

UNTITLED NICKI MINAJ PILOT

Written by

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COLD OPEN:

INT. NICKI TALKS TO CAMERA - DAY

NICKI MINAJ, seated in a giant throne, talks to CAMERA. She wears a BLUE AND WHITE CHECKERED BODY SUIT, an ELABORATE WIG WITH LITTLE WHITE BOWS and RUBY RED, SEQUINED, 6-INCH PLATFORM BOOTS. She looks like Dorothy from THE WIZARD OF OZ if Dorothy were totally fucking bad-ass.

NICKI

I'm going to tell you a little story. It's a good story. An inspirational story. A mostly true story except for the parts that are not true. In The Wizard of Oz, when Dorothy gets lost, Glinda the Good Witch tells her to close her eyes and click her heels together and say, there's no place like home...

Nicki closes her eyes and clicks her ruby red boots together.

NICKI (CONT'D)

There's no place like home...
There's no place like home...
There's no place like home...

We expect something magical to happen. Something out of this world. But nothing does. Nicki opens her eyes.

NICKI (CONT'D)

What if you don't know where home is?

SMASH TO:

EXT. TRINIDAD - FLASHBACK

AERIAL SHOT of the ISLAND OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO.

NICKI (V.O.)

I was born here. In Trinidad.

PUSH IN past beaches and cities and towns and follow a long yellow dirt road until we find a LITTLE GIRL, 5. She wears a BLUE AND WHITE CHECKED SCHOOL GIRL UNIFORM, CORNROWS IN HER HAIR WITH LITTLE BOW BARRETTES, and dusty RUBY RED SCHOOL SHOES.

NICKI (V.O.)

That's me when I was a little girl.
I lived with my mom and dad until
they left for New York to try and
make a better life for us.

SFX the sound of an airplane flying overhead.

Nicki looks up with hope in her eyes. But the plane keeps going. She sighs and continues down the dusty road to:

CUT TO:

INT. GRANDMA'S HOUSE - FLASHBACK

The house is small and crowded with RELATIVES. Everyone is eating and drinking and watching TV, which is way too loud.

The CAMERA FINDS Nicki's GRANDMOTHER.

NICKI (V.O.)

That's my grandmother. She took
care of my brother and me while my
parents were trying to make enough
money to bring us over. She was
great, but it just wasn't the
same...

Nicki's grandmother hands her a POSTCARD OF THE STATUE OF LIBERTY.

INT. NICKI'S BEDROOM - FLASHBACK

Nicki sticks the postcard to the wall with a push pin.

PULL OUT to reveal that the whole wall is covered in push pins and POSTCARDS OF NEW YORK CITY.

ANGLE ON her bedside table, where we see a PHOTOGRAPH of Nicki and her brother, JAYSON, with her parents, GRACE and VINCENT. The picture was taken at the airport on the day they left. Everyone is full of big smiles.

Nicki picks up the photograph and studies it.

JAYSON (O.S.)

You're looking at that picture
again?

ANGLE ON Nicki's brother, JAYSON, 8, at the door.

NICKI

Why were we smiling? There wasn't
nothing to smile about that day.

Jayson sighs. He puts his arm around her.

JAYSON

They're coming for us, soon.
Grandma said so.

NICKI

It was supposed to be two months.
It's been two years.

JAYSON

That's because they're *killing* it
in New York City. They're probably
millionaires by now.

Jayson takes a postcard of Central Park's BELVEDERE CASTLE
off of the wall.

JAYSON (CONT'D)

When we get there, we're gonna live
in a place just like this.

They both look at Belvedere Castle and smile.

NICKI

Yeah, you're right. That's how
it's gonna be...

SMASH TO:

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - FLASHBACK/DREAM SEQUENCE

AERIAL SHOT of the ISLAND OF MANHATTAN.

PUSH IN past the East River and the Upper East Side and into
CENTRAL PARK where we find BELVEDERE CASTLE.

A white-gloved DOORMAN opens the door, and we push inside and
into the ornate elevator and up to the penthouse. Nicki and
Jayson smile as a BUTLER opens the doors to their new,
majestic life.

BUTLER

Sorry, kids. This is not *at all*
how it's gonna be.

SFX the sound of a RECORD SCRATCH.

SMASH TO:

EXT. JFK AIRPORT - NIGHT

Whipping wind and swirling snow -- Nicki and Jayson step into the freezing cold night. Grace and Vincent put their arms around them trying to keep them warm.

NICKI (V.O.)

I'll never forget that cold. The way it felt. The way it smelled. I never knew cold could be like that...

Vincent pushes them in the direction of a waiting limousine. Nicki and Jayson look at each other excitedly. But he pushes them past the limo towards the taxi line, and then past the taxi line to the bus stop.

And there they wait -- no bus, no shelter, huddled together against the cold.

NICKI

(to Jayson, sotto)

Will this take us to our castle?

SMASH TO:

INT. NICKI TALKS TO CAMERA - SAME

Nicki looks at us like we're crazy.

NICKI

There ain't no castles in New York City. And it wasn't even New York City. It was QUEENS!

SMASH TO:

EXT. QUEENS NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

AERIAL SHOT of QUEENS. PUSH IN past warehouses and vacant lots and low income housing and into a neighborhood with row-houses and KIDS playing in the street.

A SPRAY-PAINTED CHYRON tells us it is now 1995.

A passing KID WITH A BOOM BOX picks up our THEME SONG as we pass a church, a Korean Deli, a pawn shop and then we:

FIND NICKI, 13, and her crew, TASHA, KIMMY and DOUGH-BOY. Nicki wears baggie overalls over a BLUE AND WHITE CHECKERED FLANNEL, A BI-LEVEL HAIRCUT with a WHITE BOW, and RED HIGH TOPS. She looks at the camera and smiles.

INT. NICKI TALKS TO CAMERA - SAME

Nicki talks to camera.

NICKI

Okay, so it wasn't a castle and it wasn't New York City, but it wasn't the projects either. That was three blocks over. It was my new home, and it was the beginning of something big. We were finally all together, and we were happy.

PRELAP the sound of arguing.

NICKI (CONT'D)

Most of the time.

END OF COLD OPEN

ACT ONE

INT. NICKI'S HOUSE - NIGHT

GRACE and VINCENT, mid-30's, are arguing at the dinner table.

NICKI (V.O.)
That's my mom and dad arguing over
who should say grace.

WHIP TO NICKI, 13, and JAYSON, 15, with forks of mashed
potatoes and peas held frozen right at their mouths.

NICKI (V.O.)
That's me and Jay waiting to eat.

BACK TO Vincent and Grace.

VINCENT
Grace, if it's so important to you,
you say it.

GRACE
You're the man of the house. You
say it. Do I have to do *everything*
around here?

Nicki and Jayson put their forks down. This could take a
while.

VINCENT
Oh, please. I do plenty. Kids,
don't I do plenty?

NICKI
Yeah...sort of.

JAYSON
Define plenty...

VINCENT (CONT'D)
Did I or did I not patch the hole
in the bedroom wall today.

GRACE
That's because you punched a hole
in it!

VINCENT
Well, it's not gonna patch itself,
is it?

JAYSON
Goodbye warm mashed potatoes.
Goodbye warm peas...

NICKI

Oh, fine. I'll say grace.

Nicki speaks in an exaggerated gospel tone.

NICKI (CONT'D)

Oh, Lord, Lord, Lord. Please bless this delicious but increasingly lukewarm food. Bless this house, bless this family and...

(big fake sneeze)

God bless me.

Tension broken. The family starts to laugh.

NICKI (CONT'D)

No laughing! Praying is serious business, and I suggest we get down to gettin' down. Let's get down with some thanks. Can I hear a hell yeah?

GRACE/VINCENT

HELL YEAH!

JAYSON

Is *hell* really an appropriate grace term?

VINCENT

Quiet, boy. Let your sister do her thing.

JAYSON

We're never gonna eat...

NICKI

Let's all say what we're thankful for today. Mama. You first.

GRACE

Well, I'm thankful that Payless was having a sale, and I was able to get some new shoes for you kids.

NICKI

Pop?

VINCENT

I'm thankful that I got a new job, and now I can pay this month's rent.

He smiles at Grace and slaps a stack of cash on the table.

JAYSON

I'm thankful that Pop got a new job
so I can finally get Nintendo!

Jayson swipes the cash. Vincent shoots him a look. Jayson puts it back.

NICKI

And I'm thankful for my family, my
friends, my teachers, my great
voice, my fresh style, my all-
around amazingness, my--

GRACE

Amen. Let's eat.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Nicki and Grace clear the dishes. Grace calls out to Vincent in the living room.

GRACE

Vincent, you want coffee?

VINCENT (O.S.)

Uh...no thanks. Coffee's bad for
you.

GRACE

Coffee's bad for you? Since when?

Grace grabs the coffee and measures out a scoop. She goes to pour it into the machine but ends up pouring it right onto the counter.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Where's my coffee maker?

Nicki's eyes widen. She knows what this means.

GRACE (CONT'D)

VINCENT!

Grace storms into the living room. Vincent backs up, afraid.

VINCENT

Coffee raises your blood pressure.
You know that, right? And makes
you irritable and--

GRACE

You don't have a new job. You're
selling our stuff again for money.

(MORE)

GRACE (CONT'D)

You better not have sold my VCR.
My Guiding Light Tape's in there.
Reva Shane came back from the dead
today, but you will not.

She opens the media cabinet. The VCR is still there. Grace takes a deep breath and lets it out.

VINCENT

See how labored your breathing is?
That's the coffee!
(off her look of death)
Okay, I'll get it back.

Trying to diffuse the situation, Nicki opens the PAYLESS BOX and reverts to the gospel tone.

NICKI

*Oh, Lordy-Lordy-Lord. Look at my
new boots. Praise Je-SUS.*

GRACE

That was cute the first time. Now
it's just annoying.

She crosses off.

MUSIC CUE: "JOY AND PAIN" by Rob Base and DJ E-Z Rock.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ELIZABETH BLACKWELL MIDDLE SCHOOL - NEXT DAY

"JOY AND PAIN" CONTINUES and, just as the drums kick in, we see Nicki walking to the beat in her new, funky-fresh boots.

ANGLE ON the entrance to ELIZABETH BLACKWELL MIDDLE SCHOOL.

NICKI (V.O.)

That was my school.

ANGLE ON Tasha, Kimmy and Dough-Boy (who sits on a GIANT BOOMBOX).

NICKI (V.O.)

Those were my peeps.

PUSH IN on the boom box, blaring "JOY AND PAIN".

NICKI (V.O.)

And that was my jam. It was a
perfect day.

Nicki reaches her friends and does a few dance moves to highlight her new boots.

DOUGH-BOY
Nice kicks, Nick. *I approve.*

NICKI
Thanks, Dough-Boy.

DOUGH-BOY
It's D.B. now. I lost 5 pounds.

TASHA
Where. In your dreams?

NICKI
Don't listen to her, D.B. You look good.
(then, re boots)
So, what do you think? Pretty fly, right?

KIMMY
They look like those Fila ones.

NICKI
I know! You can't even tell they're Payless.

Nicki does "the Running man" while pointing at her boots.

NICKI (CONT'D)
Uh-huh...that's right. I got these kicks last night. Uh-huh...that's--
(then, stops dead)
Uch. Look.

ANGLE ON a WHITE LIMOUSINE slowly rolling up to school.

NICKI (CONT'D)
She can't walk three blocks?

TASHA
I wouldn't walk if I had a limo.

DOUGH-BOY
She doesn't *have* a limo. Her dad *drives* a limo. Big difference.

TASHA
Does *your* dad drive a limo? Oh, wait, you don't have a dad.

Dough-Boy pretends to tackle Tasha. She screams and laughs.

NICKI

Whatever. I'm not gonna let her ruin my good mood. Because...

(launches into dance)

Uh huh, that's right. I got these kicks last. Uh, huh, that's...

(then)

Aw, hell no!

WHIP BACK TO LIMO as SPLENDID RADIANCE WHITE, 13, emerges. She's a plus sized girl, proudly squeezed head-to-toe into designer duds.

PUSH IN on her boots. They look like Nicki's, except better.

SMASH TO:

INT. NICKI TALKS TO CAMERA - DAY

Nicki shakes her head.

NICKI

Splendid Radiance White. Don't be fooled by the name. She was the meanest, nastiest girl in the world, and I'm not saying that because I was jealous that she rode in a limo, or had nice clothes, or took dance lessons, or had a voice coach. She was just mean, inside and out. And now she had Fila boots. FILA BOOTS! With the fur and the leather and the Fila. And mine were Payless knock-offs.

(sighs)

Well, maybe she wouldn't notice.

BACK TO:

EXT. ELIZABETH BLACKWEL MIDDLE SCHOOL - SAME

Nicki and Splendid are now face-to-face.

SPLENDID

Nice boots.

Splendid touches Nicki's Payless with the toe of her Fila. Nicki kicks it away. Splendid smiles. Her teeth are all jacked up.

NICKI

Do us a favor, don't smile.

SPLENDID

Well, at least no cows were killed making your boots...on account of them not being real leather and all.

NICKI

They're real.

SPLENDID

Real ugly.

NICKI

If anyone knows anything about *real ugly*, it's you.

Nicki's crew laughs. Splendid walks off, smiling.

SPLENDID

Enjoy your Payless life.

TASHA/KIMMY

You gonna let her talk to you like that, Nic? That's just wrong.

NICKI

Step aside.

Nicki steps forward and calls out a rhyme on the fly.

NICKI (CONT'D)

*My life's not Payless.
My life's not Way-less.
My life's not less than or worse
than or a mess.
I'm a girl in this world destined
for Great-ness.
Unlike you, I don't need a shoe
to make up for my grill
that makes people ill.*

Nicki's crew cheers.

NICKI (CONT'D)

Keep stepping, Splendid.

SPLENDID

I will. In my Fila boots.

NICKI

Get over yourself. I'm getting those boots any day. I'm just waiting for Foot Locker to get a new shipment.

Splendid turns. And drops her own kind of bomb.

SPLENDID
Your mother could afford Fila
boots?

SMASH TO:

INT. NICKI TALKS TO CAMERA - DAY

Nicki stands like she's ready to fight.

NICKI
Bitch please...you *know* my mama
could afford Fila boots. Who do
you think you are with that donkey
mouth? Can't your mother afford
braces? Maybe my mother could lend
her the money after she buys me
some Fila boots.

BACK TO:

INT. NICKI'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Nicki and Grace sit on the family couch.

GRACE
I can't afford Fila boots! Are you
crazy? And what person in their
right mind buys a kid Fila Boots?
They're \$75!

NICKI
Splendid has them.

GRACE
If they've got so much money, how
come her mama don't fix her teeth?

NICKI
That's what I said!

GRACE
Honey, Fila ain't nothing but a
label. You're better than that.
(then, standing)
Okay, gotta get ready for bible
study.

Grace crosses off.

INT. JAYSON'S ROOM - NIGHT

Nicki ENTERS to find Jayson on the edge of his bed, staring at a blank television screen.

NICKI

Do you have \$75 I could borrow?

JAYSON

I'm playing pretend Super Mario Brothers on a broken TV with a fake joystick. Do I look like I have \$75?

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Nicki finds Vincent in the living room.

NICKI

Do you have \$75 I could borrow?

VINCENT

What do you got for me?

He smiles. Nicki jumps in his arms and gives him a hug.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

Oh, yeah. That's worth \$75 at least. Maybe more...

He takes a wad of bills from his pocket. Grace ENTERS from the bedroom.

GRACE

Damn it, Vincent! You sold my gold bamboo earrings? I haven't even finished paying them off yet!

She swipes the cash out of his hand and EXITS.

NICKI

(back to Vincent)
Maybe tomorrow?

EXT. CHURCH - NIGHT

Grace approaches the church while reapplying lipstick. She runs into her friend, SHIRLEY LEE, mid-30's, who is carrying a box of wine, and MONIQUE, mid-30's, who's breasts are pushed up to her chin by a MIRACLE BRA.

GRACE

Did your boobs grow boobs?

MONIQUE

It's a Miracle Bra. It's new from
Victoria's Secret.

PASTOR WILLIAMS, 30, approaches. The ladies straighten up
and smile. Monique sticks out her chest.

MONIQUE (CONT'D)

Hi, Pastor Williams.

PASTOR WILLIAMS

(to her breasts)

Good evening, ladies.

And then he catches himself and looks away, embarrassed.

MONIQUE

Works better than I thought.

INT. CHURCH BASEMENT - LATER

A group of ladies sit in a circle (Grace, Monique, Shirley,
and others.) Pastor Williams reads from his bible, while the
ladies talk over him and drink wine.

PASTOR WILLIAMS

*He who walks with the wise, grows
wise, but a companion of fools,
suffers harm...*

GRACE

I'm a companion of a fool.
Vincent's gambling again.

The ladies voice their disappointment.

SHIRLEY

I'm sorry to tell you -- he's
buying Scratchers at the deli.

GRACE

Why are you selling him Scratchers!
I bust my ass all day answering
phones so he can gamble it away?

PASTOR WILLIAMS

(clears his throat)

Proverbs 13:20. Are you with me?

SHIRLEY

We make our money from liquor and lottery tickets. If we don't sell to everyone around here who has a problem, we'd be broke!

GRACE

Some friend you are, Shirley.

PASTOR WILLIAMS

Good. Let's talk about friendship. Let's turn to John 15:12. *Love each other as I have loved you...*

MONIQUE

I love that passage, Pastor Williams. Keep reading.

PASTOR WILLIAMS

Thank you, Sister Mo--

She leans over (showing cleavage) to pour him some wine. Pastor Williams looks away, embarrassed.

PASTOR WILLIAMS (CONT'D)

Ladies, we are a community, and what effects one of us, effects us all. Let's pray for our brother Vincent. And let's pray for everyone who needs a little extra help tonight. Let's bow our heads--

They do. And then HONEY-BEAR, 30, enters on a tear.

HONEY-BEAR

Sorry I'm late, Pastor Williams.
(then, to Grace)
I have a bone to pick with you. My daughter's at home crying because Nicki called her ugly.

GRACE

And my daughter's at home crying because Splendid called her poor.

And then all hell breaks loose.

HONEY-BEAR

That's a lie! Splendid Radiance would never say that. Splendid is the kindest, nicest kid on the block.

GRACE

Why are you buying her Fila boots? Splendid is mean enough as it is, don't give her something to make her think she's all that.

PASTOR WILLIAMS
Ladies! Please!

Pastor Williams slams his bible shut.

PASTOR WILLIAMS (CONT'D)
That's it! This group is fractured. And if the moms are fractured, the community is fractured. And if our community is fractured, then we're all broken. So it's time to bring everyone back together.

The ladies look up in fear.

GRACE
Oh, no. Not a Block Party.

PASTOR WILLIAMS
Yes, ma'am.

All of the ladies groan and complain.

PASTOR WILLIAMS (CONT'D)
Let's start forming committees. Who's bringing food? Who's manning the booths?
(then, pointed)
I nominate Grace and Honey-Bear for the barbecue.

GRACE
Oh, come on! I just got my hair done.

HONEY-BEAR
Me, too!

Monique leans over Pastor Williams again, her breasts exploding out of her shirt.

MONIQUE
I think it's a wonderful idea, Pastor Williams.

PASTOR WILLIAMS
For Heaven's sake, Monique, put those things away. This is a house of God.

He EXITS as we:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. NICKI'S HOUSE - NEXT MORNING

The family is at the breakfast table. Grace and Vincent are arguing.

GRACE

Just say grace already.

VINCENT

You say it.

GRACE

Why? Is your mouth too tired from all the lies you been telling? Is this your new job, Vincent?

(mimes scratching)

Scratching lottery tickets?

NICKI

(jumping in)

Dear heavenly father. Please bless this food and bless this family and especially my parents who love each other very much no matter what.

JAYSON

And, also, thank you for bringing us a Block Party this weekend. God bless the Block Party. Amen.

Everyone turns to Jayson.

VINCENT

God bless the Block Party?

JAYSON

Yes! Block Parties are the bomb! There's music and the girls get all dressed up and look nice.

(then, to Nicki)

Tasha will be there, right?

NICKI

Ew. Gross.

(then)

I'm not going to the Block Party. And not just because the idea of you and Tasha is nasty.

JAYSON

Why aren't you going?

NICKI

'Cuz I don't have Fila Boots yet.

GRACE

Honey. Give up on those boots. Even if we could afford them, I'd never buy something so extravagant for a child.

NICKI

Fine. I'll buy them myself. Can I be excused? I gotta get a job.

Nicki stands and EXITS. Grace calls after her.

GRACE

If you find a job, see if there's an extra one for your dad!

VINCENT

You know, I'm sitting right here.

GRACE

Yeah, that's the point.

Vincent shakes his head and then starts eating. And then he turns to Jayson with a smile.

VINCENT

So you like Tasha now, huh?

EXT. FRONT STOOP - LATER

Nicki hangs out on the front stoop with her crew.

TASHA

So how are you gonna get a job?

NICKI

I don't know. How hard can it be?

DOUGH-BOY

Judging by the Food Stamps line this morning, must be pretty hard.

NICKI

I have an idea. Watch this.

She grabs Dough-Boy's hat and throws it on the ground.

NICKI (CONT'D)

Gimme a beat, Dough-Boy.

DOUGH-BOY

It's D.B. now, remember?

He starts beatboxing. And he's great. Nicki waits for a group of PEOPLE TO PASS BY and then throws out some rhymes.

NICKI

My name is Nicki and I'm here to say. I need some cash, I'll make it any which way. Walk your dog. Feed your cat. Watch your kid as long as he's not a brat. I may be young, I may be brash, I do what it takes to make that caaaash.

A MAN tosses a quarter into the cap. Nicki picks it up.

NICKI (CONT'D)

A whole quarter? Thank you so much!

MR. PETE, the neighborhood homeless guy, shuffles by with his shopping cart. Nicki puts the quarter in his cup.

NICKI (CONT'D)

Here you go, Mr. Pete.

MR. PETE

What the hell am I gonna do with that?

He shakes his head and walks on. Nicki's friends crack up.

TASHA

Give it up, Nic. No one around here has any money.

KIMMY

What about Miss Martha? She won \$10,000 on a Lotto ticket one time. My parents have a picture of her at the deli.

ANGLE ON a dilapidated house on the corner.

NICKI

I don't know...that house looks haunted.

As they stare at the dilapidated house in fear, we hear a CAR HONK. The kids scream and jump.

NICKI (CONT'D)

What the...

WHIP TO the dreaded WHITE LIMO, IN SLO MO, rolling towards them. The kids groan as the back window slowly goes down.

NICKI (CONT'D)

This is worse than a drive-by.

SPLENDID

(from inside limo)

Hey, Nicki. Got your Fila's yet?

(then)

Didn't think so...

The limo glides past. But Splendid's laugh lingers. Nicki takes off towards Miss Martha's house.

NICKI

I'm going in! If I don't come back, call 911.

EXT. MISS MARTHA'S HOUSE - DAY

Nicki takes a deep breath and then knocks on the door.

MISS MARTHA (O.S.)

Who's there! What do you want?

MISS MARTHA, 70s, opens the door a crack. Nicki peers inside.

NICKI

Whoa.

The house is completely cluttered with stuff -- boxes, trunks, clothing racks of elaborate costumes. Everything is in disarray. Nicki sees all this and then gets an idea.

NICKI (CONT'D)

Hi! I'm from the cleaning service on Archer Avenue. I'm your housekeeper for the day.

MISS MARTHA

You're not a housekeeper. You're Grace's daughter from up the street.

NICKI

And...I am also a housekeeper who cleans houses for the low, low, low price of \$75. Let's get started!

Nicki pushes her way in and starts tidying up. She grabs a VICTORIAN WIG from a shelf and uses it as a feather duster.

MISS MARTHA

But...I don't need a housekeeper.

Nicki puts the wig on her head and turns around dramatically.

NICKI

(British accent)

But I believe you do, Ma'am.
Please let me help you today.

MISS MARTHA

Can you take that off, please? I
take my wigs very seriously.

Nicki does. Miss Martha looks at Nicki. She looks at her
for a long time. And then...

MISS MARTHA (CONT'D)

Okay, little miss whoever you are,
I might have a job for you. Follow
me...

Nicki's eyes light up.

EXT. MISS MARTHA'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

They stand on the sidewalk staring at GRAFFITI on the side of
the house.

MISS MARTHA

You see this graffiti? I hate it.
This ain't the projects. That's
three blocks that way. I'll pay
you five bucks to clean it.

NICKI

You will?!

SMASH TO:

INT. NICKI TALKS TO CAMERA - SAME

Nicki, WEARING THE VICTORIAN WIG, holds up five ones and fans
herself.

NICKI

Heeey!

MUSIC CUE: "ME MYSELF AND I" by de la Soul.

BACK TO:

EXT. MISS MARTHA'S HOUSE - LATER

BEGIN MUSICAL MONTAGE of Nicki cleaning graffiti. It's hard work but Nicki is determined.

--NEIGHBORS pass by and admire her work.

--She gets hired to do another house.

--She makes a sign "NO NEEDY YO' GRAFFITI? CALL NICKI!"

--Nicki cleans graffiti for the rest of the day.

SMASH TO:

INT. NICKI TALKS TO CAMERA - SAME

Nicki "makes it rain" with one dollar bills.

NICKI

Heeeey!

BACK TO:

EXT. FRONT STOOP - EVENING

Nicki and Grace, coming from opposite directions, meet up on the front stoop. Grace has a Blockbuster bag.

GRACE

Hey! How'd you do?

Nicki holds up a handful of cash.

GRACE (CONT'D)

That's my girl!

She gives Nicki a high five and then puts her arm around her.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Let's put up our feet and watch a movie. I'm beat.

NICKI

Me, too. Working is no joke.

GRACE

Tell me about it.

They walk up the steps and into the house.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

It's later in the evening. Jayson and Grace are in the kitchen, while Nicki counts her money on the couch. Vincent watches with pride.

NICKI

...thirty-six, thirty-seven, thirty-eight, thirty-nine.

VINCENT

You made \$39 today? That's really something.

NICKI

(a beat, realizing)

It's not enough. I need \$75.

VINCENT

There's always tomorrow.

NICKI

There's no more graffiti. I cleaned the whole neighborhood.

VINCENT

You'll think of something. You always do. You're special like that, Nicki.

(then)

Come here. How'd you get so amazing?

He pulls her in for a hug.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

Oh, right. You got my DNA. You feel it? That's good DNA right there.

Nicki laughs. Vincent kisses her on the forehead. As he does, Jayson pushes through with a bowl of popcorn.

JAYSON

Excuse me, pardon me, excuse me...

VINCENT

What's going on?

JAYSON

MOVIE NIGHT!

He jumps onto the couch. Nicki's dollar bills go flying.

NICKI

Hey!

JAYSON

Sorry. This is my spot.

Grace ENTERS from the kitchen with more snacks.

GRACE

Hey, Vincent. Come sit. It's movie night.

VINCENT

I have an idea. What about family game night? We could play Pictionary or Trivial Pursuit.

(off their looks)

Or how about we just talk? Let's talk and enjoy each other's company. Or listen to records. Or whistle! Who knows how to whistle?

He starts to whistle. Grace closes her eyes.

GRACE

If that VCR is gone, so help me God...

She storms to the media cabinet flings open the doors. The VCR is there but the TV is not.

NICKI

(trying to be positive)

Look! The VCR's still there. Yay!

Grace throws the tray of snacks on the ground.

GRACE

I've had it! Everyone in this family is working their ass off but you!

VINCENT

I'm working. It's just a different kind of work.

GRACE

Gambling is not working.

VINCENT

(pleading)

I'm gonna get lucky soon, baby. I just know it.

GRACE

No you're not! You never get lucky! The only lucky thing you got is us! And you're about to lose that, too! If you sell one more thing I am picking up the kids and LEAVING!

She goes to her room and SLAMS THE DOOR behind her.

Vincent goes out the front and SLAMS it behind him.

Nicki and Jayson look at each other. A long beat, and then:

JAYSON

Come on. Let's go play Nintendo.

INT. JAYSON'S ROOM - LATER

Nicki and Jayson sit on the bed facing the broken TV. Jayson holds his pretend joystick and plays "Nintendo."

JAYSON

You want a turn?

Nicki shakes her head.

NICKI

Are we as poor as Splendid says we are?

Jayson presses "pause" on the game. He sighs.

JAYSON

Poor is what you make of it, Nicki. If you think we're poor. We're poor. If you think you have the latest Nintendo and you're the all-time reigning king of Super Mario Brothers, then you are.

NICKI

(a beat, then)
So we're really poor, huh.

He goes back to his game.

JAYSON

Yeah. We're stupid poor.

INT. NICKI'S BEDROOM - LATER

ON Nicki's bedside table, we see the old postcard of BELVEDERE CASTLE. Nicki stares at it while lying in bed in the dark.

Grace ENTERS. She stands at the door for a beat, and then gets in bed next to Nicki.

GRACE

When we lived in Trinidad, we all slept in the same bed. Do you remember that?

Nicki shakes her head no.

GRACE (CONT'D)

I used to hold you like this. One of the hardest things about leaving was sleeping without you. I missed you so much. My heart was broken.

Grace's eyes tear up.

GRACE (CONT'D)

But I knew I had to do it so we could have a better life. And I know we're not there yet, but I'm *trying*. I am *trying*. It kills me that I can't buy you everything you want, but I am so proud of what you did today. You worked your fingers to the bone, and you made thirty-nine dollars all by yourself.

Grace turns Nicki towards her. Her eyes filled with pride.

GRACE (CONT'D)

You are my daughter.

Nicki's eyes tear up.

NICKI

I worked my ass off all day, and I'm still thirty-six dollars short. I am your daughter.

ON Grace's look we:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. NICKI'S BEDROOM - MORNING

It's morning. Nicki gets out of bed, walks to the bathroom and starts to brush her teeth. While looking in the mirror, she sees the REFLECTION OF THE WINDOW BEHIND HER.

NICKI (V.O.)

Remember snow days? Remember how that felt? The excitement of running to the window and seeing something so magical that happened while you were asleep.

With a mouth full of toothpaste, Nicki SCREAMS and runs to the window.

NICKI (V.O.)

Well, it wasn't snow, but it was just as exciting. And it was *everywhere...*

PUSH THROUGH the window where we see that the whole neighborhood is COVERED IN GRAFFITI.

EXT. NICKI'S NEIGHBORHOOD - MOMENTS LATER

NEIGHBORS walk around, confused. How could this happen? Pastor Williams walks through the streets shaking his head.

PASTOR WILLIAMS

Why, Father, why? Why must you test me like this?

Nicki RUNS BY with her turpentine and her rags.

NICKI

Don't worry, Pastor Williams, I GOT THIS!

SMASH TO:

INT. NICKI TALKS TO CAMERA - SAME

Nicki sits in a blizzard of dollar bills.

NICKI

Heeeeeeeeeeeey!

BACK TO:

INT. FOOTLOCKER - LATER

Nicki runs into Footlocker with a fist full of cash. In a series of QUICK CUTS we see her dream come true:

--She tries on the boots.

--She hugs the boots.

--She hugs the SALESGIRL who's selling the boots.

--She pays for the boots.

--She EXITS with the boots.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - MOMENTS LATER

Nicki runs all the way home with the SHOE BOX under her arm. She runs right by THE CHURCH where the ladies are setting up the Block Party.

ON GRACE as she pours charcoal into the giant barbecue. She looks up as Nicki runs past. She breaks into a huge smile.

GRACE
That's my girl.

INT. NICKI'S HOUSE - DAY

Nicki races through the front door. She rips open the box and sits down on the couch to put them on. But instead of landing on the couch, she lands SMACK ON THE FLOOR.

The couch is gone.

SMASH TO:

INT. NICKI TALKS TO CAMERA - SAME

Nicki shakes her head. She goes to say something but can't. She just shakes her head.

BACK TO:

INT. NICKI'S HOUSE - SAME

Nicki is still sitting on the floor. She blinks her eyes a few times, trying to process what just happened. After a few moments, she gets up, dusts herself off and puts the boots back in the box.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Nicki walks back through the neighborhood with the SHOE BOX. Once again, she walks right by the CHURCH where we see everyone getting ready for the Block Party.

ANGLE ON Grace at the barbecue, who sees Nicki walking with the shoe box under her arm. She looks confused.

EXT. FLOYD'S PAWN SHOP - MOMENTS LATER

Nicki walks towards Floyd's Pawn shop.

ANGLE ON the familiar blue couch, right in the window.

INT. FLOYD'S PAWN SHOP - MOMENTS LATER

Nicki ENTERS and approaches FLOYD at the counter.

NICKI
(re couch)
I need that back.

She puts the Fila Boot box on the counter and pushes it towards him. And then she goes to the couch and lies facedown on it.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - SAME

Nicki is still facedown on the couch.

PULL BACK to reveal Floyd and a CO-WORKER carrying the couch back to Nicki's house. Nicki rides facedown the whole way.

NICKI (V.O.)
There are some moments in life that make you who you are. This was one of those moments. I still remember the smell of that couch. It smelled like failure. It smelled like no matter what you do, you don't have enough. It smelled like Jayson's ass because my face was in his spot. But it didn't matter. I couldn't walk home. I couldn't let them see me cry.

They pass right by the WHITE LIMO. Splendid stands up through the sun roof and watches the couch pass by.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Nicki is still facedown on the couch.

NICKI (V.O.)
But I knew I couldn't give up. My
mama never gave up. I would just
have to start over.

Nicki finally sits up.

MUSIC CUE: "CHANGES" by Tupac Shakur.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - LATER

BEGIN MUSICAL MONTAGE of Nicki trying to make money again.

--She rakes leaves for Miss Martha.

--She sweeps in front of A-1 deli for Shirley.

--She raps on the corner with Dough-Boy.

--She shakes out her PIGGIE BANK, which is empty.

END MUSICAL MONTAGE

INT. JAYSON'S ROOM - LATER

Nicki ENTERS to find Jayson playing "Nintendo."

JAYSON
I heard what happened today.
Sorry.

Nicki shrugs.

NICKI
Can I clean your room for a dollar?

JAYSON
I don't have any money, but I could
pay you on layaway.

Nicki starts to clean his room. She makes his bed, cleans his desk and puts his shoes in the closet. When she gets to the closet she stops.

NICKI
What the hell?

The closet is full of SPRAY PAINT CANS. She turns to Jayson, confused. Jayson doesn't say anything. He just kind of shrugs. Nicki looks at him. She can't believe it.

NICKI (CONT'D)

That was you?

She runs to him and gives him a hug.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Nicki and Jayson ENTER to find Grace and Vincent talking in hushed tones. When Grace sees the kids, her face softens. She holds out her arms.

GRACE

Come on, kids. Let's go to the Block Party. It's starting.

NICKI

I don't feel like--

GRACE

We're all going. As a family.

Nicki looks at Vincent. He looks down, ashamed.

VINCENT

Come on, Jay. Let's go.

Vincent and Jayson head out. Nicki reluctantly follows, but Grace stops her.

GRACE

I know what you did. I know he sold that couch, and I know how you got it back.

Nicki's eyes fill with tears. She hangs her head. Grace picks her head back up.

GRACE (CONT'D)

You have always done whatever it takes to keep this family together. You are my daughter.

(then)

And let me tell you something...you may not have everything you want right now like designer boots and limos, but you will. You will have everything you want and more because you are *special*. You are *somebody*. I believe in you, Nicki.

(MORE)

GRACE (CONT'D)

And so does your father. Don't ever forget that.

NICKI

Don't be mad at Dad. And don't make us leave. This is our home.

GRACE

(softening)

Don't worry about your father. I'll take care of him.

EXT. BLOCK PARTY - DUSK

CLOSE ON a billows of smoke pouring out of the barbecue.

PULL BACK to reveal Vincent in a chef's hat and apron. No matter how many times he wipes his brow, it doesn't matter. There's so much smoke. He coughs and fans his face as the PEOPLE line up and wait for food.

Away from the smoke, we find Grace and Honey-Bear watching with great satisfaction.

GRACE

Well...it's only one day, but at least he finally got a job.

HONEY-BEAR

And we didn't get smoked.

They touch their tidy, smoke-free hair-dos as we:

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BLOCK PARTY - LATER

MUSIC CUE: "HIP HOP HOORAY" by Naughty by Nature

The sun is setting and we are WIDE on a fantastic block party. There are games and food and a BOUNCE HOUSE. The whole neighborhood is there and they are dancing and eating and bonding as a community.

Pastor Williams stands there and smiles. Monique, in her Miracle Bra, approaches with a plate of barbecue chicken. She leans towards him, showing her cleavage.

MONIQUE

I got you some nice juicy breasts,
Pastor Williams.

PASTOR WILLIAMS

No, thanks. I'm really more of a
leg man.

He walks away, leaving Monique stewing.

We FOLLOW PASTOR WILLIAMS past the barbecue area where we see Grace take pity on Vincent and put on an apron to help him.

Pastor Williams keeps walking, past the bounce house, where we see Nicki, Jayson, Tasha, Kimmy, Dough-Boy and Splendid singing and bouncing inside.

KIDS

Hip hop hooraaaaay...hoooo, heeey.
Hip hop hooraaaaay...

SMASH TO:

INT. NICKI TALKS TO CAMERA - SAME

Nicki talks to camera.

NICKI

There's no place like home. That
was home. That moment. That time.
Those people. It wasn't easy, but
we had each other...

BACK TO:

EXT. BOUNCE HOUSE - SAME

All of the kids' shoes are lined up right outside of the bounce house. Nicki's Payless boots are right next to Splendid's Fila ones. Until...

ANGLE ON a boy swiping her Fila boots and running.

SPLENDID

Hey! Someone took my boots!
Come back! Bring those back!

PUSH IN the bounce house where we see Splendid stumbling and falling trying to get out to save her boots. Nicki and her friends laugh and point as Splendid flails. Jayson even tries to get an arm around Tasha, which she swats away.

NICKI (V.O.)

Jayson was right. Poor is what you
make of it.

(MORE)

NICKI (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Maybe there was a castle in New
York after all. And you know who
was the queen.

PULL BACK to REVEAL that the Bounce House is actually a
BOUNCEY CASTLE. And inside the castle, there's Nicki, jumping
just a little bit higher than everyone else. She turns to us
and smiles. And we FREEZE.

FADE OUT:

END OF SHOW