

AUNT CHLOE

2020 ISSUE YEAR

Jamaica Greenwood

Stepping In

INT. KATY'S BEDROOM - MORNING

MASON (39), a tall, African-American man wearing a suit, enters the room holding balloons with the number "8" and a small box wrapped in pink paper with white polka dots and a big blue ribbon.

KATY (8), a young, African-American girl with messy, curly pigtails, grows a smile from ear to ear and jumps on her father with a hug. She gets out of the bed and begins to get dressed.

Mason kisses her on the forehead, then ties the balloons to her headboard. He sets the gift box on her nightstand next to a framed picture of Katy and a tall, black woman with short curly hair wearing a military uniform.

The frame reads: "BEST MOM EVER."

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

Mason enters the bathroom with his hands full of combs, brushes, bows, and hair ties, and a spray bottle. With a weak smile on his face, he struggles to set everything down and begin taming her natural hair.

With all the tugging and brushing, Katy struggles to keep her hands away from her head but makes it through. She hands Mason three pink bows to add to the ends of each of her braids.

Katy excitedly steps up on a stool and on her tippy toes to look in the mirror, but her shoulders slouch at the sight of her crooked parts and half-done braids.

Still, she smiles up at Mason and grabs her backpack to leave.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - MORNING

The clock shows the seconds leading up to eight-thirty AM, and the bell rings as the KIDS file into the classroom.

Katy walks in and looks at the classroom bulletin board. The board is mostly empty except for a flyer for "Mommy and Me Tea: Saturday, November fifth, two-thousand-eighteen."

Katy looks away quickly and finds her desk.

The teacher begins writing on the board: Welcome to Ms. Gleason's class. Quote of the day: ...

THE CAMERA TURNS TO FACE KATY.

CUT TO:

CU ON KATY

Katy's blinking becomes slow and she falls into a daydream.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. KATY'S BATHROOM - MORNING (DAYDREAM)

NIA (36), a tall black woman with long, curly hair wearing a green dress enters the bathroom with a rat tail comb, a spray bottle, and Curls Blueberry Bliss Styling Cream.

Nia cornrows Katy's hair into four perfect braids and finishes them off with four pink bows at the bottom.

Katy jumps up on the stool, grins, and hugs Nia.

CUT TO:

INT. KATY'S BEDROOM - AFTERNOON (DAYDREAM)

A small table is set up with food, a tea set, and Groovy Girl dolls sitting in two of the four chairs. Katy and Nia sit in the other two.

Nia and Katy laugh nonstop as they act out a beautiful tea party.

Nia turns on "Can't Stop The Feeling" by Justin Timberlake, and they get up to dance and jump around the room, enjoying each other's company.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - MORNING

The bell rings and wakes up Katy. Katy motions to another YOUNG BLACK GIRL in the room, and they run out the door.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - AFTERNOON

Katy is sitting in the backseat of Mason's car dancing to the music and looking out the car window.

The car drives by a cemetery, then an army base. Katy looks at both locations, but does not react.

The music gets louder, and they arrive home.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE ENTRYWAY - AFTERNOON

Mason unlocks and opens the door. Katy walks in, drops her backpack, and runs upstairs to her bedroom.

CUT TO:

INT. KATY'S BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

Katy runs straight to the nightstand where Mason left her present, grabs it, and plops on her bed. Mason enters the room and stands in the doorway. Katy excitedly snatches off the ribbon and tears off the wrapping paper, letting them fall onto the floor.

Once she opens the box, WE SEE a handwritten letter and a locket necklace. She opens the locket, and looks inside at a picture of Nia and Katy.

Mason helps Katy put on the necklace, and while she looks in the mirror, Mason exits.

Katy sits and begins to read the letter.

Mason returns with a large gift bag with gold ribbons, and hands it to Katy. Katy opens it, and reveals a beautiful pink and gold dress. Katy hugs Mason and holds it up to her body in the mirror.

CUT TO:

INT. KATY'S BEDROOM - MORNING

The calendar in Katy's room shows November fifth, twenty-eighteen.

Mason walks in the room wearing a suit and holding a teacup.

Katy smiles, gets out of bed, grabs her birthday dress, and walks out of the room.

CU ON THE NOTE "Happy Birthday, Beautiful! I am still away in the army, and will not make it home for your big day. Wear this locket every day to keep me close. I miss you so much. Daddy is doing the best he can, and I will be home soon. I love you."

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END

Jamaica Greenwood graduated from Spelman College in May 2020. Originally from Oakland, California, Jamaica writes both short fiction and screenplays.