

"Toniyah: the princess Tiger" By: Ro'sha Bennett  
\*Synopsis\* 10/15/13 - Fiction/Fable

Flint: the fox; Henry: the hippo; Bee: the giraffe; JaKayla: the jaguar; Ebony: the elephant; and Sayani: the squirrel all attend the Gibson's Village elementary school. But more importantly, they're all the best of friends.

The boys witness the abduction of their teacher, as well as Village elder, Mrs. Whammy: the wise owl by the King, who unaware to everyone else has devised an evil plot to gain precious land from the Villagers.

Toniyah: the princess' layed eyes on the group of friends in the Village for the first time on a special trip to the Village with her mother. This trip forever changed the course of her life; and left her desiring to know, what it felt like to live a normal life, as a regular child.

she didn't know what to think when she saw her father soldiers dragging, a clawing, scratching, and fighting Henry, Bee, and Flint to the dungeon.

Within the blink of an eye, Toniyah finds herself helping JaKayla, Ebony, and Sayani rescue their friends. A rescue that leads them eluding her father, as he gives chase through the unfamiliar forest. Will this chase prove that he's right in regards to the Villagers, or soften his hardend heart?

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# "Oniyah' The princess 'Tiger" By: Ro'sha Bennett

## Chapter 1

"Run, Run, Run!" his teammates shouted to Henry the Hippo' as he rounded second base heading to third.

Jakayla the jaguar' looked back over her shoulder just in time to see him tagging second base. She turned on her jaguar speed, retrieved the ball and rushed back towards infield.

Henry's little stubby legs were moving as fast as he could will them; but from his view, the base didn't seem to be getting any closer.

"Get 'im Jacki!" sayani the squirrel' encouraged her friend watching the action from her position on the pitcher's mound.

The Gibson's village elementary third grade class always took full advantage of their noon classroom break with a game of kickball. Over the years the games have evolved into a traditional rivalry, which places the boys against the girls. Even though, they're the best of friends, sayani, Jakayla, and Ebony the elephant' never wanted to be on the same team as whom they considered 'the Big mouths' Henry, Flint the fox', and Gee the giraffe'. The girls had become determined to show the boys that they could compete with them on any level. Of course the boys begged the differ. For them, it was already bad enough that the girls usually outshined them in the classroom; that's why events involving muscles are their domains.

Jakayla planted her foot and threw the red rubber kickball at Henry with all her might. The ball struck him on his side just as his foot connected with the base.

"out!" sayani excitedly screamed while jumping up and down.

"Safe!" Flint protested from the sideline.

They both turned to Ebony who had been designated as a base judge. Ebony had missed the play though cause her attention had been diverted by a passing car.

"Well Ebony?" Kim 'the Kangaroo' who was playing third base and now held the kickball asked.

Ebony didn't know what to say and the skepticism revealed itself on her face. Before she could say anything the bell rang indicating that breaktime was over. The ringing of the bell was the sweetest sound that Ebony had ever heard.

"Yeah!" Henry pumped his fist in the air as he and the rest of his team celebrated their 4-3 victory over the girls.

"Dat's o.k.; ya'll got away dis time!" Jakylla stated to the group of boasting boys. who in return had their chests poked out doing their victory dance.

"Dey make me sick!" Ebony joked, saying to Sayani as they walked towards the school.

Sayani looked in their direction and when she locked eyes with Flint, he stuck his thumbs in his ears, wiggled his free fingers and stuck out his tongue.

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"E.t.h.i.o.p.i.a!" Kim spelled with confidence before turning to give Sayani and her crew high five.

"Jerry good!" Mrs. Whammy 'the wise owl' congratulated Kim before turning to the boys' group; and saying "Babylon". "Babylon", Alex 'the alligator' repeated to Mrs. Whammy. "B.a.b.y.l.o.n!" He breathed a sigh of relief after getting the word spelled.

Z. Róshá Bennett "Tonitah 'the Princess' tiger

"Good, good, Alex!" she acknowledged while selecting the next word for the girls. "Jerusalem", she stated.

Ebony stood, "Jerusalem! J.e.r.u.s.a.l.e.m."

"Correct!" Mrs. Whammy agreed.

"Heey!" she also gave her crew high five glad to be redeeming herself after the kickball episode.

"The next word is inhabitant." Mrs. Whammy read from the cue card. Flint slowly raised from his seat and made the fatal mistake of looking over at Sayani and her crew. They all eyed him back wearing confident smirks on their faces.

"In-ha-bi-tant", he broke the word into syllables the way Mrs. Whammy had taught them to do. "I.n.h.a.b.a.t.a." he stumbled. "n.t."

"Sorry Flint, that's incorrect." she read the disappointment in his whole demeanor, before turning to the girls and asking. "Either of you want to try it for the win?"

"Of course!" Jakayla arrogantly replied and rose to her feet. "I.n.h.a.b.i.t.a.n.t!"

"That's right!" Mrs. Whammy cried.

"Dag man!" a voice from the boy's group moaned.

The girls instantly began to get their mock on. Normally Mrs. Whammy wouldn't let the girls torment the guys but she observed from the window earlier when the boys were strutting their stuff on the playing field. So at the moment, it was just fair play.

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Deep into the forest, down roads untraveled by the villagers oblivious and uncaring to what was going on inside the classroom, the money hungry

3. Póshá Bennett - Toniyah - the Princess - Tiger

King, Tyrone 'the tiger' plotted in the comforts of his mighty castle. "I don't care!" he shouted and raged at the developer. "That part of the village is merely ruins and marks the perfect place for my new shopping center." He concluded.

"But your highness," the developer pled. "That part of the village is the Kids and School district."

"What makes you think that I care about those peasants?" The King questioned.

The developer already knew that the King didn't care about the people of the village. He was also aware that nothing mattered to the King, but wealth; a fact that the King doesn't disregard. "Buu, But!" The developer stammered to get the next statement out, afraid of the King's reaction.

"Buu, But what?" The King demanded to know.

"None of the villagers are willing to give up their land or homes." The developer said.

"Then I will take it!" He screamed at the top of his lungs and walked over to the table in his office that held the T-model of his new shopping center. He exhaled and calmly stated. "You have one week before I send the bulldozers in."

"Yes, your highness." The developer bowed his head and eased his way out of the office wondering, what could he possibly say to convince the villagers to give up their land and homes. He knew that this was all any of them had, as well as the only place they'd ever known.

The King's only child and daughter Toniyah sat in her bed looking around her spacious room. It was the most beautifullest room that a princess could ask for; and according to the words of her father, "she has

it all." If this is so, then why does she feel so incomplete, like there's something major missing out of her life. She hopped off the bed and made her way to the window, unlatched it, and flung it open. She deeply inhaled the cool, fresh air that entered. From her point of view, she could see out to the edge of the forest back to their magnificent backyard. A backyard that was occupied at the moment with her father's lawn crew and his forever present soldiers.

She looked out over the forest and wondered, as she always does, about what's on the other side of it. She's heard of the dangers that lay beyond the trees. But, she's also been told stories by her mother about the nice and friendly people she's met when going out to buy certain things they may need.

On more than one occasion she's pretended to be playing while really listening in on the lawn crew conversations. She's heard them mention parades, beauty pageants, and all other type of events that takes place in the village.

The one thing that perplexed her young mind so much was, why her father disliked the people in the village so much. He's never said it directly to her, but she's overheard him screaming at his workers about the village and the people that live in it. This has been taking place more frequently as of lately.

She closed the window and went to find her mother.

## Chapter 2 'Tonyah' By: Roshá Bennett

"Get up Henry!" Gee shook Henry's massive body again trying to arouse him out of his sleep; Flint merely stood beside the bed looking on.

It was Saturday, the morning they had agreed to go into the forest and find a place to build their clubhouse.

"Hmmm;" Henry moaned.

"Come on man!" Flint shoved Henry hard. No matter how many times they did this, the job of getting Henry out of bed, never got any easier. It's been a duty they've had to endure every since they formed their little clique.

Henry finally sat up, rubbed the sleep from his eyes, and said; "I'm up."

The grogginess evident in his voice.

"Get out the bed den!" Commanded Gee, while Flint snatched the covers off of Henry exposing his Incredible Hulk pajama set.

That did it. The cold breeze instantly brought his mind to full alertness. He hurried and got dressed; and after several minutes in the bathroom, he reappeared. Together they tidied up his room; Before leaving they were approached by Henry's mother. "Here ya'll go!" she handed each of them a bag that consisted of a couple of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, a juicy juice, an apple; and a few pieces of hard candy. She's gotten use to them going missing all day; and from watching them; eventhough, they call themselves sneaking around; she knew that they were just being boys and exploring in the forest behind their home.

"Thank you!" They accepted the bags; and said in unison.

"Ya'll better behave too!" she shouted to their fleeing backs.

They walked along the edge of the forest until they found their mark. One by one, they ducked into the bushes. Flint bringing up the rear, glanced behind himself

to make sure they weren't being followed. They dodged branches and trees for awhile before Gee spotted a thicket of bushes. After literally fighting their way through the bushes, a clearing opened revealing the perfect place for their clubhouse.

"Yeah!" exclaimed Henry, as the three of them slapped high fives.

They could all but visualize the set up already in their minds. After all, they've already gathered most of the things they're gonna need for the 'ultimate club house.' They've gotten boards off of abandoned houses, found two old chairs in Mr. Brandon 'the Beaver' trash pile. They came to the conclusion that a few bricks under a board would be their table; and any or everything else they would eventually find.

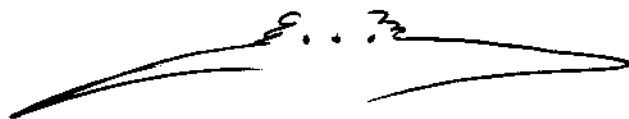
"We'll start bringing the stuff in tomorrow." Flint stated, eager to bring their vision into reality.

"We gotta make sure Jaki'nim ain't around when we start bringing the stuff," added Gee.

"Dey don't know bout dis!" assured Henry.

"Dey only know dat, we come in here to play. So, let's show dem what we play wit." Gee laughed, anticipating the look of surprise on the girls faces; and produced the jar that he had in his back pocket.

They scurried the forest, found a couple of slimy humen and entrapped them in the jar. They spent the rest of their time in the forest eating and discussing the design of their clubhouse.



"Bo Yani; Bo Yani!" The girls chanted as Sayani jumped methodically

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between the double dutch ropes.

"Work girl!" Jakayla encouraged her friend, while she and Ebony maneuvered the ropes for her to jump.

Sayani, jumped with expertise. It's no secret, she's the best double dutcher among them all, the same way her mother had been at her age. Sayani, easily did twists and turns that made the average person dizzy just merely watching her. Knowing how tired her friends arms must be, she stopped. They took a brief break, before Sayani switched places with Ebony. Their peers on the sideline rooted Ebony on with the same enthusiasm they had given Sayani. The girls switched out until the ice cream truck came, and after buying their favorite flavors, they walked over and sat on the utility box.

"Whut do you think dem crazy boys are doing in dem woods?" Jakayla asked, enjoying her orange sherbert.

"Probably playing wit dem slimy, ugly humen thangs." Ebony shuddered at the thought of the creepy crawlers.

"I dont know, but dere up to somethin'." Sayani said, holding back the fact that she's tried following them a few times.

Before either of them could say another word, Flint, Gee, and Henry emerged from the back of a building, spotted them and headed straight for them.

"Speaking of trouble." Jakayla mumbled just loud enough for her girls to catch it. The three of them laughed.

"Whut's so funny?" Flint questioned on approach.

Sayani, put the last bit of ice cream cone in her mouth, before quickly replying,

"Nun-ya!"

"Whutela!" Henry came to his partner's aid. "We dont care anyway." He

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Concluded.

"What ya'll woodsmen been up to all day?" Jakyka questioned. The boys looked sheepishly at each other, but, it was Gee who responded with "Nun-ya!"

"Good one Gee!" Flint acknowledged the quick witts of his partner, and the boys high fived. Ebony even found herself laughing with the boys.

"Oh hush!" Sayani said, as she watched Mrs. Tammy the turtle go into the local grocery store.

"Ya'll really want to know what we've been up to?" Gee asked, moving closer to them.

Neither of the girls had time to respond before Gee raised the jar of humen.

"Ewww!" Ebony squinted her eyes and retrieved two steps backwards.

"You betta get dem thangs away from me!" Threatened Jakyka, while involuntarily stepping back.

Henry and Flint roared with laughter, enjoying the looks of fear on the girls faces.

"Man, aint no body scared of dem thangs!" stated Sayani, taking the jar out of Gee's hand and peering into it.

"Jaki and Ebony are!" Flint pointed out with satisfaction in his voice.

"We aint scared of dem, we just don't like how slimy dey are," defended Ebony.

"Yeah, yeah, yeah!" crooned Henry.

"How would ya'll like it if someone put ya'll in a jar?" Sayani asked, as

she walked towards a grassed in area. The rest of them followed her. She reached the area, twisted the cap off the jar, and let the humen go. "See ya lil fellas!" she watched them scamper away.

"You make me sick!" Flint complained.

"Yeah, yeah, yeah!" Saxonii mimicked Henry.

The girls laughed and clapped each other with high fives.

### Chapter 3 'Triumph' By: Ro'sha Bennett

"And see here!" The developer pointed out an area on the screen.

"The parking lot will be roofed in so you won't have to worry about rainy days." He felt like he was getting through to them.

All of the concerned parents were crammed into the small space the building provided for their town meetings. For the past few weeks they've found themselves staring into the faces of several different developers and accountants. Each with only one purpose at heart, to convince them to sell their land for the King's benefit.

"We've all come to the same conclusion." Mrs. Whammy, who also happens to be the mayor, spoke for the entire village. "We're not giving up our land, houses, and school district!" she paused to let that sink in with the developer's slash King's messenger, before concluding. "We don't need, nor care about a new shopping center."

"That's right, that's right!" The chants from the villagers came in unison. "But, think about what the new center will do for the town!" The developer tried.

"What, destroy it?" Mrs. Whammy looked directly at the developer. "Our final answer is No!"

"No, No, No!" echoed throughout the tiny room causing the walls to vibrate.

The developer quickly gathered his things and left to go do something he strongly regretted, relaying this outcome to the King

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"Enter!" ordered the King, not rising from the comfort of the chair he was

Sitting in behind his desk.

The developer eased his way into the office and let the door close behind him before speaking. "It's the mayor your honor."

"Do not speak to me in parables! What are you trying to tell me?"

The King fixed him with stern eyes.

"The mayor makes all the decisions for the village; in other words," he swallowed the lump in his throat. "She's the only thing standing between you and your shopping center."

The King just stared off into space, entertaining his own thoughts. "So," he finally spoke breaking the silence. "Take care of the mayor and the rest of the villagers will follow?" He proposed.

"I would assume my lord."

"Then, it's simple. Kidnap the mayor and place her in the dungeon till she's ready to convince the villagers that my shopping center is the right move." He spoke nonchalantly.

The developer didn't agree with the King's idea; but, he wasn't about to voice this to the King. He merely asked, "when would you like for this to take place?"

"Yesterday!" shouted the King, slamming his fist down on the desk.

"I'm on it." The developer left the King alone.

The King rose and walked over to the table that held the T-model. "It won't be long now." He spoke to the model as if that it could hear him.

Toriyah sat on the livingroom floor laughing at the cartoon characters on the big screen t.v. No-matter how many times she watched shrek

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she could never get enough of the gingerbread boy's juice.

"Hi Sweetie." Her mother came in and sat on the couch behind her.

"Hi mamma!" she spoke, glancing back over her shoulder.

They both laughed at a scene on the movie. Tamyra looked at her daughter. She couldn't believe how fast the nine years had past since she first brought her home. It felt like only yesterday she was totting her little bundle of joy around the castle. Now at nine, she knew her way around the castle better than most of the servants there. She also knew that the time was hastily approaching when her and her husband would have to start thinking about her future. Well, a time she'd have to start thinking about it. Cause, according to her husband, it was already established and planned out. She would learn everything there is to know concerning the kingdom and take her proper place on the throne when her time came. Eventhough, she hasn't spoken it, she doesn't sense that Toriyah has much interest in becoming heir to her father's throne. One thing she was sure of though, was that, it was atleast time for her to see something else besides this castle. With this thought in mind, she asked, "Baby, how would you like to go into the village with me?"

Toriyah didn't think that she heard her correctly. "For real ma?" she asked excitedly.

Her mother stood, walked over to the wall and rang an unseen bell. A servant appeared instantly. "yes your highness!"

"please, get the car ready and meet me out front." she requested.

The servant left to go get the car.

Toriyah stood wide eyed and stunned.

Her mother smiled. "Let me go inform your father that we're going out."

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Toniyah still couldn't find her voice, she found it hard to believe that she was actually about to go into the village.

"Go freshen up!" Her mother ordered continuing to smile at the preplexed look of surprise on her face.

Snapping out of her daze, she rushed off to her room. A thought occurred to her; what if dad says no?

The thought was quickly negated and ten minutes later they were in the car headed to the village. Eventhough, there were only trees on either side of the road, she marvelled over the scenery. Her young heart pounded in her chest from the excitement of it all. Finally, the first house came into view, followed by the village itself. Toniyah nearly caught whiplash from the jerking back and forth of her head; she tried not to miss anything. she watched the people move along the sidewalks. she was glad that the driver crept through the busy street, cause it gave her time to admire the beautifulest place she's ever seen.

Their car pulled up and stopped just outside the door of one of the local shops. The chauffeur was out immediately opening her mother's door. After being escorted out of the car, her mother stood on the sidewalk and waited for Toniyah to slide across the seat to join her.

The passing villagers smiled, bowed, and spoke to the beautiful queen. They had grown accustomed to seeing her, being that she came to the village atleast twice a week. she respectfully smiled and spoke back. To Toniyah's young eyes and ears, it appeared that her mother knew everyone in the whole village. Her mother gently took her by the hand and guided her inside the shop.

"Woww." Toniyah whispered under her breath, at awe with the crowd

and flow.

Her mother felt Toniya's hand tighten around hers. "It's O.K. Sweetie!" she assured her. "Go look around and find some things you like."

She glanced around the shop, hesitant at first. But, the warm smirks on the women faces made her feel comfortable. So, off she went. She was filled with wonder as she admired the many spectacular dresses that adorned the shop. So, this is where mamma get the stuff from to make our dresses, she thought to herself. She walked around sight seeing, until her mother eased up behind her.

"See anything you like?"

Unable to conceal her happiness, she said. "Oh, everything is so beautiful!" She took her mother by the hand, back tracked and pointed things out.

Unknowingly to her, everything she pointed out, her mother nodded her head, and the saleswoman her mother had already informed, fetched Toniya's size off the rack and placed them in shopping bags.

Later, while eating her favorite 'naughty food' french fries soaked in Catch-up, and thinking that this was the greatest day of her life, Toniya took in the activities going on outside the large window that she sat behind. Her heart skipped a beat when her eyes fell on the crowd gathered on the sidewalk. They were the farthest thing from her mind, but, there they were, kids. They had to be around her age. marvelled, she continued to watch them, she was hypnotized by the girl jumping the ropes. She wanted to know how long it had took her to learn to do that. Then, out of no-where, the boys appeared and began pestering the girls. One of them kept stopping the ropes whenever the girl would get a good rhythm going. The looks and body language the girls displayed, revealed their degree of agitation.

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Then the oddest thing happened. One of the girls and one of the boys walked a few feet away from the rest of the crowd, turned back to face them, and positioned themselves in starting positions for a race. The crowd separated into two groups, and formed a clear path for the two runners. One of the girls walked to an area, turned, faced the two and raised her arms. When her arms dropped, the two runners sprang into motion.

"Gooo!" Toniyaah unconsciously shouted.

Her mother followed her gaze and on seeing the other kids, she realized that this was Toniyaah's first time seeing kids her age.

"Yeah!" she was glad to see the girl beat the boy across the finish line. She continued to watch and enjoyed seeing the girls taunt the boys. She laughed along with the girls when one of them went into an imitation of how the boy was running. Throughout all the competition and pestering, one thing stood out to Toniyaah though, and that was the group's friendship.

On the ride back home, Toniyaah dominated the topic on the kids and various games that they were playing.

Her mother had never seen her this overwhelmed with joy.

"You think dad'll let them come to my next birthday party?"

With the mention of her husband, her mother started thinking that, it might not have been a wise decision to expose her to the village after all. With this thought in mind and knowing how her husband felt about the village, she simply said, "I don't know Baby."

The moment her and her mother entered the castle, she rushed off to find her father to tell him about her exciting day.

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She located him in the livingroom watching something on t.v. "Sweetie!" He acknowledged her instantly.

"Oh, you should have seen it daddy!" she begin. "It was people every-where. Did you know that everyone in the whole village like mamma? mamma bought me some new dresses, they pretty too!" she finally paused to catch her breath.

"I bet they are". He smiled at her enthusiasm.

"Dad, it's kids my age in the village to. Can some of them come to my next birthday party? I ca...."

She never got the last part of her sentence out before he was on his feet screaming. "No, definite not!" He stated firmly. "I will not have you dealing with the likes of those dirty peasants!"

"But", she tried. she wanted to tell him about the rope jumping and other games they were playing.

"But nothing; I knew that I shouldn't have let you go to that village!"

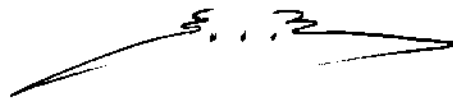
on this, he stormed out of the livingroom, leaving her standing there with tears in her eyes. she ran up to her room, fell across the bed and cried into her pillow.

## Chapter 4 "Tori-yah, the princess Tiger" By: Ro'sha Bennett

Mrs. Whammy finished breakfast and cleaned the dishes. She couldn't wait till her husband got back from his business trip out of town. She missed him so much, but knew within her heart that he had to do what he was doing to keep their business going. She brushed off the wave of sadness and went about her normal routine. She was looking forward to seeing her best friend Tammy later.

Mrs. Whammy and a few of the other family occupants were the first ones to settle into this area and call it home. They all worked diligently to build up their little community. The moment the village was complete, she was voted in as the mayor and has held the position every since. Her love and compassion for the kids in the community drove her to volunteer for the job as the elementary school teacher. Over the years her worth to the village has increased; she's now 'officially' the village grandmother figure. Everyone depends on her for support and advice.

Finally finishing the house chore, she went outside into the backyard to water her garden; she never saw the three shadows that emerged out of no-where.



Flint, Bee, and Henry decided to take an eccentric route as they took the supplies to their clubhouse. They had gotten an early start and were just about finish constructing their hideout. "man, dis is gonna be the best clubhouse in the world!" Henry stated, pushing his way through the forest. "yeah!" Bee shifted the board on his shoulder, before continuing. "As long

as we keep it a secret."

Flint the observant one brought up the rear. He constantly surveyed their surrounding. He stayed mindful of the fact that every few feet or so, houses would appear through an opening in the woods. He listened to Henry and Gee carry on, knowing that neither one of them were paying any attention to nothing more than what was in front of them. For all they knew, Takayla and her crew could be following them; which they will probably try to do sooner or later, this Flint was sure of. They were just about to pass Mrs. Whammy's backyard when Flint stopped in his tracks. "PSSS!" He hissed. His attempt went unheard because Gee was holding Henry ears hostage. "Gee, Henry!" Flint spoke barely above a whisper.

They stopped and turned to face him. The second they caught eye contact, Flint motioned for them to come back. They did. "Look man!" He pointed towards an opening between the trees.

Henry and Gee stood opened mouth and wide eyed not believing what they saw.

The three guards manhandled Mrs. Whammy; they pushed her around to the front part of the house.

The boys dropped the things they were carrying and rushed towards Mrs. Whammy's house. By the time they reached it though, they only caught a glimpse of the car speeding away, and Mrs. Whammy cry of help hanging in the air. Their eyes fell upon the emblem on the back of the car, each recognizing the King's emblem.

For an instant, they were puzzled and didn't know what to do. "We've got to help her!" suggested Flint, snapping them out of their trance.

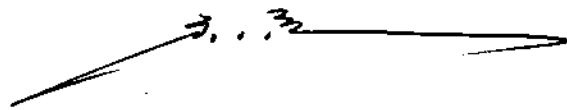
19. 'Toniyah' BY: Po'sha Bennett

"How do we know where dey took'er?" Henry asked, a deep sadness in his voice.

"Didn't ya'll see tha emblem on tha back of tha car?" Questioned Flint, still looking in the direction in which the car fled.

"Yeah!" Gee stared at Flint, then added. "It was one of tha King Cars!"

"Come on!" Flint demanded and dashed towards the forest. Henry and Gee the loyal friends they were, followed.



Jakayla was on her way to Sayani's house when she heard the car tires streak. Curiosity got the better of her; she ran between two houses in the direction of the unusual sound. On reaching the street over, she didn't see the car she had expected to see. In fact, she didn't see any car at all. But what she did see, was the boys fleeing backs disappearing through the edge of the forest. What are they up to? she wondered. "Follow them" an inner voice told her. Something else inside of her though informed her that something was wrong and to go get her girls first; so, she did.

"I'm not following dem crazy boys in dem woods!" Ebony stated, minutes later when Jakayla suggested it.

"Something ain't right. I'm telling ya'll!" Jakayla looked up the road, secretly hoping to see the boys coming down it. "Because." she continued. "I told ya'll, I heard a car speeding off before I got dere. Now, ya'll tell me why would dey be running into tha woods right after a speeding car take off?" she waited for a response.

The other two girls pondered this question; before Sayani said. "maybe dey were 20." Toni. yah' BY: Po'sha Bennett

throwing rocks and got caught."

"Dem boys might be crazy, but they're not going to run from adults."

That did make sense to Ebony and Sayani.

"But, I heard dat it's dark in dem woods."

"No it's not Ebony!"

"How do you know?" Sayani asked, thinking that she already knew Jakayla answer; but wanting to hear her say it.

"Cause, I've been in dem!" Jakayla was anxious and eager to go.

Both girls looked at their friend

"Yeah; I've tried to follow dem a few times to see what dey were up to." Jakayla concluded.

"Girl you crazy!" said Ebony.

Sayani merely laughed, knowing she's tried the same thing.

"Look ya'll, our friends may be in trouble. Are ya'll gonna go wit me or not?"

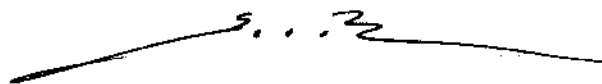
Eventhough, Ebony and Sayani weren't jery keen on running off into the woods behind Flint, Gee, and Henry under these circumstances, Jakayla was right; they're all friends. With this in mind, Sayani agreed. "I'm in."

They both turned to Ebony.

"O.K, O.K! but if this turns out to be one of dere lil pranks, I'm'a give dem more trouble den dey can handle!"

"Deal and we'll help you." Jakayla laughed. "Let's go!"

She led them to where she had last seen the boys run and boldly guided them into the forest.



The boys sat around their makeshift clubhouse, the part of it that had been completed anyway. They knew that they had to devise a plan.

"We've got to go to the Castle." Flint told them.

"My mamma told me that the King's Castle is a long, long way from here." Gee informed them.

"Then we better get going." stated Flint.

"What will we do when we get there?" Henry wanted to know.

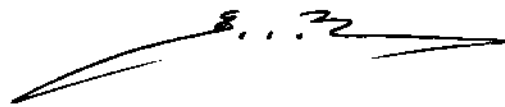
"I heard that there's like a thousand guards at the castle." Gee added, knowing that they had heard the same thing, caused they've discussed it before.

"We'll tackle that when we get there." Truthfully, Flint didn't know what they were going to do when they got there, but he couldn't tell them this.

"I also heard that the deeper you go into the forest, the thicker the bushes get." Added Henry.

"I don't care! For Mrs. Whammy, I'll take my chances. So, grab anything ya'll might think we'll need and let's go!"

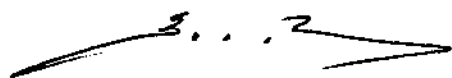
Armed with the strongest sticks they could find, they were off to rescue Mrs. Whammy.



Five minutes later the girls came up on the boys clubhouse.

"Well, now we know why dey stay in dese woods." Laughed Jakafla.

After searching around, they found the guys tracks and followed them deeper into the forest.



22. Toriyah' BY: Ro'sha Bennett

mrs. Whammy slowly looked around the dungeon. she knew what this was all about. But, no matter how hard the King tried, she would not get her people to sell their homes and land. she walked over to the blankets that they had provided her, sat down and waited.



## Chapter 5 "Toriyah: the princess Tiger"

By: Roshia Bennett

Toriyah, moped around the castle everyday after her experience with the village. Her mother had tried to explain to her why her father was so protective of her.

"He can't afford to have anything happen to you sweetie." Her mother had said.

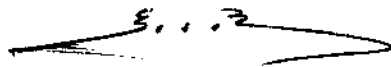
"But, how can anything happen to me by having friends?" she wanted to know.

"He just thinks that, if you start hanging out with other kids, then." she hesitated. "you'll lose interest in having all this one day." she swept her hand in the air to indicate everything around them.

"I don't want this!" There, it was out. She had said it.

"Sometime sweetie." Her mother spoke as softly as possible, not to upset her more. "we can't run from what is meant to be."

Toriyah, played this conversation over and over in her mind; and later that evening while watching her mother prepare dinner, she wondered if she was letting her mother down. However, she still couldn't erase the vision of the kids happy faces in the village running and playing.



"How long do you plan to keep her captive my lord?" The developer questioned the King.

"Till she's ready to cooperate and see to it that I get my land!" He glared at the developer, then added. "Can you believe that my daughter

wants to invite those worthless kids to the castle?"

"She is only a child herself your majesty."

"I don't care!" The King shouted. "I'll never let those kids ever step a foot into this castle!"

The developer knew that he was skating on thin ice with his next comment, but he said it anyway. "The princess isn't going to be young forever, and before long she's going to have to deal with the villagers."

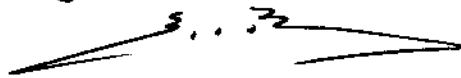
The King didn't respond at first. "This is true," he agreed. "Therefore, the future I keep her away from them." He paused. "The less she'll know of them. As long as she doesn't become attached to them, I need not worry about those peasants taking advantage of her whenever I bestow the kingdom upon her."

"I agree my lord, but I don't th..."

"Don't what?" The King cut him off.

"Think that she should be denied her childhood."

"That's why, I don't pay you to THINK about how I raise my child. But, how I develop my empire. We won't ever have this conversation again. My daughter will not socialize with those kids; nor will she go back to that village and set eyes on them!"



The boys used the sticks to beat a path through the shrubbery. They felt relieved once the bushes in their path started thinning. Neither of them was even sure that they were headed in the right direction. They only knew that, if the village rumors held true and they cleared the forest, then the castle wouldn't be a problem finding.

"my momma told me dat tha King wants to build a new place for everyone ta shop." Henry said, as his huge bulk led the crew through the forest.

"Dat's not what I heard my momma and daddy say." Flint replied.

"what dey say?" asked Gee.

"Dat tha King wants ta tear down alot of houses and tha school."

"Just ta build a place ta shop!" Henry was puzzled now.

"yeah, I couldnit catch everything dat dey were saying though, only bits and pieces."

"But you do know for sure dat dey said tha King wants ta tear down houses and tha school?" Gee questioned, while beating a bush aside.

"yelp!" Barked Flint.

"Dat's crazy." stated Henry.

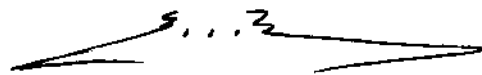
Then, a thought struck Flint, and he asked. "Do ya'll think dat's why dey kidnapped Mrs. Whammy?"

"why else would dey take her?" Gee couldnit see no other reason.

"Good question." Remarked Henry.

"Let's take a short break". Flint implied.

They found a rest area.



Jakayla, Sayani, and Ebony didnt have any problem tracking the boys; because the path they left was clear and visible.

"Where are dey going?" Ebony asked, still feeling uneasy about being in the woods like they were.

"I dont know." Sayani responded, and checked behind them.

"Dere's only one place dey can be going." Jakayla calmly stated.  
"Where?" Ebony ready for this little expedition to be over inquired.

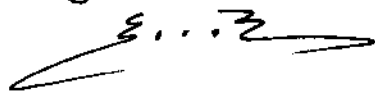
"Tha Castle."

"Tha Castle!" Sayani and Ebony belched in unison.

"Why would dey be heading to tha castle?" Ebony wanted to know. Jakayla pushed some shrubbery aside before responding. "I don't know. I just know dat, it's tha only place ta go in dis direction."

"Dey so crazy, dey probably think dat dey can just walk up, knock on tha castle's door, and meet tha King." Sayani stated.

Jakayla and Ebony laughed, which was interrupted by a bizarre sound that echoed throughout the forest, frighten them.



From their place of rest, the boys frantically looked for the source of the sound.

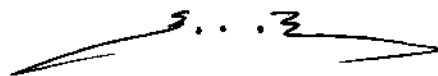
"What was dat?" Henry was the first to ask.

"I don't know." Truthfully replied Flint.

"maybe it's a monsta." Gee hinted.

"man, aint no such things as monstas." Flint assured them.

They all heard the twig when it cracked at the same time, followed by the sound of something coming in their direction. They jumped up and took cover behind the nearest tree.



Within minutes the girls came pushing through the bushes and into full view. They stopped, a worry look was on their faces, because the

path they were so easily following, seemed to have vanished. Flint, Gee, and Henry all thought that they were seeing things when the girls came through the thicket. However, the moment that Flint realized that the girls were real, he hurried over to where they stood, followed closely by Gee and Henry. "What are ya'll doing here?" He asked the startled girls.

"We thought dat ya'll were in trouble, so, we came ta help!" Jakayla replied, glad to have caught up to them.

"Well, we aint, now, ya'll go back home!"

"We aint going no where!" she stood firm.

"You dont tell us what ta do!" Sayani came to her friend's aid.

"Ya'll dont have any business in dese woods!" Flint really didnt want the girls around; cause, he felt that they might be a burden.

"Yeah, dat's right!" Gee and Henry agreed understanding their partner's motive.

"What's going on Flint?" Ebony asked, all seriousness in her voice.

Flint, reluctantly told them the whole story, from the moment they saw Mrs. Whammy getting kidnapped to their plot to rescue her.

"Well, we're gonna help her too!" Jakayla firmly invited.

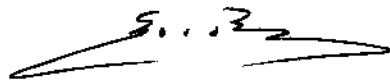
Flint looked at Henry and Gee; but neither of them had words for the situation. He turned back towards the girls and realized that they had their minds made up; they were going with them. Knowing that time was of an essence, Flint didnt want to waste it arguing with Jakayla, Ebony, and Sayani; so, off the six of them went.

## Chapter 6 "Toniayah" the princess Tiger By Ro'sha Bennett

After dinner Toniayah went out to the backyard and sat in her favorite swing. She had a few hours left before she'd be courted off, take her bath, and headed to bed. I'll be glad when I get big, then, I can go where I wanna go. She thought, as she gently kicked her feet and swing back and forth. She glanced towards the woods; instantly wondering, how far the village was through them. She wished to know, what the kids in the village were doing at this moment. Were they out playing, or also getting ready for their baths and bed?

"You'll never know!" The voice in her head said.

A sadness crept over her, because, deep down inside, she knew that the inner voice only spoke the truth.



By the time the castle came into view, the heavy thickets and bushes had dwindled down to mere scarce areas of high grass. The actual size of the castle amazed them. Even at this distance, it appeared to be on top of them. Though its splendor was indeed majestic, the fact that the yard was patrolled by guards didn't go unnoticed by any of them.

"Now what?" Jakayla asked, breaking into whatever thoughts everyone were thinking.

"We've got to find a way inside and find Mrs. Whammy." Flint informed her, never taking his eyes off the occupied yard.

"And how are we suppose to do dat?" Ebony quizzed.

Flint looked over his crew. "Ain't no WE! me, Henry and Bee are going to

go up and see what we can find out. we." He added. "don't even know if Mrs. Whammy is in dere."

"What are we suppose to do just stay here looking crazy?" Questioned Sayani.

"We'll be right back. we're only going to see if we can atleast locate a way inside to look around." Flint revealed his just thought up plan.

Squinting her face, Jakayla asked. "You mean break in?"

"What if ya'll get caught?" Sayani didn't think that the boys plan was a good one.

Speaking for the first time since they came up on the castle, Gee said.

"Den ya'll follow the path we made back home."

"See, dat's where ya'll are wrong, we're not going home without ya'll."

Jakayla looked at them, before adding. "And if ya'll get caught, we're coming to get ya'll."

Happy that the girls had agreed to wait, Flint simply said. "Deal." After all, him and his boys didn't plan to get caught. "Let's go!" He glanced at Henry and Gee.

"Ya'll betta be careful too!" Ebony shouted, just loud enough for them to hear her.

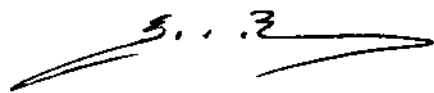
Henry acknowledged that they had heard her with a thumb up.

The boys reached an area of high grass, crouched low and maneuvered their way through it. They moved extremely careful, aware that one wrong move and the guards would be on them. They came up on the edge of the grass; Flint raised his head just high enough to peer into the castle's yard. He spotted a hedge bush. "we've got to get to the hedge bush. It's only a few feet; I'll go first."

With that, he checked the yard, realized wasn't a guard around and dashed to the hedgebush. From his viewpoint, he could see his two Compadres. He beckoned for them to follow; one by one, they did. Quickly realizing that they were along side the Castle, Flint strategized how they would make their way, to where he assumed the back of the Castle would be. "I think dat tha back of tha Castle is round dat corner." He whispered; and indicated the direction with a nod of his head. "our best chance of reaching tha back is from tha cover of dem bushes lining tha Castle."

Henry and Gee considered where Flint was referring to. Being that Henry was the slowest of the three, they sent him first; he made it with ease.

Flint and Gee followed behind him. Crawling on hands and knees, they made their way along the Castle's wall. Flint silently prayed that they were headed in the right direction as they slowly rounded the corner of the Castle.



The girls kept their eyes on the boys from their place of hiding up until the point when the boys disappeared behind some bushes beside the Castle's wall.

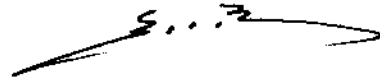
"If we don't hurry, we'll be out here when night falls." Ebony stated, not liking the idea of being caught in the forest after dark. Plus, there's the golden rule of all of them being home before the streetlights come on.

Jakayla, speaking on the behalf of the boys defense said. "Dey know dat we've got ta be back before dark; so, dey'll be back"



"Dey betta, or when I get my hands on dem I'm g..."

Sayani's words were drowned out by the sudden blarring of the horns coming from somewhere about the castle. The horns caused all three of them to jump. They also knew that the horns meant that something had gone wrong. They stared towards the castle's yard in bewilderment.



After making their way around the corner of the castle, Flint spotted the cars and knew that they were in the front part of the castle. "Ah man!" He hissed.

"What's up?" Hearing the dejection in his friend's voice, Gee asked from behind him.

"We've got ta head back tra other way." Flint told them.

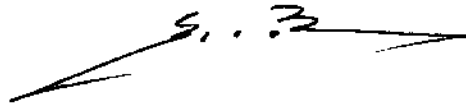
However, before they could, something on the ground beside one of the cars caught Flint's attention. "What's dat over dere on tra ground by tra second car backdoor?"

Gee and Henry both spotted the image that Flint spoke of. Eventhough, the sunlight reflected off the object, Flint had a hunch that he knew what it was. He just needed a closer inspection to be sure. "Hold up yall!" He instructed them as he eased from behind the bush. He utilized the cover of the other cars to stay hidden until he reached his destination. The moment he saw them, his heart rate increased; and after retrieving them he turned heading back to where Henry and Gee watched and waited.

"Halt!" The soldier's voice demanded from somewhere behind him.

Then, the horn rang, announcing their presence; and within seconds the

guards had them apprehended.



A guard that was in the backyard quickly rushed over to Toriyah and escorted her towards the Castle. By the time they reached the door to enter, the guards carrying the three struggling boys came rushing around the corner. Her little feet stopped in their tracks. Was this some type of a joke by her father? She wondered. She watched as the boys kicked and clawed against their over sized captors. She knew from the direction they were headed, that they were taking them to the dungeon. In a flash, the thought hit her. Oh my, I got them in trouble by asking my dad if I could befriend them.

She rushed into the Castle, and ran directly into her father, who happened to be heading out. "Why are you doing them like this?" she asked, unable to mask the anger.

He looked at her before responding. He had already been briefed on the situation, so he knew exactly what was on her mind. "I didn't have anything to do with this Sweetie." He assured her.

Tears had welled up in her eyes. "Then why are they here?" she paused, then asked. "And what are you going to do with them?"

"What should be done to any trespassers." He looked at her. "Break them!" He solemnly stated, broke into a devious laugh and walked away.

She ran up the staircase and burst into her room. Unable to sit still, she pranced back and forth for what seemed like hours before walking over to the window.

The soldiers had settled back down once they realized that it was

only some of the Village Kids that caused all the ruckus.

Toniyah surveyed the woods and wondered, where had the boys come from? Then, something happened, she saw some movement from the far corner of the woods. Knowing, or more importantly hoping that this could only mean one thing. Her adrenaline pumped as she raced back down the stairs and out the backdoor.

## Chapter 7 "Toniyah the princess Tiger" By Rosha Bennett

Mrs. Whammy stood the moment she heard the door at the end of the corridor open. The first thing that caught her ears were the voices of the protesting boys. She knew that there had to be some type of a mistake, there was no way that the voices she heard belonged to who she envisioned.

When the first guard came into view carrying Bee, she was speechless. The other guards brought the other two boys and placed all three of them into the cell with her. "Oh my, what are ya'll doing here?" she asked, bracing them in a group hug.

"We came looking for you." Flint spoke with his face buried in the apron around her waist, and through sobs.

Her heart melted at the thought of her little rescue rangers coming to her aid like this. "How did you all know that I was here?" she stroked Henry's head as he held onto her.

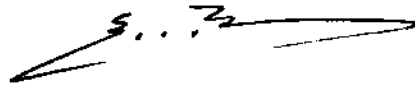
Just as he had done earlier with the girls, Flint shared the story about them seeing the guards force her into the car. Remembering her glasses, he fished in his pocket for them and handed them to her.

"Jakayla, Ebony, and Sayani are in the woods waiting on us." Bee added. This worried Mrs. Whammy. She was well aware of the fact that the girls disliked those woods. However, she was more concerned on how the girls would react now that the boys had been captured.

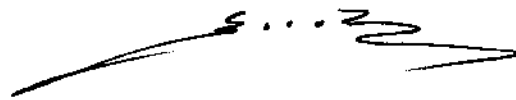
Hoping, Henry said, "maybe dey'll go back home and tell everyone where we're at."

"Wait!" Mrs. Whammy asked wide eyed. "You mean to tell me that no-one knows that you all are here?"

"No mam." Flint spoke for them. "But, Jacki'nim will do what's right."  
"Let's pray they do." Mrs. Whammy led them over to the blankets and they all sat down.



Toniyah, ran out the backdoor, and made her way towards the far end of the forest. Her adrenaline has never reached the level it was at now; so, she had to steady herself. She was careful to make sure that none of the guards that were finishing up their rounds saw her.



Jakayla, Ebony, and Sayani all were awe struck to see Toniyah heading in their direction. Who is she? The three of them wondered alike. Neither of them knew, nor had they ever heard of this strange, but beautiful girl's existence. They dipped behind a large tree, once they realized that she was coming to where they were.

Toniyah, came to the high grass, which marked the edge of the forest; stopped, and called out to them. "Hi, are you all still there?"

There was no response.

The girls were silent. They didn't know what to make of Toniyah or the whole situation. The one thing that the girls were sure of at the moment was that, all the commotion earlier meant that, those knuckle headed boys had gotten caught.

"Listen!" Toniyah continued. "I'm only here to help. I know where your friends are." she added, out of desperation for a reply.

Jakayla knew that they couldn't stay hidden forever, and darkness

would be setting in within the next couple of hours. On top of that, this may be the only chance they get to help their friends. With this burden on her mind, she gave in. "Who are you?"

"My name is Toniyah, I'm the daughter of the King." She spoke in the direction of Jakayla's voice.

Stepping from behind the tree, followed by Ebony and Sayani, Jakayla asked. "How can you help us?"

"Are you really a princess?" Ebony couldn't help but ask, not giving Toniyah time to respond to Jakayla's question.

"Yes, I am." Toniyah looked back over her shoulder. "We don't have much time before the next shift of guards began making their rounds. If you want to help your friends, then we better get going!" She concluded. The three girls came through the high grass. Toniyah instantly recognized them from her trip to the village, especially Sayani, who had won the race she had seen.

"Hi, my name is Jakayla and this is Ebony and Sayani." She pointed at each girl so that Toniyah would know the difference.

"Hi!" Toniyah nodded in each girl's direction, before adding "Come on." She led them through the backyard and to a spot in the rear of the castle, where a secret door was concealed. She pushed an unseen button and the door swung open. Once they were all inside, she secured the door and started down a long hallway.

Occasional lanterns lined the walls of the hallway, illuminating their path. The girls' nerves were such a wreck that they were frightened by their own shadows which danced on the walls. But, they boldly continued to follow Toniyah.

They finally came to another door, and before Toniayah pushed it open she turned to them and put a finger up to her lips, indicating for them to be extremely quiet.

They stepped through the open door. It took a second for each of their eyes to adjust to the bright lights; but once they did, they realized that they were inside of the castle.

Toniayah gave them time to adjust their vision before heading down yet another passageway.

Engrossed in their own thoughts, Ebony, Sayani, and Jakayla silently followed. Unknowing to each other, that they were entertaining the same thought. How did Toniayah know about all these secret tunnels?

Another door appeared before them at the end of the passageway.

"This door opens to the dungeon!" Toniayah whispered over her shoulder.

The door opened and closed just as smooth as the others had.

Ebony with her keen sense of hearing heard the sound of muffled voices. The words weren't clear enough to make out what was being said, but, there wasn't any mistaken, someone, somewhere was talking. "I hear someone talking," she quietly informed them.

Jakayla and Sayani listened tentatively, each catching faint sounds.

Jakayla quickly observed the long corridor, noticing the rooms that lined the right side of the wall, she wondered if the voices were coming from one of them. "What are dem rooms?" she asked.

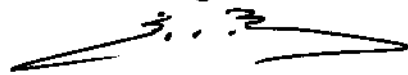
"The ones on the right belongs to the guards on duty, and the ones further down are the dungeons." Responded Toniayah.

Affraid that a guard would hear them and rush out a room,

They crept down the hall, each barely breathing. By the time they covered the distance to the first room, the voices were clear. Ebony, Sayani, and Jakayla looked at each other the minute they recognized Gee's voice, as he talked non-stop. Then Mrs. Whammy spoke, and the girls had to keep themselves from running down the remainder of the corridor.

Led by Jakayla, with their backs on the wall, the girls slid down the corridor. They came to the last room, Jakayla slowly eased her head around the doorframe and was relieved to find it too empty. "It's empty." She turned and informed them.

"Good!" stated Toniayah, and rushed past Jakayla. She entered the room, went straight to the drawer that held the keys to the cells; and returned with them dangling in her hand



"If s.." Gee stopped in mid-sentence, had he heard keys? The looks on everyone's else's face, answered his question. The boys went into action, positioning themselves in front of the cell door. If whoever was coming intended to take Mrs. Whammy, then they'd have to go through them first.

Toniayah, reached the cell first; immediately followed by Jakayla, Sayani, and Ebony.

"Some kind of rescue rangers ya'll are." Teased Jakayla, smiling.

"Oh hush." Flint responded, glad to see them.

Toniayah unlocked the cell door, stepped back and watched the joyful reunion began. She had never seen such compassion



and affection shared so openly. She was glad to be a part of their happiness.

Jakayla introduced Mrs. Whammy and the boys to Toniya; of course, Ebony couldn't resist adding the fact that she is a princess.

"Come on kids, we've got to get out of here," Mrs. Whammy said, wishing that the kids could have met under normal circumstances. Toniya led them back the way she had brought them; and in no time, they were standing up against the castle in the backyard. They were lucky, the guards hadn't changed shifts yet; this came as a relief to Toniya. She led them back to the spot that she had met them at, before saying, "You all should be fine from here, and I'm sorry for what my father did."

"Thank you Toniya!" They all said in unison, while standing at the edge of the grass leading back into the forest.

## Chapter 8 "Toni-yah" the princess "Tiger" By Ro'sha Bennett

The King sat in his study, behind his desk, in his plush chair. He was beaming with confidence; after all, he had a new proposal to present to the town's people. How could they resist him now that those boys had trespassed on his premise? That's a violation punishable by keeping those boys held in the dungeon for three weeks. I may not need the mayor after all, he thought to himself.

He got up, stretched his back, and walked over to the window. The scene playing out before him temporarily paralyzed him. There in plain view was his prisoners making their way across the lawn, being accompanied by more kids. They all bore little merits to his hazy vision. For the person that held his devoted attention was his daughter, who had the audacity to be leading the little group of peasants.

His anger rose; and instead of alerting the guards he rushed out the door, down the steps and out into the yard. He ran across the yard yelling Toni-yah's name.

Mrs. Whammy was the first to hear the King screaming. The kids glanced in the direction of his voice. Fearing that he was calling for his guards, the boys dashed deeper into the woods, followed by Mrs. Whammy and the girls.

Toni-yah hesitated for a second before chasing behind them. She ran with them as the boys ducked through shrubbery, and anything else that was in their way.

The King's greatest concern at that moment was his precious heress,

whom he called out to several times. The trees and shrubbery tore and pulled on his royal garments. He wished now that he had called his guards for this task. They'll pay for this; he thought to himself as a branch smacked him across the face.

Before the scared little crew realized it, a ragging river awaited, just below them. They were forced to slow their pace and calculate their every step.

"Come on!" Flint guided them down a thin path leading beside the angry river.

Determined not to let them out of his sight, the King emerged through the brush. He eased his way onto the path; but being unaccustomed to such activities, his feet slipped, causing him to tumble into the river.

The kids heard the splash and stopped. They turned around just in time to see the King go under the water, resurface, and began flapping his arms wildly. "HELP!" He cried.

Much to Mrs. Whammy's surprise, the kids shot into motion. They sprinted a few more feet of the drowning King.

Henry and Ebony used their weight to knock an uprooted tree over, which fell perfectly over the river and landed on the other side of the bank.

Orchestrating the daring rescue, Flint said. "Jakayla, ya'll hurry up and snatch some vines."

Toniyah, working with Jakayla and Sayani, went to retrieve the vines off a nearby tree, returned and gave them to Flint.

Mrs. Whammy remained in awe at the kids' heroics.

Flint and Gee expertly laced the vines together. "Here, tie this end around the tree over here!" Flint pointed, and Gee utilizing his long legs, obliged.

No sooner were the words out of Flint's mouth, he used his swift eyes and feet mobility to race across the fallen tree. After being sure there was enough slack in the vine to rest in the water, he tied his end to the nearest tree.

The King saw the kids running around on the bank over the rippling water, before it pulled him back under. He couldn't believe that his life was going to end like this, especially not in the presence of his precious princess.

"Here he come!" Hooted Ebony, seeing the King fighting in the water to stay afloat.

Tears ran freely down Toriyah's face. She couldn't stand to see her father, over bearing love and all, in such a hazardous predicament.

Then the most amazing thing happened, to the King's surprise, his momentum was stopped instantly by the awaiting unseen vine. With what little strength he had left, he clasped and held onto the vine for dear life.

"ya'll come over here!" Flint yelled to his team to be heard over the roaring water, as he put the final part of his plan together. "Mrs. Whammy, I need you to untie the other end, when I say so." He concluded, as the crew made their way across the tree.

Mrs. Whammy awakened out of her trance, rushed over to the tree where the girls had tied the vine. She waited for her call.

"Everyone grab hold of the vine!" Flint commanded his squad.

They all willingly obeyed, not once thinking about just mere minutes ago that the King meant them harm.

From her position amongst the team, Taniyah shouted encouragement down to her father. "Hold on Daddy!"

"O.K Mrs. Whammy!" Flint screamed.

Once Mrs. Whammy untied her end, the kids easily pulled the King to safety.

He rested on the bank, catching his breath before looking up at the kids.

They all stared back in bewilderment.

His heart melted at that moment as he realized how natural his daughter looked standing there with the other kids. He knew right then, that he could no longer deprive her of a childhood and friends. He stood and climbed up the bank.

Excluding Taniyah, the kids took a step backwards, prepared to dash out of his reach.

Recognizing their fear, he quickly said. "Wait. I just wanted to say thank you."

"Daddy, please don't put them back in your dungeon." Taniyah pled.

He chuckled. "I wouldn't dare Sweetie, treat your FRIENDS like that."

"You mean, they can start coming to the castle to play?" was the only question she could think to ask.

"Of course!" He looked at the little group. "And you can start going to the village more often."

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She ran and embraced him.

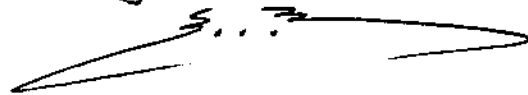
Cheers rang out as Takayla, Ebony, Sayani, Flint, Henry, and Gee rejoiced over the idea of having a new friend.

Flint marched them over to the other side of the river where Mrs. Whammy had been waiting and watching the whole ordeal.

"Mayor." The King gracefully bowed to her. "I can find another sight to build that shopping center."

"Thank you my lord." she replied.

"Now, let's get out of these woods and get ya'll back to your love ones." stated the King.



Toniyah's mother was in the kitchen and couldn't believe her eyes when she saw her husband along with the rest of the dirty little crew emerge from the woods.

Once inside the castle, the King summoned some help and got everyone cleaned up. Afterwards, while in the car headed to the village, the King turned to the back seat where Mrs. Whammy and the kids were, and asked, "Mayor, would you happen to have room in your class for one more?"

"Of course!" smiled Mrs. Whammy.

The kids broke into another cheering session, as tears of joy ran down Toniyah's face.

The End!  
\* Po'sha Bennett  
(13)