Plot Synopsis of In the Heights

IN THE HEIGHTS tells the universal story of a vibrant community in New York's Washington Heights neighborhood - a place where the coffee from the corner bodega is light and sweet, the windows are always open and the breeze carries the rhythm of three generations of music. It's a community on the brink of change, full of hopes, dreams and pressures, where the biggest struggles can be deciding which traditions you take with you, and which ones you leave behind. IN THE HEIGHTS is the winner of the 2008 Tony Awards for Best Musical, Best Score, Best Choreography and Best Orchestrations."

Please find to follow a synopsis of the play.

BE AWARE – there are spoilers in the following text.

Act 1

At the crack of dawn, Usnavi chases away a graffiti artist from his tiny bodega in Washington Heights, opens the store, and introduces the major characters. Last to appear is Nina Rosario, back at last from her freshman year at Stanford University. Alone, Nina ponders her struggles at college and readsies herself to give her parents some bad news ("Breathe").

Meanwhile, Nina's parents, Kevin and Camila, seek an emergency loan to keep their struggling taxi dispatch afloat, temporarily leaving Benny, a young employee and friend of Nina's, in charge ("Benny's Dispatch"). Meanwhile, at the hair salon across the street, Vanessa, Usnavi's potential love interest, dreams of escaping to a studio apartment in the West Village, remaining optimistic despite her own financial insecurity ("It Won't Be Long Now"). When Vanessa stops by Usnavi's bodega, Usnavi's younger cousin Sonny asks her out to a romantic evening on Usnavi's behalf, and she accepts.

When Nina's parents return, she reveals how she lost her academic scholarship and dropped out of Stanford. Nina's father, Kevin, is devastated that he cannot provide for his daughter ("Inútil"). Nina seeks comfort from Vanessa, but the salon owner and local gossip, Daniela, sits Nina down for a makeover, coercing Vanessa into admitting that she cares about Usnavi's sexual decisions; Nina then reveals to the salon that she has dropped out ("No Me Diga").

After Usnavi discovers that he sold a winning lottery ticket worth $96,000, everyone on the block dreams of how they would each spend the small fortune ("96,000"). Later, Abuela Claudia—the beloved neighborhood matriarch who "practically raised" Usnavi as a young orphan—reflects on her childhood journey from Cuba to New York in 1943, showing the audience that she secretly holds the winning lottery ticket ("Paciencia y Fé").

Nina and Benny take a tour of the neighborhood and reminisce, gradually sharing romantic feelings ("When You're Home"). At a dinner party, Kevin announces that he has sold the family car service to pay for Nina's tuition. Vanessa and Usnavi enter a dance club for their date, followed by a furious Benny, who is now out of work, and an apologetic Nina; tensions rise on the dance floor because Vanessa and Usnavi are attempting to make each other jealous, while Benny drunkenly hits a man dancing with Nina ("The Club"). The entire club breaks out into a huge fight when, suddenly, the power goes out throughout the city, erupting the neighborhood
Act 1

Usnavi, Vanessa, Nina and Benny all look for each other in the darkness, while Sonny and his mischievous friend from the opening of the show, Graffiti Pete, attempt to distract the bodega from any potential looters by setting off fireworks; in the meantime, Abuela Claudia reveals to Usnavi that she won the lottery, while Nina and Benny find each other, argue, and kiss ("Fireworks").

Act 2

Benny and Nina have spent the night together and, the next morning, Nina teaches Benny some Spanish phrases, while he shares his stress over what Kevin will think of their new relationship ("Sunrise"). Down on the street, Usnavi's bodega has been looted. Abuela Claudia convinces Usnavi they should use her lottery winnings to move to Usnavi's homeland: the Dominican Republic. Usnavi agrees to pursue this lifelong dream at last ("Hundreds of Stories").

Nina's parents have been searching for her all night, and when they learn that she has been with Benny, Kevin is furious. Kevin vows that Benny will never be a part of the Rosario family because he is not Latino, but Camila ends the family fight ("Enough"). It is high noon and all are frustrated by the extreme heat and continuing power outage. The locals, led by Daniela, muster enough energy for a last celebration before the bodega, salon, and dispatch shut their doors forever. Usnavi publicly announces that Abuela Claudia won the lottery, and he and she will soon leave for the Dominican Republic; the neighborhood celebrates, though Vanessa is heartbroken ("Carnaval del Barrio"). Kevin makes a sudden announcement over the taxi radios: Abuela Claudia has suddenly died ("Atención"). The neighborhood holds a vigil for Claudia, while Usnavi, attributing her death to a "combination of the stress and the heat," makes an impromptu eulogy ("Alabanza"). Usnavi and Nina rummage through boxes of Claudia's keepsakes ("Everything I Know"). As Nina discovers photographs from her own high school graduation, she decides to accept her father's sacrifice and return to Stanford.

Across the street, as Daniela closes her salon, she reveals one last bit of juicy news: she will co-sign on Vanessa's dream apartment in the West Village, thanks to a little convincing from Usnavi ("No Me Diga" – Reprise). Vanessa brings a bottle of champagne to thank Usnavi and, though she flirts with him, he is so flustered by Claudia's death that he is unable to appreciate Vanessa's attempts; Vanessa finally kisses him and leaves ("Champagne"). Meanwhile, Benny worries about his relationship with Nina, since her decision to go back west, and they stand together while the sun sets, uncertain of their future ("When the Sun Goes Down").

The next morning, Usnavi wakes up early to begin closing up shop. In just a few weeks, Usnavi imagines that the block will be completely changed. Sonny, however, has commissioned Graffiti Pete to paint a mural of Abuela Claudia on the bodega's grate. Sonny now rolls down the bodega grate in front of Usnavi, revealing the memorial. Usnavi is stunned that they completed this all in one night; he tells Sonny to spread the news that he has changed his mind to stay, promises to pursue Vanessa, and realizes that this block is his true home ("Finale").

Plot synopsis is reproduced from Wikipedia.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/In_the_Heights