.

EXT. ROYAL PALACE - VERANDA - DAY

KING DELMAR, 65, possesses a commanding presence, signs off on some documents. QUEEN THEMA, 60, a stunning beauty, sips coffee from fine china. Nia plops down at the breakfast table. Looks ragged out.

QUEEN THEMA

Good morning, Nia.

Nia responds with a grunt.

QUEEN THEMA

What happened to good morning,  
mother?

Nia squints at the sun peeking over the Aberdare  
mountains.

NIA

Why must you insist, mother,  
on doing breakfast in this  
bleeding sun?

KING DELMAR

It would not bother you, Nia,  
if you were not hung over.

Slumped over the table, Nia shoots her father a pissed  
off look.

QUEEN THEMA

You are princess of Denkali.  
Future heir to the throne.  
Think of the example you are  
setting for the youth of this  
country?

A uniformed servant pours Nia coffee from a silver pot.

NIA

I have a news flash for you  
both. I have absolutely no  
interest in being a princess,  
heir to a throne or a bloody  
role model.

KING DELMAR

No, you prefer to indulge  
yourself in party drugs and  
unemployable lotharios.

King Delmar leans close to Nia.

KING DELMAR

I'm not as naive as you think.

Nia matches her father's intense stare.

NIA

And I'm not as controllable as  
you wish.

Nia slurps her black coffee. Her panther green eyes search the horizon.

NIA

Do you know what I long for?  
To return to a life in exile.

QUEEN THEMA

Nia, you don't mean that.

NIA

The hell I don't. Abroad I  
had the luxury of doing  
whatever thrilled me. Racing  
Lamborghinis. Hang gliding  
naked off El Cid.

Nia leans back in her chair. Grins mischievously.

NIA

Smoking the finest ganja in  
Jamaica with a gorgeous  
Rastafarian.

KING DELMAR

In other words, making a total  
waste of your life.

King Delmar hands off the signed documents to a suited assistant. He bows and leaves.

KING DELMAR

For the first time in thirty  
years, our beloved nation held  
democratic elections. The  
citizens in one voice voted  
for a return to a  
parliamentary monarch.

King Delmar sits up in his high back velvet chair. He radiates regalness.

KING DELMAR

Like it or not, Nia, your fate  
has been mapped out. You are  
of the royal bloodline and are  
destined to rule this country.

NIA

The only flipping thing any of us are destined for is a cold grave.

A servant pulls out Nia's chair. The princess heads off. King Delmar latches onto his daughter.

KING DELMAR

If you continue this hedonistic pursuit, you will have done an extreme disservice to yourself and your country.

Nia yanks her arm free. Storms off.

EXT. MEADOW - DAY

A trap machine jettisons a pair of clay pigeons.

Nia pumps a shotgun.

BLOWS them both out of the sky.

KAMU, pressed and starched like a four-star hotel bed, politely applauds.

KAMU

Marksmanship like that will qualify you for the palace guard.

NIA

Better a palace guard than a princess.

(calls out)

Pull!

A second pair of clay pigeons scar into the air.

Again Nia BLASTS them to smithereens.

Nia trades a servant her .20 guage Mossberg for orange juice in Irish crystal.

KAMU

The king informed me of your tete-a-tete this morning.

NIA

Father thinks he can rein me  
in like one of his prized  
Lipizzans.

KAMU

The king only wants what is  
best for you.

NIA

My father wants what's best  
for the bloody throne.

Nia pours vodka from a gold-plated flask. Spikes her  
O.J. Takes a belt.

KAMU

May I proffer an observation,  
your Highness?

Nia nods.

KAMU

When your brother Prince Kwame  
died in that plane crash last  
year, you by default, became  
heir to the throne. A  
responsibility you neither  
asked for nor were prepared to  
assume.

Half listening, Nia stirs her vodka infused orange juice  
with her finger.

KAMU

Consider this, if you will.  
For centuries, the royal  
family has governed this fine  
nation through war. Famine.  
Economic crisis.

Kamu steps closer to Nia.

KAMU

You not only will have the  
opportunity one day to  
continue this proud legacy,  
but you will have the power  
to make a meaningful  
difference in people's lives.

NIA

Are those your words, Kamu,  
or my father's?

Nia knocks back her screwdriver. Climbs in a golf cart.

KAMU

I pray, your Grace, you will  
at least make peace with your  
father.

NIA

I see, Kamu, why you are the  
king's senior advisor. Your  
eloquence is only surpassed by  
your wisdom.

Nia speeds off.

EXT. MOUNTAIN TOP - NIGHT

Haunting moonlight shimmers off a pair of shiny Land  
Rovers. A smoked window powers down. GENERAL LUSALA,  
55, his face scarred by mercenary wars, peers out at  
ZUBERI, 45, a skeleton of a man with an eye patch.

GEN. LUSALA

When will you make your move?

ZUBERI

Tomorrow. At the coronation.

General Lusala fires up a pipe. Puffs confidently.

GEN. LUSALA

What about the officers who  
are loyal to the throne?

ZUBERI

My agents are hauling them  
out of their beds and  
executing them as we speak.

GEN. LUSALA

If we are successful, Zuberi,  
I will make you chief of my  
secret police.

The general inhales pensively.



GEN. LUSALA  
If we are not, then you will  
hang next to me in the gallows.

The two Land Rovers drive off in opposite directions.

INT. ROYAL PALACE - MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

A tailor puts the finishing touches on the king's  
military uniform. A BUTLER walks in and bows.

BUTLER  
Your Majesty. General Lusala  
wishes to see you.

Before the king can respond, General Lusala marches in.  
Beaming in his combat medals and ribbons.

GEN. LUSALA  
Excellency.

KING DELMAR  
General.

GEN. LUSALA  
I wish you much success, this  
day of your coronation. I am  
certain you will prove to be  
an inspired leader, just like  
your father.

KING DELMAR  
I appreciate the good tidings,  
general.

General Lusala bows. Passes Nia on the way out. The  
two exchange icy stares.

NIA  
That man makes me want to puke.

Nia beholds King Delmar in his regal attire.

NIA  
You look very handsome, father.

King Delmar takes in Nia's sparkling white gown.

KING DELMAR  
And you are positively radiant.

King Delmar waves off the tailor.

NIA  
I want to apologize for the  
other morning.

King Delmar cups his hands around Nia's glowing face.

KING DELMAR  
King or not, it is the  
obligation of every father to  
provide guidance to his child.

King Delmar brushes the curly bangs from Nia's face.

KING DELMAR  
You may not recognize it, but  
you have the makings of a  
great ruler and a wonderful  
woman.

Nia slips out of her father's hands.

NIA  
You can sweet talk me all you  
want, father, but I have no  
desire to follow in your  
footsteps.

KING DELMAR  
God in heaven will decide that,  
my angel.

King Delmar straightens a red sash accenting Nia's gown.

KING DELMAR  
In the meantime, you and I  
have a coronation to attend.

Nia and King Delmar walk out arm in arm.

INT. CATHEDRAL - DAY

Young choir boys SING a heavenly song. A line of dignitaries file in. On cue, red velvet drapes are drawn back.

King Delmar and Queen Thema sit on a pair of gilded thrones. A bespectacled BISHOP steps up to the pulpit.

BISHOP

We are assembled here today to witness the crowning of King Delmar Abbas Kwasi Mathosa and Queen Thema Dayo Ekua Mathosa.

Seated in the front pew, Nia winks at her father. King Delmar winks back.

BISHOP

This historic event was delayed by thirty years of foreign occupation. This momentous occasion not only symbolizes a people's independence --

AK-47s OPEN FIRE.

A spray of bullets riddle King Delmar and Queen Thema. Splattered with blood, they fall from their thrones.

NIA

No!

Nia runs to her dying parents.

General Lusala intercepts her.

Aims a .9 millimeter at her face.

NIA

You fucking --

A SHOT rings out.

The general staggers sideways.

Gripping a Derringer, Kamu grabs Nia.

KAMU

Come with me!

NIA  
My parents --

KAMU  
Are dead --

A BULLET strikes Kamu in the shoulder.

Nia scoops up the Derringer.

BLOWS a hole in the assassin.

With his good arm, Kamu drags Nia from the alter.

INT. BENTLEY - DAY

A CHAUFFEUR weaves around a hysterical crowd.

Nia rips off her sash.

Cinches it around Kamu's bloody arm.

KAMU  
(into a car phone)  
I want a helicopter gassed and  
ready to --

CHAUFFEUR  
Sir! A roadblock!

KAMU  
Ram it!

The chauffeur PUNCHES IT.

GUNFIRE bounces off the bullet-proof glass.

The Bentley SMASHES through an Army blockade.

EXT. ROYAL PALACE - HELIPAD - DAY

The Bentley RACES up.

Kamu and Nia bail out.

The make a mad dash to an awaiting chopper.

KAMU

The helicopter will ferry you to Bangui. From there, a private jet will fly you to Paris. You must get to the American embassy and appeal for immediate asylum.

NIA

What about you?

KAMU

Do not be concerned about me.

Nia grabs Kamu's blood-stained suit coat.

NIA

No, Kamu, you cannot stay.

Kamu gestures the palace guards. They separate Nia from her royal advisor and force her into the idling chopper.

INT. HELICOPTER

Lifting off, Nia presses her face against the window.

Witnesses the general's soldiers killing off the palace guards.

Nia spots Kamu surrounded at gunpoint.

She pounds her fist on the helicopter door.

NIA

Kamu!

A hail of BULLETS puncture the fuselage.

Nia ducks her head between her legs.

The chopper VEERS sharply.

Flies away at TOP SPEED.

INT. POLICE STATION - BASEMENT - DAYS LATER

Zuberi jams a cattle prod in a prisoner's groin.

The prisoner screams. Passes out.

General Lusala swaggers in.

He yanks the prisoner's head back. It's Kamu.

GEN. LUSALA  
(to Zuberi)  
Anything?

Zuberi shakes his head.

He grabs a bucket of water.

Splashes Kamu in the face.

He spits and chokes as he comes around.

GEN. LUSALA  
(to Kamu)  
Tell me the princess'  
destination and the pain will  
stop.

Kamu mumbles something.

General Lusala leans close.

Kamu kisses him full on the lips.

Zuberi whacks Kamu with the metal bucket.

GEN. LUSALA  
(to Zuberi)  
Take him to the quarry and  
shoot him!

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

An old farmer squirms beneath an overturned wagon.

He hollers in agony.

The FARMER'S DAUGHTER runs in front of a speeding humvee.

The driver stands on the BRAKES.

FARMER'S DAUGHTER  
Please, you must help my  
father!

A soldier steps out. Locks and loads an AK-47.  
The soldier chuckles at the farmer's predicament.  
Levels his machine gun at the farmer's head.

FARMER'S DAUGHTER

No!

A GUNSHOT echoes in the valley.  
The soldier drops where he stands.  
A second sniper's bullet SPLINTERS the humvee's windshield.  
Instantly kills the driver.

FARMER'S DAUGHTER

Take the vehicle!

Ragtag rebels pour out from the dense brush.  
Free their comrade pinned beneath the wagon.  
All of them pile into the humvee.

INT. HUMVEE

The farmer's daughter aims a gun at Kamu who is handcuffed in back.

FARMER'S DAUGHTER

Who are you?

Kamu struggles to upright his bruised and bloody body.

KAMU

My name is Kamu Shabala.  
I am... I was General Counsel  
to the Royal Court.

The farmer's daughter uncocks her .45. Places a hand on Kamu's shoulder.

FARMER'S DAUGHTER

Welcome to the resistance, my  
brother.

The humvee BURNS RUBBER down the dirt road.

INT. NEW YORK - J.F.K. AIRPORT - INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

A KNOCK at the door. An armed guard opens it. A female STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL, stiff as her tailored suit, breezes in. She sits down at a table across from Nia.

STATE DEPT. OFFICIAL  
Washington has denied your  
appeal for asylum.

NIA  
My application was approved by  
your embassy in Paris.

STATE DEPT. OFFICIAL  
Unfortunately, our people in  
Paris are not up to speed with  
the political dynamics --

NIA  
Don't hand me that rubbish.

The official recoils in her chair.

STATE DEPT. OFFICIAL  
Off the record. The U-S will  
recognize the new government  
of Denkali in the next  
twenty-four hours.

Nia glares at the official.

NIA  
Why the bloody hell would your  
country give credence to a  
dictator who massacred the  
royal family... my family...  
and every member of its  
elected parliament?

STATE DEPT. OFFICIAL  
I'll spell it out for you.  
O-I-L.

The official gathers up her leather briefcase.

STATE DEPT. OFFICIAL  
Next to Nigeria, Denkali  
possesses the largest crude  
oil deposits in that region.



Nia slumps in her chair. The official marches out.

NIA  
What happens to me?

The starkness of Nia's question stops the official cold in her tracks.

STATE DEPT. OFFICIAL  
You will be loaded aboard a  
government aircraft and flown  
back to Denkali under guard.

Nia springs to her feet. Boxes in the official.

NIA  
You realize you have just  
signed my death warrant.

The official's steely persona finally cracks.

STATE DEPT. OFFICIAL  
I'm very sorry.

The official reaches for the door. Nia grabs her.

NIA  
Dispatch me to another country.  
I have passports to half a  
dozen other --

STATE DEPT. OFFICIAL  
My orders are non-negotiable.

The guard clicks handcuffs around Nia's wrists. The princess hangs her head like the condemned woman she is.

INT. VAN - DAY

An I.C.E. agent loads Nia into the middle seat.

Nia back kicks him in the gut.

Wraps her handcuffs around the driver's throat.

NIA  
Drive!

The driver reaches for something.

Nia yanks back on her handcuffs.

Almost snaps the driver's neck in two.

NIA

Do it!

The driver stands on the GAS.

EXT. AIRPORT TARMAC

The van zig-zags between taxiing planes.

Several squad cars are in HOT PURSUIT.

The van pops a curb. PLOWS through a chainlink fence.

Nia and the driver vanish down the interstate.

INT. VAN - DAY

Nia spots a sign as they speed down the freeway. She tightens her cuffs around the driver's neck.

NIA

Pull into that rest area.

The driver does as Nia orders.

NIA

I want you to park between those two lorries.

The driver shoots Nia a questioning look.

NIA

The blooming trucks!

The driver eases the van between a pair of big rigs.

He jerks his gun from its holster.

Nia fights for control.

Jams the barrel against the driver's skull.

NIA

Nice try, luv. Now unlock the bracelets.

The driver scans the parking lot for help. Nia pulls the hammer back on the Smith and Wesson.

NIA

Now, goddamnit!

EXT. REST AREA

Nia fluffs up her curls. Straightens her clothes. Nia sashays over to a trucker walking his pooch. Nia smiles at him. Chats it up. The trucker smiles back. Helps Nia into the cab of his Kenworth.

INT. DENKALI - ROYAL PALACE - BALCONY - DAY

Blowing smoke rings, Lusala listens to ARTILLERY FIRE in the distance. Dressed in his new chief of secret police uniform, Zuberi joins the general.

ZUBERI

The loyalist forces have been crushed.

GEN. LUSALA

What about Princess Nia?

ZUBERI

(beat)

There's a problem.

The smile on General Lusala's face morphs into a scowl.

ZUBERI

She escaped U-S custody.

The general swats Zuberi with a stinging backhand.

GEN. LUSALA

What are the Americans doing about it?

ZUBERI

They are conducting a coast to coast manhunt.

GEN. LUSALA  
 Our coup d'etat is only half  
 complete as long as that royal  
 bitch breathes free air.

General Lusala straightens the sling cradling his  
 wounded arm.

GEN. LUSALA  
 I will give the Americans  
 forty-eight hours to locate  
 the princess.

The general puffs on his pipe. Blows a choking smoke in  
 Zuberi's face.

GEN. LUSALA  
 After that, she becomes your  
 problem.

EXT. U.S.A. - ROUTE 35 IN MONTANA - DAY

A sign carved out of ponderosa pine declares:  
 "WELCOME TO WILLOWS BEND". An eighteen-wheeler pulls  
 onto the shoulder. Nia hops out. Surveys the small,  
 artsy town.

INT. CAFE - DAY

New Age music PLAYS on a retro juke box. Nia sits down  
 at a deuce table. RHONDA, 25, a walking billboard for  
 body piercing and goth rock, appears. She startles Nia.

RHONDA  
 Whadaya have?

NIA  
 Water, please.

RHONDA  
 Desani or Perrier?

NIA  
 From the tap is fine.

Rhonda lifts a pitcher off the counter. Pours Nia a  
 glass.

RHONDA  
Where're ya from?

NIA  
The U-K.

RHONDA  
No shit. I once dated a guy  
from England. Or was it  
Belfast? That's a country,  
right?

Nia looks at Rhonda with disbelief. The waitress shoves  
her hand at Nia.

RHONDA  
I'm Rhonda.

NIA  
Ni... uh... Nichole.

RHONDA  
Moving in or passing through?

NIA  
I haven't decided.

RHONDA  
A lot of the townies here are  
transplants from Seattle and  
Portland. The local rag calls  
them "urban refugees".

A bell RINGS.

RHONDA  
There's my Monte Cristo.

Rhonda hustles off. The couple at the next table leaves.  
Nia eyes a half eaten bran muffin. She swipes it.  
Stuffs it in her mouth. Rhonda reappears.

RHONDA  
Couldn't wait for the menu?

Nia turns red with embarrassment. Swallows hard.

NIA

The truth is... I have no money.

(beat)

I just left my old man. It was really a bad scene.

RHONDA

Listen girl, been there, done that. Well Jake really wasn't my husband, he was my boyfriend. I mean we did live together. Ya know, split the rent. Although, if I remember right, he was the one who left me.

Rhonda snaps her fingers.

RHONDA

And come to think of it, that dirty pisser stole all of Green Day C-Ds. What a chump! Sorry. I digress.

Rhonda glances around the cafe. Notices the morning rush has died down. She pulls up a chair next to Nia.

RHONDA

So back to the money. How ya getting around with no bread?

NIA

I've been thumbing it the past couple of days.

RHONDA

Hey, that's got issues all by itself.

Rhonda twirls one of her brow rings.

RHONDA

Well, F-Y-I. The jobs here in Willows Bend are hard to come by. Most of the businesses are owner operated.

Rhonda leans close to Nia.

RHONDA

I really shouldn't be telling ya this cuz the local citizens group, which by the way I'm the treasurer of, is protesting this project. I guess you'd call it protesting. I mean we actually hold demonstrations and everything.

Nia appears dizzy trying to keep up with Rhonda.

RHONDA

Anywho, there's this company that's building a chemical plant over by Lake Flathead.

NIA

Construction? Not exactly my forte.

Rhonda slaps her forehead.

RHONDA

Hold the freakin' train. It just hit me. Bronk Taylor is looking for a full-time caretaker for his ranch. Or at least he was.

NIA

Caretaker?

RHONDA

Yeah, ya know. Someone to cook the carpets. Vacuum the meals. Hell, you get what I'm saying.

NIA

A ranch, huh? Where is it?

RHONDA

The Lucky Thirteen? It's about ten miles west of town. Or is it east?

Rhonda shakes her head. Tries to clear the cobwebs.

RHONDA

Man, I gotta lay off that  
mushroom tea.

Rhonda snaps up Nia's glass of water. Looks around  
suspiciously.

RHONDA

Tell ya what, girlfriend.  
I'll slip ya a shake and  
sandwich. On the house.

Rhonda boogies into the kitchen before Nia can thank her.

EXT. RANCH - DAY

A hand painted sign reads: "LUCKY 13 RANCH". Nia hops  
out of a rusty pickup. Waves to the driver as he pulls  
away. LUCIO, 35, Meztizo cheekbones, a flowing ponytail,  
canters up on a snorting Appaloosa.

LUCIO

Senora!

NIA

Are you Bronk Taylor?

LUCIO

No. I am Lucio. The foreman.

NIA

I was told Mister Taylor is  
looking for a caretaker.

LUCIO

Si, senora.

Lucio bends sideways. Extends his hand to Nia.

LUCIO

I will take you.

Nia hesitates.

Lucio grabs her hand.

Hauls her aboard with one jerk.



EXT. CORRAL

BRONK, 40, his face and body chiseled from years of hard ranch life, brands cattle with a mark of "13". Lucio and Nia trot up.

LUCIO

Senor Bronk!

Bronk looks up.

BRONK

Que pasa?

LUCIO

(in Spanish)

This lady is here about the caretaker job.

Bronk locks eyes with Nia. Her polished beauty looks out of place against the rugged land.

BRONK

(to a field hand)

Roy, take over.

ROY, bowling ball build topped off with a battered cowboy hat, takes over branding. Bronk knocks the dirt from his jeans. Helps Nia off her mount.

BRONK

What's your name?

NIA

Nichole.

BRONK

Where're ya from?

NIA

The west coast.

BRONK

Is that where you picked up that accent?

NIA

I'm originally from Kent.  
Outside of London.

Bronk removes the bandana from his head. Wipes the mud from his face.

BRONK  
Ever work on a ranch?

NIA  
No, but during my last job as  
an au pair --

BRONK  
An au what?

NIA  
A governess. A babysitter? I  
also maintained the house of  
my employer.

Bronk pulls the canteen from Lucio's saddle. Takes a long swig of spring water.

BRONK  
Job pays two-fifty a week plus  
meals. Work starts 'round  
here at five A-M.

NIA  
Five A-M?

Bronk tosses the canteen to Lucio. Climbs back in the corral.

NIA  
Yoo-hoo! Mister Bronk!

Bronk ties his bandana back on. Doesn't look back.

NIA  
When will I know...

Bronk sears another steer with the branding iron. The sight of burning hide makes Nia squeamish.

NIA  
... if I've gotten the job?

BRONK  
You just did.

Nia tiptoes around the cow dung. Approaches the corral.

NIA  
Uh, Mister Bronk?

Bronk still doesn't look at her.

NIA  
I was wondering... hoping  
actually... would it be too  
much to ask for an advance?

Bronk turns around. Looks impatiently at Nia.

NIA  
I'm new to town. I have no  
money.

BRONK  
(beat)  
Lucio will take care of you.

Bronk stabs the branding iron in a bed of hot coals.  
Curiously, he looks back at Nia.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Nia steps inside and closes the door. Nia turns the  
deadbolt. It won't lock.

NIA  
Aw, nice.

Nia wedges a chair against the door. Hits the lights.  
Looks about the dingy room.

NIA  
Not exactly the Ritz-Carlton.

Nia sits on the edge of a stiff bed and tears into a  
7-11 burrito. Nia turns on the T.V. Surfs with the  
remote. The reception stinks on every channel.

NIA  
Golly gee, why doesn't that  
surprise me?

Nia reaches for her burrito. Her hand brushes against a  
fat rat nibbling on her dinner. Nia vaults off the bed.  
Backs herself into a corner. Nia's pent-up tears come  
pouring out.

EXT. RANCH HOUSE - DAY

Nia bounds up the porch steps. The front door swings open. Bronk blocks Nia's entrance.

BRONK

You're late.

NIA

I had a problem...

Bronk turns on his heels. Leaves Nia talking to the woodwork.

NIA

... getting a lift.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Bronk marches in. Nia tries to keep up.

BRONK

(calls up the stairs)  
Jesse, you're burnin' daylight!

KITCHEN

Bronk barrels in. He's chased by Nia.

BRONK

There's a brown bag in the  
fridge. Grab it.

Nia retrieves a bulging paper bag from the refrigerator. Bronk pulls a granola bar from a box. JESSE, 16, half white, half Native American, moseys in with CHESTER, a golden retriever.

BRONK

Move any slower, boy, and  
somebody'll make turtle soup  
out of ya.

Bronk tosses the granola bar to Jesse.

BRONK

There's breakfast.

Bronk grabs the brown bag from Nia. Chucks it to Jesse.

BRONK

There's lunch.

Jesse focuses his sleepy eyes on Nia.

JESSE

Who's that?

BRONK

Name's...

NIA

Nichole.

BRONK

She's the new domestic.

Jesse stares coolly at Nia.

BRONK

Well say something, son.

JESSE

Can't find my iPod.

A HORN honks outside. Bronk glimpses his Timex.

BRONK

School bus, Jesse. Get a move on.

Jesse rips open the granola bar. Munches on it. Wanders out of the kitchen.

NIA

Is your son always so conversational?

BRONK

Actually, you caught him on one of his good days.

Nia looks at the dog. The dog looks at her.

NIA

What does he want?

BRONK  
Chester? You're blocking his  
bowl.

Nia steps aside. Allows the dog to drink. Bronk pulls  
a pair of rawhide gloves from his back pocket.

BRONK  
I'll let you get to it.

NIA  
Get to it?

BRONK  
We like breakfast 'round here  
at six-thirty sharp.

NIA  
We?

BRONK  
Me and the hands.

Bronk walks out. Nia looks dumbfounded.

KITCHEN - LATER

A pot of oatmeal boils over.

Steaks in a frying pan erupt into flames.

Nia fans the fire with her blouse.

Brushing off the dust, Bronk troops in.

BRONK  
What the --

Bronk grabs the frying pan and the pot of oatmeal.

Dumps them into the sink.

Bronk shoots Nia a scorching look.

DINING ROOM - LATER

Lucio twirls a burnt T-bone on the end of his fork. Roy  
stares at two charred eggs sunny-side up.

LUCIO  
What'choo got there, Roy?

ROY  
Ain't sure. Whatever it is,  
it's starin' back at me.

Bronk takes a spoonful of a gelatinous goo. Lets it  
plop solidly on his plate.

ROY  
Jesus, what the Sam Hill is that?

BRONK  
Looks like something the  
cattle threw up.

Bronk leans over. Offers the plate of mystery food to  
the dog. Chester gives it a whiff. Tottles off.

LUCIO  
Senor Bronk.

Quickly, Bronk sits up. Nia walks in with her head down.  
Scrapes fried potatoes out of a pan. Doling them out to  
Bronk and his men, the potatoes SOUND like rocks hitting  
their plates.

NIA  
I'm sorry --

Nia hustles into the kitchen.

KITCHEN

Crying, Nia scrubs the hell out of a frying pan. Bronk  
strolls in.

BRONK  
Hope that's not soap you're  
using.

Nia waves the soap bubbles out of sight.

NIA  
Why?

BRONK  
That skillet's been seasoned.

NIA

Seasoned?

Bronk lifts a cast iron skillet off the stove. Turns it upside down. The steak inside clings to it.

BRONK

Keeps the food --

NIA

From sticking.

Nia drops the frying pan and grabs her jacket. Nia makes a beeline for the back door. Bronk cuts her off.

BRONK

According to my watch, you're still on the clock.

NIA

You can't be serious. After this debacle?

BRONK

Don't have a choice.

Bronks relieves Nia of her designer jacket.

BRONK

Last woman I hired was a seventy-two year old widow. She kept swiping the saddles off my horses. Claimed it improved their circulation.

Nia chuckles. Bronk wipes her tears with a brush of his calloused hand.

BRONK

I'm willing to give it another shot if you are.

NIA

I may burn your house down.

BRONK

It's okay. Roy and Lucio are volunteer firemen.



NIA

In that case...

Nia throws open the fridge. Bronk whistles. Lobs a loaf of bread at Nia.

BRONK

Why don't you stick with sandwiches for now?

EXT. MISSOULA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - PARKING LOT - DAY

A fine snow dusts a row of rental cars. Speaking into a cell phone, Zuberi heaves a suitcase into the trunk of an Impala.

ZUBERI

I'm in Montana.

GEN. LUSALA (V.O.)

Montana?

ZUBERI

It's between --

GEN. LUSALA (V.O.)

I know where it is, you simpleton!

Zuberi shuts the trunk. Looks up at the snow in wonderment.

ZUBERI

The F-B-I interrogated... what phrase did they use... a long haul trucker.

Zuberi sticks out his tongue. Tastes snow for the first time.

ZUBERI

This was the last place the princess was seen.

GEN. LUSALA (V.O.)

Find her, Zuberi and kill her. Otherwise, do not come back.

The phone signal goes dead.

Zuberi climbs in the rental car. CRANKS the cold engine. Comically, the Impala skids and slides as Zuberi makes his way in the snow.

INT. RANCH HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Jesse washes up. Bronk squeezes in. His face is red from working outside.

BRONK

Snow's coming down pretty hard.

NIA (O.S.)

Jesse! Bronk! Dinner's ready!

JESSE

If I gotta eat one more tuna fish sandwich --

BRONK

Hey.

Bronk elbows Jesse to share the sink.

JESSE

C'mon, dad. Let me nuke a Hot Pocket.

BRONK

You ain't eating that crap. Besides, you'll hurt the girl's feelings.

JESSE

A cook like her makes a vending machine look good.

Bronk ricochets his soapy hand off Jesse's head.

BRONK

Get your butt downstairs.

Jesse makes a face behind his father's back and splits.

DINING ROOM

Bronk joins Jesse at the dinner table. Nia sweeps in carrying a platter of sloppy joes and baked potatoes.

NIA

Here we are.

Bronk and Jesse's eyes bug out.

NIA

Oh, I almost forgot the salad.

Nia leaves. Bronk and Jesse lean in. Give the pending meal the old sniff test. Nia returns. Quickly, Bronk and Jesse sit up.

NIA

No dinner's complete without a good salad.

JESSE

How would you know?

Bronk kicks Jesse under the table. Jolts his son upright.

NIA

Well, that's according to Sandra Lee.

JESSE

Who?

NIA

She's one of the chefs on the Food Channel.

Bronk's starving eyes gaze at the meal before him.

BRONK

You really made all of this?

NIA

Surprised?

JESSE

Freakin' stunned.

Remembering Bronk's boot, Jesse quickly scoots away.

NIA

I've not only become a habitue' of the Food Network, but I've been checking out cookbooks from the library.

Nia takes a seat. Pats the dog on his head.

NIA  
Chester was my taste tester.

The dog whines. Scampers out the room. Looking skeptical, Bronk bows his head.

BRONK  
Lord, we thank you for this  
food we're about to eat.

JESSE  
(under his breath)  
Maybe.

Bronk and Jesse sit frozen in their chairs.

NIA  
Go ahead, guys, dig in.

Bronk and Jesse trade hesitant looks.

NIA  
Oh all right, I'll be the  
guinea pig.

Nia bites into her sloppy joe. Bronk and Jesse watch closely for a reaction. Nia's smile erodes into a painful grimace.

NIA  
Aw Christ, that's bloody awful!

Bronk and Jesse push away from the meal. Nia erupts into raucous laughter.

NIA  
Psych!

Bronk and Jesse dive into their food.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Bronk fires up a chimanea. Warms his hands. Nia joins him wrapped in an Indian blanket.

BRONK  
Haven't eaten like that --

NIA  
Since I began working here?

Nia gazes at the snow as it gently blankets the ranch.

NIA  
Reminds me of when I used to  
night ski in the Italian Alps.  
What a rush.

Bronk looks quizzically at Nia.

BRONK  
Something I don't get.

NIA  
What's that?

BRONK  
All the places you've been.  
Your education. Why settle  
for working on a ranch?

NIA  
Truthfully? I've never been  
particularly concerned with  
job titles or power.

Nia runs.

Slides across the snowy porch.

Finishes off with a pirouette.

NIA  
I'm something of an adventurer.

Nia slides back to Bronk.

NIA  
My guess is, you are too.

BRONK  
I've been around.

NIA  
I'm sure you have.

Nia sits in a rocking chair close to the fire. Chester hops in her lap. Nuzzles Nia for warmth.

NIA

How did you get the name Bronk?

BRONK

Did the rodeo circuit for a while.

NIA

Rodeo?

BRONK

Man, you are from out of town.

Bronk sparks a match. Lights up a cigarillo.

BRONK

Before makin' a living on the bronc and bullriding circuit, Uncle Sam was my travel agent.

NIA

What do you mean?

BRONK

It was ninety-one. My guard unit got called up. Found my country ass square in the middle of Desert Storm.

NIA

That must have been terrifying.

BRONK

My unit rolled with the Army's Third Armored.

Bronk looks out into the darkness like he's searching for a distant land.

BRONK

We ramrodded across the Iraqi desert in Bradleys and M-ones. Blasting the hell out of enemy tanks and strongholds.

(beat)

I saw things no nineteen-year-old should ever have to witness.

Bronk turns back to Nia.

BRONK

Enough war stories.

Bronk takes a hit off his cigarillo.

BRONK

Lucio tells me you're crashing  
at the roach motel in town.

NIA

Actually very large rats are  
the resident wildlife.

BRONK

Why don't you stay here? Lord  
knows, we got the room.

NIA

I appreciate the offer, but --

BRONK

Good, then it's settled.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

A lamp switches on. Nia pokes her head in. Bronk leans  
over Nia's shoulder.

BRONK

What do you think?

NIA

Quite charming.

Nia steps in. Checks out the Native American  
furnishings.

BRONK

My mother-in-law stayed here  
when she came to visit.

Bronk picks up a cute Indian doll off the dresser.

BRONK

Most of things in the room she  
and my wife made.

Nia turns to Bronk.

NIA

I don't mean to be nosey...

BRONK

My wife died four years ago.  
Complications from childbirth.

NIA

I'm so sorry.

Bronk puts the doll back. Opens a closet door.

BRONK

There's plenty of space --

Southwestern style frocks and blouses hang neatly on a rack.

BRONK

Forgot these were in here.

Nia looks inside the closet.

NIA

They're lovely.

BRONK

Sequoia made them. My wife.

Nia detects a sadness in Bronk's grey eyes.

NIA

Look, I really don't think --

BRONK

Please... I'd like you to stay.

Bronk closes the closet door.

BRONK

Besides, if you lived here,  
you might get to work on time.

Nia smiles.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Nia places a bag of groceries in the cab of Bronk's work truck. Rhonda walks by. Backs up.



RHONDA

Nancy?

NIA

Nichole.

RHONDA

That was my second choice.

Rhonda checks out the groceries in Nia's ride.

RHONDA

Meals on wheels?

NIA

I owe you a big thanks. I'm working at the Lucky Thirteen.

RHONDA

How's it working for big, bad Bronk?

NIA

He's really not that bad.

RHONDA

Compared to what? A timberwolf?

Nia notices a stack of pamphlets under Rhonda's arm.

NIA

Where are you off to?

RHONDA

To sling some arrows at corporate America.

NIA

Beg your pardon?

Rhonda passes Nia a pamphlet.

RHONDA

Remember the chemical plant I was telling you about?

NIA

Oh right, the citizens group. But won't the plant bring a lot of jobs to this area?

RHONDA

And a lot of toxic byproducts.  
If that plant gets up and  
running, your boss may start  
raising three headed cattle.

Nia reads the pamphlet. Her expression grows serious.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

Dump trucks and earthmovers stack up at the front gate.  
Blocking them is an elderly REVEREND and scores of  
PROTESTORS, including Nia and Rhonda.

PROTESTORS

Hey, hey! Ho, ho! Toxic  
waste has got to go!

A news crew films the SHERIFF, partial to Stetsons and  
chewing tobacco, bellying up to the protestors.

SHERIFF

All right, folks. You're  
gonna have to let this  
equipment through.

REVEREND

We're not budging an inch,  
sheriff. This road is public  
property and we're going to  
stand here as long as we have  
to.

The sheriff digs out a document from his jacket.

SHERIFF

Judge Ryan has issued a court  
order --

The reverend turns to the protestors.

REVEREND

Five, six, seven, eight! We  
ain't ready for the pearly  
gates!

The protestors pick up the chant. The sheriff's  
deputies move in.

They haul the reverend away.

SHERIFF  
Now unless the rest of you  
move aside --

Nia pushes her way to the front of the crowd.

NIA  
Come on, people! One, two,  
three, four! We know what  
we're fighting for!

The deputies grab Nia. Rhonda jerks her free.

RHONDA  
Everyone, link arms!

Quickly, the protestors form a human chain blocking the  
plant entrance.

NIA  
Are you prepared to arrest  
each and every single one of  
us, sheriff? Because that's  
exactly --

The sheriff spits tobacco juice on Nia's fashion boots.  
His deputies pry the protestors apart. Shove them one  
by one into a paddy wagon.

EXT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

The entrance door flies open.

Bronk exits with a full head of steam.

He makes tracks for his pickup.

Stumbling in her high heel boots, Nia tries to keep pace.

NIA  
If you didn't agree with the  
protest, why did you bail me  
out?

Bronk throws open the driver side door.

Nia snares him by the arm.

NIA  
The right to protest is  
protected by your constitution.

BRONK  
Suddenly, you're a law  
professor?

NIA  
I thought you of all people --

BRONK  
You don't know the first thing  
about my politics.

Bronk jumps in the front seat.

NIA  
As a rancher, you should be  
concerned --

Bronk slams the door in her face.

Nia yanks it open.

NIA  
What are you going to do when  
the runoff from that plant  
contaminates the streams and  
rivers where your cattle drink?

BRONK  
I've got a better question.  
Who the hell cares?

Bronk slams the door again.

His tires spit gravel as he PEELS OUT.

Nia watches helplessly as Bronk leaves her behind.

Suddenly, the pickup BRAKES hard. Slowly reverses back  
to Nia.

EXT. DENKALI - ARMY DEPOT ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Heading into town, scantily clad hookers stagger past.

Leering sentries swipe their rum bottle. Feel up the women.

Commando knives flash in the moonlight.

Slash the guards' throats.

ARMY DEPOT

Stolen humvees BLOW through the front gate.

Soldiers in a watchtower shower the intruders with  
MACHINE-GUN FIRE

Hanging out of the SPEEDING humvees, the Rebels FIRE back.

INT. ARMORY

The humvees SMASH the bolted doors wide open.

An ALARM sounds.

Kamu and the rebels leap out.

Quickly pick the racks clean of weapons.

EXT. ARMY DEPOT

The humvees RACE out of the armory.

A T.O.W. missile WHISTLES in and EXPLODES.

Sends one of the vehicles CAREENING on its side.

Dodging heavy GUNFIRE, the other humvee hauls ass into  
the night.

EXT. CAPITAL OF DENKALI - PUBLIC GALLOWS - DAY

Captured rebels are bound with barbed wire. A hangman's  
noose around each of their necks. General Lusala climbs  
on the roof of the royal Bentley. Kamu and the farmer's  
daughter secretly blend in with the crowd.

GEN. LUSALA

Denkali is on the brink of a  
new era. An era which  
promises greatness and untold  
glory.

The general glares at the condemned rebels.

GEN. LUSALA

But there are subversives  
among us who plot against our  
success. Anarchists who  
distract us with random  
violence and false promises of  
democracy.

The trap doors BANG OPEN.

The condemned rebels fall hard.

The jerk at the end of the rope snaps their necks.

The farmer's daughter whips out a concealed .45.

KAMU

(hushed)

No.

Quickly, Kamu hugs the farmer's daughter. Pins her arms  
by her side.

KAMU

Not now.

FARMER'S DAUGHTER

I can take him out.

KAMU

You do not have a clean shot.

General Lusala climbs back in the royal family's white  
Bentley and ZOOMS OFF. The farmer's daughter jams the  
gun in Kamu's gut.

FARMER'S DAUGHTER

Who are you working for?

Kamu takes a step back from his comrade. Stares into  
her angry eyes.

KAMU

Nobody wants Lusala to pay for  
his barbarism more than I.

The crowd disperses. Leaves the two of them in the  
shadow of the gallows.

KAMU

If you do not believe me, then  
pull the trigger.

The farmer's daughter gazes up at her dangling  
compatriots. Then back at Kamu.

FARMER'S DAUGHTER

Blood for blood.

Nervously, Kamu watches for her next move. The farmer's  
daughter releases the hammer. Pockets the .45.

KAMU

When the time is right.

Eyeing the bodies of their dead comrades, Kamu and the  
farmer's daughter walk solemnly away.

INT. MONTANA - RANCH HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Nia hammers a nail into a curtain rod. Bronk shuffles  
in. His face is chapped and dirty.

NIA

Where have you been?

BRONK

Red Arrow Ranch. Me and Lucio  
pitched in on a roundup.

NIA

Moonlighting?

BRONK

Damn flu's laid up most of  
their hands.

Bronk's eyes jump from the new curtains, to the new  
comforter, to the new throw rugs.

NIA

What do you think?

Bronk looks unsure of what to say. Nia flips the hammer  
around. Pulls at the freshly hung curtain rod.

BRONK

Whoa! It's your room. You  
decorate it any way you see  
fit.

Bronk runs his rough hand across the silky comforter.

BRONK

A-J was saying --

NIA

A-J?

BRONK

Owens the Red Arrow. The  
Cattlemen's Association is  
throwing their annual gala  
tomorrow night.

Bronk fingers the new curtains.

NIA

And?

BRONK

I was just...

Nia folds her arms. Gives Bronk a "what next?" look.

BRONK

.... wondering.

NIA

You're not asking me out on a  
date, are you?

BRONK

Hell, no.

Bronk starts for the door. Turns around.

BRONK

Would you like to go?

NIA

Sounds like the bomb.

BRONK

No, actually it's a pretty  
good time.



Nia smiles realizing her expression went over Bronk's head.

INT. COUNTRY CLUB - DANCE HALL - NIGHT

A band PLAYS country music under a spinning shower ball. All gussied up, Bronk and Nia sign in. Lucio and ALICIA approach.

LUCIO

Senor Bronk.

BRONK

Como esta, amigo?

LUCIO

You remember my wife, Alicia?

Bronk shakes Alicia's hand.

BRONK

Mucho gusto.

Alicia turns to Lucio. Says something in Spanish.

NIA

What did your wife say?

LUCIO

She said you and Senor Bronk make a very nice couple.

Bronk and Nia throw each other an awkward glance. Alicia tugs at Lucio's sleeve.

LUCIO

Permiso. My wife wishes another dance.

Lucio and his wife traipse off.

BRONK

Would you like a drink?

NIA

Is the Pope Catholic?

BAR

Bronk and Nia walk up.

BRONK  
(to the bartender)  
Bourbon and branch. And a...

NIA  
Peach Bellini.

BRONK  
One of those.

Bronk watches the other couples having a good time.

BRONK  
Ain't been to one of these  
since...

NIA  
Since your wife died?

Nia detects that familiar sadness in Bronk's eyes.

NIA  
You don't mind that I'm  
wearing one of her frocks,  
do you?

Bronk forces a smile.

BRONK  
Looks damn fine on ya.

The bartender serves up their cocktails. Bronk takes a sip. A bejeweled hand slaps Bronk on the back. Throws him into a coughing fit.

CLARK (O.S.)  
Bronk Taylor!

Catching his breath, Bronk turns to CLARK WEATHERINGTON, 55, his ego is only outsized by his waistline.

CLARK  
How the hell are you?

BRONK

I was okay up until two  
seconds ago.

Clark gives Nia the once-over.

CLARK

You going to make the intros,  
Bronk, or am I going to have  
to fly by the seat of my pants?

BRONK

Clark Weatherington. Nichole...

NIA

Chalmers.

Clark's huge hand swallows up Nia's slender fingers.

CLARK

Finally get the chance to  
place a name with the face.

NIA

Sorry?

CLARK

Saw you on T-V the other day.  
You and those other card  
carrying bleeding hearts.

Nia tries pulling her hand back. Clark squeezes tighter.

CLARK

F-Y-I, Missy. That chemical  
plant will provide a big time  
boost to the local economy.

NIA

As well as devastating the  
bloody hell out of the  
ecosystem.

Nia digs her nails into Clark's beefy hand. He quickly  
pulls back.

CLARK

If you're so damn concerned  
about the environment, why  
don't you join a commune and  
live in a tree?

Nia tastes her peach bellini. She smiles wickedly.

NIA

You remind me of something my  
father once said. What do you  
expect from a pig, but a  
grunt?

Nia and Clark exchange drop dead stares.

CLARK

Bronk.

Clark walks off.

NIA

Who was that fat sod?

BRONK

He's a hotshot developer out  
of Edmonton. Made his  
millions in land speculation  
and construction.

Bronk observes Clark schmoozing the other cattlemen.

BRONK

Clark owned the two hundred  
and fifty acres the chemical  
plant's being built on.

Bronk takes a belt of his Kentucky bourbon.

BRONK

He owns another hundred or so  
which he got the town to zone  
for workforce housing.

NIA

Bet I can guess who the  
primary contractor is.

Nia finishes off her drink. Turns to Bronk.

NIA

Don't suppose you dance?

BRONK

Is the Pope Catholic?

Nia and Bronk segue to the dance floor. They get down with a Texas two-step.

EXT. COUNTRY CLUB - LATER THAT NIGHT

Laughing, Bronk twirls Nia onto the patio.

She falls butt first in the snow.

Laughing harder, Bronk offers Nia a hand.

Nia grabs Bronk. Pulls him into the snow with her.

NIA

Blimey, I haven't had this  
much fun since I --

BRONK

Since you what?

With a guilty grin, Nia clears her throat.

NIA

Never mind.

Bronk gazes at Nia in the winter moonlight.

NIA

What?

BRONK

Nothing.

Bronk helps Nia to her feet.

NIA

Your wife taught you how to  
dance, didn't she? Here, at  
the country club.

Nia brushes off the snow.

NIA

I'll wager this was one of her  
favorite frocks.

Shivering, Nia stands close to Bronk.

NIA  
This night has been one big  
flashback for you, hasn't it?

Looking uncomfortable, Bronk opens the patio door.

BRONK  
C'mon. We'd better go in.

INT. RANCH HOUSE - NIGHT

The front door swings open. Nia and Bronk step inside.

NIA  
Thank you for a lovely --

Bronk lays Nia out with a fiery lip lock, then pushes her away. Nia smacks Bronk with a hot kiss of her own. Bronk sweeps Nia off her feet. Whisks her upstairs.

INT. KITCHEN - NEXT DAY

Nia stuffs a picnic basket full of goodies. Feeds Chester a morsel. Looking grouchy, Bronk thunders in.

NIA  
Good morning to you too.

Bronk unearths a bottle of bourbon from underneath the sink. Pours himself a shot.

NIA  
Hair of the dog?

BRONK  
More like hair of the grizzly.

Bronk knocks back the liquor. Winces as it goes down.

NIA  
I thought we could go for a  
picnic later.

BRONK  
A picnic? In case you ain't  
noticed, it's the middle of  
winter.

NIA  
So? When I lived in  
Switzerland, we use to --

Bronk bangs his glass down on the counter.

BRONK  
I don't give a good goddamn  
what you use to do!

Bronk backs away from the counter. He can't look Nia in  
the eye.

BRONK  
This ain't gonna work.

Bronk heads for the door.

NIA  
There's nothing to feel guilty  
about.

Bronk spins around. His eyes are aflame.

BRONK  
I hired you to be the  
caretaker of this ranch house,  
not my...

NIA  
Go on, say it.

Bronk throws open the back door. Nia swings it shut.

NIA  
What's really bothering you,  
Bronk? That you shagged a  
black woman?

BRONK  
Shagged?

NIA  
Slept with. Screwed. Drove  
her to Cleveland.

Nia gets in Bronk's face.

NIA  
Or do you feel you've betrayed  
your wife's memory?

BRONK

You just put it out there,  
don't you?

Bronk pulls out a chair. Rests his hung over body.

BRONK

I was thinking about Jesse.  
How's it gonna look --

NIA

Jesse's a big boy.

Nia pulls up a chair next to Bronk.

NIA

I don't know where this is  
going. Or if it's going  
anywhere.

Nia lays her hand on top of Bronk's. Reads the  
uncertainty in his eyes.

NIA

If this complicates things,  
I will leave the ranch.

Bronk looks away. Nia gets up from the table. Walks  
off.

BRONK

Hey.

Nia stops. Doesn't turn around.

BRONK

There's a butte I know that  
overlooks the river. We could  
have a picnic there.

Nia turns around. A smile lights up her face.

EXT. RANCH - FRONT GATE - DAY

On horseback, Nia secures the "LUCKY THIRTEEN" sign with  
a hammer and nails. HEARING something in the distance,  
Chester starts barking. A Mini Cooper comes into view  
and rolls up. Rhonda slides out of the car.



RHONDA

Next thing you know, Bronk  
will have you branding cattle.

NIA

What brings you out here?

RHONDA

The town council is holding an  
emergency session tomorrow  
night. They're hearing  
arguments from both sides  
about shutting down  
construction of the chemical  
plant.

NIA

If you need arses in the seats,  
I'm there.

Rhonda turns up her collar against the biting wind.

RHONDA

Actually, the citizens group  
is looking for a speaker.

(beat)

Several of us put your name in  
the hopper.

NIA

Me? What about Reverend  
Fleming?

RHONDA

That's a story all on its own.

Rhonda pulls out a pair of purple mittens. Wiggles her  
freezing hands inside of them.

RHONDA

It seems the rev is  
extremely claustrophobic.  
When the sheriff threw his  
butt in jail, Reverend Fleming  
had a panic attack. The panic  
attack brought on his severe  
asthma and that --

NIA

Let me guess. The good  
reverend has been confined to  
bed.

RHONDA

Bingo.

Rhonda rubs her cold, red nose.

RHONDA

Everyone saw how you stepped  
up at the demonstration. You  
not only believe in our cause,  
Nichole, you're a natural born  
leader.

Nia's eyes drift back to the ranch house.

RHONDA

What is it?

NIA

Bronk. He doesn't agree with  
the protests. The citizens  
group. None of it.

RHONDA

Hey, it's not worth losing  
your job over.

Freezing, Rhonda hustles back to her car.

RHONDA

Too bad. I gotta feeling you  
would've rocked those old  
farts on the town council.

Rhonda climbs in her Mini Cooper and takes off. Nia  
watches the car as it disappears down the road.  
Nia spurs her horse. Kicks it into a full gallop.

INT. MINI COOPER

Goth rock BLASTS out of the car's speakers.

Rhonda glances in her rearview.

Spots Nia on horseback gaining on her.

Rhonda powers down her window. Nia pulls alongside.

NIA

I'll do it!

Rhonda gives Nia a big thumbs-up.

INT. RANCH HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

By a crackling fire, Nia reads a book. Makes notes. Looking groggy, Bronk shuffles in.

BRONK

Looking up more recipes?

NIA

I tried not to wake you.

Bronk flips over the cover of Nia's book.

BRONK

"Chemical Contamination And Its Victims". That sounds appetizing.

NIA

The citizens group asked me to make a presentation to the town council tomorrow night.

Looking ticked, Bronk heads for the stairs. Nia drops the library book. Hurries after him.

NIA

I know you don't agree --

BRONK

It's a free country.

Bronk walks upstairs alone. Nia pounds the bannister.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - FOLLOWING NIGHT

Residents of Willows Bend pack the bleachers. The town council sits at a long folding table. Nia stands center court behind a podium.

NIA

Whether one looks at Glenrock,  
Wyoming or Pineview, Idaho,  
ChemCo has a deplorable...

Nia notices Bronk slipping into the back of the gym.

NIA

... track record.

Nia folds up her speech. Looks unsure of her next move.

NIA

I could throw numbers and  
statistics at you the way  
representatives from the  
chemical company have tonight.

Nia unhooks the microphone. Approaches the engaged  
audience.

NIA

The decision to continue  
construction of the plant  
boils down not to financial  
spreadsheets, but to the  
quality of our lives.

Nia looks directly at Rhonda.

NIA

Many of us are urban refugees.

Rhonda smiles recognizing the quote.

NIA

Abandoning the big city for  
the simple beauty of Willows  
Bend.

Nia shifts her gaze to Bronk.

NIA

Patrick Henry once said, "I  
know of no way of judging the  
future, but by the past."

Finally, Nia focuses on members of the town council.

NIA

If we are to be judged  
generations from now on how  
we cared for this land, then  
our decision presently must be  
the right one.

The residents jump to their feet and applaud wildly.

INT. ROADHOUSE - NIGHT

Cold and weary, Zuberi parks it on a stool at the bar.  
A BIKER BARTENDER greets him with a blank stare.

ZUBERI

Brandy.

BIKER BARTENDER

Scotch, bourbon or everclear.

Zuberi leans in. His one good eye stares back at the  
leathered up bartender.

ZUBERI

In that case, make it a shot  
of each.

The bartender lines up a trio of shotglasses. Grabs  
three different bottles of booze. Pours them  
simultaneously.

BIKER BARTENDER

Double sawbuck.

Zuberi looks quizzically at the bartender.

BIKER BARTENDER

Twenty bucks.

ZUBERI

And I thought the only crooks  
were in prison.

Zuberi peels a twenty off a fat bankroll. Flings it at  
the bartender. Knocking back one of the shots, a T.V.  
overhead catches Zuberi's attention.

INSERT - TELEVISION SCREEN

A local NEWS REPORTER wraps up an interview with Nia.

NEWS REPORTER

That's the latest on the fight  
over construction of a  
chemical plant here in Willows  
Bend. Reporting live --

RETURN TO SCENE

Zuberi's jaw drops. He knocks out the remaining shots  
in short order.

ZUBERI

How far is Willows Bend?

BIKER BARTENDER

What do I look like? Mapquest?

Zuberi grabs the bartender by his long, greasy hair.

Slams his head against the bar.

ZUBERI

If you were in my country, I  
would toss you in a pit of  
hyenas and laugh as they  
chewed on your entrails.

Zuberi mashes his thumbs in the bartender's eyes.

The bartender yelps like a wild dog.

ZUBERI

Willows Bend. Where is it?

The bartender breathes hard.

BIKER BARTENDER

You son of a --

Zuberi stiffens his arms.

Presses harder on the bartender's eyeballs.

BIKER BARTENDER

Ahhh... it's a hundred miles  
north of here.

Zuberi releases his torturous grip. Stares down the other tough guys in the bar. Zuberi saunters out like he just bought the joint.

INT. PICKUP - DAY

Nia steers with one hand. With the other, she strokes Bronk's dog sitting next to her.

NIA  
So Chester. What do you think  
I should make for dinner?

The dog barks excitedly.

NIA  
No, we had that last night.

Nia laughs. Kisses Chester.

A beat-up station wagon RAMS the back of the pickup.

NIA  
Bloody hell!

The station wagon ACCELERATES.

Pulls even with the pickup.

A REDNECK sticks a sawed-off shotgun out the window.

REDNECK  
Pull over, bitch!

Nia jerks the steering wheel.

SIDESWIPES the station wagon.

Forces it to SPIN OUT.

NIA  
Up yours, ya f --

A loud HORN blares at Nia. She whips her head around.

A loaded logging truck SPEEDS directly at her.

Nia VEERS back into her lane, but loses control.

The pickup FLIPS sideways. VIOLENTLY rolls end over end.

EXT. ROADSIDE

The two rednecks run to the smoking pickup.

Hobbling on a broken leg, Chester growls at them.

Backs them up.

REDNECK

Shoot 'im.

A shotgun BLAST. The dog cries out.

The rednecks pull Nia unconscious from the wreckage.

They stuff her in the station wagon and SPEED AWAY.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Stripped to her bra and panties, Nia is tied to a tree blindfolded. A bejeweled hand slaps her face. Dazed and bleeding, Nia comes around.

CLARK

Listen up, Missy, 'cause I'm  
only going to say this once.

Nia shivers uncontrollably in the frosty conditions.

CLARK

That chemical plant is going  
to get built. And it's going  
to get built right here in  
Willows Bend.

Clark grabs Nia by her curly locks.

CLARK

You hearing me?

Clark slams Nia's head hard against the oak tree.

CLARK

Now you've got two choices,  
girly. You can leave town the  
way you came in...



A snub-nosed .38 is jammed underneath Nia's chin.

CLARK

... or you can leave in a pine  
box.

Clark pulls the hammer back.

Nia shakes violently from the cold and fear.

CLARK

Which is it going to be?

The .38 GOES OFF.

Nia yells out.

Clark waves the smoking muzzle under Nia's nostrils.

She pulls back from the biting smell of gunpowder.

CLARK

Next time, Missy, we play for  
keeps.

Clark and the two rednecks get in their cars. Leave Nia  
twitching in her underwear.

INT. HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

The sheriff fills out a report. Bronk rushes up to him.

BRONK

How is she?

SHERIFF

Doc says she's got a  
concussion and some busted  
ribs.

BRONK

Who did it?

SHERIFF

Hard to say. She was blindfolded.

Bronk sees a deputy posted in front of an E.R. bay.

BRONK

I want to see her.

The sheriff nods to his deputy. Allows Bronk to pass.

EMERGENCY ROOM BAY

Nia lies on a gurney. An I.V. drips into her veins. Quietly, Bronk walks in. Slips his hand inside Nia's. Her swollen eyes slowly open.

NIA

They killed Chester.

Nia breaks down. Bronk envelopes her in his strong arms.

NIA

It was Clark.

Looking stunned, Bronk backs off.

BRONK

What?

NIA

Clark Wetherington.

Nia wipes the tears from her face with her bandaged hand.

NIA

He called me Missy. Just like he did that night at the country club.

Bronk shakes his head.

BRONK

No way. Can't be Clark. He wouldn't be that --

NIA

I'm telling you it was him!

A searing pain from her broken ribs causes Nia to fall flat on the gurney.

NIA

It's all about the chemical plant. Clark's determined to get it built... no matter who he has to shove out of his way.

The disbelief in Bronk's face turns to white hot rage. He vacates the room.

NIA

Bronk!

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

Sitting behind the wheel of a Navigator, Clark angrily blows cigar smoke out the driver's side window.

CLARK

(into a cell phone)

Listen to me, you jerk off. I paid you in advance for those steel cables.

A battered pickup ROCKETS IN on Clark's blindside. Bronk bails out of the truck.

CLARK

(into a cell phone)

I don't give rat's ass where your truck broke down!

Clark chucks his half-smoked cigar out the window.

CLARK

Either you get my order here by C-O-B or I'm coming to your warehouse and personally kick your fucking ass!

Bronk throws open the driver's side door.

Hauls Clark unceremoniously out of the front seat.

CLARK

What the --

Bronk pins Clark's fat ass against his luxury S.U.V.

BRONK

Is that how you do business?  
Using fear and intimidation?

CLARK

How I conduct my business is  
none of your goddamn concern!

BRONK

It is my concern when you  
threaten the life of one of my  
employees.

CLARK

What the hell are you going on  
about?

Hearing the ruckus, Clark's redneck workers stop what  
they're doing. They pick up a shovel and a hoe.  
Double-time it towards their boss.

BRONK

You're a real tough guy, Clark.  
It takes you and two of your  
goons to --

A shovel CRACKS Bronk on the noggin.

It staggers him.

A hoe WHACKS Bronk on the back of his legs.

Drops him to the turf.

CLARK

Get this fucking cowboy off my  
job site!

Bronk is jerked to his feet, but he comes up swinging.

Bronk shellacs the first redneck, breaking his nose.

Bronk collars the second redneck. Pounds him into  
submission.

Bronk whirls around. Stares at the business end of  
Clark's .38.

CLARK

Get off of my worksite you  
piece of --

Bronk grabs Clark's wrist.

Yanks the revolver away.

Bronk torques Clark's entire arm.

The intense pain brings the fat man to his knees.

BRONK

Is this the gun you used to  
threaten Nichole?

Bronk leans on Clark's contorted arm.

You can hear the shoulder tendons RIP.

Clark lets out a pitiful whimper.

BRONK

The same gun that fired a  
thirty-eight bullet into the  
tree she was tied to?

Bronk releases Clark. His hyperextended arm dangles  
uselessly. Bronk flicks open the revolver. Pulls out  
an empty shell casing. Bronk smiles.

BRONK

A round's missing.

Bronk flicks the gun closed.

Sticks it in his belt.

Bronk grabs Clark by his hair.

Forces the fat man to look him in the eye.

BRONK

Anything, and I mean anything,  
happens to Nichole again, I'm  
turning your piece over to the  
sheriff and have him run a  
ballistics test.

Bleeding from the head, Bronk climbs in his pickup.

REVS the V-8 and FLOORS IT.

FISHTAILING, Bronk slings mud and snow all over Clark's  
S.U.V.

INT. RANCH HOUSE - DAY

Fresh stitches on his forehead, Bronk carries a full lunch tray. Jesse skips down the steps. Slips into his parka.

BRONK  
Where are you going?

JESSE  
I'm hooking up with Tony at the arcade.

BRONK  
Before you head out, take this up to Nichole.

JESSE  
I don't think so.

Jesse walks on. Bronk blocks his exit.

BRONK  
What did you say?

JESSE  
She's your girlfriend, not mine.

Jesse sidesteps his dad. Bronk sidesteps too.

BRONK  
What the hell's that supposed to mean?

JESSE  
It means I ain't her nursemaid.

Jesse pushes past his father.

Bronk reels him in with one hand.

Jesse flips the tray. Food flies everywhere.

Bronk grabs a fistful of Jesse's parka.

JESSE  
What are you going to do, dad?  
Beat the crap out of me like you did those guys?

Bronk stares at his son intensely. Releases him. Jesse stomps out of the house. Slams the front door.

LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Smoldering embers glow in the fireplace. Bronk takes a swig of bourbon. Stares at a photograph of his dead wife.

INSERT - PHOTOGRAPH

SEQUOIA, 40, Native American, long silky black hair, smiles as she stretches her arms around Bronk and Jesse.

RETURN TO SCENE

Clad in a flannel robe that's too big for her, Nia wanders in.

BRONK

You shouldn't be up.

Bronk stands. Helps Nichole into an overstuffed chair.

NICHOLE

If I lay down anymore, I'll have bed sores on my bed sores.

Nia spies Sequoia's picture. Lifts it off the coffee table.

NIA

Your wife was very beautiful.

BRONK

Like a summer rose blowing in the wind.

Bronk moseys over to a liquor cabinet.

BRONK

My old man didn't approve of us getting married.

NIA

Because she was Indian?

Bronk nods. Pours a pair of straight bourbons. Hands one to Nia.

BRONK  
That old bastard never met his  
grandson. My mom...

Bronk grins as he recalls something.

BRONK  
... she snuck over here once.  
Saw Jesse shortly after he was  
born.

Bronk takes a slug of his bourbon. Sits down on the  
sofa.

BRONK  
It was the only time my mom  
ever got to hold him.

NIA  
Is that why Jesse is so angry?  
Because part of his family  
rejected him?

BRONK  
That...

Bronk gazes fornlornly at Sequoia's picture.

BRONK  
... and his mama dying.

NIA  
Were you with her?

Bronk stares into his empty glass.

BRONK  
Four years ago, an outbreak of  
hoof-and-mouth wiped out most  
of my herd. Had to take a job  
up north working the pipeline.

Bronk traces his finger along the rim of his glass.

BRONK  
The money I made was enough to  
keep the ranch afloat. But it  
meant being away from my  
family six months out of the  
year.



NIA

Was your wife expecting?

Bronk nods.

BRONK

It had been a tough pregnancy.

(beat)

One night, Sequoia started hemorrhaging. The snow was piled against the door. By the time help finally arrived...

Bronk looks away.

BRONK

... Sequoia and the baby were dead.

Gingerly, Nia gets up. Sits down beside Bronk.

BRONK

Jesse was the only one with Sequoia that night. He saw his mother die.

Nia puts her arms around Bronk. Gently rocks him.

INT. STABLES - DAYS LATER

Jesse half-heartedly pitches hay into the stalls. Carrying a thermos and a pair of metal cups, Nia walks in.

NIA

How about some hot chocolate?

Jesse ignores Nia. Keeps tossing the hay.

NIA

I even brought marshmallows. The big kind that get warm and gooey.

Nia pours the hot chocolate. Savors a sip.

NIA

Mmm. Sure you don't want some?

Nia plops a pair of puffy marshmallows on top. Jesse ditches the pitchfork. Pours himself a cup.

NIA

You know Jesse, you and I are a lot alike.

JESSE

Yeah, whatever.

NIA

I was always knocking heads with my parents. They had these expectations of what I should do with my life, but I never listened.

Jesse pops a marshmallow in his mouth. Slurps his hot chocolate.

NIA

Then one day they were killed.

Stunned, Jesse stops chewing.

JESSE

Both of them?

Nia nods.

NIA

Like you, I saw my mother die. I was so angry... and then I felt guilty.

Jesse turns away.

NIA

I blamed myself for not doing something. For not saving her.

Nia stands. Places her hand on Jesse's shoulder.

NIA

But you know what? No matter how many times I relived that day, I realized there was nothing I could have done.

Nia turns Jesse around to face her.

NIA

I wish I had known your mother.  
From everything I've heard,  
she was a special woman.

JESSE

Yeah, she really was.

Nia flips Jesse's long black hair behind his shoulder.

NIA

Just like we have our parents'  
hair... or their eyes... or  
even their temper...

Jesse smiles.

NIA

... we also carry their  
teachings and their love.  
That's how their spirit lives  
on inside of us.

Nia holds out her cup of hot chocolate. Jesse clinks  
his cup with hers.

EXT. BUTTE - DAY

Zuberi squints his one good eye through a pair of  
binoculars. He spies Nia and Jesse running and  
laughing. Throwing snowballs at each other. Zuberi  
hits the demon dial on his cell phone.

ZUBERI

I have located the princess.  
You can send the others.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

A SCREECHING train rumbles to a stop. A trio of HIT MEN,  
one Russian, one Asian, one Arab emerge from the  
clinging fog. Zuberi approaches.

RUSSIAN HIT MAN

Zuberi, you bastard.

The two men shake hands.

RUSSIAN HIT MAN

Last time I saw you, you were  
torturing prisoners for the  
Hutus.

ZUBERI

A different time. A different  
war.

Zuberi and the hit men disappear into the fog.

INT. RANCH HOUSE - NIGHT

The front door opens. Nia, Bronk and Jesse troop in.  
They all shed their coats.

JESSE

Awesome movie, dad.

BRONK

Glad somebody liked it.

JESSE

Didn't you think it was cool  
the way the killer used that  
nail gun?

NIA

Please. My chili dog hasn't  
digested yet.

Bronk glances at this watch.

BRONK

All right, hoss, time to hit  
the sack.

JESSE

Uh...

BRONK

Uh, what?

JESSE

I kinda got this essay that's  
due tomorrow.

BRONK

Essay? Why didn't you --

JESSE  
Cuz I knew you wouldn't let me  
check out the movie.

Looking miffed, Bronk turns to Nia for help.

NIA  
So he loses a little sleep.  
It's better than him flunking  
his assignment.

Bronk turns back to Jesse.

BRONK  
All right, Einstein, one hour  
and then it's lights out.

JESSE  
Thanks, dad.

Jesse kisses Nia on the cheek.

JESSE  
'Night, Nichole.

NIA  
See you in the morning, luv.

Jesse hustles up the stairs.

BRONK  
You know for a woman who  
didn't know one end of a  
spatula from another, you've  
made yourself pretty  
indispensable 'round here.

NIA  
I guess there's a compliment  
in there somewhere.

Bronk pulls Nia to him. Holds her in his arms.

BRONK  
How the hell did you become so  
important in my life?

NIA  
I could ask you the same thing.

Nia runs her fingers through Bronk's hair.

NIA

It's good to see you and Jesse getting along.

BRONK

For the first time in a long while, I feel...

NIA

What?

BRONK

I feel like I have my family back.

Bronk looks deeply into Nia's eyes.

BRONK

And you're a big part of that.

Bronk kisses Nia.

INT. RANCH HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

The front door creaks open. The Russian and Asian hit men silently slip in. The two of them fan out.

BEDROOM

Noshing on a candy bar, Jesse plays a game on his laptop. Polishes off a glass of milk. Empty glass in hand, Jesse quietly opens his door and sneaks out.

HALLWAY

Jesse bebops to the stairs listening to his iPod.

A gloved hand clamps over his mouth.

The Russian hit man drags Jesse back to his room.

The two trip over a skateboard and fall.

JESSE

Dad!

Jesse sprints towards the master bedroom.

The Russian opens fire with an UZI.

Jesse ducks into the hall bathroom.

Bronk throws open his bedroom door.

BRONK

Jesse!

Rapid GUNFIRE tattoos the door closed.

The Russian hit man charges down the hallway.

The bedroom door swings open.

Bronk BLASTS the Russian with a .357.

NIA

Jesse!

Jesse pokes his head out of the bathroom.

Nia runs to him.

The Asian hit man SPRAYS the hallway with more HOT LEAD.

Nia dives for the Russian's Uzi -- SHOOTS the Asian dead.

MASTER BEDROOM

A red laser dot appears on Bronk's bare shoulder.

A single SHOT. Bronk is sent reeling to the floor.

The Arab hit man CRASHES through the window.

Nia whips around. Pulls the trigger on the Uzi. It JAMS.

NIA

Damn it!

ARAB HIT MAN

Time to die, bitch.

The hit man lights up Nia's forehead with the laser sighting.

JESSE

Nichole!

Jesse tackles Nia to the hardwood.

The Arab FIRES. BLOWS a hole in the wall.

Nia racks the Uzi and CUTS LOOSE.

SHOT again and again, the Arab flips head over heels and out the window.

NIA

(to Jesse)

Check your dad!

Jesse runs to Bronk who is still flat on his back.

Jesse whips off his t-shirt.

Presses it against his father's bleeding shoulder.

Nia snaps up the phone. Dials feverishly.

NIA

Shit, they cut the phone line!

ZUBERI (O.S.)

Perhaps you would like to use  
my cell phone?

Gripping a Glock .9 millimeter, Zuberi steps through the doorway.

ZUBERI

Throw down the gun, your  
Highness.

Nia hesitates.

Zuberi thumbs the hammer back.

Nia tosses the Uzi on the bed.

ZUBERI

Eleven thousand, three hundred  
and forty-seven miles I have  
traveled to find you.

Zuberi surveils the carnage in the room.



ZUBERI

And here we are.

NIA

I'll go with you. Just leave  
the boy and his father --

ZUBERI

You misunderstand, your Grace.  
I am not here to take you back.

Zuberi lines up Nia in his gun sight.

ZUBERI

My orders are to --

A .357 GOES OFF.

Zuberi slams sideways into the wall and collapses.

Blood oozes from his head.

Clenching the Magnum, Jesse kicks Zuberi repeatedly.

NIA

Jesse!

Nia drags Jesse away from Zuberi's lifeless body.

NIA

Jesse, he's dead!  
(hushed)  
He's dead.

LIVING ROOM - LATER

Paramedics patch up Bronk's bloody shoulder. The  
sheriff ambles in carrying an exotic machine pistol.

SHERIFF

Those boys were packing some  
heavy artillery.

The sheriff inspects the automatic weapon in his hand.

SHERIFF

Any idea who these jokers were?  
Why they'd want to harm you  
and your family?

Bronk fires Nia an angry look.

BRONK

Why don't you ask her?

The sheriff turns his attention to Nia who sits alone on the couch.

NIA

Those men were ordered by General Lusala to assassinate me.

SHERIFF

Assassinate?

NIA

My real name is Princess Nia Manyara Dada Mathosa. My family once ruled the African nation of Denkali.

(beat)

That is until they were all murdered.

Chewing his tobacco excitedly, the sheriff drops the machine pistol on the couch. He pats himself down. Hurriedly fishes out a pen and pad.

SHERIFF

And this General...

NIA

Lusala.

SHERIFF

What's his beef with you?  
Why does he want you dead?

NIA

I'm the last of the Mathosas. Denkali's royal family. With me no longer alive, Lusala's takeover of my country would be a fait accompli.

The sheriff plants his portly carcass on the sofa. Scribbles notes as fast as he can.

NIA

When the media reports what happened here tonight, do not be surprised if ICE, the F-B-I and other federal agencies descend on Willows Bend.

The sheriff looks up from his copious notes.

SHERIFF

Why's that?

NIA

I am a wanted fugitive. I am in your country illegally.

The sheriff stops gnawing his tobacco.

NIA

I will be arrested by your government and deported back to Denkali. When I am handed over to General Lusala's people... I will be executed.

The sheriff swallows his chewing tobacco. Makes an ugly face.

EXT. RANCH HOUSE - DAY

Jesse and Bronk roll up in a mud splashed pickup. His arm in a sling, Bronk eases out. Observes Lucio loading a backpack in his Jeep.

LUCIO

Senora Nichole... Nia is leaving.

Nia walks onto the front porch. Stops in her tracks when she sees Bronk.

BRONK

(to Lucio)

Uno momento.

Bronk approaches Nia.

NIA

I was hoping I'd be gone  
before they released you from  
the hospital.

BRONK

Sheriff says you're not gonna  
be deported.

NIA

It seems international  
pressure has caused a change  
in U-S policy. Your country  
no longer supports nor  
recognizes the new government  
of Denkali.

Bronk looks at Nia sadly.

BRONK

So why are you leaving?

NIA

We both know I can't stay.

Nia steps off the porch.

NIA

Just because I've been granted  
amnesty, doesn't mean there  
won't be more attempts on my  
life.

Nia moves closer to Bronk.

NIA

I would die if anything  
happened to you or Jesse.

Nia looks around the ranch. Tries to memorize every  
square inch.

BRONK

Where will you go?

NIA

It's better you don't know.

Nia kisses Bronk one last time.

NIA  
 Maybe you can hire that old  
 widow again. The one who kept  
 nicking the saddles off your  
 horses.

Nia lingers for a moment. Stretches out her final  
 seconds with Bronk.

LUCIO (O.S.)  
 Senora! Your bus leaves in  
 twenty minutes.

NIA  
 Good bye, Bronk.

Jesse runs up to Nia. Throws his arms around her.

NIA  
 Take care of your dad, Jesse.

Trying not to cry, Jesse pulls away. Nia gets in  
 Lucio's Jeep. She looks forlorn as they drive off.

EXT. U.S. ROUTE 35 - DAY

A pickup swerves in front of a Greyhound bus and STOPS.

The bus BRAKES hard.

Smokes its tires as it SCREECHES to a halt.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS

Bronk pounds on the door outside.

A roly-poly BUS DRIVER opens up.

He stands to get a piece of Bronk.

Bronk shoves him back in the driver's seat.

BRONK  
 Nia!

Bronk spots her all the way in the back.

BUS DRIVER

I'm radioing the cops, you  
asshole!

Bronk walks down the aisle with determined steps. The passengers on the bus watch him in fear. Bronk stops at Nia's seat.

NIA

Go home, Bronk.

BRONK

Not without you.

Nia doesn't budge.

BRONK

You just gonna keep running?  
Is that your game plan?

Bronk looks around the bus. Realizes all eyes are on him. Bronk kneels down in the aisle. The tone in his voice softens.

BRONK

You can't leave, Nia. You've  
stolen my heart.

Bronk looks for a sign in Nia's eyes. Sees none. Bronk climbs to his feet. Walks off the bus.

EXT. U.S. ROUTE 35

Head down, Bronk walks back to his pickup.

NIA (O.S.)

Bronk!

Bronk spins around. Sees Nia sauntering with her backpack.

NIA

Give a lady a lift?

Nia dumps her backpack. Runs and leaps into Bronk's arms. Laughing, Bronk twirls Nia in the middle of the road.

## INT. PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL - GYMNASIUM - DAY

Standing room only. Bronk, Nia, Rhonda and the reverend squeeze into the front row of bleachers. The CHAIRWOMAN stands behind a podium at center court. The rest of the town council is seated behind her.

CHAIRWOMAN

After listening to both sides  
and giving careful  
consideration to all of the  
facts presented...

Nia squeezes Bronk's hand with anticipation.

CHAIRWOMAN

... the town council of  
Willows Bend unanimously votes...

Rhonda shuts her eyes. Steals herself for the bad news.

CHAIRWOMAN

... to cease and desist any  
further construction of  
the Lake Flathead chemical  
plant.

The residents jump up and down with joy. Nia looks at Clark who stares at her furiously. Rhonda shoots the developer the "Up Yours" sign.

BRONK

Congratulations, Nia.

Bronk extends his hand. Nia pushes it away. Hugs Bronk for all she's worth.

## EXT. RANCH - DAY

A local rock band JAMS on a makeshift stage. Nia and Jesse work the grill serving up burgers and dogs. Bronk cuts a path through his mingling neighbors. He hops up on stage as the band closes.

BRONK

(into a microphone)  
Excuse me. Hey, folks.

The neighbors keep PARTYING.

Bronk signals the band's drummer. He hits a DRUM ROLL. Ends with a cymbal SMASH. The neighbors pipe down.

BRONK

I know we're all here to celebrate the town council's decision, but I have a very special announcement to make.

(clears his throat)

A short time ago, a young lady came to work for me.

Bronk glances over at Nia.

BRONK

I hired her to be the caretaker of my house. Little did I know that she couldn't cook or clean or even iron a shirt.

The crowd chuckles.

BRONK

But then something unexpected happened. I fell in love with the young lady.

Bronk digs out a diamond ring from his jeans.

BRONK

Nia Manyara Dada Mathosa.  
Will you do me the honor of marrying me?

The crowd bursts into applause. Nia drops her spatula. The hamburgers and hotdogs burn on the grill.

RANCH HOUSE - FRONT PORCH

Nia moves at a fast clip. Drags Bronk away from the revelry.

NIA

Where the hell did that come from?

Bronk holds up the engagement ring.



BRONK

This? I bought it over at --

NIA

You know bloody well what I mean!

Bronk takes a step back.

BRONK

I take it you're not happy?

NIA

More like blown out of the proverbial water.

Bronk stows the engagement ring in his shirt pocket.

BRONK

What's this about, Nia?  
That I'm not royalty? That  
a hard working rancher ain't  
good enough --

NIA

Ah for chrissake, Bronk.

Nia turns away. Watches the neighbors celebrating.  
Bronk takes a step closer.

BRONK

Look, if you don't want --

NIA

That's the whole bloomin' point!

Nia looks directly at Bronk.

NIA

I don't know what I want.

Nia leans against the railing.

NIA

One minute, I'm living in a  
palace in East Africa waited  
on by servants and the next --

BRONK

Stranded in B-F Montana.

Nia takes hold of Bronk's hand.

NIA

I just don't know if this is  
where I want to call home.

BRONK

Yeah? Well I'll tell you what.  
When you figure it out, write  
me a postcard!

Bronk makes a beeline into the ranch house. Slams the  
front door.

INT. RANCH HOUSE - NIGHT

Cry-in-your-beer music PLAYS on the stereo. Slung low  
in his favorite chair, Bronk stares into a dying fire.  
Clad only in Bronk's T-shirt, Nia walks in.

NIA

Aren't you coming to bed?

Bronk doesn't answer. Nia sits on the couch across from  
him.

NIA

I know I hurt your feelings  
today. I'm sorry.

BRONK

You know things were humming  
along just fine till you  
showed up.

Bronk gulps the remains of his bourbon.

BRONK

Busted my ass every day just  
to make this ranch break even.  
Raised my dysfunctional son  
the best as I knew how.

(beat)

Wallowed in self-pity over the  
death of my wife.

Bronk looks at Nia.

BRONK

Then you stumble onto my ranch  
with your designer boots and  
your passion for righteous  
causes.

(beat)

Didn't want to love you, Nia.  
Just happened.

Nia rises from the sofa. Kneels in front of Bronk.

NIA

I told you earlier I wasn't  
ready, as you Americans say,  
to put down roots.

Nia relieves Bronk of his empty glass. Nestles between  
his legs.

NIA

But I know one thing. I love  
you Bronk Taylor. And my life  
would be so empty without you.

Nia scoops out the engagement ring from Bronk's shirt  
pocket.

NIA

If the gentleman's offer is  
still good...

Bronk snatches the ring from Nia. His tired eyes focus  
on her.

BRONK

I hear princesses can be  
snooty little bitches.

NIA

I hear ranchers can be a  
stonking pain in the arse.

Bronk's poker face finally cracks a smile.

BRONK

Sounds like a perfect match.

Bronk slides the engagement ring onto Nia's finger.  
The two fall into each other's arms by the fire.

EXT. CORRALL - DAY

Roy herds cattle into a chute. Bronk stokes a branding iron in a smoldering coal bed. Passes it to Nia.

BRONK  
Stick him on the butt. Count  
one Mississippi. Two  
Mississippi and back it off.

Nia aims the branding iron at a steer. Pulls up.

NIA  
I can't.

BRONK  
Imagine those hind quarters  
belong to Clark Wetherington.

Nia plasters the red hot brand on the steer's ass. Repulsed by the smell of burning hide, Nia turns away.

NIA  
One Mississippi. Two  
Mississippi.

Nia retracts the branding iron. The steer's rump smokes with the number 13.

LUCIO (O.S.)  
Senor Bronk!

Lucio gallups up on a sweaty Appaloosa.

Bronk looks past his foreman.

Spots an S.U.V. bouncing along his dirt road.

The vehicle stops. The sheriff and another man swing out.

BRONK  
Who's that with the sheriff?

Lucio shrugs. Nia's face goes white as the mystery man draws near.

NIA  
My God...

BRONK

Who is it?

NIA

Somebody I thought was dead.

INT. RANCH HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sitting across the table, Bronk sizes up Kamu who's still wearing his Chesterfield coat.

KAMU

It is quite cold here.

BRONK

Uh-huh.

Nia walks from the stove carrying a coffee pot. Kamu springs to his feet. His open hands offering to help.

KAMU

Your Highness...

BRONK

It's Nia.

The sternness in Bronk's voice freezes Kamu.

NIA

It's all right, Kamu. Sit down.

Reluctantly, Kamu takes a seat. Nia pours three black coffees. Sits between the two tense men.

KAMU

Many parts of the capital are without water and electricity.

Kamu clasps his hands around the hot coffee cup for warmth.

KAMU

The hospitals are running low on essential items. The shelves at the markets have been bare for weeks. Many of the supply routes into the capital were destroyed during the coup.

NIA

How are the people coping?

KAMU

Many are not. The mortality rate among the old and very young is extremely high. It is reminiscent of when Denkali was a backwards, third world country.

Nia sits back in her chair. She looks exasperated by all of the bad news.

NIA

What about Lusala?

KAMU

The general is in prison awaiting execution.

Kamu leans forward. His battle weary eyes pierce Nia's.

KAMU

The problem, your Highness...

Bronk fires Kamu a warning look.

KAMU

... Nia, is without proper and effective leadership, our nation could erupt into a full blown civil war. Or worse --

NIA

Be taken over again by a foreign power.

KAMU

Precisely.

Nia stands. Gazes out a window. With darkness falling, Nia is faced with her own reflection.

NIA

Ask your question, Kamu.

Kamu rises. Approaches Nia.

KAMU  
Will you come back to Denkali  
and lead our people?

Bronk ejects out of his chair.

BRONK  
Now wait just a damn minute!

Nia separates the two men.

BRONK  
In case you ain't noticed,  
hoss, Nia has made a new life  
for herself.

KAMU  
As what? Your scullery maid?

Bronk lunges for Kamu. Nia pushes him back.

BRONK  
Tell him, Nia.

Nia turns to Kamu. Her expression is torn between joy  
and regret.

NIA  
Bronk and I are engaged to be  
married.

Nia raises her hand. Kamu's jaw drops seeing the  
glistening diamond ring.

#### DINING ROOM

A dismantled hunting rifle lies on the table. Bronk  
cleans each piece with care. Finally shedding his  
topcoat, Kamu ventures in.

KAMU  
I appreciate you allowing me  
to spend the night.

BRONK  
That was Nia's call.

Kamu gestures to a chair.

KAMU

May I?

Bronk ignores him. Kamu takes a seat anyway.

KAMU

You know Princess... Nia is quite the crack shot.

BRONK

I saw her in action when she took out a pair of Lusala's hit men.

KAMU

Denkali owes you --

BRONK

You and your country don't owe me squat.

Bronk vaults from his chair. Makes tracks for the breakfront. Pours himself a snort.

BRONK

You know what you can do for me?

Bronk looks Kamu square in the eye.

BRONK

When you wake up tomorrow, grab the first plane outta Montana and don't look back.

Kamu stands. Approaches Bronk with tenuous steps.

KAMU

Do you really think living here is what is best for Nia?

BRONK

What the hell's that supposed to mean?

KAMU

I heard what Nia has done for this town. Rallying its citizens in order to shut down construction of a controversial chemical plant.



Bronk knocks back his bourbon.

KAMU

Doing so at a considerable risk  
to herself.

BRONK

Make your point.

KAMU

Magnify what Nia did on a  
scale a hundred times... a  
thousand times greater.

Growing confident, Kamu moves closer to Bronk.

KAMU

Now you have some idea of the  
positive force Nia could bring  
to Denkali.

Kamu is eye to eye with Bronk.

KAMU

A country on the verge of  
civil and moral collapse.

BRONK

You ain't laying that at my  
doorstep.

Bronk bumps Kamu. Walks back to the table and sits down.

KAMU

Of all the things you could do  
in this world, you chose to be  
a rancher. Why?

Bronk doesn't bite. Oils up his cleaning cloth.

KAMU

Perhaps because your father  
was a rancher and his father  
before him.

Bronk cleans the rifle parts with agitated vigor.

KAMU

Nia was born to lead. It is  
in her genes. It is her  
destiny.

Bronk throws down the gun barrel. Stomps out of the room.

MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Nia awakens. Looks beside her. There's no sign of Bronk. Quickly, Nia sits up in bed. Sees Bronk watching her from a chair.

NIA

What are you doing?

Nia notices the dark circles shadowing Bronk's eyes.

NIA

You never came to bed, did you?

BRONK

Couldn't sleep.

Nia picks up on Bronk's melancholy mood.

NIA

Where's Kamu?

BRONK

Gone. Lucio drove him to the airport at daybreak.

Nia swings out of bed. Sits in Bronk's lap.

NIA

You think I'm going back to Denkali, don't you?

BRONK

According to Kamu --

NIA

Kamu does not make decisions for me.

Bronk twirls the soft curls in Nia's hair.

BRONK

It's funny, you know?

NIA

What?

BRONK

Things got as far as they did.

Bronk traces his finger along Nia's sensuous jawline.

BRONK

We're worlds apart, you and me.  
By all rights, we should've  
never met, let alone...

NIA

Fallen in love?

Nia slides her arms around her man.

NIA

I'm not leaving you, Bronk.

BRONK

Can't stay, Nia.

Nia pulls back.

NIA

The bloody hell, I can't.

BRONK

How can you live here with me  
knowing the fate of your country  
hangs in the balance?

Nia hops off Bronk's lap.

NIA

Kamu really did a number on  
you, didn't he?

Nia grins.

NIA

He always was an eloquent  
bastard. If you want my two  
pence, Kamu should govern  
Denkali.

BRONK

He can't bring your country  
together the way you can.

NIA  
What makes you so sure of that?

BRONK  
It's like Kamu said. It's in  
your blood.

Bronk pushes his weary body out of the chair.

BRONK  
Last thing I want is for you  
to walk out of my life.

Bronk pulls Nia close.

BRONK  
You've been such a...

NIA  
Princess?

Bronk holds Nia tightly.

BRONK  
Damn it, Nia. I love you.

LIVING ROOM

Bronk glances at his watch anxiously.

BRONK  
(calls upstairs)  
Nia!

Slinging a backpack, Nia descends the staircase.

NIA  
I know, I know. I'm burning  
daylight.

Nia looks around.

NIA  
Where's Jesse?

BRONK  
At his buddy's. He said he  
could only say good-bye to you  
once.

Nia twists the engagement ring off her finger.

NIA

I need to --

BRONK

No.

Bronk slides the ring back on Nia's finger.

BRONK

If anyone asks, tell 'em you  
won it at a carnival.

Nia throws her arms around Bronk. Smells his scent for  
the last time.

NIA

I don't want to do this.

BRONK

Sometimes doing the right  
thing ain't easy.

EXT. RANCH - DAY - MONTHS LATER

Bronk's head is buried in a tractor's engine. Lucio  
sits behind the wheel.

BRONK

Crank it!

Lucio gives it the gas. The engine ROARS to life. The  
two men high-five each other.

LUCIO

My father always told me. An  
engine is like a woman. If  
you prime her right --

BRONK

You're stuck with her.

Lucio cocks his head. Misses the joke.

Bronk's pickup RACES up and stops.

Jesse bails out.

JESSE

Hey, dad!

Jesse shoves a large envelope at Bronk.

JESSE

It's from Africa.

Bronk rips open the envelope. Stares at its contents.

JESSE

What is it?

BRONK

Couple of airline tickets...

Looks up at Jesse.

BRONK

... to Denkali.

JESSE

That's it? There's no letter?  
Nothing?

Bronk shakes his head. Jesse's cell phone GOES OFF. He glances at the caller I.D.

BRONK

Who is it?

Jesse shrugs. Flips open his cell.

JESSE

Hello?

Jesse's eyes pop wide open.

JESSE

Nia?  
Yeah, dad's right here.

Jesse extends his cell phone to Bronk.

JESSE

She wants to talk to you.

Bronk takes the phone.

BRONK

Hey.

Bronk holds up the airline tickets.

BRONK

Yeah, I just got 'em.  
I appreciate you sending 'em,  
but --  
A coronation?

Jesse leans his ear next to the phone.

BRONK

We'll be staying where?  
The palace?

Jesse pumps his fist in the air.

BRONK

I don't know, Nia. It's  
pretty short notice.

Jesse flashes his praying hands at Bronk.

BRONK

Of course we'd like to come.

Bronk waves off his annoying son.

BRONK

Okay, okay. If it means that  
much to you.

JESSE

Ya-hoo!

Jesse tears after Lucio who's parking the tractor in the barn.

JESSE

Hey Lucio, I'm going to Africa!

EXT. DENKALI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - DAY

Each pulling a suitcase, Bronk and Jesse emerge from the terminal. They feel the warmth of the African sun. Dressed casually, Kamu walks up.

KAMU  
 Welcome to Denkali. I am so  
 glad you could come.

The two men shake hands. Bronk motions to Jesse.

BRONK  
 This is my son, Jesse.

KAMU  
 Nice to meet you, Jesse.  
 (to Bronk)  
 You know I never got the  
 chance to properly --

BRONK  
 You don't owe me squat,  
 remember?  
 (looks around)  
 So, which way to the palace?

KAMU  
 If you will follow me...

Kamu leads Bronk and Jesse to a lowrider taxi. Father  
 and son pull up short.

JESSE  
 This is how we're getting to  
 the palace?

KAMU  
 Perhaps you were expecting a  
 golden chariot?

Everyone laughs. The threesome load up in the taxi and  
 head off.

INT. ROYAL PALACE - DAY

A pair of solid brass doors open. Kamu strides into the  
 marbled foyer, followed by Bronk and Jesse.

KAMU  
 Per the princess' wishes, this  
 is now the people's palace.

Walking down the main corridor, Kamu gestures to a cozy  
 room on the left.



KAMU

This parlor is currently used as a music chamber for students who cannot afford to attend university.

Bronk and Jesse peer in. An instructor conducts a quartet who are playing CLASSICAL MUSIC. Kamu continues with the tour.

KAMU

On your right is the royal dining room. It serves as a soup kitchen for the displaced or for those who simply cannot afford to eat.

Bronk and Jesse observe the palace staff serving food to the needy.

EXT. VERANDA - DAY

Kamu leads Bronk and Jesse outside.

KAMU

In the past, this is where the royal family would often breakfast. Now it is a place of learning.

Writing on a portable blackboard, a teacher instructs children in mathematics.

BRONK

I can see Nia's really doing a lot of good work.

Kamu shoots Bronk a look.

BRONK

Uh, I mean the princess.

KAMU

Her Grace wanted you to see this.

Kamu looks back at the children learning.

KAMU

It is a small sample of the positive changes Princess Nia has implemented for her people.

BRONK

Speaking of...  
(glances around)  
Where is she?

Kamu checks his watch.

KAMU

Princess Nia is presently in a meeting. Perhaps you and your son would like something to eat?

JESSE

I'm starved.

Kamu shows Bronk and Jesse the way.

JESSE

Hey, Kamu. Any chance they got Hot Pockets in the palace?

Bronk ricochets his hand off Jesse's head.

INT. STUDY - DAY

Looking sharp in a tailored pant suit, Nia talks into a speaker phone.

NIA

My engineers assure me the repairs to our oil wells are on schedule. We should be at prewar production within the next thirty days or less.

A KNOCK at the door. Kamu enters.

NIA

In the meantime, the people of Denkali desperately need the grain shipments your country has committed itself to.

Nia motions Kamu to approach.

BRITISH PRIME MINISTER (V.O.)

Rest assured, your Highness,  
those grain shipments are  
en route as we speak.

NIA

I knew I could count on you,  
Mister Prime Minister.  
Good-bye.

Nia hangs up.

KAMU

Your Grace. The V-I-Ps you  
were expecting are here to see  
you.

Bronk and Jesse stroll in.

NIA

Bronk! Jesse!

Nia launches out of her executive chair. Throws her  
arms around father and son.

NIA

Come. Sit down.

Everyone takes a seat.

NIA

I'm sorry I've been so busy.

JESSE

Yeah, we know how it is trying  
to run a country.

NIA

Sort of like running a ranch?

BRONK

Without the cow manure.

NIA

You haven't met the members of  
our parliament yet.

Nia sits back. Looks every bit like a modern royal  
leader.

NIA  
What do you think of Denkali?

BRONK  
I like what I see. Maybe  
later, you can give us a tour.

NIA  
I would love to.

Nia smiles gazing at Bronk and Jesse.

NIA  
You don't know how happy I am  
to see you both.

BRONK  
So when's the coronation?

NIA  
Not for three days. That  
gives us plenty of time to  
catch up.

JESSE  
Cool -- and dad can fill you  
in on the latest gossip from  
Willows Bend.

The three of them laugh.

EXT. MOUNTAIN TOP - DAY

A Pathfinder bearing the royal crest rolls up. A  
bodyguard steps out. Opens the door for Nia. Bronk  
hops out the other side. Takes in the breathtaking vista.

BRONK  
Now this is what I call a view.

NIA  
Legend has it, this is the  
exact spot where General  
Lusala plotted the  
assassination of my parents.

Bronk gazes at Nia and the beautiful backdrop of the  
Aberdare Mountain range.

BRONK

Your folks would be proud of  
you, Nia.

NIA

I fought so hard not to follow  
in their footsteps and here I  
am running the country.

Nia notices Bronk's lingering stare.

NIA

What?

BRONK

Had this crazy idea on the  
plane.

NIA

Really?

Nia moves closer to Bronk. Strokes his rugged face with  
her soft, manicured fingers.

NIA

And what were you thinking?

BRONK

That you wouldn't cut it as  
the leader of Denkali. That  
maybe...

NIA

I'd come back to you.

Bronk looks over at the bodyguard keeping watch.

BRONK

But now that I've seen what  
you've accomplished... you're  
doing what you're supposed to,  
Nia.

Nia takes Bronk's hand in hers.

NIA

Yes, my country needs me. But  
you and I came into each  
other's lives for a reason.

BRONK

Yeah, you learned how to cook.

Nia smiles.

NIA

And you learned how to love  
again.

Nia rests her head on Bronk's muscular chest.

NIA

After the coronation, I don't  
want you to go home.

BRONK

You seem to be forgetting I've  
got a ranch to run.

Nia waves her hand at the lushness of the valley below.

NIA

Denkali has hundreds of  
thousands of fertile acres.  
You could --

Nia's cell phone RINGS. She checks the caller I.D.

NIA

Excuse me, I have to take this.

Nia turns away. Speaks seriously into the phone. Bronk  
moseys back to the S.U.V. Nia catches up.

NIA

We need to go back.

BRONK

Something wrong?

NIA

Lusala is playing his last  
trump card.

INT. PRISON - DAY

Flanked by a pair of bruising guards, Nia and Kamu walk  
briskly down a cell block.

NIA

How long has this hunger  
strike gone on?

KAMU

Lusala has not eaten in four  
days. He refuses even water.

NIA

What's his condition?

KAMU

Being a diabetic, his health  
is deteriorating rapidly.

Nia and Kamu reach a solitary cell. One of the guards  
unlocks the metal door.

#### PRISON CELL

Nia and Kamu step in. General Lusala lies on a cot.  
Tremors rack his sickly body.

NIA

This isn't going to work,  
Lusala.

The general rolls his languid eyes toward Nia.

NIA

Dying a martyr hours before  
I am to be crowned queen of  
Denkali.

GEN. LUSALA

I am simply saving her  
Highness the expense of an  
execution.

General Lusala erupts into a coughing fit. Nia hurries  
to his bedside. Grabs him by his prison shirt.

NIA

Listen to me, you bloodthirsty  
blaggard. If I have to issue  
an order to have you force-fed,  
I will.

GEN. LUSALA

It is too late. The doctor  
said my organs are already  
shutting down.

Nia turns to Kamu.

NIA

Find the prison physician. I  
want an I-V set up immediately.

Kamu hustles off.

NIA

You are not going to die,  
Lusala. Do you hear me? I  
have plans for you.

GEN. LUSALA

Plans, your Highness?

NIA

I've decided to stay your  
execution.

A curious expression crosses the general's blotchy face.

NIA

Your coup d'etat cost Denkali  
dearly. Wrecking our  
infrastructure. Throwing our  
economy into a depression.

Nia yanks General Lusala off his pillow.

NIA

I am going to see to it that  
you get well.

Nia shakes the general for emphasis.

NIA

And when you do, you will help  
rebuild every road, every  
bridge, every school that you  
damaged or destroyed.



Nia drops General Lusala on his pillow and storms out.

INT. CATHEDRAL - DAY

Dignitaries and common people sit side by side. Nia kneels before a FEMALE BISHOP.

FEMALE BISHOP

Do you, Nia Manyara Dada  
Mathosa, promise to lead the  
people of Denkali faithfully...

Nia winks at Bronk and Jesse sitting in the front pew. They wink back.

FEMALE BISHOP

... and to uphold the  
principles of justice and  
equality, so help you God?

NIA

I do solemnly swear.

The bishop lifts a bejeweled crown off a velvet pillow. Gently rests it upon Nia's head.

FEMALE BISHOP

In the presence of our Lord  
and witnessed by your loyal  
minions, I crown you Queen  
Nia, ruler of Denkali.

Cheers and applause ROCK the cathedral.

INT. PALACE - BEDROOM - DAY

Bronk packs up his suitcase. Still wearing her coronation gown, Nia rushes in.

NIA

So it's true.

BRONK

I left the suit you loaned me  
in the closet.

NIA  
Won't you at least stay for  
the celebration?

Nia slides her arms around Bronk's waist.

NIA  
There's going to be a parade,  
a banquet...

BRONK  
I promised to be here for your  
coronation. Now it's time --

Nia pulls away.

NIA  
What's the urgency, Bronk?

Nia narrows her eyes.

NIA  
Have you met someone else  
since I left Willows Bend?

BRONK  
The truth is Nia...

Bronk zips up his Samsonite.

BRONK  
.. the longer I stay, the  
harder it is to leave you.

NIA  
If you still have feelings for  
me then why --

BRONK  
Because you're now a queen.  
Your first obligation is to  
rebuild your country.

Nia closes the distance. Bronk can smell the sweet  
scent of her perfume.

NIA  
I'm also a woman... in love  
with a man.

Bronk lifts his suitcase off the bed. Nia latches onto him.

NIA

You once said to me, by all rights, we should've never met.

Nia is in Bronk's face.

NIA

But we did meet. And we touched each other's hearts.

(beat)

I've been around the world enough to know how rare that is.

Seeing no change in Bronk's expression, Nia steps aside.

NIA

Go.

Bronk takes a hard look at Nia and walks out.

EXT. PALACE

Bronk and Jesse load their bags in a cab and hop in. Nia watches as the cab cruises the circular driveway. Unexpectedly, the cab pulls round to the palace entrance again. Bronk leans out of the car window.

BRONK

(to Nia)

Hey, lady! You wouldn't know where an unemployed rancher could find a job 'round here, would ya?

Nia runs to the cab.

Bronk jumps out.

Hoists Nia off the ground.

Bronk hugs Nia with all of his might.

FADE OUT.