Disney PRINCESS

14 ORIGINAL ILLUSTRATED STORIES

TALES OF COURAGE AND KINDNESS

TIANA IS...
AMBITIOUS
HOPEFUL
SELF-RELIANT
FOCUSED
RESILIENT
HARDWORKING

TIANA'S DREAM:
To open her own restaurant

HEROIC MOMENT:
Braving the bayou to break the Shadow Man's curse

SIDEKICK:
Ray

FAMOUS QUOTE:
'The only way to get what you want in this world is through hard work.'

'I want to do something extra special to honour Daddy this year,' she said.

'Achidanza!' Naveen said in his native Maldonian. 'That's a great idea. Count on me to help out.'

But what should she do?

The next morning, Tiana was on a mission. When she set her mind to something, watch out. Her daddy's birthday was only a week away. She had to come up with something just right.

Tiana knew exactly where to go first – to visit her mama, Eudora. As she entered her childhood home, Tiana marvelled at the ruby gown her mum was making. In her hands, tulle, lace and ribbons were more powerful than a magic wand. She was the best seamstress in all of New Orleans.

'Mama,' Tiana said, kissing her on the cheek, 'you outdid yourself. The First Lady and the Queen of Maldonia would be jealous.'

'Aw, thank you, honey,' she said. 'But you didn't come all this way to compliment this dress. What's on your mind?'

Tiana picked up the picture of her dad in his Army uniform that sat on her mum's table. His distinguished service cross for heroism during the Great War lay nearby.

'Daddy's birthday is coming up. I want to do something that shows people who he was.'

'You honour him and me every day,' her mother said, 'by just being you.'

'I know, Mama,' she said, 'but I *want* to do something. You remember how Daddy used to give *us* presents on his birthday. He would insist on making gumbo and inviting everyone over to share. We would eat on the front porch and laugh. He gave to others all his life. He deserves a tribute to him.'

'Yes, your father, James, was a good man. I won't try to talk you out of it. Lord knows you're hardheaded just like him,' she said, chuckling. 'You won't stop until you make it happen.'

Tiana left her mum's feeling good but just as unsure about what to do. On her way back to her restaurant, she saw a man and a woman who were asking people for money to buy lunch. Their faces were pale. Their clothes were old and torn. It hurt Tiana that they were hungry. Her daddy had always said a pot of gumbo does more than fill your stomach; it fills your heart with love.

'I'm Tiana,' she said. 'What are your names?'

'I'm Fleur,' the woman said, 'and this is my husband, Jean. We fell on hard times and could use a little help getting back up.'

'Y'all come on into the Palace,' Tiana said, 'and get something to eat. Don't worry about paying. The meal is on me.'

They looked at each other like they weren't sure she was serious. Then they followed her inside. Their eyes bugged as they took in the arched ceiling and grand chandelier. They stared up at the skylight and gaped at the intricate designs of the wrought-iron balconies. They admired the tables covered with linens that looked like lily pads.

'Make sure Fleur and Jean get whatever they want,' Tiana told Naveen, who welcomed everyone as they arrived.

She winked at them.

Ever since Tiana had opened her restaurant, she'd made sure to look out for people who didn't have as much as she did. If someone wanted to eat, she would accept whatever they could pay and give out food for free to those who couldn't.

'Tia!' called her best friend, Charlotte LaBouff, as Tiana entered the main dining room. 'Tia, didn't you hear me?'

'Sorry, Lottie,' she said, giving her a hug. 'I guess I was lost in my thoughts. I want to do something special to honour Daddy, but I don't know what to do.'

They sat together at a table. Charlotte stared into space like she was thinking through options.

'I know, I know!' Lottie squealed, and took Tiana's hands in hers. 'A celebration! My father loves those. That would be a great way to honour the memory of your daddy. Let's have a ball and name it after him.'

While Lottie chattered about silk gowns, dances and fine china, Tiana thought about her dad. He had loved bringing people together

but he didn't care about fancy. He liked simple and sincere more than fuss.

'Can't you see it, Tia?' she said. 'Tia?'

Tiana noticed a man peering into the front window of her restaurant. Something about him looked familiar. Where did she know him from?

'Sorry, Lottie,' she said, standing up and heading to the door. 'I'll be right back.'

'Excuse me, sir,' she said, once outside. 'Do I know you?'

'Are you Miss Tiana?' he asked. 'I heard that James's little girl opened a restaurant. I had to come see it for myself.'

'You knew my daddy?' she asked with wide eyes.

'Sure did. Your daddy was something special,' he said. 'I was in the war with him. He would give anyone the shirt off his back and laid down his life to keep others safe.'

As her eyes brimmed with tears, Tiana smiled. That was her dad. And she remembered who this was – Mr. Larkin, the friend of her father's she'd seen in so many pictures.

'Wasn't easy,' he said. 'Just like now, some people only cared about the colour of our skin. They didn't see us as heroes. But your daddy stood up for anyone who needed it.'

Tiana thought about that. She and Lottie were best friends but not everybody liked that. Her restaurant was a magical place where all people could be together but at most places, Black and white people had to be separate. That was the law. Tiana hoped for a day when segregation and injustice would end. She wanted everyone to be treated equally, not just at her restaurant but everywhere.

'Won't you come inside?' she said. 'I'd love to show you around.'

‘Not today,’ he said. ‘But it sure is good to see you. James talked so much about his wife and little daughter who had a gift that gleamed brighter than a star. Feel like I already know you.’

Tiana thought about what Mr. Larkin had said as she walked back inside.

‘Who was that, Tia?’ Charlotte asked.

‘A friend of my daddy’s,’ replied Tiana.

‘That’s nice,’ Charlotte said. ‘Now what do you think about the ball?’

‘I don’t know, Lottie,’ Tiana said, sighing. ‘Daddy was humble. Not sure that fits who he was.’

Just then Louis, the star of the band Firefly Five Plus Lou, came over.

‘Hey, Tiana and Charlotte,’ he said, flashing his toothy smile. Newcomers to Tiana’s Palace were always startled to see an alligator playing trumpet. But once he started to swing, they forgot all about that as toe tapping and finger snapping took over. ‘Y’all want to hear what I’m working on?’

‘Of course,’ Tiana said.

His tail bouncing as he bopped, their friend played a solo that would put Louis Armstrong to shame. Lottie cheered and clapped. Tiana stood and gave the big alligator a hug.

‘Amazing,’ she said. ‘I’m trying to think of something special for my daddy’s birthday. Got any ideas?’

‘Your daddy liked jazz, right?’ Louis said. ‘How about a jam session in his name? The guys and I could play something special.’

‘Did someone say jam?’ Naveen said, walking up while strumming a ukulele. ‘Don’t forget about me.’

Tiana smiled. Her daddy had loved music. Having Louis and Naveen play in his honour would be special. Maybe that could be it.

‘Thanks,’ she said. ‘I need to think it through.’

She hugged Lottie goodbye and headed to her cosy office. That’s where she came up with new recipes and made plans for the future. She stared at the poster her daddy had created for the restaurant he hoped they’d open. She remembered when it was just a twinkle in his eyes.

She wrote down the ideas her friends had shared for his birthday celebration – a ball, a concert. Did those show who her daddy was?

Before she knew it, evening covered the French Quarter like a blanket. It was time to get ready for bed. In her room, Tiana paced, her mind still racing. She needed some air. She walked up to the rooftop, the city of New Orleans sparkling below her. She stared again at Evangeline, glittering like a beacon. Next to Evangeline was her dear friend Ray’s star. Tiana closed her eyes and made a wish.

‘Please help me think of something special for Daddy’s birthday,’ she said.

Tiana opened her eyes and took a long last look at the twinkling stars before returning to her room and turning in. No sooner had she fallen asleep than a flickering light appeared.

‘Naveen,’ she called sleepily. ‘Did you leave the light on?’

‘You got a light inside, cher,’ someone said. ‘You just got to let it lead you.’

Tiana sat up straight. She knew that voice. She looked around and saw Ray, her firefly friend from the bayou, circling her head. She loved seeing his face again.

'Me and Evangeline heard your wish. But you got all you need right there,' he said, landing near her heart and shining bright.

Tiana thought about her daddy saying that good food brings people together. It makes their hearts glow just like Ray was showing her. She could almost hear his voice telling her to never forget what's most important.

When she woke up the next morning, she realised Ray hadn't really visited her. It had all been a dream. But a name blazed in her head like a sign trimmed with lights – *Daddy's Front Porch*. That had been a place full of love and laughter. She remembered how a pot of gumbo and a place to gather had brought everyone together in hard times and good. No one had gone without food when her daddy was around.

She had her idea. It would be a lot of work. Tiana would need everyone to pitch in, but they could do it. She hopped out of bed, ready for the challenge. Tiana could already see her dream taking shape.

Along with being the best seamstress around, Eudora was the manager of Tiana's Palace. Tiana couldn't wait to tell her the news.

'Mama,' she said when she saw her,

'I know how to HONOUR Daddy.'