

SCENE 5-HISTORY LESSON

MANSA MUSA

Who summoned me?

CANDICE

Uhhh Milly? That's not Martez.

PROFESSOR

We must've did something wrong.

MANSA MUSA

Who is Martez? I am Mansa Musa. Ruler of the Mali empire.

CANDICE

Who is Mansa Musa?

PROFESSOR

I can't remember.
(feeling his head)

JUSTIN

Wait, Mansa Musa?

MANSA MUSA

Yes. That is my name.

JUSTIN

I remember him in our African American History class.

DEENA

Really? What about him? And how do you of all people remember that?

JUSTIN

He was the richest man to ever exist in all of human existence! I like to get money, so of course I'd remember.

MANSA MUSA

I was the ninth Mansa of the Mali empire. I inherited my money and kingdom from my father and it flourished into a massive empire. I built landmarks and temples all throughout the land. Gold was everywhere in my kingdom and over half

the gold sold in the world came from my kingdom at the time. My 2000 mile pilgrimage to Mecca was one of the most lavish and flamboyant journeys showcasing the beauty and riches of the Mali empire. I traveled with over 60,000 men, 21 tons of gold, and I gave away so much gold on my journey, that I crashed the gold market. My wealth today would total over \$400 billion.

STANLEY

Dang the richest man in history was a Black man.

(dapping up JUSTIN)

That's fire.

PROFESSOR

Milly, Musa has the exact type of gold we need!

MILLY

Really? This is perfect!

PROFESSOR

Yes!

(to MANSA MUSA)

Mansa, we need to help our people. We will need some of your gold.

MANSA MUSA

Of course. I wanted to give you more than just my knowledge. I gave then, and I am here to give now. This is for you. Keep my history alive.

MANSA MUSA gives some of his gold to the PROFESSOR. He also gives a piece of gold to each of the students.

JUSTIN

We will.

MANSA MUSA steps back into the pod. He vanishes.

JUSTIN

Man he was so cool! I'm gonna make sure everybody knows about his legacy.

PROFESSOR

That is exactly why we need to preserve our history. Our people amass wealth and turn around and give back to those in need. It is part of who we are. Now let's add the gold!

The PROFESSOR takes the gold and places it into the side of the pod. The pod powers up and starts to glow.

PROFESSOR

This is it! It should work now.

As the pod starts to power up it short circuits and sparks begin to fly out. It starts to smoke and a loud noise paired with a smoky boom. It shuts down.

DEENA

Aw man what happened now?

PROFESSOR

Hm...the gold should have been able to correct the sequencing of the pod accordingly. I can't remember what happens next.

CANDICE

Maybe we're missing something else.

DEENA

Yeah, but what?

CANDICE

Don't look at me. I don't understand all this science stuff. I just know that that's not supposed to happen.

PROFESSOR

Maybe the Congressman took more from the pod than we thought. What could be missing?

MILLY

It looks like the landing gear is damaged.

PROFESSOR

If we don't fix the landing gear, we won't be able to land safely.

MILLY

I wish Martez was here. He always adjusted our landing gear.

STANLEY

Maybe we don't need him.

MILLY

Okay Stanley, that's enough. You've done nothing but talk down on Martez all day.

STANLEY

No, I'm saying if we can control who comes out of the pod, then I know who can help us with our landing gear.

MILLY

Who?

STANLEY

One of my favorite pilots!

STANLEY goes over to the pod and adjusts wires and puts in time coordinates. The pod powers up. Smoke begins to pour out and another figure emerges out of the pod.

MILLY

No way! Is that...

BESSIE COLEMAN

How did I land here?

STANLEY

Yep! Bessie Coleman! The first Black and Native American woman to hold an international pilot's license!

MILLY

Stanley, you're a genius! Hi Ms. Coleman! I'm Milly, and these are my friends.

BESSIE COLEMAN

Hi, I'm Bessie Coleman. I was born in Atlanta, TX in 1892. When I was a young woman, I applied to numerous flight schools in the US, but was rejected from each one because of my

gender and race. I studied French and traveled to France to learn how to fly at an aviation school that allowed women to learn how to fly. In 1921 I earned my pilot's license and was free to soar the skies! I moved back to the US and performed stunts in multiple air shows. I believed that in the skies, we're all free to be who we are without being bound by the color of our skin. I wouldn't even participate in segregated shows because I took a stand against racism in this country. I declared that the air is the only place free from prejudice.

STANLEY

It is such an honor to meet you here in person. We will need your assistance with our landing.

BESSIE COLEMAN

Of course. How can I help?

MILLY

We need to repair the landing stabilizers. It's damaged.

BESSIE COLEMAN

I can help you with that! Show me the plane!

PROFESSOR

It's not a plane, but it does travel.
(points to pod)

BESSIE COLEMAN

Eh...it's definitely not a plane, but I guess I can still help.

BESSIE COLEMAN works on the pod fixing the landing stabilizers. The PROFESSOR watches her.

MILLY

(to STANLEY)

Thanks for bringing Bessie. I thought you thought the professor was just talking a bunch of bull-

STANLEY

-I know how important it is to you and
I know how big your helping heart is.

MILLY

(touching his shoulder)

No really, thank you. You've always
been there for me.

STANLEY

(smiling)

Anytime.

BESSIE COLEMAN

Alright, I've fixed the landing
stabilizers. Y'all should be good to
safely land next time y'all take
flight.

STANLEY

Thank you Bessie. It was so great to
meet you.

BESSIE COLEMAN

It was great meeting you too. Don't
forget to spread your wings and take
flight. Don't forget about me either!

STANLEY

We won't. Bye!

ALL

Bye!

BESSIE COLEMAN steps back into the pod. She vanishes.

PROFESSOR

Perfect. Now that the landing
stabilizers have been fixed, we'll be
able to travel anywhere in time.

ALL

Yes!

PROFESSOR

Let's take a look at the pod and make
sure we have everything.

As the PROFESSOR and STANLEY work on the pod, DEENA pulls MILLY to the side.

DEENA

Hey Milly, I know you guys have been fixing the pod and all, but is the Professor really going to help us find Martez? I mean, they are the one that created the machine that changes everything in the future right? What if they're just fixing the pod to get back to the future?

MILLY

I do think they want to help us. I just think they're having trouble remembering.

DEENA

But they're a super smart scientist right? Why can't they remember how to fix the pod if they've worked on it for so long?

MILLY

Well...maybe they didn't create the pod themselves?

DEENA

That's what I'm thinking. I know they said they invented it, but I feel like there's more to the story that they're not telling us. Like why out of all places would you travel here? And to talk to a bunch of teenagers?

MILLY

I guess we'll just have to wait and see...

CANDICE jumps into the conversation.

CANDICE

Um, hello? Aren't you supposed to be helping them fix the pod?

MILLY

Oh, right. Sorry.

(to DEENA)

We'll talk about this later okay?

MILLY walks over to the pod.

STANLEY

So, it looks like we have to adjust the navigator.

PROFESSOR

What are you talking about?

STANLEY

Uh...the navigator is glitching. We need to adjust the compass or else we'll be sent to the wrong year.

PROFESSOR

Wrong year? What year is it?

STANLEY

Yo, uh...are you okay?

MILLY

Stanley, I think the amnesia is getting worse. We have to fix the pod quickly so we can find Martez and get the professor back to the future.

STANLEY

Yeah, cause they obviously tweaking. We're running out of time.

MILLY

So who can we get to help us with our navigation?

CANDICE

Would a famous explorer work?

MILLY

Actually, it would. Candice you're a genius!

STANLEY

She is?

CANDICE punches STANLEY in the arm.

Ow! What was that for?!

CANDICE

For underestimating me!

STANLEY

Whatever. Let's just summon the next historical figure. Who can we use?

PROFESSOR

I am feeling so dizzy. My head is fuzzy and I can't remember why I came back to this date.

MILLY

Maybe you should sit down. We can do this one.

PROFESSOR

My amnesia comes and goes. If I get back to the future I will remember everything. I'm not sure how much this will help. Only one name is coming to my mind right now though.

ALL

Who?

The PROFESSOR stumbles over to the pod and types on the keyboard. The pod powers up and begins to smoke. Another figure begins to come out of the pod. He is wearing a parka and gloves.

JUSTIN

I have no idea who that is.

PROFESSOR

This is one of the best explorers. A great leader. A person often forgotten in history.

MATTHEW HENSON

Oh, hello! Are you guys ready for adventure?

PROFESSOR

Why, of course! But first, why don't you tell my friends who you are!

MATTHEW HENSON

Well, my name is Matthew Henson! I was born to freed peoples August 8, 1866 in Maryland. I'm an explorer. In fact, I am the first, and not just the first

Black person, but the first person to reach the North Pole! I explored the arctic over twenty years on my good friend Robert Peary's sea crew and traded knowledge and goods with the Inuit people. They taught me how navigate while riding on a dog sled and how to train the dogs myself. I even made most of the equipment used in our journeys across the arctic. In 1909, myself along with a team of six men and over a hundred snow dogs, set sail from Greenland and completed the harsh expedition to the top of the world. It was cold, brutal, and took over eight attempts. Before we got to the top, Robert Peary couldn't continue on foot anymore so it was up to me to lead the expedition the rest of the way. Once I made it to the farthest north point, I planted the American flag.

DEENA

What? Why have I never heard of this? That's amazing!

MATTHEW HENSON

Well, they tried to erase my history and give credit to someone else. Only Admiral Peary was acknowledged as the first man to reach the North Pole.

MILLY

(fourth wall break)

Typical.

(return to world of play)

Wow this is perfect! An explorer with raw talent and leadership. Black people have been defying all odds in every moment in history all over the globe.

PROFESSOR

Mr. Henson, we will need your help resetting our compass.

MATTHEW HENSON

No problem! Let me see your ship.