STREET DREAMS

Pilot: "The World is Yours"
Written by Jonathan Levine
Based Upon the Life and Music of Nasir "Nas" Jones
July 10, 2015

Electric City Entertainment
8322 Beverly Blvd, Suite 201
Los Angeles, CA 90048
323.654.7800
FROM BLACK

We streak over Manhattan to the plaintive opening chords of the Chili Peppers’ “Under the Bridge”—early 90’s, radio-friendly, white as fuck. Camera hurtles through the Financial District, where the Twin Towers stand tall, and up through the Village, to Central Park.

VOICE (O.S.)
Gooooood mornin’ New York! Scott Shannon, WPLJ, here on a beautiful morning in the Tri-State area. Spring is here! So get outside and enjoy yourselves, people! Unless you’re a squeegee man, in which case you can stay home, because Mayor Giuliani has announced a zero tolerance--

We zoom east, toward the 59th Street Bridge, AKA

THE QUEENSBORO BRIDGE

We streak across it, and DJ Red Alert’s voice rises on the soundtrack just as Shannon’s fades away. Red Alert represents a different kind of NYC: the outer boroughs. Hip hop.

VOICE (O.S.) (CONT’D)
New York City! This is Kool DJ Red Alert commin’ atcha on the 1s and 2s. You make ‘em, I play ‘em! Next up, we got Pete Rock and CL Smooth--

“They Reminisce Over You” swells. As our camera skims the East River. Up, up and away toward the Queensbridge Houses, a campus of uniform, gray buildings that slice a sharp line through the streets of Queens. And a super:

“QUEENSBRIDGE HOUSES.

Largest Public Housing Development in North America. Spring, 1992”

CL Smooth’s voice disappears from the track, leaving only Pete Rock’s beat. As we push in on one Queensbridge apartment in particular. Apartment 5D. From the outside, it’s just like any other. But within...

INSERT on a BOOMBOX. A hand plugs a janky MIC into a jack, presses PLAY on one deck, PLAY and RECORD on another deck. A Maxell tape with the words “KID WAVE DEMO” scribbled on it begins to rotate on its heads. ECU on a pair of lips,
Spitting RAP LYRICS with rapid-fire intensity. Complex rhymes, unique technique, and a flow that breathes hunger.

This is NASIR JONES (17). And he’s on a roll:

NASIR
Jesus cursed me since a fetus/Churches mislead us/
Stephen King's pen, New Benz my feet up/Like a magic carpet float thru the Sahara--

Until a VOICE interrupts him:

VOICE (O.S.)
Man, shut the fuck up! I’m trying to sleep!

POP OUT to reveal Nasir in MCU. He’s handsome, soft features framed by short dreads. He’s dressed in Champion sweatshirt, Karl Kani jeans. We’re in his childhood bedroom, where he huddles in the corner over a boombox. He looks to his little brother, JUNGLE (14), in the top bunk of a bunk bed. The source of this annoyed voice:

NASIR
Your ass shoulda been up an hour ago. Real quick, tell me what you think of this--

Nasir proceeds to SPIT A FEW MORE VERSES:

NASIR (CONT’D)
I do it my way/Like comrade Che-
Guevara./On 95-I high-way cops with scanners/They locked my man up /Streets is hot as the closest planet to the sun is--

Jungle turns away from his brother, to our camera:

JUNGLE
(mouths)
Daaaaamn...

NASIR
What you think?

He turns back to his brother, adopts a poker face:

JUNGLE
Gotta be honest--it’s kinda wack.
NASIR
You serious?

JUNGLE
Yeah. Sorry. It’s alright, but you know, I was thinkin, maybe you should hit up my friend Gary’s cousin William. He’s a rap producer and he goes to John Baum high school and he’s supposed to be crazy dope. I told him all about you. I said, “My brother’s alright, but he could use some help. A little guidance.”

Nasir looks at his little brother. He doesn’t need any help from a 14-year-old:

NASIR
I’m cool.

JUNGLE
If you’re so cool, then stop wakin’ me up with that weak-ass bullshit.

Jungle pulls the covers over his head. And Nasir looks at his brother, annoyed. Turns the music WAY up.

JUNGLE (CONT’D)
Man! Come on!

And now, JANET, the boys’ mom, opens the door. She’s in her late 40’s, with a pretty, serene face and a no-bullshit demeanor.

JANET
Turn that down.

Nasir immediately complies.

JANET (CONT’D)
Breakfast is in the kitchen. I am so late.
(kisses him goodbye)
That the sweatshirt I bought you?
(off his nod)
Handsome.

Janet pulls the covers off Jungle:

JUNGLE
Hey!
JANET
I want you out of this house in 20 minutes.
   (gives Jungle a kiss)
Don’t be late for school again.

JUNGLE
Dad says we’re smarter than the teachers and we don’t even have to
go to school if we don’t want to.
He gave me this book by W.E.B. Dubois and said I should learn that
instead. He says that the school system is broken for young black men.

JANET
Well, in this house, young black men go to school.

And with that, she’s gone. Jungle looks at his brother:

NASIR
You heard her, Jungle...

Jungle shuffles to the bathroom. Nasir watches to make sure mom is gone, takes off the Champion sweatshirt, revealing a Nautica polo and a giant GOLD ROPE.

Nasir opens his top drawer, slides his socks and underwear out of the way to reveal a GLOCK. Nasir grabs the gun, tucks it into the waistband of his jeans. He throws on his ARMY JACKET.

NASIR (CONT’D)
Time for school.

WE FREEZE ON HIM:

NASIR (V.O.)
It’s like my boy Henry Hill said:
As far back as I can remember I
always wanted to be a gangster.

EXT. QUEENSBRIDGE PROJECTS - DAY

Nasir and Jungle walk across the basketball courts of the Queensbridge projects. It’s early morning. The sun is shining bright:

NASIR (V.O.)
It was the first nice day of the year.

(MORE)
That’s like a holiday in New York City. Soon as the sun comes out and the temperature hits 70...

CLOSE ON an IRON moving in precise alignment over a POLO.

NASIR (V.O.)
That’s when motherfuckers break out their flyest gear.

CLOSE ON cleavage in a tanktop. A bead of sweat forming on a sunsoaked breast.

NASIR
That’s when girls start rockin’ their tanktops. Even the crackheads have smiles on their faces today...

CLOSE ON a THRONG of CRACKHEAD ZOMBIES, shuffling across the asphalt. Nasir and Jungle walk past them. Nasir keeps his eyes low, but Jungle can’t help but look at a couple CRACKED-OUT MOTHERFUCKERS getting into a CRAZY BRAWL.

NASIR (V.O.)
Some of them, at least.

Jungle looks at the crackheads, starts pointing and laughing:

JUNGLE
Yoyo! Check it out!

NASIR
Don’t clown them.

JUNGLE
So fucking stupid.

One crackhead STABS another with a bottle.

NASIR
Keep moving. Look down.

Jungle and Nasir pass a New York Post vending machine. On the front cover, Rudy Giuliani. On the back, Patrick Ewing. They reach the North Tower, stop at the base, look up, as Nasir calls:

NASIR (CONT’D)
Ayo, Will!

Immediately, a window swings open on the third floor, and WILL, 17, charismatic as fuck, looks down, smiles a dangerous smile:
WILL
(breathes in)
Damn. It’s mad nice out.

FREEZE ON Will.

NASIR (V.O.)
That’s my best friend Will. If any shit goes down in your life, Will’s the dude you want in your corner. He had the heart of a lion. He wasn’t afraid of nothin’.

INT. WILL’S ROOM - DAY

Wall-to-wall POSTERS: “New Jack City”, Brand Nubian, Big Daddy Kane. Will opens his drawer, grabs a GLOCK, tucks it into the waistband on his jeans.

EXT. QUEENS PUBLIC SCHOOL - DAY

Nasir, Jungle and Will walk to school, past a slew of factories and industrial buildings that spew smoke into the air.

WILL
Yo, that girl Jessie’s gonna be at the block party tonight...

NASIR
Word.

WILL
She told me not to tell you, but she’s, like, coming specifically to see you--

NASIR
Cool.

Nasir absentmindedly flips his PAUSE TAPE in his hand:

WILL
You should play her that tape.

NASIR
Nah.

WILL
Damn, kid--what good is you rappin’ if you don’t rap for nobody?

(MORE)
WILL (CONT'D)
You know music was invented by people for the express purpose of getting pussy, right? You’re defeating the point of the whole shit.

JUNGLE
Hahahaha. Good one, Will.

NASIR
Jungle, don’t speak.

JUNGLE
Ayo, Will--I was telling my brother, my friend Gary's cousin William is a dope producer--

WILL
(ignoring him)
How ‘bout you let me play your tape and say it’s me rappin’. Shit, at least help me get laid--

JUNGLE
Will! I was telling my bro, like, maybe he could work with Gary’s cousin--

WILL
(fed up)
Shorty, can't you see we're having a motherfucking conversation here? No one cares about your friend William's cousin Gary...

JUNGLE
Gary’s cousin William.

WILL
What?! Man, shut the fuck up!

JUNGLE
Fuck you, Will.

And now, Jungle grabs Will’s Mets cap, runs off with it.

WILL
I will beat your prepubescent ass.

Will chases Jungle, who laughs, runnin’ down the block.
INT. HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM – DAY

ANGLE ON birds chirping on tree. The early blossoms of Spring filter late morning sunlight. Now, ZOOM OUT to reveal we are looking through the cinderblock windowframe of a Queens Public High School. The loud din of dozens of teenagers wilding out flood onto our soundtrack.

ANGLE ON Nasir. Staring out the window. Lost in his own world.

NASIR (V.O.)
It was way too nice to be in school today. Not that I needed an excuse. Queens public school was a fuckin’ horror movie anyway.

Rows and rows of desks sit in a classroom overflowing with students. Everyone’s screaming, yelling, fighting. In the corner, a BOY AND GIRL make out so hard, it’s like they’re basically fucking. A seen-it-all male TEACHER, (50’s, overweight, white) recites roll in a monotone. Not even looking up.

Nasir sits at a desk next to Will. Now, his pager starts vibrating. He reaches into his pocket, pulls it out, checks it. Will turns to him, and Nasir gives him a nod.

NASIR (V.O.)
Besides, me and Will were young entrepreneurs. We were what you call foot soldiers for my man Bo. Nothin’ too stressful. Sold some shit. Did a little dirt. Put a little extra money in our pockets...

TEACHER
Nasir Jones.

NASIR
Here.

And Nasir and Will promptly get up and walk right out of the classroom, dodging a PRETTY ILL FISTFIGHT on the way out.

INT. PROJECT HALLWAY/EXT. BO’S HOUSE – DAY

Will and Nasir stand in a dingy, fluorescent-lit project hallway. Nasir knocks on Bo’s door: 3 short knocks followed by a long one. A code. The door swings open, revealing BO (20).
BO

Sup.

He turns, and they follow him through the

LIVING ROOM

It’s a mess. His MOM is asleep in all her clothes, empty Heinekens in front of her, TV still on.

BO

Mom, we got company.

(no response)

MOM, WE GOT COMPANY!

She wakes with a start, looks at him—a cracked-out mess. He shakes his head as they move into his bedroom.

INT. BO’S BEDROOM — DAY

Bo weighs out some CRACK COCAINE on a small scale, placing it into vials.

BO

Page me when you moved all of it.

WILL

Cool.

And now, from the other room:

BO’S MOM (O.S.)

Baby! C’mere!

INT. BO’S LIVING ROOM — MOMENTS LATER

Bo puts some CRACK into a CRACKPIPE for his mom. She grabs a lighter:

BO’S MOM

Thank you, sweetheart. You’re a good boy.

Nasir and Will try not to make eye contact as they exit.

EXT. QUEENBRIDGE PUBLIC HOUSING — DAY

Nasir and Will walk across the basketball court, eyeing other rival dealers as they walk.
NASIR (V.O.)
I was cool with the hustle. But
Will wanted more. Will always
wanted more. I mean, I understood
where he was comin' from. We were
surrounded by motherfuckers who had
shit like this--

NASIR’S POV: his eyes lock on dealers working different
corners, displaying various spoils of the hustle:

THREE FINGERED RINGS.
GOLD ROPES.
PHAT FARM POLOS.
PRISTINE JORDANS.

NASIR (V.O.)
You peep those Jordans? Damn.
(beat)
And that’s why Will wanted us to go
into business for ourselves. He was
always saying--

WILL
We need to go into business for
ourselves. I don’t wanna work for
Bo no more. He’s a fucking clown.
We could run this shit better than
half these fools.

NASIR
Yo, I’m just tryin’ to make this
money and not think about what
we’re doin’ at all. I don’t need to
be good at this shit. As long as we
don’t get into trouble--

WILL
Fuck that. We should be the best in
the world at everything we do.

NASIR
I want to be the best rapper in the
world. That’s what I want to be.

INT. PROJECT HALLWAY - DAY

A dimly-lit hallway on the first floor of a tower in the QB
Houses. Dotted with crackheads. Nasir’s absent-mindedly
flipping through “The Source.” On the cover, a black and
white picture of a young Dr. Dre holding a revolver to his
head.
...Besides, if we went into business for ourselves, we wouldn’t have Bo protectin’ us no more.

WILL
Forreal? You think Bo protects us?! Bo’s soft as fuck. I protect us.

A WOMAN approaches Will:

WILL (CONT’D)
Yo, I told you, Nicole: it’s not happening.

WOMAN
C’mon, Will. I got money. Please.

WILL
Bitch, get your pregnant ass out of here.

We now see that she’s pregnant. She turns, exits.

WILL (CONT’D)
But it would be so easy. Just head up to Harlem, get a cookie, flip it back home. Double our money in two hours, tops.

NASIR
Nah, man.

WILL
Why not? You scared?

NASIR
Damn right. Fuckin’ terrified.

A SINGLE MOM holds her KID’s hand, bringing him home from school.

SINGLE MOM
Excuse me.

Will and Nasir slide out of the way so she can put the key in her front door...

Now, Nasir looks up. The world freezes...

NASIR
Yo! Yo! Check it out!

As he sees:
NASIR (CONT'D)
It’s Shante.

ROXANNE SHANTE (24) ... Outside in the courtyard, signing autographs, smiling.

NASIR (V.O.)
Roxanne Shante was one of the most famous rappers ever to come out of Queensbridge...

“Roxanne’s Revenge” rises on our soundtrack as the words ROXANNE SHANTE spray onto our screen like old-school graffiti and images of Shante flood our field of vision: Shante rapping onstage at a block party, Shante rapping at a club, the cover of her album. An article from Rap Pages spins toward us:

NASIR (V.O.)
She was only 24, but, like Marley Marl, she owned a piece of hip hop history. Her first album--
(beat)
You know what? If you don’t know who Shante is, that’s on you.
Google her ass.

EXT. QUEENSBRIDGE HOUSES, COURTYARD - DAY

Nasir steps out into bright sunlight, walks over to the crowd, speaks softly:

NASIR
Miss Shante...

Roxanne glares at him:

ROXANNE
Yeah. What you want?

NASIR
I want... Um. Well... (beat)--see, I’m kind of a rapper--

ROXANNE
No shit? Cuz You look like kind of a crack dealer to me.
NASIR
(ignores her, pushing on)
...I was just--I was wondering if you ever, like, need people to open for you, or whatever.

She looks at him, smiles:

ROXANNE
You think you could open for me?

NASIR
Yeah. I do. Maybe.

ROXANNE
What kinda stuff you rhyme about?

Nasir fumbles into his pocket, grabs his mixtape, hands it to her:

ROXANNE (CONT’D)
A pause tape?

She laughs, examines the label:

ROXANNE (CONT’D)
Kid Wave, huh?

NASIR
You don’t like it?

ROXANNE
You sound like an R&B singer. You should do a duet with Anita Baker or some shit. Who produced this shit? Jimmy Jam? A fuckin’ pause tape...

NASIR
Just listen to it. It’s nice.

ROXANNE
I don’t think so. Thanks, though.

She hands the tape back to him.

NASIR
Really?

ROXANNE
Really. I don’t have time to listen to some bullshit pause tape, Kid Wave...

(beat)

(MORE)
ROXANNE (CONT'D)
But you could spit for me right now...

NASIR
Right now?

ROXANNE
Or you can wait thirty seconds ’til I walk away and rap for them squirrels and pigeons right there.

NASIR
I, uh--I need a beat.

He looks around. Will is standing in the project hallway. They make eye contact. Nasir nods his way, urging him to come outside.

ROXANNE
That’s right. Get your little crack-dealin’ partner out here--

Will comes up.

WILL
Sup, Miss Shante?

ROXANNE
I should fuck both y’all up for selling drugs in our neighborhood.

NASIR
But that’s the whole point. I don’t wanna be doin’ this. I wanna rap.

ROXANNE
Then rap. Go ahead. Show me what you got.

Nasir looks at Will, nods. Will starts to beatbox. But he’s too nervous. He can barely get a noise out. Spit flies everywhere.

WILL
Sorry. My mouth is just a little dry.

Roxanne starts cracking up.

ROXANNE
Here, I’ll help you.

She starts beatboxing. And Nasir nods along. He scans the crowd. His neighborhood, looking at him...
As he starts to spit:

NASIR

Jesus cursed me since a fetus/Churches mislead us/
Stephen King's pen, New Benz my feet up/Like a magic carpet float
through the--through the--
(beat)
Sorry. I fucked up. Lemme start over...
(beat)
Jesus cursed me since a fetus/Churches mislead us--

ROXANNE

Whoa. Whoa. Whoa. Hold up. You gonna just start over onstage? Cuz the crowd would fuck your ass up. And then I’d fuck your ass up for you even associating that wack-ass shit with me.
(long beat)
Question: do I make you nervous?

NASIR

Nah.

ROXANNE

The correct answer is yes I do. But that’s OK. I used to get nervous too. It goes away. Long as you’re not nervous in the studio...
(beat)
Good news is, your flow was nice. All four seconds of it. And I’d love to help get your crack-dealin’ ass into a more positive life situation. So I’m a help you. You go rap without me lookin’ at you, see how it goes. Make a demo.

Nasir goes back into his pocket for the tape--

ROXANNE (CONT’D)

Not that ghetto shit. A proper demo.
(beat)
I got a meeting with my label in a couple days. Get me something--4, 5 songs. I’ll play it for them, and maybe they’ll put you on...
NASIR
Really? Damn. OK. Cool. Thank you
so much, Miss Shante.

But Roxanne’s already walking away.

NASIR (CONT’D)
Wait! Wait up!

But she’s disappeared. Nasir turns to Will:

NASIR (CONT’D)
How the fuck we gonna do this shit
in 2 days?

INT. BODEGA – DAY

Will puts 2 40’s of O.E. on the counter, along with White
Owls, Funions and a couple quarter waters.

NASIR
First we need to find a studio...

WILL
I guess we can check the phone book.

EXT. PARK – DAY

Will and Nasir smoke a blunt, huddled in a phone booth. Nasir
checks the white pages.

NASIR
Which one do we go to?

WILL
This is mad confusing.

NASIR
...And what about beats? We don’t
got no beats. We need a producer.

WILL
Hot Day’s DJing the block party
tonight. He’s a dope producer.

NASIR
We need him.

WILL
(stoned)
I need some of those funions.
MUSIC: “In a Sentimental Mood”, Coltrane, up on our soundtrack, initiating a

STONED AS HELL SMOOTH MONTAGE

A stoned Nasir and Will walk through Queensbridge at dusk, pulling on an L. Through their squinted eyes, they see:

- A couple Crackheads screaming at each other. We don’t hear what they’re saying...

- Some OLDER MEN, sitting in folding chairs and talking shit on the street.

- Late day sun shooting flares of sunlight through trees.

- Homeless people sleeping in a makeshift bed of cardboard on a park bench.

- Crack dealers, eyeing our boys as they walk by.

Will and Nasir glare right back, slits for eyes and thin smiles on their faces, as the sodium vapor lights of the New York City night fire on...

END OF MONTAGE.

A COUPLE OLDER DUDES CARRY A LONG EXTENSION CORD AND SPEAKERS out of their apartment. Early preparations for the big park jam. Nasir and Will walk past them, continuing to smoke a blunt on their way home.

NASIR
Ayo. Headsup. It’s my moms.

Across the projects, Janet walks with GROCERY BAGS. Nasir slides the gold off his neck, slips it to Will. He throws on his Champion sweatshirt. Will stubs out the Blunt.

NASIR (CONT’D)
Mom!

She looks at Nasir and her eyes light up.

INT. NASIR’S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

A civilized dinner. Nasir, Jungle, Will and Janet. Nasir’s home is better appointed than other Queensbridge apartments: crystal chandelier, marble coffee table. Floor model Zenith with wood paneling on it and antenna sticking out and framed photos of Nasir and Jungle atop. Wallpaper looking like it might peel any day, but clinging on for now. Nasir flipping through the yellow pages.
JANET
Put that book away.

He does.

JANET (CONT’D)
Will, how’s your mother?

On Will, stoned as fuck, stuffing his face:

WILL
Real good, Miss Jones.

JANET
Give her my best.

WILL
I will. How’s your mother? I mean, Miss Jones, how are you--uh, Miss Jones?

She looks at him, curious. Furrows her brow.

JANET
Fine. Thank you.
(to her boys)
How was school today?

Nasir and Jungle look at each other. A silent beat.

ESCO
Good.

JUNGLE
Good.

Now, in the distance, the sound of BASS entering the night. And a DJ scratching. Nasir and Will look at each other.

NASIR
May we be excused?

JANET
Baby, we just started eating...

NASIR
Mom, we gotta go to the party. My man Hot Day’s DJing and we need him to produce a demo--

JUNGLE
What about Gary’s cousin William, from John Baum?

JANET
Demo? You should be focusing on schoolwork.
WILL
This is actually a project for school.

JANET
OK, that’s a terrible lie, Will. Give me a little more credit.

JUNGLE
Mom. They never listen to me. I told them about my friend’s cousin who could produce their demo. He’s an amazing producer--

JANET
You should listen to your brother more.

NASIR
I will Mom.

JANET
Don’t just “yes” me.

NASIR
So what do you want me to say?

JANET
I want you to think about the fact that you don’t consider your brother’s advice as much as you could--

NASIR
Fine. I’ll think about that.

JANET
...And I want you to finish your dinner. I took the time to cook it. You take the time to eat it.

NASIR
Yes, ma’am.

JUNGLE
Can I go to the block party too?

JANET
You know you can’t be out that late, sweetheart. Next year.

JUNGLE
That’s bullshit!
JANET
No swearing.

WILL
Jungle, please. Such language is offensive to your elders.

Jungle looks at Will, fuming with anger. Will winks at him, mouths “FUCK YOU.”

JUNGLE
Mom! Will just mouthed “Fuck you” to me!

JANET
Jungle! Language!

JUNGLE
Fuck that! I mean--

JANET
Jungle, go to your room.

JUNGLE
Ugh. Fine.

He gets up, goes to his room. As he does, Will winks at him.

JANET
I’m sorry. I don’t know what got into that boy.

WILL
Oh, it’s OK, Miss Jones. He’s young. He’ll grow out of it. And while I am mildly offended, I have heard such language before.

JANET
Shut the fuck up, Will.

MUSIC UP: Father MC’s “Everything’s Gonna Be Alright”

EXT. UNDER THE QUEENSBORO BRIDGE – DUSK

Old school park jam. Music pulses through the cool April night. Sodium vapor light mingles with strung-up Christmas lights. People cook off makeshift grills. Smoke dances into the night air.

And Nasir and Will move through the park in slow motion, in silhouette, until they step into the light of the party...
Their eyes land on BO, who is standing with their friend SNACKS (22), overweight, laid back, puffing on a blunt. They all exchange pounds. Snacks hands Will and Nasir Heinekens.

SNACKS
Yo, check out how big that dog’s balls are...

ANGLE ON a PITBULL WITH GIANT BALLS. The guys eye them, in awe. And start laughing.

NASIR
Yo, I’ll be right back.

SNACKS
Where’s you goin’?

NASIR
To see Hot Day.

SNACKS
Check it. Them girls are here--

Three GIRLS, dressed in Carhartt jackets, jeans and tanktops, wander the party. These are JESSIE, LISA, and MARY. Nasir makes eye contact with JESSIE. She gives him a smile, demurely looks away, as he disappears into the crowd.

SNACKS (CONT’D)
TLC! Whaddup!

JESSIE
Who you callin’ TLC?

SNACKS
Y’all look like TLC.
(almost to himself)
Overalls. Backwards hats and shit...

JESSIE
(to Bo)
You must be the skinny one. I’m Jessie. Nice to meet you.

BO
The skinny one?

JESSIE
You guys are PM Dawn, right?
(beat, to Snacks)
Cuz you’re definitely the fat one.

Everyone cracks up at this. Snacks reaches into a cooler:
SNACKS
Drink, ladies?

They each take a Heineken. Jessie looks up:

JESSIE
Where’s Nasir?

MEANWHILE--

Nasir approaches the stage. Hot Day is up there on the wheels of steel SCRATCHING up a storm. Nasir clears his throat:

NASIR
Yo...

(no response)

Ayo, Hot Day!

DJ Hot Day turns around, nods at Nasir. And we FREEZE:

NASIR (V.O.)
Hot Day was a DJ slash producer slash hustler. He was starting his own label, at the same time he was runnin’ guns and crack in the neighborhood. If anyone could help me record my demo, it was him...

HOT DAY
Look at you with them nasty dreads! When’s the last time you washed that nasty-ass hair, kid?

NASIR
Yesterday.

HOT DAY
Then you ain’t doin’ it right. Lather, rinse, repeat, my man. Damn. Nasty Nas with them nasty-ass dreads. Nasty Nas. Can’t you see I’m busy?

NASIR
I just had one quick question--

Now, a COUPLE KIDS come up. Hot Day reaches into his pocket for some crack. His shirt lifts to reveal a nickel .22.

HOT DAY
What is it?
NASIR
You know where’s the best place to record a demo?

He scratches one record into another.

HOT DAY
Power Play Studios.

NASIR
Where’s that?

HOT DAY
Really? It’s right around the fuckin’ corner, man.

NASIR (V.O.)
Right around the corner and I never knew it existed. That’s how small my world was...

NASIR
Cool. Thanks.

A long beat.

NASIR (CONT’D)
Yo, you think maybe you wanna produce it for me?

Hot Day turns, looks at him:

HOT DAY
Do I want to produce your demo?

NASIR
Yeah.

HOT DAY
No.

NASIR
Why not?

Hot Day sizes him up and down.

HOT DAY
What you gonna rap about anyway? How much crack you sell?

NASIR
Nah. I mean, yeah. Maybe? Like, just about our lives...

(MORE)
NASIR (CONT'D)

(beat)
Write what you know, right?

HOT DAY
Well, y'all don’t know shit.
People don’t want to hear about
your small-time wannabe gangster
bullshit. This is 1992! People
wanna dance, have a good time.
That’s what hip hop’s all about.
Always has been. Rapping about guns
and drugs—that shit is way too
dark. The audience ain’t never
gonna accept shit like that. You
gotta rap about how dope you are.
It’s about your flow. Your look.
The whole package. And, no offense—

Will approaches, overhears:

HOT DAY (CONT'D)
But y’all don’t look like much.

WILL
You’re not gonna do it?
(off their looks)
nice. You know he’s nice.

HOT DAY
He’s just a kid. Both of y’all are.
Come back when you got some hair on
your dick.

WILL
Man, fuck you! Who needs you
anyway? We’re gonna run this whole
fucking city when we’re done. And
you’re gonna remember this moment.
You’re gonna think about it for the
rest of your life. This was your
chance. And now you’re just gonna
be fucking garbage.

HOT DAY
Watch your mouth, son.

WILL
Or what?

Nasir steps in between them.
NASIR
It’s cool. We’re cool. Thanks for the advice.

They walk away.

WILL
Did he tell you a studio at least?

NASIR
Yeah.

WILL
Nice!

EXT. PARK JAM - MOMENTS LATER

Nasir and Will approach their crew. He sees Jessie.

JESSIE
Hey.

NASIR
Hey.

They lock eyes. Nasir smiles.

JESSIE
You all right?

NASIR
I’m sorry, but I gotta go somewhere.

JESSIE
Well, I kinda came here just to see you.

NASIR
You did?

She smiles.

JESSIE
Your man didn’t tell you that? C’mon, I know he did.

NASIR
(smiling)
Nah. He didn’t say shit.
(beat)
You should come with us...
Now, Hot Day scratches into Rakim’s “Know the Ledge”...

JESSIE
(fucking with him)
I don’t know, man. I mean, I did
come here specifically to see you,
but you kinda dissed me and now I’m
having a real fun time here.
Without you.

NASIR
Really? This is what you look like
having fun?

She smiles a forced smile.

JESSIE

NASIR
Shit. I believe you. That’s good
acting. You’re a good actress.

JESSIE
Thank you. So I’m just gonna stay
here. Because I’m having so much
fun.

She does a little dance.

JESSIE (CONT’D)
Time of my life.
(beat)
I love this song.

And now, someone kills the lights. And the music. All eyes
turn to see New York’s Finest. A cop in those old light blue
uniforms proclaims:

COP
OK. Let’s wrap it up.

Everyone groans.

COP 2
We said WRAP IT UP!

She looks at Nasir,

Who smiles.
EXT. QUEENSBRIDGE BLOCK – NIGHT

Rakim’s “Know the Ledge” rises on the soundtrack, as we STREAK OVER THE BUILDINGS OF QUEENSBRIDGE. Night falls over New York City. We INTERCUT WITH: The opening credits of “Juice.” Jungle watches a VHS along with 10 OTHER KIDS. Janet puts a bowl of popcorn on a table, whispers to him:

JANET
(whispers)
I don’t understand why you can’t watch this at someone else’s house...

JUNGLE
We’re the only family with a VCR.

YOUNG FRIENDS
This quality is terrible!/Fix the tracking!/This sucks!

JUNGLE
It’s a bootleg. It gets better.

Janet turns, grabs a basket of laundry. We follow her, as she enters Nasir and Jungle’s room.

INT. NASIR’S ROOM – CONTINUOUS

Janet starts MATCHING the boys’ socks. She slides open the sock drawer--

Puts the socks away. Now, she feels something, beneath a pile of underwear. She moves the underwear to the side, revealing...

A GLOCK. She looks down at it.

She reaches for it, troubled.

Just then, she hears SCREAMING OUT THE WINDOW. She looks outside to see:

A GROUP OF YOUNG MEN BEATING THE SHIT OUT OF ANOTHER MAN.

It’s brutal, goes on for far longer than it should. Screams and profanity fade into the cool night air.

Janet backs away from the window, looks down at the gun in her hand...
EXT. QB STREETS - NIGHT

Nasir, Will, Snacks, Jessie, etc. walk down the street, toward Power Play studio:

JESSIE
So, what? You sing or something?

NASIR
No. I don’t sing.

JESSIE
Don’t tell me you rap?

NASIR
C’mon. It’s like that hard to imagine?

JESSIE
I mean, a little. It’s just--
(beat)
You’re so quiet.

NASIR
Just sometimes.

JESSIE
So if you rap, how come I’ve never seen you do it? Like, why didn’t you just get up on stage and rap back there?

NASIR
It’s not time yet. I’m not ready.

JESSIE
My sister just had a kid. And my pops told her, “you’re never going to feel ready.”

INT. POWER PLAY STUDIOS - NIGHT

Will and Nasir and their crew stand in the studio, when something catches Nasir’s eye.

He moves across the room, to a door, with a little glass picture window in the middle of it. He peers through the window.

NASIR’S POV: The studio, packed with people. Nasir scans the crowd... Where Rakim spits on the mic.
NASIR (V.O.)

Eric B and Rakim?

And Nasir’s eyes land on an UNASSUMING KID, wearing BIG-RIMMED GLASSES, sitting at the controls. He looks through the window, at Nasir, gives him a polite nod. PAN OVER to ERIC B, right next to him, who gives Nasir THE FINGER.

OLDER GUY (V.O.)

Sorry, kiddos. We’re all booked up.

Nasir quickly turns. Across from him, an OLDER GUY (white, most likely Jewish) who’s running around, doing five things at once, completely frazzled:

NASIR

Really? You don’t have nothin’ in, like, the next couple days?

OLDER GUY

Next couple days? We’ve got nothing for four months. I can schedule you for late August.

NASIR

It’s gotta be sooner than that.

OLDER GUY

What’s the rush? You’re a kid! You’ve got plenty of time!

NASIR

All I need is like, half an hour or somethin’—

OLDER GUY

30 minutes?

NASIR

Please, sir.

He checks the LOG, more closely this time. A long beat.

OLDER GUY

I’ll squeeze you in tomorrow at 6. But if you’re here a second late, no dice. And you’ll have to wait 4 months, just like everyone else. I know sometimes you people aren’t the most time-conscious, so—

Nasir and Will both scowl at him.
OLDER GUY (CONT’D)
Oh, don’t get indignant. I deal with black people all day. Jews are cheap. Blacks are late. It’s a stereotype because it’s true.

NASIR
I’ll be here at 6. Promptly, sir.

OLDER GUY
We’ll see.

NASIR
Uh, sir, one more question: how much will that cost?

OLDER GUY
Two.

NASIR
Hundred? For half an hour?

OLDER GUY
Two hundred dollar minimum. That a problem?

NASIR
Uh--

WILL
No. It’s no problem at all, sir.

EXT. ROOF - NIGHT
The roof of the QB houses. The Manhattan skyline twinkles in the distance. Nasir puffs on a blunt, passes it to Jessie. Further off, Will pisses, drinking a 40. He returns, sits next to Nasir. They stare out into the night.

JESSIE
How the fuck y’all gonna get two hundred dollars?

WILL
I know exactly how.
   (to Nasir)
And so do you.
   (beat)
Hot Day’s right. We’re living too small...
NASIR
That’s not even what he said. And who gives a fuck about that fool anyway?

WILL
I do, man. I’m sick of other people telling us what to do. I’m sick of being smarter than everyone else and not doing nothin’ about it. I’m sick of working for Bo. I’m sick of these fucking projects. I’m sick of sitting up here at Pebble Beach and looking at that city so far away when I know we could be running this whole motherfucker. Look out there...

Their eyes land on a GOODYEAR BLIMP. And LCD display runs across it, reading: “The World Is Yours”. Will jumps onto the ledge, his back to the city:

WILL (CONT’D)
All this shit could be ours, man. I’m telling you.

JESSIE
Get down. You’re crazy.

Nasir eyes his friend, standing on the ledge, with concern:

NASIR
Fine, man. Fine. We’ll do it. Just get down.

Will immediately jumps down.

WILL
That’s whassup.

A long beat. Nasir looks at the blimp again, blinks. The display now reads, “GOODYEAR TIRES $5.99”

NASIR
Fuck! I just thought of something...

WILL
What?

NASIR
I’m a have to ask Jungle to hook us up with that producer kid.
WILL
So?

NASIR
So he’s gonna be a dick about it.
Man, I’m drunk as fuck.

Will sits down next to them:

WILL
Word? I feel pretty good.

Will pukes all over the roof.

EXT. STAIRCASE – NIGHT

Nasir and Jessie hook up on the stairs. She breaks the clinch:

JESSIE
Whatever it is you’re about to do,
you sure about it?

NASIR
Yeah.

JESSIE
You’re lying.

They smile at each other. An electric moment. She gazes into his eyes.

JESSIE (CONT’D)
You’re so lying...

NASIR
Yo, stop looking into my eyes like that. You’re bugging me out.

JESSIE
I just want to get to know you. I
don’t judge you. You don’t got to
lie to me. Really. I don’t care
what you do.

NASIR
Then let’s just do this.

They kiss a little more. He unbuttons her fly, tries to put his hand down her jeans.

JESSIE
Nah.
NASIR
Forreal?

JESSIE
We shouldn’t.

NASIR
But I heard you let that dude Khalil fuck you...

JESSIE
First of all, I don’t know who told you that, but that’s none of your business. Second of all, I like you more than I like him.

NASIR
Wait, hold up. You like me more, so I get to do less?

JESSIE
Just right now...

NASIR
That’s not fair.

JESSIE
In the long term, you’ll get to do everything. If you’re in it for the long haul, it’ll all work out...

He looks at her. A long beat.

NASIR
OK. So maybe I could just get a hand job then?

She laughs.

INT. JANET’S BEDROOM – NIGHT
Janet lies in bed, asleep. And now, she hears the front door open. Her eyes flutter. She thinks about getting up, going to talk to him, but she hears the door to his bedroom click closed. She stares into the night, worried for her son. A POLICE SIREN streaks by outside as we

FADE TO BLACK.
EXT. NASIR’S HOUSE - MORNING

Morning in Queensbridge. Again, we push in on Nasir’s window. He’s making a new PAUSE TAPE, rapping for his brother. Again, his rhymes are indisputably dope and again...

JUNGLE
Wack.

NASIR
Wack?

JUNGLE
I liked the one yesterday better.

NASIR
But you said the one yesterday was wack!

JUNGLE
Yeah, but not as wack.

...Again, Janet enters.

JANET
Breakfast is on the table.

She pulls the covers off Jungle, looks at Nasir:

JANET (CONT’D)
Have a nice day.
(gives him a kiss)
Be careful.

He nods. And with that, she’s gone.

NASIR
You heard the woman, Jungle! Time for school!

Jungle groans, gets out of bed. Nasir moves to his top drawer, slides his socks to the side, revealing--

The Glock. He grabs it, tucks it into the waistband of his jeans.

EXT. QUEENSBRIDGE PROJECTS - DAY

Nasir, Will Jungle walk across the basketball courts on a rainy day. Quiet this morning. Jungle looks at his brother, whose eyes are glued on the horizon:
JUNGLE
You alright?

NASIR
Yeah. I’m cool.
(long beat)
So, uh, listen--

JUNGLE
Yeah?

NASIR
Remember that kid you were talking about? The producer?

Jungle looks at his brother, smiles:

JUNGLE
Uh huh--

NASIR
You think he’d, like, work with me today? I got some studio time at 6pm.

JUNGLE
I don’t know. I don’t know his schedule.

A long beat. They keep walking.

NASIR
But can you, like, ask him about it?

JUNGLE
Ask who about what?

NASIR
Yo, stop fucking around.

Jungle cracks up:

JUNGLE
Yeah. I’ll ask Gary.
(beat)
Just don’t waste his time with those weak-ass rhymes.

NASIR
Yeah. OK. Fuck you.
JUNGLE
Fuck you too. I’ll page you when I know.

NASIR
Thanks.

NASIR (V.O.)
Now came the hard part. I’d never done nothing like this before. I was more likely to shit a brick than sell a brick. But at least we had a plan:
(beat)
Take the 1, 2 up to 145th street. Get a cookie. That’s like 2, 3 z’s of crack. Cut it up into rocks and sell that shit back in Queens.

INT. SUBWAY – DAY
Nasir and Will sit on the subway.

NASIR (V.O.)
But as long as we were going up to Harlem...

He turns to Will:

NASIR
Just wanna make one stop first.

EXT. HARLEM BROWNSTONE – DAY
Nasir and Will stand outside. Nasir rings the bell. And someone BUZZES THEM IN. Nasir moves to the front door, knocks...

And a SCANTILY CLAD WOMAN answers. She’s wearing nothing but a silk robe. She smiles at Nasir and Will:

SCANTILY CLAD WOMAN
Can I help you?

NASIR
Is Duke in?

SCANTILY CLAD WOMAN
And you are...?

NASIR
His son.
Will jumps in--

WILL
And I’m his son’s friend, ma’am.
And I think I speak for both of us
when I say it is a true pleasure to
meet a mature lady as fine as you--

SCANTILY CLAD WOMAN
I’ll get him.

She turns around, her robe sliding up to reveal her bare ass
as she walks away.

DUKE
Son!

Now, from the other room, Duke enters, pulling on his slacks,
buttoning up his shirt.

DUKE (CONT’D)
Will. To what do I owe the
pleasure, gentlemen--?

NASIR
We were just in the neighborhood.

DUKE
Shouldn’t y’all be at school?

NASIR
It’s a holiday.

DUKE
No it’s not. That’s OK. Y’all want
something to drink?

They nod.

INT. DUKE’S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Thelonius Monk plays. Sunlight cuts through smoky air.
African masks on the walls. Filled with books: black history.
Arithmetic. Egypt. The Bible. Duke smokes a cigarette. Nasir
and Will sip brown liquid from a tumbler. Nasir makes a face:

NASIR
Aarrgh. What the fuck is that?

DUKE
Bourbon.
WILL
It’s good.

DUKE
How’s your mother?

NASIR
Alright.

DUKE
Send her my regards. So what kind of scheme y’all cooking up today?

NASIR
Nothing.

He studies his son’s eyes:

DUKE
That’s fine. Keep it to yourself. I don’t mind that you’re not in school. I want you to be independent thinkers. So long as you don’t get yourselves into trouble. I’m looking at you, Will. (to Will) Don’t get my son in trouble. He’s a good kid.

NASIR
Actually, we’re gonna record some music today.

DUKE
Some music, huh? What kind of music?

NASIR
I’m gonna record a rap demo. We’re just heading uptown to pick up some equipment.

DUKE
Well, a lot of people are gonna give you bullshit advice on that, I imagine. And I don’t know much about rap. But I do know music, so here’s my bullshit advice: (beat) Be yourself. Tell them a story they’ve never heard before. Show them what makes your perspective on the world unique...
Nasir looks at his dad, smiles, nods.

DUKE (CONT’D)
And maybe learn how to play the trumpet. That’s real music. None of this Hammer Time bullshit.

Will nods. He finishes his drink. Looks at his watch:

WILL
We should go.

DUKE
Let me give you two some books first.

Duke moves to his bookshelf. Will and Nasir look at each other. The weight of what they’re about to do finally landing on them...

Dark jazz swells, as we CUT TO:

INT. SUBWAY – DAY

Nasir and Will ride in between cars on the 1 train, kinda drunk.

They look down, beneath the cars...

And see OCEAN... shimmering with strobing sunlight.

And now, SKY... And the skyscrapers of New York City receding below...

Nasir and Will look at each other. They’re flying.

NASIR (V.O.)
We didn’t know what was gonna happen when we got up there. We didn’t know how we were gonna find what we were lookin’ for...

BACK TO REALITY.

EXT. 145TH STREET – DAY

Nasir and Will POV: They move past SKETCHY PEOPLE ON ALL SIDES, all of them whispering:
SKETCHY PEOPLE
Smoke? Dose? Trip? Rock?/I got that
coke for you/You want that
herb?/Nickel bag? Dime?

NASIR (V.O.)
Turns out they made that shit easy.

A SERIES OF QUICK CUTS:
-Will nods at a CRACK DEALER.

-Will, Nasir and the Crack Dealer step around the corner into
an alley. Crack Dealer looks from side to side.

CRACK DEALER
Hurry up yo. Hurry up.

-Nasir pulls a hundred bucks from his jean pocket. The Dealer
counts it out, quick.

-The dealer hands Will the cookie, bunched up TIN FOIL.

-Will tucks it under the tongue of his sneaker.

And now, we’re back on the

INT. SUBWAY TRAIN - DAY

Nasir and Will sit next to each other, stare at their
reflections strobing in the black subway picture window, as
the 9 train rumbles downtown.

PAST 96th.
PAST COLUMBUS CIRCLE...

EXT. TRAIN PLATFORM - NIGHT

A kid on the subway plays the buckets. Nasir and Will stand
nervously on the platform, as the N Train rumbles into the
station...

INT. WILL’S BEDROOM - DAY

Will and Nasir, in the bedroom, cutting the cookie up and
splitting it into vials.

NASIR (V.O.)
There was only one place to move
that kinda weight: the Terrordome.
EXT. QUEENSBRIDGE BLOCK - DAY

Public Enemy’s “Welcome to the Terrordome” assaults our soundtrack as we trail Nasir and Will around a corner and into

THE TERRORDOME

An open-air drug market in the middle of Queens. All around them, shady figures lurk.

NASIR (V.O.)
Now we just try not to piss off any of the other dealers who think we’re movin’ in on their turf.

Will assumes a more gangster stance as he stalks down the street, standing taller, glaring at everyone. He turns to Nasir, who appears terrified:

WILL
(whispers)
You look like a fucking pussy. Look harder.

Nasir nods. Adopts his hardest looking glare.

NASIR
Yo, where we supposed to go?

Will’s eyes take in the lay of the land. He’s got court vision.

WILL
That corner.

As Nasir and Will amble across, past a few RIVAL DEALERS who eye them. Nasir and Will eye them right back.

Nasir’s PAGER VIBRATES. He checks it.

NASIR
It’s Jungle. I’ll be right back.

WILL
OK. Just remember, don’t look like a pussy. These dudes smell fear.

Nasir moves off, hard lookin’.

WILL (CONT’D)
Now you look like you have to take a shit. Dial it back.
INT. NASIR’S HOUSE - DAY

The phone rings. Jungle picks up:

JUNGLE
Yo.

INTERCUT AS NECESSARY:

NASIR
Whassup?

JUNGLE
Meet him at John Baum at 5pm.

NASIR
5pm. Got it.

JUNGLE
He said don’t be late or he’ll leave.

NASIR
OK. How do I know it’s him?

JUNGLE
I don’t know. I never met him.

NASIR
You never met him? You never heard none of his beats?

JUNGLE
His cousin swears he’s dope, though. I trust him.

NASIR
Shit, Jungle.

JUNGLE
Just look for the motherfucker holding a bunch of records.
(beat)
And don’t give him none of those weak-ass rhymes--

Nasir hangs up. He checks his watch:

3:15. Shit.

Public Enemy swells and we watch

*Nasir AND WILL UNLOAD ALL THEIR SHIT IN FAST-MOTION*
Over the course of the next hour or so. A throng of crackheads come and go. As the sun begins to set...

**EXT. TERRORDOME - DUSK**

Will stands against a brick wall, surreptitiously counts out some money. He smooths out his billfold, puts it in his pocket. Behind him, a CRACKHEAD waits.

WILL  
Aiight. We cool.

Nasir slips the CRACKHEAD a vial. The Crackhead shuffles off. A beat. Nasir checks his watch-- 4:13...

He looks at Will:

WILL (CONT'D)  
That’s the last of it.

NASIR  
Let’s bounce.

Will smiles big. And they move down the street, together.

NASIR (V.O.)  
Four hundred bucks in under an hour. And I still had plenty of time to get to John Baum. Will was right. Everything was out there for us. We just had to take it...

Just then--

An ARM REACHES OUT, grabs Will by the throat. ANOTHER ARM grabs Nasir, as they are pulled into an--

**EXT. ALLEY - DAY**

TWO THUGS stand across from them. One THUG holds a gun to Will’s head. The other holds a KNIFE to Nasir.

NASIR (V.O.)  
Fuck!

WILL  
What y’all want?

THUG ONE  
All of it, nigga. Now. Now.
NASIR (V.O.)

Stick up kids. Forgot about them.

Will looks at Nasir, nods. And we PUSH IN ON Nasir’s eyes. He shakes his head, almost imperceptibly:

NASIR (V.O.)
This is what we asked for. This is what we wanted. We didn’t want to be kids no more. And now, look at us. Guess there was a lesson to be learned here...

We PUSH IN on Nasir Right into his eyes. Beads of sweat form on his temple.

Our CAMERA MOVES INTO THE GUN that’s pressing into him.

And back to his eyes. As they narrow.

NASIR
Scared money don’t make none.

NASIR (CONT’D)
Man, fuck y’all.

THUG ONE
What?

Nasir pulls his gun.

WILL
Y’all got in the wrong nigga’s way today.

Will pulls his gun too.

WILL (CONT’D)
You think you can fuck with us? Who THE FUCK you think you’re dealing with...?

Nasir starts to back away, but Will just stays there:

NASIR
OK, cool. Let’s go...

WILL
Nah, fuck that.
(beat)
All of it, motherfuckers. All of it.
THUG TWO
All of what?

WILL
Your money.

THUG TWO
Man, what the fuck do you think you’re doing?

WILL
Y’all see Pretty Woman? I’m robbin’ you right back.

They groan, and turn over all their money to Will...

Who PROCEEDS TO PISTOL WHIP THEM.

WILL (CONT’D)
Pussy-ass, bitch-ass motherfuckers. You don’t fuck with Ill Will!

He pounds the shit out of them. It’s brutal. Blood flies everywhere. It’s almost as if he actually likes it.

WILL (CONT’D)
I don’t ever wanna see you sellin’ over here.

THUG TWO
OK. OK. Don’t worry about it. You’ll never see me do this again...

WILL
EVER!

NASIR
Will, c’mon. Let’s go.

Nasir and Will back out together, guns leveled at the TWO THUGS. Now they turn the corner, breathing heavy. They look at each other...

A long beat. Silence.

WILL
Damn, that was exhilarating as fuck.

Nasir looks at his friend: excited and scared all at the same time. And now, from O.S.
VOICE (O.S.)

HEY!

Will and Nasir turn to see:

NASIR (V.O.)

Robocop.

(beat)

Homeboy was a legend. Stood like
seven feet tall. He could kill you
with one hollow-point bullet from
like three blocks away. And he
liked to kill young niggas for
fun...

ANGLE ON a NYPD officer, 10 FEET TALL, clad in the light-blue
uniform of the period, but head concealed in a ROBOCOP
HELMET. His eyes glow red:

ROBOCOP

Dead or alive, you’re coming with
me.

ROBOCOP STRAFES THE BLOCK WITH GUNFIRE. Nasir and Will are
riddled with bullets. Crackheads fly backwards into windows,
shattering them. It’s carnage. Blood, glass, bullets
everywhere.

BACK TO REALITY.

Nasir and Will stare at an NYPD cop. Not Robocop, not 10 feet
tall, but paunchy and with a moustache and, most importantly,
a gun. He chases them down the street.

Nasir and Will haul ass.

They turn the corner... See a FIRE ESCAPE...

They leap up onto it...

Climb up. The COP trails right behind them...

They land on the ROOF.

WILL

Split up!

Nasir checks his watch: 4:52...

NASIR

Yo! Hold up! We gotta divide the
loot first!
Will reaches into his pocket, pulls out a stack of bills. He eyes out about half, hands it to Nasir.

WILL
Give ‘em hell.

NASIR
Peace.

Now, the COP crests the roof. Nasir and Will run off, each one jumping onto the roof of a different adjacent building. Will runs to the door that leads to stairwell, opens it, descends.

Nasir runs to the DOOR atop the roof of his BUILDING. He tugs at it. Shit. It’s locked. The Cop sees this, and jumps across to that building. Headed to Nasir...

Nasir turns. Shit. He’s closing in.

Nasir eyes a brick on the ground next to him. He grabs it, uses it to PUNCH OUT the square pane of glass in the middle of the door...

He reaches through the pane for the door handle.

It’s just out of his reach. He steps onto his tiptoes. The Cop closes in.

Finally, Nasir GRABS THE HANDLE, turns it, runs into the building. Right before the cop grabs him!

Nasir runs...

Down STAIRCASE...

After STAIRCASE...

**EXT. QUEENS STREET – NIGHT**

Streetlights fire on. It’s quiet. And now, Nasir BURSTS OUT onto the street. He looks from side to side. No sign of the cops...

Nasir BOOKS IT DOWN THE BLOCK.

Never looks back.

**EXT. JOHN BAUM HIGH SCHOOL – DAY**

Nasir runs up to the front entrance of John Baum, doubles over, breathing heavy.
He looks around. It’s empty. He checks his watch:

5:35.

VOICE (O.S.)
You’re late. I almost left.

Nasir turns, sees a really NERDY LOOKIN’ DUDE. Big, bifocal glasses. Unassuming.

We’ve seen this guy before. In the studio with Eric B and Rakim.

WILLIAM
You’re Jungle’s brother, right? I’m William.
(beat)
They call me Large Professor.

NASIR
You’re...Large Professor?

NERDY
Yep.

NASIR
I’m Nasir. Nice to meet you.

NERDY
Jungle’s friend Gary’s my cousin.

NASIR
Yeah, uh, he told me that.

They look at each other a beat.

LARGE PROFESSOR
Let’s go. We don’t want to be late. Arthur hates it when we’re late. Helps reinforce his stereotypes.
(beat)
As luck would have it, I booked the next hour myself. I have a few friends meeting me there.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Large Professor drives. Nasir rides shotgun. Quiet between them. Finally:
LARGE PROFESSOR
Your brother tells my cousin you’re going to be the greatest rapper of all time.

NASIR
He said that?

LARGE PROFESSOR
Says your flow is beyond reproach.

Nasir allows himself to smile a little bit.

INT. STUDIO - DAY

Nasir and Large Professor enter the studio. Nasir looks around, scans the crowd: Eric B, Rakim. The studio teeming with other people.

LARGE PROFESSOR
Hey, guys. This is Nasir. We’re going to be working together.

They nod hello.

ERIC B
This that kid you told me’s s’posed to be, like, the greatest rapper of all time?

LARGE PROFESSOR
That’s what his brother says.

NASIR
My brother’s only 14. And he’s kind of an idiot.

ERIC B
Come on. I wanna hear the greatest rapper of all time.

Nas takes a deep breath. And...

NASIR
Fuck it.

INT. STUDIO - MOMENTS LATER

Nasir steps to the mic.

He looks across to Large Professor, who nods. Nasir puts on a pair of BIG HEADPHONES...
Clears his throat...

And Large Professor drops a beat. Nasir hears it. We don’t. We just see him SMILE. And...

NASIR
Jesus, cursed me since a
fetus/Churches mislead us --
Stephen King's pen, New Benz my
feet up/Like a magic carpet float
thru the Sahara-- I do it my
way/Like comrade Che Guevara./On 95-
I high-way cops with scanners/They
locked my man up streets is hot as
the closest planet to the sun is --

He’s warming up now, preparing to go 0 to 60.

NASIR (CONT’D)
Someone said my birth was a
myth/But I exist...

He is completely tuned in. Nothing around him matters. It’s just him and the beat.

NASIR (CONT’D)
(Cathartic release)
The scent of Mercury's mist with
Hercules strength--that combination
intricate phrasing of words paint a
pic/Ain't I Sick?/inadvertently
ripped off faces/Destruction to
stage's a curse n a gift.

And now, the MIC from the other room clicks on interrupting his flow...

LARGE PROFESSOR
Yo... Yo... Stop. Stop!

Nasir stops. In a daze he looks up, at Large Professor. Eric B leans into the mic:

ERIC B
What’d you say your name was again?

Nasir thinks. A long beat.

NASIR
Nasty Nas.

ERIC B
Well, you dope as hell, Nasty Nas.
Nasty Nas smiles. As the opening strains to Ahmad Jamal’s “I Love Music” (the sample used in Illmatic’s “The World is Yours”) swell on our soundtrack...

**INT. NAS’ BEDROOM – DAY**

A new morning in Queensbridge. The demo finishes. Ill Will sits, in awe.

**ILL WILL**

Wow, man. Wow. Yo, you sure you still wanna do this today?

**NAS**

Fuck yeah, I’m sure. I ain’t done shit yet.

**ILL WILL**

Yeah, but--

**NAS**

I’m cool. Plus, I got in on LP’s studio time, so I still got that 200. Which means I can stake the next cookie.

**ILL WILL**

You’re really sure?

**NAS**

Positive. I need more shit to rhyme about.

Nas ejects his CD from his discman. On it, professionally printed, the words: NASTY NAS DEMO. He opens his top drawer. Where the GLOCK was, there’s a stack of professional CDs. He puts this one on top of it...

And slides them to the side, revealing the GLOCK.

The opening strains to “The World is Yours” play faintly on the soundtrack. As he tucks the gun into the waist of his jeans.

**EXT. QUEENSBridge BLOCK – DAY**

The familiar intersection from the cover of “Illmatic”.

Nasty Nas and Ill Will walk across it like it’s Abbey motherfucking Road. As we go...