

CODE SWITCHIN'

An Original Pilot

"We Wear The Mask"

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TEASER

FADE IN:

INT. SKYLINE STUDIOS - OFFICE KITCHEN - MORNING

The Keurig machine. ALYSSA, 24, blonde, confident, liberal but totally clueless about the realities of life, catches up with a colleague about her weekend.

ALYSSA

So, there I was, backstage, VIP, this blonde little white girl surrounded by all of these hardcore, *Black* guys, trying to get an autograph from Eminem, who never showed up, might I add. I felt so isolated, like you can't even begin to imagine how alone I felt!

REVEAL, she's talking to KAI DAVIS, 28, BLACK, a hood girl who made it out; she wears her hair bone straight, but don't let that fool you, sis is Woke as Fuck.

FREEZE on Kai's disturbed face.

KAI (V.O.)

You see, it's moments like these that I wish America would have just stuck to separate but equal. Did this bitch really just tell me, the only Black person in our entire department, that I don't know what it's like to feel isolated?

Per Kai's POV:

LOOKS LEFT: A group of ALL WHITE ASSISTANTS play hacky sack by the microwave.

LOOKS RIGHT: A group of ALL WHITE EXECUTIVES discuss politics over coffee.

SENIOR EXEC

I'm telling you, I worked with him for years on "The Apprentice", he's going to make this country great again!

LOOKS CENTER: A WHITE GUY sitting alone plops a GIANT chunk of MAYONNAISE onto a cracker then swallows it whole. Yuck!

KAI (V.O.)  
 I'm just saying, if I worked at a Black company, I wouldn't have to smile through agonizing conversations like this out of fear of being labeled "The Angry Black Woman". Instead, thanks to good ole desegregation, I was an assistant here, at Skyline Studios where I became the token "Black friend" white people always claim to have when trying to prove they're not a racist.

Alyssa has never stopped talking.

ALYSSA  
 And the guy was like you're racist and I was like, how? One of my best friends is *African-American*!

**INSERT:** A duck-lipped SELFIE of Alyssa at work, Kai is in the background working. SCRIBBLED on the picture is an ARROW pointing to Kai with the words "TOKEN BLACK FRIEND".

Kai places her PURPLE LUNCH CONTAINER in the shared fridge.

KAI (V.O.)  
 I barely knew this girl but I didn't see the benefit of calling her out. So, I simply put on the mask and said:

Kai's voice SWITCHES to her "professional" aka valley girl tone. (This happens whenever she speaks to coworkers.)

KAI  
 (non threatening)  
 You're right. I could never imagine.

On Kai's facetious smile we,

CUT TO TITLE:

"CODE SWITCHIN'"

OVER BLACK:

Code Switching: The practice of shifting languages or dialect depending on the audience; a common practice by people of color, trying to survive in predominantly white spaces.

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. SKYLINE STUDIOS - CREATIVE AFFAIRS - MOMENTS LATER

Kai and Alyssa casually walk towards the bullpen.

ALYSSA  
So, how do you feel?

KAI  
About?

ALYSSA  
Please tell me you read Deadline  
this morning?

Kai is clueless. Alyssa hands Kai her phone. Kai freaks.

KAI  
Jackie Caldwell named head of  
Skyline Studios! What happened to  
John?

Alyssa grimaces.

ALYSSA  
Remember the whole Kevin Hart e-  
mail scandal of 2014?

KAI  
Yeah...

ALYSSA  
Well combine that with #metoo and  
poof John is gone! You didn't hear  
this from me but-

**SFX:** ELEVATOR DING.

The elevator doors cleave open. Revealing, a fabulous pair of RED BOTTOMS. The lady in the "bloody shoes" is VERONICA GOLDSTEIN, 40s, probably attended one too many Botox parties, bipolar as fuck. She's either on cocaine or in mania mode.

The BULLPEN erupts in hectic anxiety as EVERYONE pretends to be busy making money moves.

VERONICA  
Morning people! Conference room.  
Five minutes, everyone.

The STAFF all fumble for their laptops and notebooks as they race into the conference room.

KAI  
(flippant)  
Oh, great. She's manic today.

ALYSSA  
No, she's pissed. I'm pretty sure  
Veronica thought she had that  
president title in the bag.

VERONICA  
(shouting down the hall)  
Kai, Benji? My office - stat!

Shit! Kai races over into...

INT. VERONICA'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Nerve wracked, Kai sits across Veronica who she can barely see over all the EMMY'S.

BENJI, Veronica's first assistant, 30s, white, straight, eager to get promoted and willing to betray anyone to make it happen, enters, carrying a green smoothie.

BENJI  
(panting)  
Apologies for the delay, I have one  
kale smoothie with extra ice.

Benji and Kai exchange a look: it's going to be a *long* day.

VERONICA  
Shut the door.

Benji hops to it before taking a seat next to Kai.

Veronica shares the "horrific" news.

VERONICA (CONT'D)  
I'm pretty sure you've both heard  
the big news today. The studio has  
decided to go in a more... *urban*  
direction. I'm sure that excites  
you, Kai.

An awkward BEAT.

VERONICA (CONT'D)

(thrilled)

With that being said, the studio has decided to simply promote one of the assistant's to coordinator instead of bringing in someone new AKA, I'm going to lose an assistant.

Excited by the news, Benji and Kai, both sit up straighter.

KAI

Does that mean?

Benji wastes no time - he immediately pitches himself.

BENJI

Well, I think the choice is obvious. I've been on your desk for five years and the president of the studio is going to need someone with more...

He gives Kai a judgemental once over.

BENJI (CONT'D)

Executive presence.

KAI (V.O.)

(slighted)

Did he just come for me?

KAI

Actually Veronica, I think I've handled my responsibilities as your second assistant quite well and if given the opportunity to step into a more creative role-

**SFX:** Veronica's Phone Rings.

Benji and Kai stare one another down. A game of chicken. They both know that whoever answers that phone, loses.

VERONICA

(re: phone)

Are you going to get that?

Kai stares at the phone. Then finally, she cracks.

KAI

Veronica Goldstein's office. One moment.

Kai mutes the phone and whispers to Veronica.

KAI (CONT'D)  
It's Jackie.

A nervous wreck, Veronica shoos her assistants out of her office, before turning on her Hollywood charm.

VERONICA  
(into phone)  
Jacqueline, darling,  
congratulations!

Kai and Benji exit.

INT. OUTSIDE OF VERONICA'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Benji closes the door behind him, he turns to Kai, furious.

BENJI  
I don't know what you think you're  
doing, but that Creative  
Coordinator position is mine!

Kai looks over her right shoulder, then her left, searching.

KAI (V.O.)  
Who the hell he talking to?

Benji steps even closer into Kai's face. Nose to nose.

BENJI  
Exactly, you're in way over your  
head.

Kai leans back, pulling away from Benji.

FREEZE on Kai. An **ALARM GOES OFF!**

**ENVISION:** Smoke comes out of Kai's ears. She's about to snap. A BLACK MAN in a hazmat suit, takes out a measuring tape to examine exactly how close Benji is to Kai's face: 14 INCHES.

A **CHYRON** flashes: **TOO DAMN CLOSE!**

HAZMAT SUIT GUY  
(into a walkie)  
We have a clear violation of the  
standard two feet rule. I'm going  
to need reinforcements. Sis appears  
to be calm yet on the brink of a  
phase one 'niggasode.' Please send  
reminders to not act up!

Suddenly a check list that only Kai can see appears: RENT \$1850, CAR NOTE \$650, UTILITIES \$120, STUDENT LOANS \$400.

**A BUZZER goes off and a CHYRON FLASHES: DON'T-DO IT - SIS!**

This snaps Kai back to REALITY.

KAI  
(to Benji)  
I guess we'll just have to see.

She smiles cattily before walking off.

INT. ACCOUNTING - SAME

ANGELA, 28, Black, polished, queen of the classy clapback, confronts SCOTT WALTERS, a white casting producer in his 40s.

KAI (V.O.)  
I wasn't the only one fighting for recognition. My girl Angela was the only woman in accounting, and per usual there was always someone trying to challenge her authority.

ANGELA  
I'm sorry Scott but I can't reimburse you for taking your girlfriend out on a date.

SCOTT  
Date? I was courting talent!

Angela reads the receipt back to him.

ANGELA  
A dozen oysters, chocolate covered strawberries and a bottle of Dom Perignon?

She doesn't need to address how insulted her intelligence is. Her face says it all... really, nigga?

ANGELA (CONT'D)  
(beat, then)  
Look Scott, I'm not sure what type of "Casting Couch" situation you have going on over there, but it won't be at the expense of the studio.



SCOTT  
(pissed)  
Where's Adam? I can't believe I'm  
even having this conversation with  
his *assistant*!

ANGELA  
(insulted)  
Assistant? I'm a Junior Accountant.

ADAM WINTERS, 48, well off, completely unaware of his  
privilege yet abuses it, the CFO, peeks out of his office.

ADAM  
Hey Angela, will you pick up my  
lunch from Obica? It should be  
ready in about ten minutes.

Scott cuts a snide smile at Angela.

KAI (V.O.)  
She didn't want to give Scott the  
satisfaction, but Adam was the CFO,  
and junior accountant or not, a  
bitch had bills to pay.

ANGELA  
(reluctant but brightly)  
Sure, Adam!

Scott takes his moment, he snatches the receipt out of  
Angela's hand, pushes pass her and barges into Adam's office.

SCOTT  
Hey Adam, let me ask you about this  
expense.

He closes the door behind him, but not before shooting Angela  
the corporate "fuck you very much" smile. She feigns a smile  
equivalent to the finger, right back, before grabbing her  
purse to head out.

INT. ART DEPARTMENT - SAME

The Wardrobe and props department. Behind the front desk,  
sits TAYLOR, 28, high-yellow, the earthy type, looks like she  
smells like shea butter and coconut oil.

KAI (V.O.)  
This is my girl Taylor. Wardrobe  
assistant by day, avant garde  
designer by night.

She opens an elegant invitation addressed to "ART DEPT." It reads: YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO THE WEARABLE ART GALA.

Taylor lights up but her wonder is cut short when an angry, sassy art director, LOUIS ANGOZE, 40, Latino, and fabulous, rudely hurls a wrapped up PROP onto her desk.

LOUIS ANGOZE  
What is this?

TAYLOR  
(unfazed)  
I'm not sure. Let's see.

She unwraps the prop revealing a MEDIAEVAL SWORD.

LOUIS ANGOZE  
I told Hannah, that this was for an Ancient Egyptian soldier, not Christopher Columbus! Where's the bling? Where's the drama? Where is Hannah?

TAYLOR  
She's out running an errand but let me see what I can do.

Taylor grabs some BLING from the back.

KAI (V.O.)  
Taylor once hand beaded a wedding gown from top to bottom, some bling on a sword, that was lightwork!

She remixes the sword right then and there to his amazement.

LOUIS ANGOZE  
Your bead work is incredible!

TAYLOR  
It was nothing, really.

LOUIS ANGOZE  
(per her name tag)  
Well, Taylor the tailor, you tell Hannah to watch her back, she's got a star working under her.

He wraps up his new sword and crosses off.

EXT. THE NOOK - LUNCH

Kai, Taylor and Angela meet in a sacred corner of the quad for lunch. This is a safe space where the few other BLACK AND BROWN PEOPLE who work at the studio meet for lunch to remove the mask and vent.

KAI

It's gone be so lit having a Black woman for president! Just imagine! Braid out Wednesdays, twerk session Fridays...

TAYLOR

Cocoa butter in the bathroom!

ANGELA

This Coordinator position can be an excellent mentorship opportunity for you, Kai! You have to get this!

KAI

That's the plan, but Benji's determined. Talking 'bout I don't have enough 'executive presence'!

Taylor and Angela exchange a look.

ANGELA

You do dress real assistant-y...

KAI

(defensive)

This is H&M!

ANGELA

We can tell...

Insecure about her style, Kai ponders on this.

INT. SKYLINE STUDIOS - CREATIVE AFFAIRS - THE NEXT MORNING

Head held high, dressed a la Kerry Washington in "Scandal," Kai struts down the hallway, greeting colleagues. She arrives at her desk to a wowed Alyssa.

ALYSSA

What do we have here?

She motions for Kai to spin. Feeling herself, Kai obliges.

KAI

Veronica's looking for someone with a "strong executive presence". So I decided to step my game up.

ALYSSA

Dress for the job you want! I get it. You look like Queen Bey!

Off Kai's stoic face.

**ENVISION:** Kai standing at a PRESS CONFERENCE podium.

KAI

Dear white people, it's Queen Bey (bee), like Be-yonce. Please stop trying to be cool, you're ruining it!

**SFX:** ELEVATOR DING.

Veronica's arrived. Snapping Kai right out of it and everyone scatters to their desks and offices.

INT. VERONICA'S OFFICE - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

Rocking a kente cloth scarf over her orange suit, Veronica anxiously paces back and forth as she presents a slide show presentation to Benji and Kai.

VERONICA

"Girls Trip"- a hundred million.  
"Get Out"- Over two hundred million. "Black Panther"- one billion dollars! What does it all mean?

Benji is stumped. Kai is somewhere between offended, concerned and confused.

KAI (V.O.)

What in the Nancy Pelosi?

The next SLIDE: rapper ICE CUBE from "Boyz in the Hood."

VERONICA

(inspired)

Diversity is hot! Diversity is in!  
Diversity makes money! But most importantly, diversity makes Jackie, our new boss, very happy!  
Kai, you're diverse...

Veronica cozies up to Kai.

VERONICA (CONT'D)  
I'd love to hear what you and your  
little posse are into these days!

KAI  
I'm sorry, my what?

Just then, JACKIE CALDWELL, 50, fine, Black, well composed enters. Her sudden appearance and regal demeanor startles Veronica, who then, code switches to jive talk.

VERONICA  
Jackie, girlfriend! What's the  
dealio?

Veronica throws up a black power fist, which throws Jackie off even more than the kente cloth.

JACKIE  
I need a talent grid done by end of  
day. Do you know who I can trust to  
knock it out?

BENJI	KAI
I can do it!	I can do it!

BEAT.

Benji and Kai both silently plead with Veronica.

VERONICA  
Kai, why don't you handle it.

JACKIE  
Perfect. Here's a list of names.  
Have it on my desk before by three  
o'clock?

KAI  
Absolutely!

JACKIE  
Perfect. Cute dress by the way.

Jackie exits.

KAI (V.O.)  
Oh snap! Sis thinks I'm fly!

**IMAGINE:** Kai has a full-blown celebratory TWERK SESSION to Kirk Franklin's gospel classic "He's Able".

Veronica clears her throat, snapping a spaced out Kai back to REALITY.

VERONICA  
Well, hop to it and remember, don't  
embarrass me.

Veronica hands Kai the list. Kai hits the ground running.

INT. CREATIVE AFFAIRS - A LITTLE LATER

Kai proudly sashays down the hall towards the copy room.

KAI (V.O.)  
I finished Jackie's talent grid  
minutes before lunch. All I needed  
was the finished product.

Kai is thrown off by the crowd hanging outside of the copy room. She shoves her way into...

INT. COPY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A group of concerned ASSISTANTS hover around the copy machine. A RED LIGHT FLASHES: ERROR. It makes a sad sound.

KAI  
No, no, no! Not today!

TWENTY MINUTES LATER.

Kai desperately troubleshoots the machine, giving it everything she's got. She even tries the Ninetendo 64 method aka the hit and blow. The other assistants look on, pitiful. Alyssa goes to pull a hopeless Kai away.

ALYSSA  
I think it's time to let it go.

KAI  
(a la 'Rose' in *Titanic*)  
I'll never let go!

Alyssa peels a dishevelled Kai away from the machine.

INT. SKYLINE STUDIOS - OFFICE KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Kai opens the refrigerator. She searches the shelves for her lunch but it's not there. Jackie comes up from behind and quickly grabs her lunch out of the fridge.

JACKIE

Hey! Kai, right? Thanks for taking care of this grid. I usually have my assistant do it but I'm still on the hunt. I Love the initiative you took. Can I expect it in about an hour or so?

KAI

(shit!)

Yeah, of course!

KAI (V.O.)

And as if my day could get any worse...

Kai turns around and in the sink is her PURPLE LUNCH CONTAINER. EMPTY!

KAI

(appalled)

Oh, hell no!

**SFX:** A la the SIREN SOUND from "Kill Bill", we HEAR the beginning notes of Crime Mob's 2004 fight anthem "KNUCK IF YOU BUCK" SCORING in Kai's head.

EVERYONE'S head whips towards Kai, concerned.

JACKIE

Is everything okay?

It's NOT okay!

KAI

(covering)

Mmmhmmmm.

Kai turns back to her accosted lunch container. She can feel all EYES on her. She takes a deep breath.

KAI (V.O.)

(on edge)

Dear God, please help me to not act like a nigga, today!

Off Kai's contained exasperation, we:

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. ACCOUNTING - COPY ROOM - LUNCH

Angela leads Kai into her office's copy room.

ANGELA  
(laughing)  
Not your granny's oven baked mac  
and cheese?!

Kai shoots her a straight face. Taylor enters with a cafeteria salad for Kai.

TAYLOR  
That is the most disrespectful shit  
I've ever heard. Here.

ANGELA  
No, I'm mad that they had the nerve  
to rinse your tupperware out!

They laugh in disbelief. Angela extends her hand out to Kai, who hands her a USB drive.

KAI  
It took everything inside me, not  
to go clear the fuck off.

ANGELA  
I'm so proud of you.

TAYLOR  
Plus we all know, had you removed  
your dignified "African-American"  
mask and revealed your "inner-  
nigga", they would of just deemed  
you another angry Black woman.

KAI  
Everyone knows that you don't touch  
a Black woman's hair, man or food!

They all toss their hands up, exasperated, fore this is common sense (at least in the Black community).

TAYLOR  
I want to know who ate it!

KAI  
We'll never know!



ANGELA

Oh no, there's a way to tell who  
ate all that soul food. Oven-baked  
mac and cheese has one side effect.

Light bulb!

TALOR

The itis!

KAI

The itis!

ANGELA

Exactly. Whoever ate all that  
"Accent" and "Crisco" is not gone  
make it through the entire day.

They all agree.

KAI (V.O.)

Ang was right, the culprit would  
reveal themselves sooner or later.  
In the meantime, I needed to get  
this grid over to Jackie asap!

The printer coughs up the talent grid. All the pictures are  
in black and white!

KAI

(outraged)

What is this?

ANGELA

Oh, did you need this in color?

Kai's eye bulge, duh!

ANGELA (CONT'D)

My bad girl you should've said  
that. We've been out of cyan and  
magenta for weeks now. We don't  
make color copies in accounting.

KAI

I need to get these copies to  
Jackie like, yesterday!

TAYLOR

Give it to me. I'll drop them off  
when Hannah gets in.

Kai hugs Taylor and hands her the drive before exiting.

INT. ART DEPARTMENT - A LITTLE LATER

Taylor places a half finished, frilly BALL GOWN onto a mannequin. HANNAH, 35, chubby, white, carrying her dog in one hand, Starbucks in the other, clearly hung-over from the night before, enters.

HANNAH

Wow that's stunning! Did you make that? It's all wild and crazy, like your hair!

TAYLOR

Thanks? It's for the gala. Also, Louis stopped by earlier. I had to make an adjustment on that Egyptian sword you made last week.

HANNAH

You, a wardrobe assistant, adjusted on of *my* designs?

TAYLOR

It seemed pretty urgent.

Hannah rolls her eyes on her way to her desk. She sits.

HANNAH

Well next time call me first. You've been really distracted every since I okayed you going to this little gala.

TAYLOR

Everyone who's anyone goes to this gala. It's a pretty big deal.

Hannah looks it up on the computer. She shrieks!

HANNAH

Wait, you didn't mention that Queen Bay goes to this thing! I don't know Taylor, this seems like a pretty important event. I'm not sure if sending an assistant is the best move. Perhaps, I, should go?

Taylor drops her measuring tape.

TAYLOR

But we had a deal and I'm almost finished with my gown!

HANNAH  
There's always next year.

TAYLOR  
The theme will be different next year.

HANNAH  
I don't know what to tell you. How am I supposed to explain to our new studio head that I let an assistant go to a Bay-once event?

On Taylor's crestfallen reaction we, Go TO:

INT. CREATIVE AFFAIRS - MOMENTS LATER

Kai's desk is covered with scripts. She drops the one she's reading.

KAI (V.O.)  
I couldn't even enjoy prepping for my first pitch meeting. One of these bastards was the office hambugarlar and I was determined to crack the case.

Dubious, she looks around the bullpen for suspects.

Pushing the cart in SLOW MOTION, the intern, ANDREW, drops mail on everyone's desk. He shoots the SMILE of a serial killer to Kai. A CHYRON reads: Suspect #1. Andrew Gold, 19, single. Probable Cause: Broke intern.

Kai glares at CHRISTINE, an extremely thin assistant, taking notes on a call. Kai **ENVISIONS** Christine making DEVILISH EYE CONTACT with her like a suspect on one of those true crime series. CHYRON reads: Suspect #2. Christine Grey, 26, divorced. Probable Cause: Sad AF.

Kai **IMAGINES** each suspect going into the kitchen, grabbing her PURPLE LUNCH CONTAINER, then savagely devouring her food.

Kai's POV: Benji eats a kale salad at his desk. Underneath him a CHYRON reads: Suspect #3. Benji Smith, 30, Engaged. Probable Cause: On a carb deprived diet.

PULL OUT to REVEAL, Kai glowering at him.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. INVESTIGATION ROOM - FANTASY

Kai and Alyssa play Good Cop-Bad Cop with Benji cuffed to the table. Kai is the bad cop.

ALYSSA

Look, we just want to know what you ate for lunch.

BENJI

(sweating)

Chicken, kale, some blueberries--

Kai slams the table.

KAI

Blueberries and chicken? That shit don't even sound right!

ALYSSA

Excuse my partner, she tends to anger easily.

(she whispers)

Probably from all the salt.

(beat, then)

Look, it's totally cool if you ate the macaroni and cheese, we're just trying to get a time line here.

BENJI

I haven't touched a carb in six months!

KAI

You know you done fucked up right?

Kai slams a PICTURE of Benji eating a donut.

KAI (CONT'D)

Six months? More like six hours!

He breaks.

BENJI

I'm sorry, I ate the donut! I've just been super stressed with the wedding and trying to make junior executive, I cracked!

KAI

Clean yourself up.

Kai tosses a bag of chips into his face. Taking us Back To:

INT. CREATIVE AFFAIRS - KAI'S DESK - REALITY

**SFX:** PHONE RINGS. Kai answers. It's Benji.

BENJI (O.S.)  
Veronica's ready for you

Kai drops her scowl.

INT. VERONICA'S OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

Kai is pitching her new idea to an eager Veronica.

KAI  
And that's, "How to Catch the  
Office Hamburglar."

VERONICA  
Well done! I like it.

KAI  
Thanks. It's silly but I got  
inspired after someone stole my  
lunch today.

Benji is standing by the door.

BENJI  
Sorry to intrude, but I have Josh  
Griffin on the phone.

VERONICA  
Oh, great! He's calling for notes  
on his new script and now I have to  
pretend I've read it.

KAI  
Is that the paranormal plane crash  
drama?

VERONICA  
That would be the travesty.

KAI  
It's actually not that bad. Just  
tell him that the second turning  
point plays a little soon and it  
might be better if the grandfather  
dies about seven pages later  
instead.

Veronica looks at Benji.

VERONICA  
And what did you think?

Benji stutters.

KAI (V.O.)  
(snide)  
Uh oh. Looks like Benji didn't read  
the script.

VERONICA  
Nevermind. Kai, you seem pretty  
sure about this.

KAI  
I'll forward you my coverage.  
And... sent!

**SFX:** DING. Veronica's e-mail. She quickly scans through Kai's  
notes.

VERONICA  
(impressed)  
Wow, this is pretty well done Kai.  
Who knew you had such an innate  
sense of story? I'm impressed.

KAI (V.O.)  
Four and a half years of film  
school and sixty grand in student  
loan debt, I better had.

BENJI  
(a power move)  
Kai, do you want to patch him  
through?

VERONICA  
Actually Kai, why don't you stay  
for the call. Benji, you patch him  
through and when you're done, grab  
me a mocha frap with extra ice.

Bushwhacked, Benji stares daggers at Kai.

KAI (V.O.)  
Wait. Did Veronica just "son" Benji  
for me?

**ENVISION:** Smoke from a fog machine fills the office. We hear  
the "storm" from the classic Dr. Dre diss record "Next  
Episode." As the beat and Nate Dogg's voice drops, Kai  
victoriously crip walks in a circle around a FROZEN Benji.

NATE DOG (SONG)

*Hold up, wait/ For my niggaz who be  
thinkin' we soft/ We don't, play/  
We gon' rock it til the wheels fall  
off/Hold up, hey/ For my niggaz who  
be actin too bold/ Take a seat/ Hope  
you ready for the next episode/ Hey  
ey...*

Veronica answers the phone snapping us back into reality:

VERONICA

Josh, Darling! How's it going?

Veronica motions for Kai to come closer and for Benji to exit. He does, reluctantly.

INT. ACCOUNTING - SAME

Angela works diligently at her desk. Her flow is interrupted when Scott slams down a new receipt.

SCOTT

I need this by end of day and don't  
make it complicated.

ANGELA

Excuse me?

Haughty, Scott walks off.

INT. CREATIVE AFFAIRS - A LITTLE LATER

Kai returns to her desk where she finds the talent grid (in color) along with a sticky note from Taylor: "Slay, Queen!"

INT. JACKIE'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Kai drops the talent grid onto Jackie's desk.

KAI

Signed, sealed, delivered!

Jackie isn't amused.

JACKIE

I needed these an hour ago.

KAI

I'm so sorry, there were a few  
technical difficulties.

Jackie slams another set of copies onto the desk.

JACKIE  
 Luckily, Benji managed to get them  
 over to me in time but thank you.

Yikes!

**INSERT:** that famous GIF from "Friday" of 'Craig and Smokey'  
 leaning back on the porch saying "dayum!"

INT. ART DEPARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Taylor is on the phone with Kai and Angela.

**INTERCUT AS NEEDED.**

TAYLOR  
 Damn girl, sorry it took so long,  
 Hating Ass Hannah didn't come into  
 work until two hours after lunch.

Angela eyes Scott's RECEIPT: cocktails, steak and roses.

ANGELA  
 (into phone)  
 Well you know what they say. Not  
 everyone that looks like you is for  
 you! You need to redeem yourself!

Kai secretly on the phone, digs through her cabinets.

KAI  
 Oh, I will. Jackie will be blown  
 away by my new unscripted project!  
 Tay, don't trip about the gala. I'm  
 pretty sure I can get us in.

Kai finds the gala invite addressed to Veronica Goldstein.

ON SCREEN: Angela receives an e-mail from Scott. Written in  
 the subject line: ETA on reimbursement? He's CC'd: Adam.

ANGELA  
 I know he did not CC my boss?

Hannah, clears her throat.

HANNAH  
 Another personal call?

**SFX:** "KNUCK IF YOU BUCK" Fades Up.



TAYLOR  
 (into phone)  
 This trick. I gotta go...

Taylor hangs up. She turns and gives Hannah a fake smile.

INT. ACCOUNTING - CONTINUOUS

Angela cracks her knuckles. "KNUCK IF YOU BUCK", continues getting louder the angrier she gets.

KAI (V.O.)  
 It was at this moment that Angela decided that *this* was the day, they would learn not to fuck with Ang!

**IMAGINE:** The fed up GHOST of Angela's "inner-nigga" JUMPS OUT of her body. The real Angela types away with fury as her Ghost paces back and forth behind her dictating what she should write.

ANGELA'S INNER NIGGA  
 I already told your punk ass that we are not paying for you to flex for these hoes.

The Real (professional) Angela, translates.

ANGELA  
 (typing)  
 Per my last e-mail, Skyline Studios is not responsible for reimbursing personal expenses created during company hours.

ANGELA'S INNER NIGGA  
 I sent you the shit that is reimbursable *forever* ago, but since I know your lazy ass ain't gone look for it, I've added it to this e-mail so that I don't have to answer your basic ass questions, again!

ANGELA  
 I've reattached the writable expenses for you convenience.

ANGELA'S INNER NIGGA  
 I'm not gone tell yo ass, again!

ANGELA  
Thank you in advance for your  
cooperation.

Angela smiles, accomplished as she hits SEND E-MAIL.

**SFX:** "KNUCK IF YOU BUCK" FADES OUT.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - LATER

Scott is pitching a new show.

KAI (V.O.)  
Angela wasn't the only one on the  
brink of a "nigga-sode". I almost  
popped a blood vessel trying to  
suppress my "inner nigga" from  
manifesting itself during my first  
creative development meeting.

ON SCREEN: The disconcerting Ms. Peachez "Southern Fried Chicken" music video, which stars a clown like BLACK WOMAN, with blue hair, obnoxiously long nails, frying chicken, in the backyard, as hungry little Black children sing. Straight coonery!

SCOTT  
The video already has five million  
views. I feel like if we push for  
it now, this could be a huge hit.

All eyes on Kai.

KAI (V.O.)  
Oh, hell nah!

EVERYONE is searing with white guilt. JESSICA, an Asian-American coordinator speaks up.

JESSICA  
Don't you think this can come off a  
little... racist?

SCOTT  
(defensive)  
Racist? How? I don't even see  
color!

KAI (V.O.)  
Don't you hate when people say that  
shit? Like, really? You mean to  
tell me, *this* is what you see?

**IMAGINE:** Everyone in the room turns TRANSPARENT.

Back to REALITY.

VERONICA

Kai, you're *African-American* what  
do you think?

Sweat beading down her brow, Kai ENVISIONS herself as a  
resistant BLACK PANTHER, stepping into the UNEMPLOYED LINE to  
Public Enemy's "Fight the Power".

She LOOKS to the other side where she ENVISIONS herself as a  
BLACK MINSTREL, wearing a fur coat, shucking and jiving with  
MONEY BAGS to 50 Cent's "Laughing Straight to the Bank".

Her eyes DART between the two as she contemplates what to  
say.

KAI

I mean...

A BLACK JANITOR in the corner shoots her the WAKANDA SALUTE.  
He nods, supportive. She takes a deep breath, fuck it.

KAI (V.O.)

Welp, it was nice having healthcare  
while it lasted.

Just as Kai opens her mouth to speak, Jackie interrupts.

JACKIE

I love it!

Kai's head whips towards Jackie.

KAI

I'm sorry, what?

**SFX:** "KNUCK IF YOU BUCK" Fades all the way up!

CUT TO BLACK:

END OF ACT TWO.

ACT THREE

INT. CREATIVE AFFAIRS - MINUTES LATER

Beyond let down, Kai vents to Taylor on the phone.

KAI  
(whispering into phone)  
I'm telling you sis is in the abyss  
of the sunken place!

INT. ART DEPARTMENT - SAME

Phone to ear, Taylor works on her gala dress.

TAYLOR  
Deeper than Kanye?

**INSERT:** Picture of fat KANYE WEST wearing his "Make America Great Again" hat.

**INTERCUT AS NEEDED.**

KAI  
Nobody's deeper than that but sis  
is in there. I bet she doesn't even  
know the dance to "Formation!"

TAYLOR  
You know what you got to do.

They hang up and Kai grabs her cell phone.

KAI (V.O.)  
Taylor was right. I knew exactly  
what to do. There was only one way  
to pull sis out of the abyss.

Kai rushes into Jackie's office, almost crashing into Benji.

INT. JACKIE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Jackie turns around in her chair to face Kai, who quickly snaps a picture of Jackie. Stunned from the flash:

JACKIE  
Did you just try to "Get Out" me?

KAI (V.O.)  
Busted!

KAI  
I'm just a little thrown off by-

JACKIE  
That fried chicken show?

KAI  
Well yeah. I thought with a Black studio head, things would be a different but I guess not.

Jackie stands to close her office door. This is a private conversation.

JACKIE  
What else did you assume about me?  
(Beat) I'm giving Benji the job.

KAI  
What? Benji? Why?

JACKIE  
I gave you an easy alley oop with the talent grid earlier and you failed. As the first black studio president here, I can't afford to have someone on my team that I can't trust to get the job done. Plus, I loved the "lunch burglar" idea he pitched me after the meeting. Very original.

KAI  
He pitched what?!

Jackie packs up for the night.

JACKIE  
Let me give you some advice that nobody taught me when I was your age. You don't get as far as I am in this business without playing the game a little. Remember, it's all theater!

KAI  
You're really going to greenlight that fried chicken show idea?

Finally, Jackie completely drops her mask.

JACKIE  
 What type of fool do you take me  
 for, girl? That shit will never  
 make it out of development.

Jackie winks before she exits.

KAI (V.O.)  
 (considering)  
 Perhaps I judged Miss Jackie a  
 little soon?

Kai walks back over to her desk. The office now deserted.

INT. CREATIVE AFFAIRS - EVENING

Kai packs her belongings to leave for the day.

KAI (V.O.)  
 As the day came to a close, I'd  
 given up on the idea of finding the  
 lunch thief. I went to return some  
 scripts to Alyssa who was at her  
 desk knocked out.

Kai drops a heavy stack of scripts onto Alyssa's desk,  
 jolting her out of her slumber.

ALYSSA  
 (startled)  
 Hey girl! You heading out? What  
 time is it?

KAI  
 It's time for you to go as well.

ALYSSA  
 God, I've been out since lunch! Can  
 you hand me that?

Alyssa points to a bag by her feet. It's here that Kai SPOTS  
 her oven-baked macaroni and cheese in Alyssa's trash.

Kai stops.

**SFX:** "KNUCK IF YOU BUCK", scores.

KAI (V.O.)  
 Did this bitch?...

Kai is about to explode. Instead, she drops Alyssa's bag onto  
 the floor and exits. The fight anthem STOPS.

EXT. THE WEARABLE ART GALA - FRIDAY NIGHT

A long line wraps around the block. In front of the line is Kai wearing her natural hair, Angela and Taylor.

BOUNCER

Next!

The girls step up to the HOSTESS.

HOSTESS

Tickets ladies?

Kai hands over her invite.

HOSTESS (CONT'D)

Veronica Goldstein?

Kai smiles confidently. Taylor and Angela are all nerves.

KAI

Is there a problem?

The hostess is skeptical until, Kai hands the hostess one of VERONICA'S BUSINESS CARDS.

HOSTESS

My apologies Ms. Goldstein. Are these your guests?

The bouncer removes the velvet rope.

KAI (V.O.)

Being Veronica's assistant had it's perks!

The ladies joyfully enter the extravagant party.

INT. THE WEARABLE ART GALA - CONTINUOUS

CELEBS dressed in amazing gowns overflow the high-class exclusive event. Taylor, Angela and Kai walk through.

TAYLOR

I can't believe you were able to get us all in here!

KAI

People do anything to be on TV in this town! Plus I put Veronica's rsvp under her husbands's name so there shouldn't be any problems.

Veronica spots Kai by the bar!

VERONICA

Kai, darling! What are you doing here?

Before Kai can respond, Veronica is distracted by Taylor's custom gown!

VERONICA (CONT'D)

Omigod, your dress is amazing! Who are you wearing?

TAYLOR

I made it!

Veronica's impressed! A voice creeps up from behind.

LOUIS ANGOZE

And I thought that sword was magical! This is a masterpiece!

Taylor turns around to greet Louis. He is standing there with, PIERRE DU BOIS, a french designer.

TAYLOR

Mr. Angoze! How'd that sword work out?

Just then, Hannah makes a bee line towards Louis.

HANNAH

Louis! I've been calling you!

LOUIS ANGOZE

(uninterested)

Hello, Hannah.

Louis closes Hannah out of the circle as he brings PIERRE DU BOIS, 50s, a french designer, in.

LOUIS ANGOZE (CONT'D)

(to Taylor)

Screw the sword! Let me introduce you to my dear friend, Pierre Du Bois, this is Taylor the tailor!

Hannah struggles to get back into the conversation circle, every space she goes towards, she's blocked.

TAYLOR

I'm a huge fan! I loved your spring collection.



PIERRE  
(flattered)  
Thank you. Your work is fantastic!

LOUIS ANGOZE  
I'm telling you Pierre we could use  
a wardrobe assistant with this kind  
of talent on our team.

Pierre agrees.

PIERRE  
I'm designing for the new Cleopatra  
movie, you must come aboard.

Pierre hands Taylor his card, then he and Louis cross off.  
Hannah cuts eyes at Taylor then chases behind the gentlemen.

HANNAH  
Pierre!

TAYLOR  
(a squeal)  
Pierre Du Bois thinks I'm talented!

VERONICA  
(shouting over the music)  
Kai, I love your hair like this!  
You look like an Egyptian goddess!

Veronica goes in to touch Kai's hair, who naturally pulls  
away. Clearly, Veronica's had one too many drinks tonight.

KAI  
Thanks Veronica!

VERONICA  
You should wear it like this in the  
office!

KAI  
I don't know. I don't want to be  
unprofessional.

VERONICA  
Kai, this is who you are! Celebrate  
it! When I hired you three years  
ago it was because I wanted someone  
with a different point of view than  
mines! Embrace it! PS: Never let a  
man take credit for your ideas!

Veronica gives a look to Kai then heads off with her HUSBAND.

KAI (V.O.)  
 Veronica was right. I was done compromising. Besides, was wearing the mask still necessary? I mean, I get why previous generations code switched to make assimilating into corporate American culture easier, but I grew up with a Black President! I did have a different point of view than my colleagues and perhaps that was worth using to my advantage. Besides I was tired of denying my Blackness!

A cocktail WAITRESS swings by, with drinks.

WAITRESS  
 Champagne ladies?

They exchange a look and code switch:

KAI	ANGELA
How delightful!	Absolutely!

They raise their glasses to toast.

KAI  
 To being young...

TAYLOR  
 Gifted...

ANGELA  
 Successful...

KAI  
 And Black!

They clink.

**SFX:** JAMES BROWN'S "SAY IT LOUD" scores...

INT. SKYLINE STUDIOS - MONDAY MORNING

"**SAY IT LOUD**" scores as we see a fabulous pair of shoes. They're not red bottoms but they're pretty fly. REVEAL, it's Kai, dressed in her Michelle Obama's best, rocking a full blown, neatly cut, curly, AFRO!

KAI (V.O.)  
I decided that from now on, I would  
no longer force myself to  
assimilate into what white culture  
deemed as 'executive' material.  
From now on, I would be  
unapologetically, Beyonce at the  
Super Bowl, Solange in the  
elevator, Black! And I had a few  
words for Benji!

Kai confidently walks across the studio hitting the Wakanda Salute to every PERSON OF COLOR she sees. They each give a nod of approval to her uncompromising confidence.

INT. CREATIVE AFFAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Feeling confident and proud Kai doesn't notice the frightened stares of her coworkers. Alyssa's eyes bulge. Jackie takes note, this smells like trouble to her...

INT. VERONICA'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Kai enters. Veronica is pleasantly, taken aback.

VERONICA  
Oh!

Benji rushes in.

BENJI  
Sorry I'm late.

He notices Kai's Afro.

BENJI (CONT'D)  
(genuinely spooked)  
Whoa!

**SFX:** RECORD SCRATCH!

KAI (V.O.)  
The fuck, he just say?

On Kai's insulted reaction, we:

CUT TO BLACK:

END OF SHOW