

BIANCA'S TREE

Written By

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EXT. KIDS EVENT

It's a little girl's birthday party, kids are running around chasing each other. There is a live band, popcorn, games, and more fun things for the attendees. Some of the girls are waiting to meet a princess. One of the kids waiting in line is Bianca Stevens... a chubby, big brown-eyed dark skinned five-year-old girl. She is impatiently waiting to finally meet the princess as she watches attentively how the princess carries herself very posh, smiling and glowing as she talks to the kids. She can't take her eyes off her. Finally, it's her turn. She walks over to her all shy.

PARTY PRINCESS

Come here sweetie, don't be shy.
What is your name?

BIANCA

Bianca.

PARTY PRINCESS

Bianca! Nice to meet you Bianca!
Don't you look so pretty in your
cute dress. Who made it for you?

BIANCA

My mommy.

PARTY PRINCESS

Wow! She is really good, maybe you
can ask her to make one for me too,
huh?

PARTY PRINCESS

She doesn't make dresses for
princesses.

PARTY PRINCESS

Oh really? That's not true, she
made one for you and you're a
princess!

BIANCA

No, I'm not! I don't have a prince
and a horse.

PARTY PRINCESS

Well, you don't need a prince or a
horse to be one, you're already a
princess.

BIANCA

Really!

PARTY PRINCESS

Yeah! And guess what I have for you!

BIANCA

What?

The princess grabs one of the tiaras on the table next to them and places it on her head.

PARTY PRINCESS

There you go! I officially name you Princess Bianca!

Bianca tries to bow but almost loses balance. The tiara almost falls off but the princess helps her.

PARTY PRINCESS

Aww! Aren't you the sweetest princess there ever is? Give me a hug.

Bianca hugs the princess so tight as her mother, Amani Stevens; a tall dark-skinned woman in her late twenties is watching her daughter gush over meeting a princess.

INT. BIANCA BEDROOM - NIGHT

6 years later.

Bianca is all grown up, she is sitting in her bedroom, drawing some sketches of a princess. Her passion for princesses and fairytales has not left her. Someone knocks on her door.

BIANCA

It's open!

A woman opens the door, it's her mother Amani. She walks in and hugs her daughter.

AMANI

How is my little muffin doing?

BIANCA

Mom! I told you I'm not a little muffin anymore! I'm almost a teenager.

AMANI

Doesn't matter! You will always be my muffin.

She playfully squeezes her little chubby cheeks.

AMANI

What are you up to?

BIANCA

Drawing...

AMANI

Drawing? Let me see here.

She grabs one of the sketches.

AMANI

Oooh... another princess huh? I love the dress! It's soo sparkly it's making my eyes hurt.

BIANCA

Mommy. Can I ask you a question?

AMANI

Yes my love.

BIANCA

Was there a princess where you're from?

AMANI

Ummm... Yeah... we did. We had two actually.

BIANCA

What did they look like?

AMANI

They were so beautiful, with big brown eyes like you.

BIANCA

Really?

AMANI

Mhmmm..

BIANCA

What was her name?

AMANI

(MORE)

AMANI (CONT'D)

Non one really knew their names...
they were hidden inside the palace
most of the time.

BIANCA

Like in a tower?

AMANI

Noo, we don't have that in Africa.
Their parents just wanted to
protect them, so they were barely
seen in public.

BIANCA

How come you never tell me stories
like that?

AMANI

You never ask!

BIANCA

Yes I do!

AMANI

Okay, I'm gonna tell you a famous
story about where I'm from. But for
now, come help me set up the table.

BIANCA

Wait, you're not going to tell me
now?

AMANI

After we set up the table.

BIANCA

Yeah right.

AMANI

I heard that! Come on, your father
will be here in thirty minutes.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM- NIGHT

Later at night, Amani and her husband Jason are spending
quality time together. She is getting a foot massage from
him as she read a fashion magazine.

AMANI

Ughh... my feet were killing me
today. I guess that's the price
you for walking in heels all day.

JASON

You know there's more than one pair of shoes that were invented right. Can't you just wear sneakers or sandals?

AMANI

Sneakers... at the office? Did you forget what I do for a living? Image is everything... wearing sandals would make me look kind of lazy, you know? Like I don't put much effort in what I wear.

JASON

I don't understand why you kill yourself to wear those tiny toothpick shoes. I don't think it's worth it.

AMANI

Yes, it is! Glamour is always worth it. Ooh... Right there right there! That's the spot!

JASON

Babe I have some good news for us.

AMANI

Oooh... Actually I have great news to share as well!

JASON

Okay you go first.

AMANI

Well, I don't want to say anything before it's a done deal but... I think Estelle is going to make me head designer for next year's collection!! How amazing is that! Then I can have more freedom to create my designs the way I want with minimum supervision. Yaay!

JASON

Well, congrats babe! That's a really good opportunity, so when do you start?

AMANI

(MORE)

AMANI (CONT'D)

Slow down... it's not official yet
but I think I have a good chance.

JASON

I think you have this in the bag.
You have worked so hard these past
few months, I'm pretty sure they
noticed your efforts.

AMANI

You think so?

JASON

No doubt.

AMANI

(squeaks in excitement)

This is just what I need. I would
have to work extra hard though and
coming home a little late. Do you
mind?

JASON

Well, you have been doing that
already so there's not much of a
difference there. You go do your
thing.

AMANI

Awww... aren't you the sweetest
husband?

She gives him a kiss

JASON

Mhmmm... Let me go say goodnight to
B.

AMANI

Wait, you didn't tell me your good
news.

JASON

Oohh... Another time. Let's enjoy
yours first.

AMANI

Okay! Hey, make sure her alarm is
set, I'm leaving very early, I
won't be able to wake her up.

JASON

Yes Ma'm!

AMANI

Thank you!

EXT. DRIVEWAY- DAY

Bianca is getting ready for school, she is eating breakfast. Her father comes in the kitchen, kisses her forehead.

JASON

Good morning baby.

BIANCA

Hi Dad!

JASON

Did you pack your homework?

BIANCA

Yeah!

Jason notices she is overly dressed.

JASON

Wait you're going to school wearing that?

BIANCA

Yeah, why not?

BIANCA

Don't you think you're gonna be uncomfortable the whole day?

BIANCA

Nope! I want to always look good like mom, she's so glamorous.

JASON

You sure are Amani's daughter.

They hear the school bus pulling up outside, Bianca grabs her backpack and lunch on the kitchen counter.

BIANCA

Bye Dad!

She kisses her father on the cheek and runs out.

JASON

Have a good day sweetie.

He starts making some coffee.

Once Bianca enters the school bus, all the other students start staring at her in her glittery dress and shoes. As she makes her way to get to the back, there are some laughs and pointing at her.

INT.LGP OFFICE - DAY

Amani works for a luxurious clothing line called LGP (Le gout Parisien). She is working on some sketches in her office. There is a phone call.

AMANI

Hello?

PHONE (VO)

Ms. Stevens, can I see you in my office?

AMANI

Yes , I'll be there in a sec.

PHONE (V.O.)

Thank you!

She hangs up and makes her way out. As she walks to her boss' office her friend whistles to get her attention.

COWORKER

(mouths)

Good luck!

AMANI

(mouths)

Thanks!

She knocks on the door.

WOMAN

Come in!

AMANI

You wanted to see me, Estelle?

ESTELLE

Yes! Have a seat.

,

She sits down, looking a bit nervous.

ESTELLE

(MORE)

ESTELLE (CONT'D)

So as you know we are launching the new collection in a couple of months. This is our biggest one because we want to attract a younger market and hopefully widen our clientele. We really need a strong team and a solid leader for this. I was impressed with your work these last few months. You have met all your deadlines and the designs you turned in are quite impressive. Would you be interested in the position?

AMANI

Yes, I am definitely interested and I will do whatever is required to make sure that the launch of the collection is a success.

STELLA

Good! Well as I have talked with my peers, we would love to give you the position of head designer. Of course, that means an increase in your salary and other perks but I have to let you know that it is a big commitment. I will need you to keep me updated on everything and we are running on a tight schedule. Do you think you can handle it?

AMANI

Absolutely. I will not let you down. Thank you so much!

STELLA

Great! So I will send you an email with all the documents for you to sign and other info you will need by the end of the day and we'll go from there.

Stella stands up to shake her hand.

STELLA

Congratulations Ms. Stevens.

AMANI

Thank you very much!

She closes the door as she exits her office, her friend notices her coming out... they make eye contact. Amani gestures that it went well.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

It's dinner time for the Stevens family. They are sitting at a small dining table having some quality family time.

JASON

How was school B? Did any of your teachers say anything about your outfit?

AMANI

What outfit?

JASON

She wore the glittery dress you got her last week to school.'

AMANI

What? Bianca! That was for special occasions!

BIANCA

I only wore it once, if I don't wear it often it will just sit in my closet. Plus I can wear whatever I want at school right? Mom said fashion is how you express yourself. Right?

AMANI

Ummmm... right... But it's kind of inappropriate for school sweetheart. That was a dress for special occasions like birthday parties, weddings... things like that.

BIANCA

Maybe everyday is a special occasion for me.

JASON

(laughs)

Well? The girl is right.

AMANI

(laughs)

I can't come back from that. I'll just shut up.

They both laugh.

AMANI

So honey guess what?

JASON

What?

AMANI

It's official! I got the position!

JASON

Alright!! See? I told you! I knew you'd get it.

AMANI

Yeah! Estelle called me in her office today and offered me the position. Thank you God!

JASON

So when do you start on the collection?

AMANI

Right away, she made it perfectly clear that I will be on a schedule so things are gonna get pretty hectic for me. You might have to do take out on some nights if I can't make it in time.

JASON

Or, there's this thing called a stove where you cook food, ever heard of it?

AMANI

You, and the stove? Hmmm... my friend that's a combination I'm not too sure of.

BIANCA

You suck too Mom.

AMANI

(african intonation)

Hey! hey!

Jason and Bianca laugh.

INT. BIANCA BEDROOM- NIGHT

After the family dinner, Amani is in her daughter's bedroom about to tell her a bedtime story. She is all tucked in as her mother sits on the side of the bed.

BIANCA

What are we reading tonight?

AMANI

B, I thought we said you were too old for bedtime stories now.

BIANCA

That's impossible, everyone needs a good story. You're never too old for fairytales. Plus I'm getting bored of hearing the same old ones. I want something new tonight.

AMANI

Okaaay... let me see. Hmmm...

BIANCA

Ummm... the books are on the shelf. Are you making one up?

AMANI

I thought you said you were bored of the same ones.

BIANCA

Yeah but I thought you would just start a new book.

AMANI

I have one even better.

BIANCA

One that you made up?

AMANI

No, would it matter if it was made up though?

BIANCA

No, as long as it has a happy ending... I'm good.

AMANI

Alright here we go, there once was a small kingdom in Africa.

INT. KINGDOM PALACE- DAY

A small kingdom in the east of Africa called Miza, there are guards in every corner watching as two princesses who are sisters are playing in the courtyard. They are running around chasing each other all through the royal courtyard. With their clumsiness, things are falling down while one of the palace maids is running trying to stop them from tearing up the place.

MAID
(african accent)
My princesses! Stop running! You will get yourselves hurt.

PRINCESS #1
No we won't!

PRINCESS #2
Yes! Let us have at least some bit of fun before our parents return!

MAID
Please stop!

One of the princesses runs into their parents who just arrived.

PRINCESS #1
Father! Mother!

FATHER
How are my beautiful darlings this morning?

PRINCESS #2
We are fine father!

MOTHER
What did we say about running in the palace?

PRINCESS #1
Sorry mother, we were just bored.

MOTHER
Oh really? This is the only way you found to entertain yourselves? There are plenty of other things you could do to spend your time wisely.

PRINCESS #1

We already finished our daily studies and chores.

FATHER

Well, there are plenty of other things you can help with. Now look how you have rendered the place. You girls know better, don't you?

PRINCESS #1 PRINCESS #2

Yes father.

MOTHER

Girls, come with us. We need to talk. And Mani!

MANI

Yes your Majesty!

MOTHER

Don't touch anything here yet, they will help you clean it up. All of it.

MANI

Yes your Majesty.

The two princesses follow their parents inside their quarters, a lavish wide space with rich colors and gold artifacts filling the room. The parents sit on a golden bench while the girls sit on a mat in front of them. The parents look serious.

FATHER

We wanted to talk to you both about something important that will be happening very soon for all the four of us. There is... there....

Their father takes a moment to gather his words. His wife steps in.

MOTHER

Something big will happen to this kingdom very soon. Something that is not good and that could be avoided but... the king doesn't have the same opinion as we do. We don't want you two to be here when it happens so...

FATHER

We will have to leave the kingdom.

.

PRINCESS #2

What hapenned?

MOTHER

We can't talk about that, you are both too young to understand.

PRINCESS #1

Will we ever come back?

FATHER

Hopefully.... one day we can.

PRINCESS #2

So where will we go?

MOTHER

We don't know yet. Somewhere far away is better for us. We can start a new life there and make it our new home.

PRINCESS #1

What about Akil and Anita?

FATHER

They have their own parents. They want to stay so there is nothing we can do. Now, remember, both of you must never share this with anyone. Not even your cousins. Do you both understand?

PRINCESS #1 PRINCESS #2

Yes Father!

FATHER

Alright, make sure to stay on your best behavior from now on, don't take advantage of the staff and make things hard for them, that's no way to behave. I don't want you running around the palace again, alright?

The princesses nod.

FATHER

Now go help clean up the mess.

The princesses bow to their parents before taking their leave.

EXT. PALACE GARDEN - NIGHT

Prince Bahati is the father of the two princesses and the younger brother to the now reigning King Ahmed. They are having a walk in the gardens admiring the beautiful flowers making the area bright and colorful on a dark night. Prince Bahati is trying to talk to his brother.

KING AHMED

I spoke with the commander this morning; he says they are ready.

PRINCE BAHATI

For you to be telling me again makes it seem like you're not so sure yourself. Like you want my opinion on this...

KING AHMED

Not really. This has to be done. We shall strike by the end of the week.

PRINCE BAHATI

Father always thought that raging war at night was a sign of weakness.

KING AHMED

Careful brother, watch your words. Remember who you are talking to.

PRINCE BAHATI

This is madness brother! Why are you trying to destroy everything that our ancestors worked so hard to build?

KING AHMED

The Koni kingdom deserves everything that is coming to them!

PRINCE BAHATI

Is what you're fighting for worth losing what you have now? Why are you reckless and bullheaded?

KING AHMED

I will never be satisfied until I find the man who murdered our father and he is at the bottom of my feet begging for mercy. If you were half of the man I am, you would understand.

PRINCE BAHATI

Hmmm, that's what you call a man? Someone who never listens to advice from his own family? I will not stand behind you brother, I can't put my family at risk for your own selfish ways. That I will not do. If you weren't my big brother, father would have never left you the kingdom.

King Ahmed grabs his brother forcibly by the collar, his face filled with so much rage that his veins are visible.

KING AHMED

You know, I never understood you... Always too scared to take matters into your own hands, good thing I am the oldest... otherwise this kingdom would have been pitiful to live in. You better be grateful I am trying to honor our father, I wouldn't expect you to be up for the task brother. I never needed your permission to make decisions for this kingdom, don't grow a big head. Nonsense.

The king leaves as his guards follow him.

INT. PERSONAL CHAMBERS- NIGHT

Prince Bahati and his wife Princess Latifah are getting ready to go to bed. She notices that he seems angry, snatching his clothes and shoes off.

PRINCESS LATIFAH

I see you have talked to your brother. What did he say?

PRINCE BAHATI

What else can he say? It's not like he will listen to anybody.

PRINCESS LATIFAH

At least you tried, there is nothing else you can do.

PRINCE BAHATI

He is putting this whole kingdom at risk, there is so much to lose. Why can't he see that? It's like he thinks I didn't lose a father too... is getting revenge going to bring him back? What about our people, will they not lose in this plot of my brother's madness? I don't know why I even bother with him, he will never change.

PRINCESS LATIFAH

His anger won't let him, he is consumed by it. Until he realizes its not worth it, no one else can help him. We just have to do what's best for our family. We have to decide where we will relocate.

PRINCE BAHATI

I already know a place.

PRINCESS LATIFAH

Should I talk to the queen?

PRINCE BAHATI

Absolutely not! I know you two are close but how do we know she won't go back and tell him. It's best to keep it under wraps.

Prince Bahati lays down facing the other way and goes to sleep.

EXT. TRAINING AREA- NIGHT

Prince Ahmed is standing in front of his army about to give them a speech. The king walks around, checking some of the armors worn by the men, he is impressed.

KING AHMED

In a few days, we will take the most important battle of our lives. We will change the narrative, we will bring the Miza kingdom's name soar in the sky. Your great-grandchildren will read about you in books because WE ARE ABOUT TO MAKE HISTORY!

ARMY
(chants)

Prince Bahati is over watching the event from his quarters.

We have been waiting for too long!
This time, we will show no mercy!
We will make them pay, we will stop
at nothing, our time has come... TO
VICTORY!

ARMY
To victory!!!

INT. BIANCA BEDROOM- NIGHT (CONT'D)

Bianca has been listening carefully to her mother until she stops.

AMANI
Well, time for bed.

BIANCA
But you didn't finish the story? I
don't even know what happens next!
A story always has an ending.

AMANI
Yeah but a little girl has her
bedtime. Come on.

Amani kisses her on the forehead, gets up and goes to turn off the lights.

BIANCA
Goodnight mom.

AMANI
Night baby. Lights out.

INT. CLASSROOM- DAY

At school Bianca's teacher Mrs Atkins is handing papers to the students. Once done, she goes in front of the class.

MRS ATKINS

Alright class! Listen up! We're
almost towards the end of the
semester, so you know what that
means. There is a project.

There are some grunts.

TEACHER

Wait a minute! I'm not done yet.
This one is quite different from
what we usually do.

STUDENT

Why, because it's harder?

TEACHER

No! Because this one you get to
decide what it will be on. I want
you to make a presentation about
something that is special to you.
It can be anything, a person you
admire, your favorite sport, a
skill you have... you decide. You
have to be creative so you need to
put in a lot of work if you want a
good grade.

STUDENT

Do we make like a powepoint?

TEACHER

You can choose a variety of ways to
showcase your project, it doesn't
necessarily have to be a
PowerPoint. You can make crafts, a
video, pictures. As I said, it's
all up to you. I will give you more
details and whatever tools you need
in the coming weeks. For now, I
want you to start thinking of ideas
and doing some brainstorming. Okay?

STUDENTS

Yes Mrs Bailey!

Bianca has already started jotting down some ideas, she is
excited. Other students are also gushing about their ideas.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Amani and her husband are watching some TV after dinner. A
commercial comes on about a cruise around Europe. It shows
tourists having a good time exploring, going to the beach,
and enjoying some fine dining. They all sit there quietly
watching it. Jason breaks the silence.

JASON

You know I always wonder, how come
they never make vacation ads about
Africa? I have never seen one.

AMANI

Well, a lot of people still hang on to the images that Africa was given for quite some time now. You know, people living in huts, hungry kids, wars. It's really sad because some people are still living in that bubble. If only they knew what they were missing.

JASON

But I mean then internet is right there! One simple search and there you have it... Someone should do something about that.

AMANI

Something like what?

JASON

I don't know...

AMANI

Well then...

JASON

I actually miss going on vacation. Why can't we take one soon?

AMANI

I think our wallets would differ. Plus, you have to plan and save, get your vacation approved... all that ruckus.

JASON

Come on! Remember when we started dating? We never planned a trip... we just went. I kinda miss it.

AMANI

That was a long time ago when we didn't have all these responsibilities.

JASON

So you're saying if I booked us a vacation to Africa you wouldn't jump to it?

AMANI

No! As much as it saddens me to say.

(MORE)

AMANI (CONT'D)

Especially not now, with this huge project on my hands...absoulutely not.

JASON

Hmmm.... shocker.

AMANI

What does that mean?

JASON

I don't know... I feel like we're not as adventurous as we used to be, you know? living life on the edge.

AMANI

We still are... in some ways.

JASON

Nah... we became exactly what we said we would never be... predictable.

AMANI

Hey!

JASON

You know it's true.

EXT. SIMON AND BEATRICE HOUSE- DAY

Amani's parents, Simon and Beatrice Omari live in the same neighborhood as them. Beatrice is looking at some photographs in their bedroom, her husband is shaving in the bathroom with the door open to be able to talk.

BEATRICE

What do you think I should give Bianca? Her birthday is coming up.

SIMON

Maybe a doll? What do girls around her age like?

BEATRICE

She's too old for dolls, I want to make her something. Something that includes our culture. I feel like she doesn't know enough about where her mother comes from.

SIMON

Maybe a plane ticket to Africa?
It's better if she experiences it
herself.

BEATRICE

That's not actually bad! Although,
the hard part would be actually
going. It's impossible to plan a
vacation with her mother. If it's
not her job, it's something else.
How many times did she cancel on
us?

SIMON

Tell her how important it is for
Bianca to go on the trip. That will
make her commit. Or maybe she
doesn't see how important it is for
her daughter to learn about our
customs and heritage.

BEATRICE

I know she doesn't because Bianca
told me.

SIMON

Not to worry my dear. We'll make
sure she doesn't.

EXT. ICE CREAM SHOP

The Stevens family is enjoying a sunny afternoon out. Jason
is getting some ice cream while Bianca and Amani wait for
him outside.

CASHIER

Alright, here's your receipt.
Enjoy!

JASON

Thank you!

He brings the ice creams to them.

JASON

Here we go! A big strawberry ice
cream for my princess and the
chocolate one for my beautiful
queen.

AMANI

Thank you honey!

They start enjoying their treat.

JASON

Mhmmm... this is heaven. Might need to work it off this week but it is soo worth it!

AMANI

Shhh.... We're not having that conversation right now.

Amani looks to her side to see Bianca's ice cream dripping on her white top. She is mortified.

AMANI

Ooh no, Bianca! Look at this mess! Now we have to stop back home and change your top.

BIANCA

Then can you help me with my project?

JASON

What project?

BIANCA

Our teacher gave us this project for the end of the semester. We're supposed to talk about something that we love.

AMANI

So what's yours going to be about?

BIANCA

I'm gonna talk about princesses!

JASON

Should have seen that coming.

BIANCA

Mommy are you gonna help me?

AMANI

Um.... I'll try baby but you know mommy has a lot on her schedule.

JASON

Babe!

BIANCA

But who's going to help me make a dress for my princess? And I need to build a castle.

JASON

A castle?

BIANCA

Yeah! Every princess lives in a castle.

AMANI

I think your dad can take that one.

BIANCA

Oh yeah!

JASON

Ummm...

BIANCA

Please Dad! I really want to ace this project. I have to get an A!

JASON

Okay! You got it. A castle fit for a princess coming right up.

AMANI

Thank you daddy!

She kisses her father on the cheek.

BIANCA

Can we go home and get started?

AMANI

No! Finish your ice cream before it turns into a tie dye t shirt.

BIANCA

Okaaaay.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM

Jason and Amani have slept in on a Sunday morning, their door busts wide open with Bianca barging in excited. She jumps on their bed.

BIANCA

Good morning! Wake up guys! It's time to work on my project!

AMANI

Wait wait! What day is it? Oh my goodness!!! Oh my goodness! I'm late for work... I'm late for work!!

She gets up abruptly, tries to get her slippers

JASON

Babe it's Sunday!

AMANI

What?

BIANCA

It's Sunday Mom, you don't work.

AMANI

(mtcheww)

And you guys watched me make a fool of myself without saying anything.! Thank goodness, I would have been chewed and spit out if I was late.

BIANCA

Well come on! Let's go make our princess!

She grabs her mother's arm and they go to her bedroom. Bianca has already put out crafts to get started.

AMANI

Okaay... I don't know where to begin.

BIANCA

Last night, I wrote some things down.

She gets her notepad.

BIANCA

I want a princess who looks like me. Dark skin, big afro, and from Africa just like you. I was looking online for inspiration but didn't find any that I liked. That's why I want to create one that is unique. So other girls like me can feel represented.

AMANI

Ooh... that's a good idea! You don't see a lot of dark skin princesses these days. So let's do this, I will draw some sketches and you figure out what else you need for your presentation?

BIANCA

Okay!

AMANI

Let me get my sketchbook.

BIANCA

Mommy?

AMANI

Yeah?

BIANCA

Can you also make waffles?

AMANI

Okay... waffles coming right up.

INT. GAMING DEVELOPMENT STUDIO- DAY

Jason is a senior game engineer at Cohen Brothers Inc. He is having lunch in the cafeteria with his coworker Scott as they talk about their personal and work life.

SCOTT

Man that smells good!

JASON

I know! When my wife has time to cook, she really puts it down.

SCOTT

Mhmmm... What is it?

JASON

It's called Pilaf, an African delicacy. It's like fried rice with meat. I think the secret is in the spices though, gives it a kick.

SCOTT

Man... this is the time I envy you the most. I'm tired of these turkey sandwiches man! I want a nice home cooked meal for once.

(MORE)

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Even my momma won't cook for me no more until I settle down.

JASON

And me knowing you... those sandwiches aren't going anywhere soon. Get used to the taste my brother.

They both laugh.

SCOTT

You got jokes huh? Anyways... How's Amani and Bianca doing?

JASON

They're good. My wife is busy as always, caught up in some new project from work. I feel bad for saying this but I'm not too happy she got it.

SCOTT

Hey man! Don't hate!

JASON

No I'm not hating. Of course not! I support my wife and I want her to succeed at what she does. I just feel like sometimes she puts us on the back burner whenever something big happens in her career.

SCOTT

How do you mean?

JASON

I wanted us to talk about having another baby but I didn't even bother to bring it up. I know she will shut that down real quick. Everything has to be planned with her. I kind of miss how we used to be, it's not the same anymore.

SCOTT

But it sounds like you're already assuming without even asking her. I might be single but I know communication is key, so get on that.

(MORE)

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Even if she's not on the same page as you, at least both of you will know where you stand and share your ideas together. I'm sure Bianca wouldn't mind a little sibling though.

JASON

Exactly, it's high time.

INT. LGP OFFICE - NIGHT

Amani has pulled a late night at work, she is the only one left in the office. She is playing some music to keep her company as she designs a dress on a mannequin. She adjusts a few things here and there. As she turns around to grab something, her eyes are still on the dress... she misses the stairs and falls down.

AMANI

Ouch!!! Oooh....

She's in a lot of pain.

INT. LIVING ROOM- DAY

After the stairs mishap, Amani is at home resting. She has a foot cast and a clutch to support her. She is now working on Bianca's princess project. She has started designing her. Her husband brings her a cup of tea.

JASON

Here you go baby, a nice cup of tea.

AMANI

Thank you sweetie. I don't know if I'm gonna get used to this.

JASON

It's only a few weeks, hang in there.

AMANI

I just can't work here at home, I can't concentrate. I need to get back to the office. I've been avoiding Estelle's calls because I know what she will want to talk to me about.

JASON

Amani, it's not that urgent. You just broke your leg babe.

AMANI

But it is urgent Jason! This is the worst timing of all time. This is the biggest project I have ever worked on and boom... my clumsy self falls off the stairs.

JASON

Why don't you just..

She gets a phone call that interrupts their conversation.

AMANI

Well what do you know?
Hello?

INT. LGP OFFICE- DAY

Estelle is back at the office as she calls Bianca.

ESTELLE

Hey Amani, do you have a minute to talk?

AMANI

Hi Estelle! Yeah I have a minute. What's going on?

ESTELLE

I just heard from Marcus, they cut the deadline short, they want the collection done in three weeks. They want to start the marketing campaign sooner so...

AMANI

Three weeks? That's impossible!

ESTELLE

I know it's crazy but there's nothing I can do. Do you think you can make it?

AMANI

I... guess I can try. This is very sudden though. I thought I had at least two months.

ESTELLE

What if I gave you some help? I can get Anna to join you. But we really have to meet this deadline or we're toast.

AMANI

You know Anna and I can't really work together, not since the last time.

ESTELLE

Well, that puts us both in a tough spot. Let me know if you change your mind, you need all the help you can get.

AMANI

Okay, thank you Estelle. I promise I will do my best and finish on time.

ESTELLE

Bye.

She hangs up the phone.

JASON

What hapenned?

AMANI

They want the collection to be done in three weeks. I'm dead.

INT. BIANCA BEDROOM- NIGHT

Bianca is deep asleep late at night, she starts having a dream.

INT. BIANCA DREAM- NIGHT

She is in a beautiful garden with flowers everywhere, suddenly someone passes her by. It's a tall, dark-skinned woman wearing a beautiful dress that seems like it's glowing... she looks like a princess, although she is a bit blurry. Bianca is mesmerized, she starts walking behind her. As the woman walks, she touches the flowers she's passing by, they glow as well. She walks with such elegance and poise that Bianca is trying to imitate her walk. She wants to see her face but she can't catch up to her, she starts running. As she finally catches up to her, about to see her face... she is awoken by her alarm clock.

INT. BIANCA BEDROOM- NIGHT (CONTINUED)

BIANCA

Man! Why are good dreams always never finished?

EXT. BACKYARD- DAY

Bianca and her mother are spending some time together. Amani is putting some nail polish on her daughter's nails. It's a casual afternoon. There are some snacks and drinks by the table. Jason is cooking in the kitchen. He is talking to his wife in the other room.

JASON

Babe! How do you want your steak?

AMANI

Medium rare as always!

JASON

Got it!

AMANI

Soo... your birthday is coming up. What do you want to do?

BIANCA

I want a big party.

AMANI

Oh yeah? Do you want to do it here or should we rent somewhere?

BIANCA

No, I just want it here with grandma and grandpa and some friends.

AMANI

And what theme do you want?

BIANCA

A princess theme of course!

AMANI

Oh... right. Hey B, I was thinking how about maybe trying something different this year? I think it's getting kind of predictable.

BIANCA

Like what?

AMANI

Maybe... an African-themed one!
Huh? We would dress up, we could
play games I used to play as a kid.
It would be fun. Plus it would be a
way for you to embrace your African
culture and roots. What do you say?

BIANCA

Yeah, I guess it could be fun.

AMANI

Trust me, It's gonna be a lot of
fun.

BIANCA

Did you finish drawing the princess
for my project?

AMANI

Oh...umm... I'm almost there. I'm
working on two projects at the same
time, it's exhausting. Don't worry
though, I'll get yours done too.

BIANCA

Good! Because I want to show it to
dad so he can work on the video.

AMANI

You got it babes! Okay, give me
your other hand, I'm finished with
this one.

INT. SIMON AND BEATRICE HOUSE- DAY

Beatrice is making an african doll in her office, she hears
her husband on the phone... he sounds irritated.

SIMON

Look there is nothing I can do!
What do you want me to tell you! I
had nothing to do with that so I'm
sorry but my hands are tied. Let
him know where I stand. I have to
go.

Simon hangs up the phone.

BEATRICE

Who was that?

SIMON

That was Akil. He's not doing good. He wanted to know if we were planning on coming to see the family anytime soon.

BEATRICE

Isn't that what we were talking about a few days ago? Maybe it's a sign.

SIMON

Yeah but I don't want to go on these circumstances. I want to go because I want my granddaughter to learn about where we're from.

BEATRICE

Why not do both? It would do us some good to see family and old friends. This is a perfect time. After Bianca's birthday, we're gonna start planning it out. Life is too short honey, don't forget the true value of family. Plus we could all use a vacation.

INT. AMANI & JASON HOUSE/ BASEMENT- NIGHT

Amani is working in her bedroom on her work project. She has her headphones on full blast. Jason comes in, kisses her cheeks. He gets her attention.

AMANI

Hey you!

JASON

Hey babe, I have something to show you, come on.

AMANI

Alright, just give me five minutes.

JASON

No, I want you to come now, please?

AMANI

Okay! I'm coming

He puts her in his arms.

AMANI

Wait! Let me hold on!

Jason pretends to drop her.

AMANI

Jason! Noo..

They both laugh.

JASON

I got you honey.

They go to the backyard. Jason has set up a romantic dinner setting. The place is lit up by lights going around the fence. It's beautiful. Amani's face lights up. He puts her down.

AMANI

Oh my.... babe! Wow! How beautiful is this? You did this by yourself?

JASON

I kind of had a little helper...

AMANI

I see... ooh how amazing is this! How sweet babe!

JASON

Come on. Sit down. I'll go get the food.

Jason returns with two plates, he sets them down. It's salmon with asparagus and some mashed potatoes.

AMANI

Yummm! I haven't had salmon in a while.

JASON

You know I put it down when I'm in kitchen.

AMANI

This is so great honey, thank you! Really...We needed this. We barely have time to ourselves anymore, date nights like these are what we have been missing.

JASON

Well cheers to making sure we make nights like these happen more often.

AMANI

Cheers! I love you

JASON

I love you too baby.

They share a kiss.

INT. LA JOLLA ELEMENTARY - DAY

At school, Bianca is heading to the cafeteria for lunch break. She goes to sit next to her friends at a table.

BIANCA

Hi guys!

GIRL

Hey Bianca!

BIANCA

So my birthday is this week and I wanted to invite you guys.

GIRL #2

I'll come!

GIRL #3

Me too.

GIRL

Great! Here are your invitations .

GIRL #2

So what should we wear?

BIANCA

Well, it's an African-themed birthday. My mom is making me a dress.

GIRL

At least it's not princess-themed as usual.

BIANCA

I thought you guys enjoyed it.

GIRL #3

We did but not the dress-up part, we're too old for princess parties Bianca. So are you.

INT. PARTY STORE - DAY

Bianca and Jason are shopping for their daughter's birthday. They are looking around but can't find what they want.

AMANI

I don't think we're in the right store.

JASON

It's a party store, what are you talking about?

AMANI

I want something that goes with the theme. I can't find any.

JASON

What about this safari ones?

AMANI

You're kidding, right? How cliché is that? No! Bianca is not a little kid anymore, those are for little kids. Plus she's not into that.

JASON

Well I don't think I can help you here because I have no idea what you have in mind.

AMANI

Something elegant and cute. Something with a pop of color.

JASON

If you know exactly what you want, why don't you just make it?

AMANI

That would take eternity, I don't have that much time.

JASON

I can help you.

AMANI

Really? If you say you're gonna help me, I'm hoping you're gonna keep your word. From start to finish.

JASON

I promise.

AMANI

Awww, you're the best! Okay let's go! We have a lot to do.

INT. AMANI OFFICE - DAY

Amani is having a video conference call with her coworkers on her laptop. She is showing the designs she has been working on.

ESTELLE

So how far are you? There's only two weeks left. Marcus is bombarding me with emails and I can't ignore them forever.

AMANI

I'm doing the best I can Estelle, I mean he has to understand the timeline I was given. If he could just give me one more week...

ESTELLE

You already know that's not gonna happen. Look, I told you that if you can't handle it you should let me know. I made a promise to Marcus that everything would be done on schedule and now I have to tell him that it won't. You know how he is when deadlines are missed.

AMANI

You know I can Estelle, but I'm planning my daughter's birthday party, helping her with some school work and I'm doing all this WITH A BROKEN LEG! I'm killing myself here because I want to get all these things done, can't you cut me some slack?

ESTELLE

Look, I understand you have other responsibilities. I think I'm gonna ask someone else to take over. I'm sorry, I'm sure you did your best. I have to go, I'll talk to you soon.

The video call ends.

Later that night, Amani is washing the dishes while listening to music. Her husband returns from work.

JASON

I'm home!

BIANCA

Hi Daddy!

JASON

Hello my little nugget! Muah

He gives her a warm embrace. Amani is in her own little world, Jason notices she's awfully quiet.

JASON

And how is my wonderful wife doing?

There is no response. He takes off her headphones.

JASON

Hey honey! Are you there?

AMANI

Oh hey! Sorry I didn't hear you.

JASON

You okay? You never do the dishes this late at night.

AMANI

Well I can now.

JASON

Why, what's going on?

AMANI

Estelle took me off the project.

JASON

What? Why?

AMANI

I guess she didn't believe I could make the deadline. She gave it to someone else.

JASON

Awww... I'm sorry babe. That's disappointing.

AMANI

I worked my butt off to impress them and now it's all for nothing.

(MORE)

AMANI (CONT'D)

They just snatched it from me without any hesitation. I...I... never had someone have so little faith in me. It's actually insulting.

JASON

This is a small setback honey, it happens to all of us. Something better will come along the way, it always does. Don't let it get to you so much.

AMANI

Of course you would say that. You know, I'm not really in the mood for you inspirational talk right now, I think I'll pass.

JASON

What's that supposed to mean?

AMANI

Nothing, I'm going to bed.

She starts walking away a little but stops.

AMANI

You know what? I'm sorry. I'm just not having a good day. I shouldn't be taking it out on you. I really had high hopes for this project because I thought it would skyrocket my career and now this is happening. I don't know how to react to it. I'm sorry I was rude to you babe.

JASON

Come here.

They embrace.

JASON

I understand how you feel baby, but I also know how strong and consistent you are. This isn't the end, you'll make another opportunity happen and when it does... you're gonna rock it. I believe in you that much. Okay?

AMANI

Thank you. That makes me feel better.

He rocks her in his arms as she gives in.

EXT. BACKYARD-DAY

Amani and Jason have woken up very early to set up everything for the birthday party. She is putting up decorations and setting the tables. Jason is building the tent. A few other friends of Amani are in the kitchen cooking. Mandazi are frying, there is meat, sambusas and pilau.

Later that afternoon, the backyard is lively, kids are running around. There are balloons everywhere, people dancing to the music. Bianca is wearing a cute yellow African dress her mother designed for her. She has put on simple makeup to complete her look. She is smiling as she mingles with some guests. Her grandpa and father are on the grill, Amani is attending to guests.

GUEST

Girl that dress your daughter is wearing is amazing! Where did you get it?

AMANI

What do you mean? I made it!

GUEST

Stop it! You actually made that?

AMANI

I would think so I mean I'm a fashion designer last time I checked.

(Chuckles)

GUEST

Wait so why are you still working for someone else? With designs like that, you should have your own clothing line or a boutique? That kind of dress, you can't find anywhere.

AMANI

I used to think about it but it's a lot of work, and money of course.

GUEST

Come on now, that doesn't sound like you. You couldn't stop talking about your big plans after college and now you're scared to make them happen? I know you! You don't talk like that. Seriously! You could tap into a market people have overlooked for years! I'm telling you.

AMANI

She does look beautiful doesn't she?

GUEST

She's stunning.

Meanwhile, Bianca is sitting on her grandmother's lap at table in a corner, away from the noise.

BEATRICE

So how is school going young lady? Getting good grades?

BIANCA

It's good. Mom and I are working on a project together.

BEATRICE

Oh yeah? What kind of project?

BIANCA

We're gonna create a princess and I will have to give a presentation at school.

BEATRICE

A princess huh?

BIANCA

Yeah! And She's from Africa... Mom is making the dresses and Dad is gonna help me create the presentation.

BEATRICE

What is she like

BIANCA

Like an African Princess. She's beautiful, intelligent and glamorous... like my mom.

BEATRICE

Oh that's nice! Can't wait to see what she looks like. Hey by the way, what would you say about a trip to Africa? You could see where your grandparents grew up and meet the rest of your family?

BIANCA

Really?

BEATRICE

Yeah! Your grandfather and I are planning on going next year. If you want, you can come with us. I don't know about your parents though, their schedule is impossible to work with. Maybe you can be my little helper... what do you say?

BIANCA

Sure!

AMANI

Bianca, come open your presents. I'm gonna go open my presents now.

BEATRICE

I think they're ready for you to open your gifts. Go on.

Bianca gets up

BEATRICE

Oh wait! Before you go. This is for you; I hope you like it.

BIANCA

Thank you Grandma!

She kisses her grandma's cheeks.

BEATRICE

You're welcome darling, now go see your presents before I steal a few.

Bianca giggles.

After everyone has finished eating, there are a few games like Suwe,Kgati (rope skipping), and more, even some adults are playing. There was even a kids' fashion show.

Later that day, Bianca opened her presents, and the evening ended with an African after-party with close friends and family. Everyone was having a blast. Kids were passed out in some of the rooms.

INT. CLASSROOM- DAY

After a fun birthday over the weekend, Bianca is back to school. Her teacher is about to hand out materials and sheets for the project.

TEACHER

Alright class, listen up. You only have two weeks left to finish your project. If you haven't started, I would suggest you get right to it. If you have any problems or questions, come see me. Now, I'm gonna hand out sheets of paper to help you create your presentation. It's a few questions to guide you. Answer them in your presentation, you can also add or change them however you want. Please grab one and pass them all the way to the back.

She hands out the papers to the ones sitting in front. Bianca reads a few of the questions. On the bottom, there is an option to give in class demonstration. She turns around to talk to her classmate.

BIANCA

Jess, are you going to do a demonstration?

JESS

Yeah! I already practiced, I'm gonna do a Michael Jackson song. What about you?

BIANCA

My mom and I made a black princess and my dad is going to make an animated video. What do you think?

JESS

Umm...I don't think you should do it.

BIANCA

Why?

JESS

I feel like they will make fun of you. Last time, you cried. If you don't want people to talk about you, you shouldn't do it.

INT. BASEMENT- DAY

Amani and Bianca are trying to finish the project on time. Her father is in the living room, working on the animation. Bianca is typing on her laptop as her mother stitches more dresses.

BIANCA

Mom?

AMANI

Yeah?

BIANCA

You never finished the story.

AMANI

Which story?

BIANCA

The one about the brothers. Can you finish it?

AMANI

Mhmm... I think that would distract us and we want to finish this in time don't we?

BIANCA

Yeah but I'm bored. Can you continue please?

AMANI

Okay, I didn't know you really liked it that much, let me see... where were we?

BIANCA

The kind was going to battle.

AMANI

Oh yeah! Okay.. So as Prince Bahati watched his brother talking to the army...

INT. KINGDOM PALACE- NIGHT

Prince Bahati leaves the window where he was watching his brother, his wife is packing things into a bag.

PRINCE BAHATI
Are the girls ready?

PRINCESS LATIFAH
Yes, I just checked on them.

PRINCE BAHATI
Good, as soon as he is done out there, we are leaving. Get only the necessities, we don't want to attract any suspicions. Let's just wait for it to get darker. Bwana Atulinde.

PRINCESS LATIFAH
Amina.

Later that night, it was quiet. Most of the kingdom were asleep, there were a few guards inside the kingdom and more at the gate. Prince Bahati and his family walk quietly outside their quarters, making their way through the corridors. As they get to the guards, they are stopped.

GUARD
Your royal highnesses. May I ask where you are headed?

PRINCE BAHATI
I am taking my family for a walk, we will be back shortly.

GUARD
The king has asked that no one leaves the palace at night, I have to inform him.

PRINCE BAHATI
I don't think he would appreciate being woken up in the middle of the night just to tell him I'm taking my family out for a walk. Wouldn't be a wise decision. If you will excuse me...

The prince passes them with his family following behind him, as Princess Latifah is trying to hide a small bag with their belongings from the guards. They try to avoid any areas where they may be stopped, usually walking in dark alleys. They finally make it out of the royal palace. Once outside, they walk for a while in a forest nearby. There is a man with a carriage a few miles from them, they start running towards it. Prince Bahati takes the youngest daughter in his arms so she won't get left behind. The man comes to help them.

GUY

Your royal highness

PRINCE BAHATI

Oh please, there is no more of that from now on. Call me Bahati.

GUY

We must go now before they find out you are gone.

The family gets into the carriage quickly.

INT. KINGDOM PALACE-DAY

The morning after, Prince Bahati and his family had fled the kingdom, the king is outraged. He has gathered all the guards, staff and counselors of the palace for a quick meeting.

KING AHMED

Where is he?

COUNSELOR

One of the guards said that he left last night with his family saying that he was going for a walk.

KING AHMED

And you fell for that? YOU BELIEVED THAT?! DID I NOT MAKE MYSELF CLEAR THAT I WAS TO BE INFORMED OF HIS WHEREABOUTS AT ALL TIMES? WHO GOES FOR A WALK IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT! I knew it... he is soo weak! Find him... bring him back. FIND HIM!!

Everyone starts getting to it, the guards leave, and the counselors talk with each other trying to figure out a plan.

INT. FRIEND HOUSE - NIGHT

Prince Bahati and his family have been staying at a friend's house, far away from the palace. They are sharing a meal with their friend's family.

PRINCE BAHATI

I wanted to thank you again for letting us stay in your home. We are eternally grateful.

FRIEND #2

I am just happy to be in service to you.

PRINCE BAHATI

It's always good to know there are childhood friends you can always count on.

PRINCESS LATIFAH

Yes, we are both grateful for what you have done for us. So how long have you two been friends? And how come I never knew about you until now?

FRIEND #2

Well, his brother never liked me. He never wanted me around him, he thought I wasn't a good influence. I guess my social status played a part as well. What could the son of a king and one of a bread seller have in common? I wasn't welcome in the palace.

PRINCESS LATIFAH

You're not the only one who has a problem with his royal highness.

FRIEND #2

How do you mean?

PRINCE BAHATI

He didn't approve of my wife when we met. He actually tried to keep us apart.

PRINCESS LATIFAH

And my wonderful husband fell for it the first time, he actually agreed with him because he was too scared to go against his brother.

(MORE)

PRINCESS LATIFAH (CONT'D)

He finally came to his senses when I was about marry another man. He was at my door crying like a baby.

They all laugh.

FRIEND #2

That's my friend, always waiting till the last minute to take action. And here we are again. You should have left a long time ago if you knew his plans the whole time.

PRINCE BAHATI

I thought he would change his mind or I would... I didn't think he would continue with the plan. He is still as stubborn as when we were children.

FRIEND #2

Now his stubbornness is about to destroy a whole kingdom. How tragic.

PRINCESS LATIFAH

You can say that again.

FRIEND #2

So when are you leaving the country?

PRINCE BAHATI

I have someone who has bought me tickets. We leave tomorrow night.

FRIEND #2

Where are you headed?

PRINCESS LATIFAH

We can't share that with you unfortunately. The less people know, the better.

Suddenly, the doors open abruptly, it is the same man who brought them to the house.

FRIEND

Your highness, you have to leave right away! The king has ordered to bring you back!

PRINCE BAHATI

I knew it! Let's go. Wake up the kids, I'll get our stuff.

The group starts rushing to get Bahati's family out of the city before they arrive.

Meanwhile, some of the guards are on their horses, galloping through the forest. The king is with them, he suddenly stops. He is pensive... his commander walks back to talk to him.

COMMANDER

Something wrong your highness?

KING AHMED

I know where he is. Follow me.

The king takes off as his army follows behind him.

EXT. FRIEND HOUSE - DAY

The king arrives at Prince Bahati's friend residence early the next morning. His commander knocks on his door, he opens.

COMMANDER

We are looking for Prince Bahati, have you seen him?

FRIEND #2

No, I haven't.

COMMANDER

A few of your neighbors are saying you had guests here last night, we would to talk to them.

FRIEND #2

You heard wrong, there was no one here.

COMMANDER

Then you wouldn't mind us havign a look, would you?

FRIEND #2

You are welcome to.

The commander pushes him to the side to enter the house, the king follows. They take a look around, looking at every corner. There is no one... the king gets frustrated. He walks to his brother's friend.

KING AHMED

You know I never liked you, ever since you became friends with my brother. You're the reason he was so weak... I should have done something then, although I still can.

FRIEND #2

Your royal highness... with all due respect, you were always envious of your brother. He is smarter than you and could have been a better king than you ever were. That is why you were threatened by him, although you couldn't show your insecurities in front of him, you tried to bring him down instead. You need him more than he needs you. You are nothing without him. This whole kingdom will crumble because of your rage and stubbornness.

The commander rushes to give him a slap but he is stopped by the king.

KING AHMED

Be lucky that I have more pressing matters to tend to... but we are not finished. I will be back.

The king starts walking away. He stops as he gets to the door. He turns around.

KING AHMED

If I ever find out you had something to do with this...
(chuckles and clicks tongue)

The king and his guards leave.

INT. AIRPORT-DAY

Prince Bahati and his family have made it to the airport, they are at the gate for their flight to departure. They are wearing regular clothes, trying to blend in with other people. The couple looks tense but the kids are playing with their dolls and giggling. His wife looks more anxious than him, her legs are shaking, he notices. He puts his hand on her knee to stop her.

PRINCE BAHATI

Are you alright?

PRINCESS LATIFAH

Not really, it's all hapenning too fast.

PRINCE BAHATI

Don't worry, we will get through this. The hardest part is already done.

PRINCESS LATIFAH

Are we doing the right thing? Maybe there was another option we missed. Are we being selfish? What about all our people?

PRINCE BAHATI

Sometimes you have to be selfish for good reasons. We have two important people we need to protect at all cost. We can't risk their lives for anyone, I tried talking to as many of them as I could but they had made up their minds already. There's no turning back now.

PRINCESS LATIFAH

So what is the plan once we get there?

PRINCE BAHATI

First of all, we have to completely forget our past. No one must know who we are, where we are from. I will get a job immediately and try to find you one as well, the kids will go to school. We will have to blend in and get accustomed to this new life.

(MORE)

PRINCE BAHATI (CONT'D)

It's a big change but we will take
it one step at a time.

PRINCESS LATIFAH

We always loved a good adventure I
guess.

PRINCE BAHATI

(chuckles)

Exactly... this is the biggest one
of all. And it will be great.

Latifah smiles, he kisses her forehead as they wait for
their flight... watching their daughters smile and goofing
around.

INT. BASEMENT- DAY (CONTINUED)

Amani pauses the story. Bianca had stopped working and just
sitting listening to her mother tell the story.

AMANI

Alright, that's it for tonight.

BIANCA

But where did they go?

AMANI

I'll tell you next time. Now let's
get back to work. We're almost
done, I'll go see what your father
is up to.

Bianca runs upstairs.

EXT. LAKE - DAY

Jason is having a good time with his two friends, Deon and
Calvin. They are having a quiet afternoon fishing and having
drinks.

DEON

Do you guys realize we haven't done
something like this in almost a
year? What happened to us?

JASON

Life happened to us.

CALVIN

The sad thing is I had to bribe you two into coming, I bet if I hadn't bought the drinks you would have ditched me.

DEON

You're right about that.

CALVIN

That's so messed up. So what's going on with you two?

DEON

Well... I'm about to be a daddy... again!

CALVIN

Woah! Congrats brother!

JASON

Yes! I'm happy for you man!

DEON

Thank you, thank you! I figured one more wouldn't hurt.

JASON

Mhmmm... then you call us crying because you lost one of them at the mall.

DEON

You know I still have that voicemail, dude was losing his marbles. If he hadn't found him, he would have left the state.

JASON

I would too if I were married to Samantha, she can really put fear into a man. Anyways, I'm happy for you man... At least one of us should expand our family. Can't say the same for myself.

CALVIN

She doesn't want anymore?

JASON

I don't even know at this point, we barely communicate.

(MORE)

JASON (CONT'D)

She lost a big project last week and I feel like she blames me because I kind of made her feel bad for focusing on her career than our family.

DEON

Well, why would you do that? Are you scared that she can't handle both?

JASON

I'm just scared that we're not on the same page. She's been shutting down all the plans I have for our family, now I'm scared to even tell her that I wanted to renew our vows and have another baby. I know how that will go, she doesn't have time... as always.

CALVIN

Hey man, when the time is right, it will happen. Even if she says no, you still have plenty of time. Now come on, let's try and catch something... we've been here for almost an hour and we haven't caught anything.

They go back to fishing.

INT. LA JOLLA ELEMENTARY- NIGHT

It's parent teacher conference night for Amani and Jason. They are speaking with Mrs Atkins, Bianca's teacher.

MRS ATKINS

So overall, Bianca has improved this year. She keeps up with her assignments and lays make attention in class.

JASON

Well that's good. I have limited her Tv time and we created a schedule so she never misses any school work.

MRS ATKINS

Yes, she told me about that. It's the small changes like that that help a student. And thank you for volunteering this semester, it's good to see that some parents really want to be involved.

AMANI

Wait, you were volunteering and you didn't tell me?

JASON

I guess I was too busy, I forgot.

AMANI

You forgot? I could have helped too... why couldn't you tell me?

JASON

I don't know... You seemed too preoccupied.

AMANI

Even if I was, don't you think that's something I would want to be part of too?

JASON

Maybe if you paid more attention to...

MRS ATKINS

(Cuts him short)

Mr and Mrs Stevens. The point I'm trying to make here is that both of you being more involved about Bianca's education... has shown to render great improvement. If we could continue on this path, I'm sure she will excel. And Bianca really needs that. This is a big improvement from last year. Let's keep it up.

Amani seems angry towards her husband.

INT. AMANI & JASON HOUSE/ KITCHEN- NIGHT

After getting home from the parent teacher conference, the couple seems to be tense around each other. They get inside the house, there is no talking.

Amani starts getting the ingredients to start cooking. Jason is just staring at her slamming things.

JASON

Are you going to keep giving me the silent treatment or are we going to talk about things like adults?

AMANI

What do you want me to say? Is there anything you want to hear?.

JASON

Whatever it is that is making you this pissed. Let's talk about it.

AMANI

(chuckles)

You humiliated me in front of that woman.

JASON

How? I didn't say a thing.

AMANI

You don't have to say things directly to get your message across. And yours was that you think I'm a terrible mother.

JASON

Oh my! Are you kidding me? When did I say that?

AMANI

You didn't have to! It's clear in your face that you think of me that way! How do you think that makes me feel? I do everything I can to provide for our daughter.

JASON

And what do I do?

AMANI

You judge me! You judge me for wanting to move forward in my career! Do you think I can't take care of my family and have my career? Either you don't believe in me or you're envious of my success.

JASON

Wow! I can't believe you actually just said that to me. Who was there when you got that promotion? Was I not the first to jump for joy? And who was there to console you when they took you off? Was it not me who was there to try and cheer you up? How dare you say that to me? I have always supported you, no matter what... Do you want to know what bothers me since you have no clue? You sometimes put us away like a project you want to put on hold until it's a convenient time for you again to focus on us.

AMANI

Hm... and that's how you feel? What sweet words to hear from your dear husband. There isn't a day that I don't think about what's best for this family, no matter what I have going on. Every decision I make, I always have to think of my family. What do you want Jason? Do you want a wife that just stays home and waits on you to bring a paycheck? Because that's not me. I'm sorry, I have my own goals in life but that doesn't stop me from doing my marital and motherly duties.

JASON

Right... how long have I been asking you about having another baby? I don't even know if it's because you don't want one or as usual... it's not on your goals this year? Why does everything have to be on your schedule Amani? Do you ever think about me, or Bianca? Do you think she wouldn't want a sibling?

AMANI

Of course, yeah... I'm the worst mother in the world. Go ahead and keep repeating it to me because it makes me feel so much better! Ughhh!! Can this night get any worse?

She turns around to grab a bottle of water, without looking something smashes on the ground. They both look down... it's Bianca's project that Jason had been working on. It is a 3D prototype palace for the princess Bianca and Armani had worked on.

AMANI

Oh my Gosh!!! Nooo!

JASON

Why would you do that? Are you kidding me!

AMANI

(sarcastic chuckle)

Of course you would think that I did it voluntarily.

It has made a loud sound; it wakes up Bianca. She comes to the kitchen; she notices the mess. Tears start coming down her eyes. Her mother tries to comfort her.

AMANI

Oh honey, I am so sorry! I didn't see it. I'm so sorry. We can finish it on time, I will stay up all night and help your dad so we can finish it. I'm so sorry baby!

Bianca runs back to her room.

JASON

You just had to say it didn't you?

He walks away shaking his head.

INT. KITCHEN-DAY

The next morning, Bianca is eating breakfast before going to school. Her mother is also in the kitchen working on her laptop. Bianca is quiet, she is still upset. Amani shuts down her laptop to try and talk to her.

AMANI

Sweetie, I know you're still mad at me. I'm truly sorry for breaking your project, it was a total accident.

(MORE)

AMANI (CONT'D)

Please don't be mad at me, I can't stand when you don't talk to me. Can you please forgive me?

BIANCA

You never cared about my project anyways.

AMANI

How can you say that? I stayed up nights helping you.

BIANCA

Because you're my mom, it's your job. You only did it because I asked you to. You always told me I was too young for princesses anyways. I don't care anymore.

AMANI

Okay now, I understand you're upset but remember I'm still your mother. Don't talk to me like that.

BIANCA

Yeah, excuse me... mother. I have to go to school now.

AMANI

Bianca...

Bianca grabs her backpack and slams the door behind her. Her mother is stunned.

INT. LA JOLLA ELEMENTARY-DAY

At school, Bianca is sitting alone at lunch. Her friend comes and sits next to her.

JESS

Hi Bianca!

BIANCA

Hey.

JESS

How come you didn't come to class last period. Where were you?

BIANCA

I went for a walk.

JESS

You skipped class? Uh oh... you're gonna get reported.

BIANCA

So what?

JESS

You're acting weird. Anyways, My aunt gave me a birthday present that I didn't like so I thought you might like it.

She hands her a kit that creates a princess. It has tiaras, shoes, dresses and a doll.

JESS

Do you like it?

BIANCA

No, I'm not into that anymore. I'm too old to believe in princesses. Here, you can give it back to your aunt.

JESS

Why are you being rude to me?

BIANCA

I'm not! I just don't like the gift.

JESS

You're acting so weird.

A few more of Bianca's friends arrive.

FRIEND #3

Hi guys! What are you talking about?

JESS

I gave Bianca a gift and she has an attitude.

FRIEND #4

What'd you give her?

JESS

This.

FRIEND #3

Wait, she doesn't like it? That's impossible.

FRIEND #4

I think it's good that she doesn't like it, now she can grow up. Who seriously is still obsessed about princesses, what are you six?

They start laughing. Bianca gets angry. She pulls her friend's hair as she screams and the other girls try to get her off. Some adults also rush to end the fight.

ADULT #1

Stop it! Soot it both of you!

JESS

Bianca let go!

ADULT #1

I said stop it!

They are able to stop the fight.

ADULT #2

Bianca what is the matter with you? Come on, to the principal's office you go! And we're calling your parents young lady.

BIANCA

I don't care!! Call them!

Bianca is escorted out of the cafeteria as the other kids are entertained by the whole scene.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Although they are in bed, Amani and Jason are not asleep. There is still tension between them. Their backs are against each other. There is silence. Jason is the one to break it up.

JASON

Babe, can we talk?

AMANI

I'm not really in the mood to talk.

JASON

I just wanted to let you know that I don't think you're a bad mother and I never thought of that.

AMANI

Hmmmm

JASON

Even if I sounded like I did, I don't. I think you're a great mother, I mean you're not perfect... neither am I. My issue is sometimes it's like I'm out of the picture when you plan things. You can lose focus on the important things in life... including us. There are so many things I plan for us but I get discouraged to even ask you because I know you are going to turn them all down.

AMANI

How?

JASON

I had planned a surprise ceremony to renew our vows this year in African. I couldn't even buy plane tickets.

We used to be so adventurous, so spontaneous. We didn't have to have everything in order or perfect. That was our thing, isn't that how we had Bianca? And everything turned out alright for us. Why did it change? Why does everything have to be on your timeline? Aren't we in this together? Life isn't about doing everything at the right time or planning every minute of your life. That gets boring.

Amani has been listening attentively. She doesn't respond. She pulls the covers and goes to sleep. Jason gets the message.

INT. PRINCIPAL OFFICE-DAY

Amani and Jason just arrived at Bianca's school. Bianca and the principal have been waiting for them.

PRINCIPAL

Mr and Mrs Stevens?

JASON

Hello, sorry... there was quite some traffic.

AMANI

Baby, are you okay? What happened?

Bianca doesn't respond.

PRINCIPAL

Bianca got in a fight during lunch.

AMANI

What? That's crazy, Bianca is not like that.

PRINCIPAL

Well, it happened. The good thing is no one got hurt. But we do not tolerate this behavior at our school.

JASON

Neither do we. Bianca, what is the matter with you? Where is this behavior coming from?

BIANCA

I don't know.

AMANI

Hey, hey, hey... lose that attitude fast. Do you hear me?

PRINCIPAL

Okay, we are getting off track here, now like I said, this behavior is not tolerated. Usually, I would have to suspend Bianca for ten days but because this is her first time and she has always been a good student... I can cut it down to just the end of the week. We have never had this problem with Bianca, which was quite shocking for me when they sent her to my office. I personally would like to know the reason for this sudden behavior.

JASON

We don't have an answer to that right now but I promise you that we will get to the bottom of this.

PRINCIPAL

Great! For now, we ask that you as parents make sure this doesn't happen again. Bianca is a terrific student; we wouldn't want to lose her over something like this.

JASON

AMANI

Yes, thank you. We really appreciate it. We are going to have a serious conversation with her and figure out what's going on. And I'm sure she will be on her best behavior from now on. Right, Bianca?

BIANCA

... yes.

PRINCIPAL

Great!

JASON

We won't spend much of your time so, we'll be on our way. Bianca let's go.

Amani grabs her daughter's backpack; they exit the office. The walk down the school hallway to the parking lot is awkward and silent.

EXT. CAR RIDE- DAY

While driving from a disappointing meeting with the principal, the car ride is silent. Both the parents look furious.

JASON

Okay, enough of the silence. Bianca, what is the matter with you? You're fighting people now? That's what you're doing?

BIANCA

They were making fun of me!

JASON

And that gives you the right to get violent?

AMANI

How were they making fun of you exactly?

BIANCA

I don't want to talk about it.

JASON

Well, look where you are now, getting suspended. This is unbelievable. You're going to be grounded for I don't know how long.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Although they are in bed, Amani and Jason are not asleep. There is still tension between them. Their backs are against each other. There is silence. Jason is the one to break it up.

JASON

Babe, can we talk?

AMANI

I'm not really in the mood to talk. With the day I've been having, that's the last thing I want to do.

JASON

I just wanted to let you know that I don't think you're a bad mother and I never thought of that.

AMANI

Hmmmm

JASON

Even if I sounded like I did, I don't. I think you're a great mother, I mean you're not perfect... neither am I. My issue is sometimes it's like I'm out of the picture when you plan things. You can lose focus on the important things in life... including us. There are so many things I plan for us but I get discouraged to even ask you because I know you are going to turn them all down.

AMANI

How?

JASON

I had planned a surprise ceremony to renew our vows this year in African. I couldn't even buy plane tickets.

We used to be so adventurous, so spontaneous. We didn't have to have everything in order or perfect. That was our thing, isn't that how we had Bianca? And everything turned out alright for us. Why did it change? Why does everything have to be on your timeline? Aren't we in this together? Life isn't about doing everything at the right time or planning every minute of your life. That gets boring.

Amani has been listening attentively. She doesn't respond. She pulls the covers and goes to sleep. Jason gets the message.

INT. SIMON AND BEATRICE HOUSE-NIGHT

Amani has gone to visit her parents, she came alone. She is having a conversation with her mom in the living room. They are alone. Amani is venting.

BEATRICE

I can't believe Bianca would act like that, don't you find that strange?

AMANI

She has been acting strange and angry since I broke her project. But I don't think that's it, it's something deeper that she doesn't want to tell them directly... I get that feeling.

BEATRICE

Well kids can act out when they don't know how to express their feelings. Just sit down with her and hear her out, she might be scared to talk about it.

AMANI

I tried, she shut me down. Jason is right, I have failed as a mother.

BEATRICE

Oh, stop right now! I am sure your husband didn't say that.

AMANI

No but it's true, sometimes I can be selfish and put my wants before my family.

BEATRICE

You have always been an independent woman; you did things on your own for a long time before you started a family... sometimes it's hard to adjust. It doesn't mean you're a bad mother or wife.

AMANI

But the worst thing is that it has affected my relationship with my daughter the most. We used to be so close, we had such a strong bond. I feel like she resents me. I want my family back, this whole thing is just stupid... why can't we have another baby? Why does everything have to happen when I say it does?

BEATRICE

Hey! enough of feeling sorry for yourself. That won't get you anywhere. Your family didn't go anywhere, this is just another bump in the road, nothing major. Marriage isn't rainbows and popsicles all the time you know? Husbands and wives have their issues, parents and children have theirs. It's all a part of life. If you're gonna be hopeless at every obstacle life throws at you... you're gonna have a hard time.

AMANI

So how do I mend my bond with Bianca? I don't know how to go about these things.

BEATRICE

Look no matter what happens, nothing can break a mother-daughter bond. Maybe she's just still not over your breaking that thing, give it some time.

(MORE)

BEATRICE (CONT'D)

The more you push her, the more she backs away. Let her calm down first, but also remember to let her know that her attitude is not acceptable. If it continues, let me know. I will set her straight.

Amani is on her phone it's a text to her husband. It reads.

" Can we have dinner tonight? Just the two of us? I made reservations. I love you" she smiles.

BEATRICE

Some good news I suppose?

AMANI

Just texted Jason about going on a date tonight, maybe it will give us a chance to talk.

BEATRICE

See? Everything works itself out. Just go, have a good time with your husband. As long as you still love each other, you'll be good.

AMANI

Thanks Ma.

INT. RESTAURANT- NIGHT

Amani and Jason arrive at a french restaurant.

WAITER

Bonsoir! How are we this evening?

JASON

Great! reservations for Jason.

WAITER

Okay, let me see. Oh here you are. If you would follow me please.

They follow the waiter to a table in a corner in the back. They sit down. Jason pulls out his wife's chair.

AMANI

Thank you.

JASON

You're welcome.

AMANI

We haven't been here in years.

JASON

Right? it kind of feels weird.

AMANI

It's weird to go on a date with your wife? Didn't know we were that bad.

JASON

(chuckles)

No, we're okay.

Another waiter comes to their table.

WAITER #2

Good evening. I'll be your waiter tonight, what can I get you started with?

AMANI

I'll have a glass of red wine please.

JASON

Same here.

WAITER #2

Alright, I'll be right back.

JASON

Thank you.

You look beautiful.

AMANI

Thank you. You don't look too bad yourself.

JASON

(soft chuckle)

I just want to make sure there isn't a special date that I forgot, it's not our anniversary is it?

AMANI

No! I just wanted to go on a fancy date, like we used to. Plus, I wanted to have a talk.

JASON

You want to have a talk here?

AMANI

Yeah. Why not? Listen, I know these past few days have been truly challenging for our family, especially for you and me. I just wanted you to hear that I haven't changed, I'm still me. I love you, you and Bianca are the most important people in my life, I would never put you second. Sometimes I may not realize I'm being a bit selfish but my heart is in the right place. I don't want to make you feel like everything has to be done my way because that's not fair and I don't want you to feel that way. I'm so sorry if I did. I do miss the old us, the way we were... is it too late?

JASON

Woah, that's a lot to take it...we didn't even order yet.

AMANI

I wanted to get it out of the way before I got nervous and messed up my speech.

JASON

(laughs)

You had it all memorized and everything? Wow, I'm touched. It's very rare that you express your feelings so openly.

AMANI

I think it's high time I get comfortable doing it.

JASON

(chuckle)

I like it.

AMANI

So do you forgive me?

JASON

Of course, babe. And I'm sorry too, I shouldn't have made you feel that way. Look, I know we mean the world to you, my thing was you just need to let go sometimes and let life take its course.

(MORE)

JASON (CONT'D)

Not everything will happen according to your schedule, that's the beauty of life. Let go and let life take its course, You know? Go with the flow or the wind... I can't remember how it goes.

AMANI

(laughs)

I get what you're saying.

The waiter returns with the drinks.

WAITER #2

Here we go...

AMANI

Thank you so much.

WAITER #2

You got it. Now are we ready to order?

JASON

Give us a few minutes, we haven't looked at the menu.

WAITER #2

Okay, I'll let you look at it.

He walks away.

AMANI

I love you Jason.

JASON

I love you too. Com here.

They share a passionate kiss.

INT. LGP OFFICE- DAY

Amani is finally back to work after recovering from her broken leg. She is coming back from a meeting in the conference room with her coworkers.

AMANI

I know. I told him to change that design, he's so stubborn.

COWORKER

Well his stubbornness may work in my favor.

Amani's phone rings. It's her father.

AMANI
(To coworker)
I'll talk to you later.
Hey Dad!

INT. SIMON AND BEATRICE HOUSE

Simon is in his kitchen making something to eat as he talks to his daughter.

SIMON
Hello sweetheart! How are you?

AMANI
I'm good, what's going on?

SIMON
Not much, just making breakfast. I thought of you so I called.

AMANI
Oh that's so sweet.

SIMON
What are you doing? Do you have a minute to talk?

AMANI
Yeah. Just came back from a meeting. We can talk.

SIMON
Your mother told me about Bianca. How is she now?

AMANI
Still the same. I don't know what to do.

SIMON
I was thinking... since summer is coming... why can't she come with us on the trip? It might do her some good.

AMANI
Oh so you really are going?

SIMON
Yeah, in July. I got a call recently; he's not doing so good.

AMANI

I thought he was getting better.

SIMON

I did too, I guess he told them not to update me anymore. We have to go, I want you to come with us but I really need Bianca to come.

AMANI

Dad..

SIMON

Please, how long are you going to keep this up? She's old enough now, there is no more excuse. What is holding you back?

AMANI

I'm just not ready. I don't want things to change.

SIMON

How will they change? Even if they do, it will be for the better. Forget what I said, Amani. Unasikia?

AMANI

Ndio.

INT. BIANCA BEDROOM-NIGHT

Bianca is reading a book before bedtime; her door is open. Her mother enters her room to check on her.

AMANI

Hi baby, are you okay?

BIANCA

Yes.

AMANI

Are you ready for your presentation tomorrow?

BIANCA

I'm not doing it.

AMANI

What do you mean? You're going to fail if you don't.

BIANCA

The project is about something you love, a hobby. Why would I talk about something I don't care about anymore?

AMANI

Bianca, come on... you know that's not true.

BIANCA

It is! I don't want to embarrass myself anymore.

AMANI

(sigh)

Let's talk about this.

BIANCA

I don't want to.

AMANI

Obviously, it's something else bothering you, I want to know what it is. Please talk to me, I can't help you if you don't open up to me.

BIANCA

It's nothing. I just don't believe in the things I used to, it's for kids anyways. No wonder people make fun of me, it's stupid.

AMANI

Hey. Hey hey... don't talk like that. We all have a right to believe in something, no matter what others think about it or us.

BIANCA

No, princesses are just a fantasy. And fantasies are not real.

AMANI

That's not true, that's not true even for one bit. They are real.

BIANCA

I loved princesses because I thought that there was something magical about them. Magic isn't real so why should I believe in them? I already told Mrs.

(MORE)

BIANCA (CONT'D)

Atkins that I didn't finish the project, she can give me a zero if she wants to, this project sucked anyways. I'm going to bed.

Bianca puts her book down, turns off the lamp on her nightstand and goes to bed. Her mother is left sitting in the dark, staring at her daughter. She kisses her on the forehead and leaves the room. She goes downstairs to her office, once there... she sits down. She ponders for a minute, then pulls out her phone. She texts her mother. The text says.

" Can I come over tomorrow? I need both of you guys' help. Love you.

BEGIN MONTAGE

INT. SIMON AND BEATRICE HOUSE

Amani and her mother are planning something. She is writing things down.

EXT. BACKYARD- DAY

Bianca is putting a box away. It contains some of her favorite princess items and drawings she puts them in the shed.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD WALK- NIGHT

Amani and her husband are enjoying a nice walk in their neighborhood hand in hand.

INT. KITCHEN-DAY

The Stevens family is having lunch, the parents are smiling but Bianca is playing with her food, not really present. Her father tries to cheer her up by playfully pinching her cheek, she doesn't budge.

INT.SIMON AND BEATRICE HOUSE-NIGHT

Simon is on a video call with a family member, it looks like a serious conversation.

INT. FABRIC STORE-DAY

Beatrice is with Amani; they are fabric shopping. They find one, they check it out.

INT. AMANI & JASON HOUSE/ BASEMENT-NIGHT

Amani is working with some fabric; she writes things down.

INT. BIANCA BEDROOM -DAY

Bianca is in her bedroom. She is taking decorations down; the room looks almost empty. Her father passes by, he notices.

INT. SIMON AND BEATRICE HOUSE- NIGHT

Amani and her parents are on a video call with someone. Amani is writing things down. Beatrice joins them and tries to take measurements of Amani although she is too focused on the video call, her mother is annoyed.

INT. KITCHEN- DAY

Bianca is eating lunch by herself, her mom and dad come hiding something behind them. They reveal it, it's the 3D sample of the project Amani broke. They have fixed it; they are excited to share the news with Bianca, but she is not too happy about the surprise.

END MONTAGE

INT. CLASSROOM-DAY

The day is here! It's presentation day for Bianca and her classmates. Some of the students are dressed up, the class is full. You can hear the excitement of the whole class as they wait for the presentation to begin. Most of the parents are also present, they are sitting in the back. Bianca isn't too excited like her peers, she is sitting quietly watching everyone prepare to go in front of the class. The teacher gets up.

MRS ATKINS

Alright, class let's settle down!
Now I'm going to call your names
and you will come to stand in front
of the class. If you need to use
the projector, let me know in
advance. You will have ten minutes
to finish so we will try and stay
on schedule, Okay? Let's get
started then.

The teacher sits down and pulls out a list.

MRS ATKINS

First person to go is Amanda James.

The student gets up, walks in front of the class. Her parents start recording.

AMANDA

My favorite hobby is painting. I have been painting since I was five, my mom taught me. Painting is my way to express myself and I hope to one day be a famous artist. Today I will do a painting in front of you.

Her canvas and tools are brought to the front by her parents. She starts drawing, the whole class has their eyes on her as they watch attentively.

More students go on after her.

- A kid working on a science experiment
- A kid demonstrating martial arts
- A kid doing magic tricks.
- A kid doing acrobats
- A kid doing a skit
- A kid doing a dance number.

Everyone is entertained, parents are proud. After some time, it is Bianca's turn. Her name is called.

MRS ATKINS

Okay up next is Bianca Stevens.

She doesn't stand up.

MRS ATKINS

Bianca? You're next. Come on.

She still doesn't budge.

Mrs Atkins walks up to her.

MRS ATKINS

(quietly)

Did you do the project?

She doesn't respond

JASON

Yes she did.

Her father replies, he is standing in the back with the other parents. There are some footsteps as some people enter the class. All eyes are on them. The people walking is Amani, her parents, and her sister. They are all wearing traditional attire. Amani takes the center of the room. Her father goes to talk with Mrs. Atkins, they are trying to use the projector.

AMANI

Hello, everyone. My name is Amani Stevens, I am Bianca's mother. I will be helping her with the presentation.

Bianca is totally confused.

AMANI

You may be wondering why we are dressed this way. Don't worry, we will get to that. Today I am going to tell you a story, a story I told my daughter some time ago but never revealed the whole truth. In a small kingdom in the east of Africa, two girls were born to Prince Bahati and his wife Latifah.

Some images start showing on the projector of the Miza Kingdom on the map as the presentation continues. The second picture shows Prince Bahati and his wife holding two babies.

BEGIN MONTAGE

INT. ROYAL QUARTERS- NIGHT

Prince Bahati and Latifah holding their twin babies. Some of the royal members are present, including the prince's father ... King Ahmed I. They are all overjoyed with the great addition to their family.

EXT. PALACE HALL-DAY

The twins are five years old; they are playing in the hall. As the gates of the royal palaces open to let Prince Bahati and his brother inside, one of the princesses' notices two kids running around, chasing a rabbit. She wants to get closer, she tries to run and join them, but her father quickly grabs her. He brings her back, the princesses are taken back by the palace maids.

INT. ROYAL COURT- DAY

Prince Bahati is having a meeting with his brother and their father. It seems like he is giving them some bad news. The brothers look worried.

EXT. ROYAL PALACE- NIGHTGFHGHUI

The Miza kingdom is under attack from another kingdom. The whole kingdom is in chaos, people are running, others are trying to hide. Prince Bahati and his brother are fighting the attackers. One of the attackers sneaks into the king's room, King Ahmed I is killed. The brothers return to see their father laying on the ground.

INT. BURIAL GROUND-DAY

The slain King Ahmed I is buried; the whole kingdom is present. They are doing a prayer for him; the two brothers throw dirt on his coffin and say their goodbyes.

EXT. PALACE HALL-DAY

Prince Ahmed II is crowned the new king as he is the oldest. His brother and his own family are by his side as they celebrate the new king.

EXT. PALACE GARDENS- NIGHT

The new king and Prince Bahati are walking in the gardens having a conversation, King Ahmed II isn't listening to his brother's advice. They get into a heated conversation, the king walks away.

INT. TRAINING AREA- DAY

The kingdom's guards are getting ready, they are assembling their weapons as the others train to use them. The king is overseeing the training while he talks to his commander.

EXT. ROYAL QUARTERS- NIGHT

Prince Bahati is talking with the man who helped them escape the kingdom. They are talking discreetly; Prince Bahati gives him money. He helps the man leave the royal palace without being seen.

INT. AIRPLANE-NIGHT

Prince Bahati and his family have managed to leave the kingdom, they are on a plane heading to America. The kids are looking out the window, enjoying the view. The parents are asleep.

INT. NEW HOUSE- DAY

The family settles in California, they enter their new house to check it out. The girls start running around looking at every room. The parents seem relieved to have a new home. They start bringing their luggage in.

EXT. ROYAL HALL- NIGHT

The Miza army is getting ready to attack, the commander is talking to the army. King Ahmed is in his quarters, reading the letter his brother had left for him. He thinks for a minute, he runs all the way to where the army is getting ready, he stops them in time.

INT. FACTORY- DAY

Back in the US, Prince Bahati is getting settled to the American life. He is given an orientation on his new position at a factory he will be working for. His name tag says Simon.

INT. SIMON AND BEATRICE HOUSE

Princess Latifah has also started a new job; she sews for other fellow African immigrants. She is helping a woman put on a beautiful African dress she sewed for her. Before she leaves, she hands her a note, it's her name and phone number written on it. She has also changed her name to Beatrice. She is paid, she waves goodbye to her customer as she leaves.

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL-DAY

The two princesses have started school. They just got off the school bus. They enter the building, holding hands... In the back of their backpacks are their names... Amani and Imani.

INT. CLASSROOM-DAY (CONTIUNED)

AMANI

My family had to leave everything behind and start a new life. I'm sure a few of you have also gone through the same situation. It's hard, sometimes it makes you question who you are as you are placed in a whole new world you are not used to. I never forgot my history and where I am from, that is the main thing I want you to remember.

(MORE)

AMANI (CONT'D)

You should always be proud of who you are and your history, no matter what it looks like. Never be scared to be who you are or what people will think. And don't change your beliefs or passion to please others, it's not fair to you. I would also like to apologize to my daughter for hiding this important piece of my life from her for so long. I want her to know that princesses are real, they're not just in fairytales. And you are never too grown for fairytales. Thank you all.

All the people in the classroom start clapping. Bianca's face has lightened up as she has finally discovered the true identity of her mother, her father is watching her from the front of the class. She comes and hugs her mother while the class watches, even the teacher is moved. One student raises their hand.

MRS ATKINS

Daniel, you have a question?

DANIEL

Yes, I wanted to ask what happened to the kingdom after.

There is some silence first. Finally, Simon answers.

SIMON

The kingdom no longer exists. Most of the habitats left because they objected to the strict ruling.

DANIEL

Where is he now?

SIMON

He lives in Tanzania, with his family. We are hoping to see him soon.

BIANCA

And I'm going too!

SIMON

(chuckles)

Yes! Bianca is coming with us, that way she can meet the rest of the family and learn about her roots.

Another student raises her hand.

MRS ATKINS

Olivia?

OLIVIA

Did you forgive your brother for what he did?

SIMON

That's a good question, no one ever asked me that. Yes, I forgave him but it took a long time. I was mad at him for years because he destroyed what our father had built. I realized there was no point in holding that grudge anymore. It's better to forgive, that way you can move on to better things. We talk from time to time.

MRS ATKINS

I guess we have some royalty in our class.

AMANI

(Chuckles)

I think we have taken too much of your time, we'll get going.

MRS ATKINS

Well, thank you all for coming and participating today. Thank you for sharing your story with the class. Now, We are running out of time so let's continue to our next presenter. Jackson... you're up.

Bianca and her family have exited the classroom. She is talking to he mom.

BIANCA

So you're really a princess?

AMANI

Yes sweetie, so are you.

Her eyes sparke with excitement.

BIANCA

How come you never told me?

SIMON

That was kind of my fault, I made both of them promise to never reveal it to anyone.

AMANI

Yeah, I had to keep my promise. And I was scared it might change things. But I promise from now on... No more secrets.

BIANCA

Promise?

AMANI

Promise.

IMANI

And if she hides anything, I'm going to tell you myself.

AMANI

Of course, you would, you tattler!

IMANI

(mtchew)

Amani gives her daughter the tiara she was wearing. They start walking together like one big happy family.

INT. BEDROOM- NIGHT

Bianca and her mother are sitting in her bedroom, she is showing her some pictures of her family back in Africa.

AMANI

These are my cousins. Anita and Akil. We basically grew up together. They were crushed when we had to leave.

BIANCA

Do they still live in Africa?

AMANI

No, Anita lives in France with her husband and their son. Akil lives in Tanzania, hopefully, you will meet him when you go. They can't wait to meet you.

BIANCA

How come they never left the kingdom?

AMANI

Because their father was the king, they had to stay. Plus, Akil would be king after him.

BIANCA

oh! So you're really not coming with us?

AMANI

I'm not sure yet honey, I have to wait to get my vacation approved.

BIANCA

But I want to go with you and dad, I think it will be more fun if we all go together. I want you to show me around and teach me about the culture.

AMANI

Okay, I'll do my best.

Jason comes to join them in the room.

JASON

What are my two favorite ladies in the world talking about?

BIANCA

About the trip.

JASON

You're excited huh?

BIANCA

Yeah, I already started packing. Daddy, you are coming, right?

JASON

Well... what I have to say to that would be... YES! I'M COMING!

BIANCA

Yay! That only leaves mom.

JASON

Wait what? What are you talking about? She's already going?

AMANI

Geez.. Well there goes the surprise! Thank you babe!

JASON

Oops.

BIANCA

Wait! So, you are coming?

Amani nods her head. Bianca jumps into her mother's arms with excitement.

JASON

Now, this is going to be a vacation to remember! And... I have another surprise.

AMANI

What?

JASON

We will renew our vows there.

AMANI

What?!

JASON

Yup! I talked to your dad, he said he has someone there who will take care of it. I feel like that would be the perfect time to do it.

AMANI

Yeah... it would. Taking it back to Mama Africa.

They share kiss.

BIANCA

Eww...

AMANI

Hey Hey! I can kiss my husband anytime, unasikia?

They all laugh.

AMANI

Well since we're all sharing news... I have one I need to share as well. I'm pregnant!

Jason is speechless.

BIANCA

Oh my gosh!!! No way!!

AMANI

(teary eyed)

Yeah! We're gonna have a baby.

They all scream and group hug. Jason rubs his wife's belly.

JASON

(to Amani)

Thank you!

AMANI

You're welcome. Love you

The family continues to bond over family pictures.

Bianca's tree

THE END

Bianca's tree

Bianca's tree