

A BRAND NEW DAY

EXT. NIKKI'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

A starry clear night reveals a majestic house sitting on a hill. As music booms from afar, the bright lights from the open bay windows lights up the night like a firefly.

INT. NIKKI HOUSE-- NIGHT

The spacious unfurnished livingroom rings with the boom of hip hop, the entire floor covered with drunken teen kids dancing.

KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

Staggering Kids drink out of red plastic cups, in the corner a girl upside down over a keg, beer foam spews from her mouth as the BOYS cheer her on.

BOYS

Go! Go! Go!

BASEMENT -- CONTINUOUS

The stairwell is wall to wall kids, barely enough room to walk down. JAZZ, 20 bald, arms covered in tattoos walks down shaking hands, he slaps one girl on the ass, she is turns not pleased.

The basement is a teenagers dream, pool tables, and video games.

Kids drink, play pool, as a variety of music videos displays on a widescreen TV.

On the couch before the TV is CASPER, 18 dreadlocks, tattoos, covers is arms like shirt. He is a classic suburban gansta wannabe.

He sits with his arm around a solemn MELISSA, 16, pretty, but the nose ring, tattoos, and colored hair streaks takes away from her beauty.

Across sits NIKKI, 15 spoiled little rich girl, wearing too much makeup and not enough clothes, and STEPHANIE, 16 African-American, street smarts, and a street attitude to match.

Jazz plops down between the two girls, he places his arms around their shoulders.

JAZZ

What's up ladies?

They both grab a hand and remove his arms simultaneously.

JAZZ (CONT'D)

Nikki when we goin out?

NIKKI

You're too old, too ugly and too  
broke for me to go out with.

They all laugh, Jazz does not look amused.

Casper pulls out a marijuana joint and lights it.

JAZZ

Yo, Casp let me hit that.

Casper passes the joint over the table to Jazz, who grabs it  
takes a few drags then passes it back.

NIKKI

You're suppose to be selling it not  
smokin it. Monte ain't gonna be too  
happy.

CASPER

I ain't sweatin Monte.

JAZZ

Hell ya.

Casper and Jazz slap hands laughing.

STEPHANIE

Ain't sweatin? Both of you sound as  
ridiculous as you look. You play  
gansta, but you straight out of  
Buckhead like the rest of us.

Everyone around them laughs, an unamused Casper takes another  
drag.

CASPER

You should know about projects, Ghetto  
ho.

Everyone's shocked, as a furious Stephanie whips out her  
cell and frantically dials

STEPHANIE

Oh hell no! Who you callin a Ghetto  
ho? You bout to meet some real  
gangbangers up close and personal.

A nervous Melissa leans over and grabs Stephanie by the arm.

MELISSA

(shaking her head)  
Stephanie please.

Stephanie glares at Casper, who sits back smoking his joint,  
a devilish grin on his face. Stephanie hangs up her phone.

STEPHANIE

Don't know what do you see in this  
guy.

Melissa just looks down. Stephanie stands, grabs her purse,  
and walks away.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

I'm going home.

CASPER

(smiling)

Yea go back to ya football playing  
boyfriend, you funkin up the party  
anyway.

Nikki stands starts after Stephanie.

NIKKI

Stephanie wait.

Nikki turns looks directly at Casper, and smiles.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

By Casper.

Nikki runs off after Stephanie. Jazz stands and goes after  
both girls.

JAZZ

Hey, girls where ya'll goin?

Melissa looks down, then turns to Casper.

MELISSA

Why she's always so friendly to you?

Still smoking Casper shrugs his shoulders.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

You sleeping with her?

CASPER

(coughing)

Who? What me? Hell no.

Casper plays with Melissa's hair, he puts the joint to her  
lips, she takes a drag, and coughs. He then passes it to  
some guy behind him.

CASPER (CONT'D)

Told you girl if you smoke more you'll  
get use to it.

Casper grabs Melissa's hand, pulls it closer.

CASPER (CONT'D)  
Too crowded, let's go outside.

Melissa pulls her hand away.

MELISSA  
I, don't know.

CASPER  
Common lets go.

Casper stands grabs her hand, and pulls her up. He pulls her thru the backdoor.

EXT. NIKKI'S HOUSE -- LATER

Melissa and Casper are behind the pool house kissing. He is more in to it that she. Casper reaches down and pulls up Melissa's dress, she grabs his hand.

MELISSA  
Casper no.

CASPER  
Common, it's been months.

They begin to kiss again, Casper pulls up Melissa's dress again. Melissa pulls away as Casper kisses her neck, she remains disinterested.

MELISSA  
I don't know about this, do you have protection? Remember what happened last time.

Casper stops looks into her eyes.

CASPER  
Your pops took care of it didn't he?

Melissa just stares at him.

CASPER (CONT'D)  
Ok, Ok, got some in the car.

Casper proceeds to kiss Melissa's neck again, she's just looking straight ahead, her mind's adrift.

CASPER (CONT'D)  
Your parents home?

MELISSA  
No.

CASPER  
Where are they?

MELISSA

At some dumb party, probably gone  
for hours.

CASPER

What about little bro?

MELISSA

Harmless.

Casper smiles, grabs her hand, and pulls her behind him.

INT. THOMPSON HOUSE -- NIGHT

In Melissa's bedroom Casper and Melissa lie on her bed under  
the covers kissing, suddenly a knock on the door.

MELISSA

(yelling)

Go away.

TOBY (O.S.)

Mom and Dad just drove up.

Melissa and Casper jump up, both in their underwear. Melissa  
grabs a shirt puts it on, opens the door pulls her brother  
TOBY, 14, inside.

MELISSA

You gotta stall em.

TOBY

How?

MELISSA

Think of something.

She opens the door and pushes Toby out.

Casper now has on his pants, he grabs his shoes and throws  
them out the window. He sticks his leg out and stops.

CASPER

You coming?

Hesitantly Melissa backs up.

MELISSA

I don't know.

CASPER

(smiling)

Common, lets go have some fun.

Melissa smiles grabs his hand and goes out with him.

INT. CASPER'S CAR -- NIGHT

Rain falls in sheets, Melissa and Casper sit in his car outside Lionel's convenience store. It's late, the small broken down store is empty.

Casper opens the glove compartment pulls out a vile of cocaine, takes a snort.

MELISSA

Why do you have to do that stuff?

CASPER

Makes me feel good.

He offers some to Melissa she shakes her head no.

CASPER (CONT'D)

Common girl it's won't kill you.

Casper holds out the small spoon filled with coke. Melissa slowly moves over and Casper places it into her nose as she takes a sniff. She immediately holds her nose and winces.

MELISSA

Oh, God it burns.

CASPER

(laughing)

Virgin nose, trust me it gets easier.

Casper grabs Melissa purse, he rummages though it.

CASPER (CONT'D)

I'm hungry, you got any money?

MELISSA

No.

CASPER

Well how bout going in that store and getting me something to eat.

MELISSA

With what? I told you I don't have any money.

CASPER

Snatch it, if you have to. I gotta eat.

Melissa turns, and looks at Casper with disgust.

MELISSA

Didn't you mother give you any money?

CASPER

Yea, gave it to Nikki, for beer.

MELISSA

What, I can't believe you would do something so stupid. I'm not getting you anything.

Melissa turns and looks out of the window.

Suddenly her head smashes up against the glass, so hard the imprint of her face remains.

Casper pulls her by the hair close to him.

CASPER

My ass is hungry. Go in that store and get me something to eat.

Melissa gets out the car, and slowly walks toward the store.

INT. LIONEL JONES CONVENIENCE STORE -- CONTINUOUS

In her dirty crumpled wet clothes Melissa slowly walks in.

Behind the counter stands LIONEL JONES, 50's, African-American. The nervous stocky man eyes Melissa's as she walks in.

Melissa walks to the rear of the store.

She ducks behind a shelf, looks up front at Lionel. He's not paying attention, so she fills her purse with chips.

CASPER'S CAR -- SAME

Bopping his head to the beat hip hop music, Casper's turns up the radio. A police car rolls up parks beside him, he nervously fidgets.

CONVENIENCE STORE -- CONTINUOUS

Melissa walks to the cooler, places sodas in her purse. A hand grabs her arm, she looks up, it's Lionel with a baseball bat.

The officer walks toward them with cuffs, Melissa looks out the front window, sees Casper peeling out of the parking lot.

The officer cuffs Melissa, reaches into her purse, finds the chips and soda.

He reaches deeper, finds the vile of cocaine, that's Casper been snorting. Melissa's eyes grow wide in disbelief.

MELISSA

That's not mine.

The officer and Lionel both give looks of skepticism.

INT. THOMPSON HOUSE -- NIGHT

Sitting on the livingroom couch is Melissa's mother STACY, 40's beautiful, long silky hair, she looks young for her age. She rubs a photo of a seven year old Melissa.

Walking thru the door abruptly, is Melissa's father JASON, 40's model good looks, father time has also been kind to him.

Following is Melissa, looking down at her shoes. Stacy looks up trying to hide her relief, and excitement.

JASON

(to Melissa)

Sit down.

Without a word Melissa sits beside Stacy, Jason sits on the coffee table before them.

JASON (CONT'D)

What...What, more we can do with you.

Melissa just stares as though she can see thru him.

JASON (CONT'D)

Now it's getting you out of jail.  
I...I'm at my wits end. I done dealing with you.

(rubbing his forehead)

just go to your room.

Melissa walks away the sound of the door slams.

Stacy picks up the picture holds to her chest and sighs. Jason moves to the couch beside Stacy.

STACY

God what are we going to with that girl.

JASON

Oh, don't put something that doesn't exist in the middle of this.

STACY

Spare me. You might teach a class in the scientific reasons God doesn't exist, but do you have to bring it in here tonight.

JASON

Ok, what do you think we should do?

Stacy places the picture on the table and grabs Jason's hand.

STACY

I've been thinking,  
(thoughtful pause)  
we need a change, a move. You know  
something...some place different.

JASON

What are you talking about, moving,  
where?

Stacy looks down and talks low.

STACY

Russell.

JASON

Think I'm hearing things, did you  
say Russell?

STACY

I did.

JASON

Alabama?

STACY

(confidently)  
Yes!

Jason leans back and places his hand over his eyes.

STACY (CONT'D)

Jason, come on here me out. We need  
to get out of this city, not only  
for Melissa, but for all of us. It  
would be a good change, with my  
father's connections I know he can  
get us jobs.

JASON

Do you have any idea what moving  
will do to my career? I can't afford  
that.

STACY

You just picked up our daughter from  
jail. I don't think we can afford  
not to.

Stacy stands and walks away leaving Jason on the couch  
dumfounded.

INT. BUCKHEAD PREP/HALLWAY -- DAY

In the hallway, Nikki looks at a mirror inside her locker. Stephanie stands beside her rolling her eyes at Nikki's vanity.

NIKKI

Been thinking about cutting my hair.

She turns, her hair pulled up by her hand with a faux model look on her face.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

What ya think?

STEPHANIE

You know I don't really care. You hear about Melissa?

NIKKI

(looking in the mirror)

Yea, I expect the drugs, but shoplifting? God, you would think that girl would have money to buy food. And stealing out of that whole in the wall, like some project girl, please.

Stephanie gives her a harsh gaze, Nikki returns with a plastic grin.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

Oh, sorry. I sure hope she can still can come to my sweet sixteen.

STEPHANIE

You know, your self-importance amazes me. All you can think about is that damn party.

(amazed)

And with the explosion you had the other night, there is no way I would be having a sweet sixteen party.

Nikki finishes with her makeup, and closes her locker.

NIKKI

That's the difference between us, Nikki gets what she wants. And, I ain't got time worrying bout Melissa, her drug problem, or her sticky fingers.

Melissa walks up slowly, wearing sunglasses, she looks exhausted. She pulls off the glass, and it looks as though death slammed her in the face.