

# Qoyska (family)

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Tomorrow is the big day which is my birthday, and my parents excitedly told me that they were going to give me a present which is going to be out of this world. I'm a really simple person, so I don't really expect anything that humongous like a big TV or a laptop. I would rather receive some clothes, shoes, or purses. I could barely go to sleep last night with all the thoughts that ran through my mind about what could be my grand surprise. I woke up really early this morning and kept on shaking my parents to wake up.

“Caaliyah, stop it, we told you that we would tell you at 8:45 am.”, mom softly said.

“It’s only 6:15 am Caaliyah, go back to sleep.”, dad mumbled like nothing was more important than his sleep.

I kept annoying my parents and then finally the alarm went off at the time when they were supposed to tell me. They took me to the living room to tell me my big surprise. My dad kept on joking around with me about how he should he tell me or not, but then I told him I won't make the great breakfast for him that I make every day, especially the one on my birthday.

He slowly held my hand and whispered, "Your Ayeeyo (grandmother) is visiting all the way from Somalia just to meet you for your birthday".

I had a shocked face for about 10 seconds, and then I started jumping up and down chanting really loudly, "Ayeeyo is coming, Ayeeyo is coming."

I hugged my mom and dad both really tightly with my teary eyes and slowly said thank you. I started making my strawberry cheese cream crepes for my younger brother, Cilmi, my mom, and dad. I was also making a pineapple-upside down cake which was one of my favorites. My mom made the best *Madhasi* (Sweet Fried Bread) which was my favorite food. As I was frying the Madhasi, a tall flame suddenly rose up. My first response to that was to quickly pour water, my dad jerked me back really hard while screaming my name right after I threw the water into the boiling oil. Throwing water into boiling oil is supposed to make the fire worse and it did. Suddenly, the alarm went off and my dad quickly grabbed us all out of the house and that's when all our joyous emotions had gone ablaze. Our whole family safely got out of the house which was most important to us. The firefighters quickly came and put water all over the fire but only a small part of the house was burnt. I knew it was all my fault because I poured the water into the boiling oil which was probably the most unreasonable and foolish decision I've ever made in my life. I kept on thinking about all the great adventures I would do with Ayeeyo when she came.

Later that evening, just before bedtime, Dad brought everyone together in a circle to make an announcement, which he said no one would be happy about.

Dad slowly told us in the most disheartening way, "Ayeeyo won't be coming from Somalia."

Dad's eyes were watering, but I could tell he was trying to be strong for us. We all burst into tears like our world was about to end.

“ Why!” I screamed angrily.

My mom looked angrily at me and said, “All of you kids go upstairs right now.”

The last time I saw Ayeeyo was about 4 years ago which was the longest time I've ever stayed away from someone who is really close to my heart. I laid on my bed just sobbing. Just then, my brother ran into my room, “It's all your fault Caaliyah. If you hadn't burned down the house, Ayeeyo would probably be coming right now!” Oh my God, I realized my brother was right. This was all my fault. I guess I fell asleep after awhile because the next thing I knew was my mom was waking me up and telling us to come downstairs.

As I walked down the stairs, I felt so ashamed of myself. “Dad, I know, I know, it's all my fault! I know Ayeeyo can't come now because I set the house on fire and that's going to cost a lot of money.”

Dad looked so puzzled. “What are you talking about, Caaliyah? This isn't your fault at all. This is because President Trump has put a travel ban on seven different countries and Somalia is one of them. We don't know when your Ayeeyo can come visit now.”

I couldn't believe it! What was he talking about? So for the next half hour my parents explained this travel ban to us. We all felt sorry for each other and for Ayeeyo.

My mom put her hand on my shoulder, and said, “Caaliyah, we are so sorry to disappoint you and that we couldn't make this birthday special.”

“It’s okay, it’s not your fault. Ayeeyo must be even more disappointed than me, because she probably thinks she’s ruining my birthday. Let’s just all try to figure out how we can fix this.”

Dad smiled at me, and said, “Thank you for being so understanding. You are really growing up.”

A week later everyone was really calm and fine with the situation we were in, and we even fixed the burnt part of the house. We then got a call from Ayeeyo saying that the judge overruled the ban and let her come in about 4 days. We all were in such a joyous mood that we went out to eat that night. We all felt like our *qoyska* (family) would once again be complete.