

NICKI MINAJ



HIP-HOP
Biographies

Table of Contents

Timeline	4
Tough Childhood	6
Discovering Her Talents	12
Creating Characters	18
Becoming a Star	24
Topping Charts in Style	28
Nicki the Superstar	34
Branching Out	40
Vocabulary	46
Photo Credits	48

Timeline



1982: Onika Maraj born in Trinidad on December 8, 1984.

2000: Onika graduates from high school.

1987: Onika's parents leave her in Trinidad with her grandmother.

2005: Onika pays to record her own music and posts it on *MySpace*.

1989: Onika's parents take her to New York City.

2006: Fendi finds Onika's MySpace page. He asks her to perform on his DVDs. Onika changes her stage name to Nicki Minaj.

1996: Onika is accepted into La Guardia High School for Music and Art

2007: Nicki meets Lil Wayne and starts releasing mixtapes of her music.



2009: Nicki Minaj signs recording contract with Lil Wayne's Young Money Entertainment.

2010: Nicki breaks *Billboard* record with seven singles on the Hot 100 chart at one time. Nicki releases first album, *Pink Friday*, on November 19, 2010.

2011: Nicki performs on national television on *Saturday Night Live*. *Pink Friday* becomes the *Billboard* number-one selling album. Nicki wins two American Music Awards.

2012: Nicki is nominated for three Grammy Awards. Nicki performs with Madonna and M.I.A. at the Super Bowl halftime show. The album *Pink Friday: Roman Reloaded* is released. Nicki performs as Steffie in *Ice Age: Continental Drift*.

Tough Childhood

People find it very hard to describe Nicki Minaj. She is a very successful solo **rap** artist. But that leaves out her talent in other styles of music. You could describe her as a fierce **feminist**. But she also works hard at being really cute. Fans of Nicki Minaj understand that she is anything but simple.

Onika Tanya Maraj was born in Trinidad on December 8, 1984. Trinidad is a small island between North and South America. Onika's parents moved to New York when she was a toddler. Onika stayed in Trinidad with her grandmother and many cousins.

Onika grew up in her grandmother's small house in Trinidad.

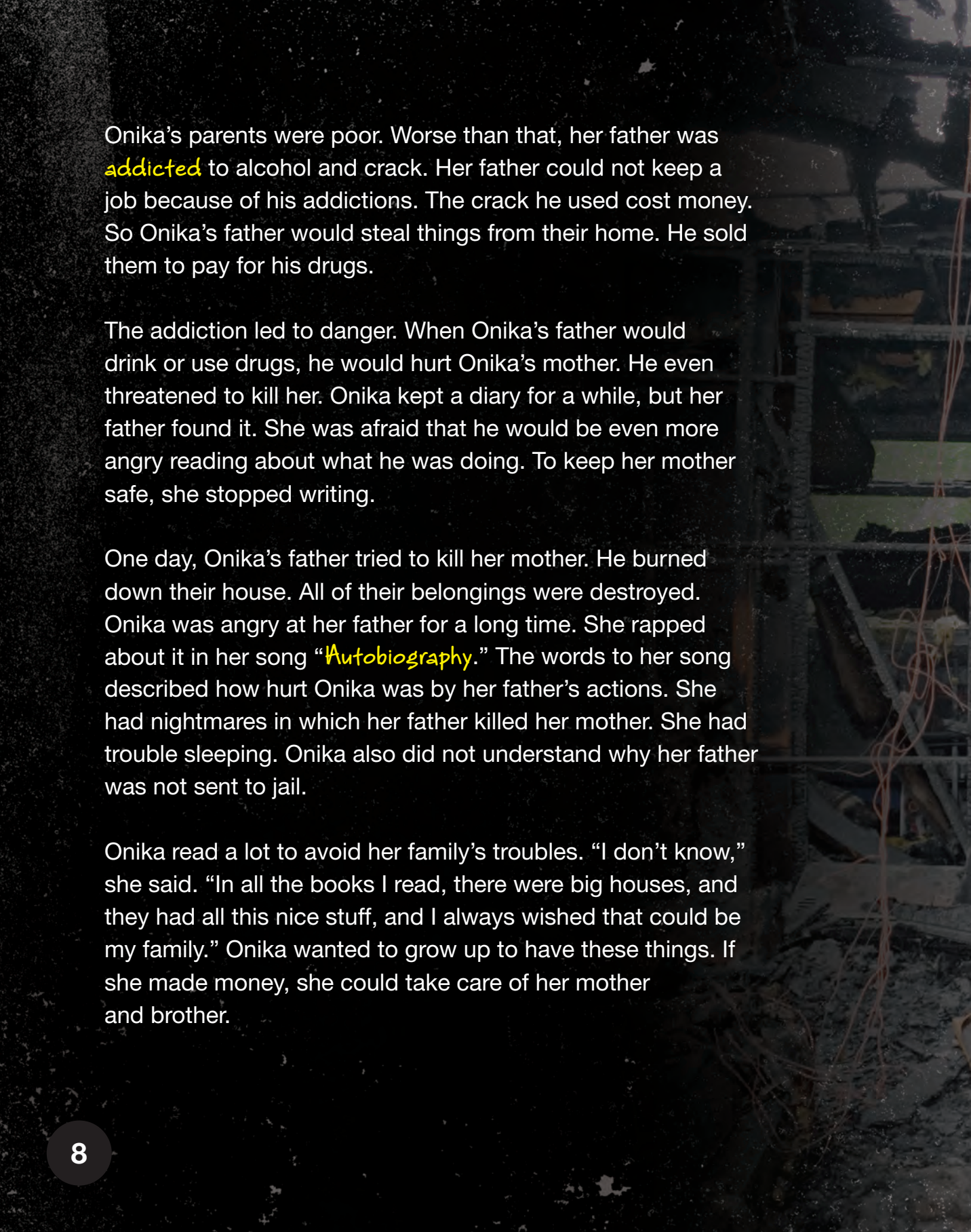


Onika missed her parents so much. Every time her mother came to visit, the little girl would get dressed and pack her things. She would sit in her room and wait for her mother. Onika wanted to go to New York so her family could be together. She remembered, "I would sit there and wait for her to leave, knowing that if she sees that I'm dressed, she'll take me with her." But each time Onika's mother would go back to New York without her.

Her grandmother lived in a small house. It felt even smaller because so many people lived there. Onika was sure that her parents had a fancy home in the United States.

Onika's parents finally came for her when she was five years old. They would live together in New York City. She was so excited! But when she got to Queens, New York, she was disappointed. Not everyone in the United States was rich. Her home in New York was not the fancy house of her dreams.





Onika's parents were poor. Worse than that, her father was **addicted** to alcohol and crack. Her father could not keep a job because of his addictions. The crack he used cost money. So Onika's father would steal things from their home. He sold them to pay for his drugs.

The addiction led to danger. When Onika's father would drink or use drugs, he would hurt Onika's mother. He even threatened to kill her. Onika kept a diary for a while, but her father found it. She was afraid that he would be even more angry reading about what he was doing. To keep her mother safe, she stopped writing.

One day, Onika's father tried to kill her mother. He burned down their house. All of their belongings were destroyed. Onika was angry at her father for a long time. She rapped about it in her song "**Autobiography**." The words to her song described how hurt Onika was by her father's actions. She had nightmares in which her father killed her mother. She had trouble sleeping. Onika also did not understand why her father was not sent to jail.

Onika read a lot to avoid her family's troubles. "I don't know," she said. "In all the books I read, there were big houses, and they had all this nice stuff, and I always wished that could be my family." Onika wanted to grow up to have these things. If she made money, she could take care of her mother and brother.



Onika's father set their home on fire because he wanted to kill her mother.

Onika, her brother, and her mother were not hurt in the fire. Onika's mother wanted to keep them safe, so she hid them. She worked as a nursing **assistant**. She moved them to **shelters** when she needed help. When she had enough money, she rented an apartment. They moved often. Onika's mother hoped that Onika's father would not find them.

Onika remembered, "We moved so many times when I was a kid. We were always running away from him. Whenever we got to a new house, he would find us."

The family had lost their belongings in the fire. Onika's mother tried keeping her children's spirits up. She did not have the money to buy them things. But she could fill their lives with music. Onika recalled, "I knew the whole Diana Ross collection before I was eight."

Onika's mother left her husband, but she did not divorce him. She just hid from him. Finally, Onika's father went to **rehab**. He learned how to stop drinking and using drugs. He fought his addictions. He was able to control his temper and stop hurting people. Onika's mother saw him change. Slowly, she started letting him see her and their children.



Onika's parents started going to church. Then her parents got back together. Onika was not as quick to forgive her father. She still worried about her mother. She wanted her mother to be strong enough to care for herself and her kids. So Onika kept dreaming of becoming rich so she could care for everyone. She even told her family that she would be a soap opera actress. She wanted to be rich and famous.



Onika's mother shared great music with her children, such as the songs of Diana Ross and the Supremes.