

## A Christmas to Remember

By Ben Anthony

Sean and Frances have been happily married and living in Oakland for close to twelve years. Their union produced a set of two lovely female twins-Tania and Juliana. A successful contemporary entrepreneur for years, Sean has always ensured that needs of the family are met. Frances, on the other hand, is a compliment of her husband. A caring housewife and an excellent store keeper, the total well-being of every member of the house has never fall off her shoulders, since her marriage to Sean and she has been a great asset to her manager for the past five years. Tania, Sean's look-alike, is the very jovial, yet down-to-earth type while Juliana, Frances' carbon copy, is rather reserved and would always chose to be alone, though related with her sister and parents.

Though both liberal in general, Sean and his wife have painstakingly nurtured their lovely twin daughters, since the age of three, to learn how to stay calm in the midst of life's troubles and appreciate whatever that is given to them, regardless of size. This would come in handy in the future.

The best of Sean and Frances had always been shown during the Christmas period. This had been a tradition for almost eight years: To them, Christmas preparation typically begins on Dec 1 of that year. All the paraphernalia of Christmas-Mistletoe, hampers, the Christmas interior and exterior decorators, the Christmas tree, Christmas lights, songs and Cheeses, Bunnies and a countless list would occupy their entire Oakland duplex. They would ensure her daughters' room had Christmas treatments-children versions of what was in their bedroom and living room. From December 23, countdown to the Christmas celebration would be alarmed. It was as comparable to the Track and Field drive-'On your mark...,' 'Get Ready...,' 'Go! '

As with Sean and Frances, Tania and Juliana have so grown up with this orientation and gotten used to tradition that Dec. 1 is when Christmas begins. Celebrating the festive season with the rest of the Neighborhood at the Oakland City Square to see the Santa Claus, have fun,

play with the 'Mary-go-round' facility at the Oakland Amusement Park was what Sean, Frances, Tania and Juliana were fond of doing. Visiting Santa Claus at the Park would start from Dec. 18 all through to Jan.3.

At some point, however, they were confronted by a chronic turbulence that almost shut down completely their yuletide bliss...

Sean's success attracted Ron, a friend and colleague of twenty years. He would always come to celebrate Christmas with Sean and his family. Through the years, "Ron" as Frances once observed, "has now become part of the family". But a time came when he needed the assistance of Sean. Ron requested that Sean borrowed him a sum of \$120,000 to execute an oil business deal in Young Island and promised to pay five months later with an interest rate amounting to 55%! He requested for this amount on the 3rd of February and assured his bosom friend updates every two weeks. On grounds of trust and after discussing it with Frances, Sean took the risk; lending the money to him.

What he thought would epitomize a ground-breaking business feat became tantamount to his insolvency! Two weeks later, Sean had nothing from Ron! Two months later, he still didn't hear anything! Before he could blink his eyes, eleven months have gone by...Ron's whereabouts in Young Island wasn't known! Sean had to close down his fast-growing T and T communication business to face the harsh reality he dreaded-poverty

From the period that chronic turbulence began, Frances had been the one shouldering the entire responsibility of the family. She would be the one to pay for their daughters' tuition fees, utility bills, other miscellaneous expenses, and even Sean's daily up-keep. They both endured through life's thick and thin, complemented with the understanding of Tania and Juliana. Though they had cause to exchange words at each other, the strength of love between them kept the home in one peace.

Unlike Sean and Frances, all through from Dec 1 to Dec 22, nothing happened. In fact, their Oakland building had been a residing graveyard. Life was taken away. Absolute silence had its way. Yet, they still endured until the countdown periods came Frances, Tania and Juliana

couldn't stomach the pain any longer...

Dec. 23, At their Oakland Residence...

Time: 9:00AM

At the living room, Sean was with his daughters getting set for breakfast while Frances was in the kitchen to dish out the plates of Swiss cheese, fried chicken and Hamburger

"Dad, this is two days to Christmas...I haven't seen any Christmas decoration in the house. We haven't been seen Santa Claus! We haven't heard fun like our friends and neighbors! Why?" Asked worried Tania.

"Sweetheart, dad is going through some issues right now. But we'll celebrate this Christmas. I assure you, Tania"

Sean was looking sobbed. His sudden mood change didn't catch Tania's attention as she charged towards the kitchen to assist her mom. But Juliana knew something wasn't right.

"Dad, tell me what's wrong? You were looking happy before now...but you're keeping a pale face..."

"Oh! My princess", Sean replied, pretending all was well, "it's just that dad is beginning to see life from a different perspective. Remember what I used to you and Tania..."

"Hmmm...Yes! 'No matter the situation in life, always stay calm!'" Juliana answered with a burst of enthusiasm.

"That's good of you, Juliana. Remember how we celebrated Christmas last year? It was great and worth remembering. We had fun all the way, you know. But something really happened this year...It's something that's difficult to explain!"

"Why so difficult?" She asked out of curiosity.

Sean calmed the storm arising from Juliana's wanting to know. "Baby, don't worry about it. The bottom line is we'll celebrate this Christmas like never before."

Again, Juliana asked, "You've not answered my question, dad!"

Sean saw the 'I-am-serious-to-know-what-happened' look on her face but decided to tell her a tip of the iceberg.

“Okay...The resources are not available at the moment. But be rest assured, we’ll have the greatest Christmas fiesta! All I want from you now is your confidence. We’ll be fine this Christmas. Have I ever disappointed you before?”

“No Dad”

Tania and Frances joined them at the dining table. With the food all dished out, they all began breakfast. It was at this time Sean said: “Juliana, Tania and Frances, Christmas celebration is not necessarily having fun with Santa Claus at the amusement park, playing with friends and neighbors and singing Christmas songs...It’s about knowing one thing...you’re the reason for the season! Tania, this Christmas celebration is made possible because of you! Juliana, we’ll be celebrating Christmas at a time as this because of YOU! Honey, Christmas celebration is blissful because of you. Bottom line is...we’re all the reason for the season, neither Santa nor the amusement park!!! Without us in the picture, there won’t be Christmas. But guess what? We will celebrate this one big time! You can eat your food!”

The atmosphere of life lifted the dying hopes of Tania and Frances. Juliana was strong in her belief that Christmas will be celebrated. After breakfast, they both left the house to the Oakland Playground, several miles away from the Oakland Amusement Park, to have fun with their peers-neighbors and friends-as they usually do, while Sean was with his wife in the house, appreciating the essence of their union. The Oakland Playground management ensured that none of the kids present returned home on an empty stomach by serving each and everyone of them lunch and ‘take-away’ foods-cookies, French fries and canned milk. It was late in the evening the duo of Tania and Juliana came home. It wasn’t long enough that they retired to bed.

All through the night, Christmas songs filled the entire building as Sean took out time to search get tapes of recorded Christmas songs in his room with Frances.

Surprisingly, Sean had no idea of how this year’s Christmas celebration would be: there was nothing that looked like a glimmer of hope of celebrating the season-Money yet to be recovered from Ron whose whereabouts were unknown and how ‘realistically’ untrue his

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assurances were to his twin daughters who wouldn't want to discover the liar in their father.

However, he kept his hopes alive. Sean wasn't alone in this. Frances, all along shouldering the weight of responsibilities of the family, was on hand to always assure him of that which he was confident of—celebrating Christmas with the rest of the Oakland Neighbors.

“Honey, you've always been the one that would say to me, ‘there is light at the end of every tunnel’ I know you...You're really not confident as you ought to be. Yes, I know the mistake has been made...But guess what Sean? We're all in this together. I'm happy we have a set of understanding daughters---Tania...Juliana. For over ten months, I've been carrying the whole family. Have I ever complained? It's because I've always loved you, I love you and will continue to love you all my life...So, be of good cheer, Sean! They say, ‘two good heads are better than one’. With yours and mine fixing our beliefs together to making this year's celebration a reality, it will happen, even though it's less than 2 days before Christmas...”

Sean was consoled. On the bed where the both laid, she cuddled him and was able to wipe away the tears he tried shed.

“I'm the happiest man in the world. An understanding wife and a set of two pearls---Tania and Juliana---all believing in me! Baby, I'm grateful! All through the years I've known you, you've never let me down; matter of fact, you've turned my world around for the better...God blessed the day I found you...”

Honey, its 2:00AM! Let's take a rest with a knowing that something great within the next twenty four hours would take place...Christmas celebration this year is a strong possibility. I'm having the feeling...”

“You're right, Frances. I agree with you hook, line and sinker. Let's rest...”

They both slept on each other's arms to the early morning hours of 7: 30AM.

Two Hours Later, Dec. 24...

Christmas songs permeated every part of the house. Christmas themes as Jingle Bell, We Wish A Merry Christmas, Joy To The World and Noel were heard. Unlike yesterday, everywhere was booming with life, though there was no single Christmas decoration.

Tania and Juliana were done with breakfast and as usual, went off to play. Sean and Frances were in the house hoping, looking from all cardinal directions of the earth-north, south, east and west-for that miracle to make this year's celebration a Christmas to remember.

1:00PM

"Honey, we don't have to panic. We have to keep a positive outlook...Because a positive mindset produces a positive thought field and like a signal, it emits itself to the universe. The universe, you know, reflection of our being, sends to us what we attract-the right people, events and places. So, let's go inside the bedroom as we observe our siesta, have fun with each other with the mindset or knowing that before tomorrow comes, we'll have all that we require for this year's celebration."

"I agree with you, my love", Frances said, hugging him passionately. She couldn't just wait for them to go to bed! Eventually, the deed was done...

At about 9:58PM, when Tania and Juliana had long retired to bed and fell asleep, Sean and Frances were on the brink of losing out on hope when they heard a rather strange knock on their living room's door, the entrance and exit points of the house. Meanwhile, the Christmas songs were being played; although very slow because of the time.

"Sean, I could hear someone knocking on our door"

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, Sean"

Sean switched off the audio player to confirm Frances' claim. He heard the knock again.

"Sweetie, go get the door"

"Okay"

Frances went get the door as Sean sat Master Size Sofa looking on. To their bewilderment, it was Ron! They realized that he didn't just come alone: he came in the company of other men, ready to decorate the house with the best of up-to-date interior and exterior Christmas decorations.

"I can't believe my eyes! This is Ron!"

Sean jumped out of his sitting position and hurriedly charged towards Ron, hugging him.

“Where have you been?”

“Man”, Ron replied, as the seven men, dressed like The Santa Claus, stared at them, “It’s quite a long story. Do you mind them coming in?”

“Of course...guys come in!”

The men positioned properly all the exterior decorations at the building’s front yard and took the interior decorations with them.

“Gentlemen, please do have your seats”, Sean requested, as excitement took complete control of him. “Frances, Serve them a glass of water...at least, you must all have something!”

Sean knew that all was settled. After they had been served each a glass of water, He didn’t waste much time to begin a discussion with Ron. Frances gladly took her seat at the dining room area to hear them discuss and observing all the decorations the men came with.

“Ron, how you’re doing? I tried looking for you all over the place, even in Long Island, but never thought you could disappear into thin air just like that”

“First, I’d say I’m sorry for what really happened. I thought the oil deal would yield its anticipated success but my partners wanted to swindle me. But with my informants working for them, I was able to ensure that all went well. This came with a price, Sean...I had to live the comfort of my home and family, from Oakland to Young Island and then travel to Falk Island, where the business was later taking place. For the next ten months, I ensured everything went on as planned. Fortunately, everything went on as planned!”

“Woohoo!” Sean exclaimed. “This is incredible! This is a great feat! I’m fully convinced...Your look says it all!”

Frances couldn’t help but to express her tear-joy mood and the rest of the men, seven of them in number nodded their heads in happiness, chuckling at different intervals.

“Sean if you don’t mind, we would like you and your lovely wife to give us the permission to decorate the interior and exterior part of this house...”

“It’s fine by me! Frances, what do you think?”

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“Honey, let them go ahead!”

“You have our words, Ron...Go ahead!”

Alright! Men, work starts now!”

For the next two hours, decorations were in progress-the interior and exterior parts of the building. All manner of Christmas lights, candles, bunnies, Christmas trees, toy versions of the Horses’ Rides, Amusement Park and others were all put in place. Sean and Frances, together with Ron saw to the finish the decoration process.

“Merry Christmas” Ron said, shaking hands with Sean as Frances looks in awe at the building’s back yard. “All is finished! My men were done with the decoration and were ready to take their leave.”

“What can I say? It’s what words can’t explain...Frances, don’t you think we need to wake Tania and Juliana up from sleep? This is Christmas! This is a dream come true!”

“Yeah! You’re right!”

“Hurry up! Wake them now!”

Frances went climbed the staircase to wake her twin daughters in their rooms. Seeing that Frances had gone into the house, Ron took out something from his all-round jacket pocket a sealed envelope.

“Sean, I know I’ve been a disappointment to you these past few months and I know how much I’ve caused you and your family...”

“Never mind, Ron. It’s all happened in the past. Our concerns are today and tomorrow”

At this point, Sean was looking forward to what would in that envelope.

“I promised to make it all up to you...This is an envelope I specially sealed for your eyes only. Please, do me the favor of opening it.”

“Alright”

Sean opened the envelope and saw in it a check of one million dollars! Sean couldn’t believe his eyes.

“You must be kidding me!!! A check of one million dollars?!!! This can’t be true!!!”

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“Shh! Hey, let anyone hear this. You may tell Frances later. Once again, Merry Christmas to you and accept my apology... My manager is on ground for you to cash it anytime from now.”

“Wish you the same...Apologies accepted...Thank You...This wonderful...Exciting! I think you should be on our way to the bank. But let me message my wife...Hmmm...what do I say now... Yeah...Ron, call one of your men...the one you trust most. They are all at the front yard while we are here. Just would like him to tell my wife where I’ve gone to...the bank”

“But I’ve told you not to...”

“Don’t bother yourself” Sean interrupted, “Call that trusted man for me...”

“If you say so, no problem.”

Ron ran to call one of his workers but surprisingly saw Frances with her excited Tania and Juliana advancing towards him. As he halted, seeing that Frances and her daughter were standing opposite to him, he said: “Your husband and I are going to the bank right about now...There is an urgent call from my bank manager. See you later....”

“Let’s go together” She suggested.

“It’s not a bad idea”

It wasn’t long Ron, Sean, Frances, Juliana and the seven men drove off and hit the Oakland City Bank. As the cash was withdrawn, Frances and his family had to part ways with Ron and his men.

Three hours later, the Christmas celebration was heated up in the house like never before. No eyes went dim all through. It was fun all the way. Each and every member of the family couldn’t just wait for the breaking of the day...To catch the fun they thought they have for this year’s Christmas. Their building’s decorations were sights to behold: it was the most decorated in the whole Oakland!

From Dec.25 through to Jan.3, the following year, Christmas celebration filled their mouths and touched all fibers of their being.

At about 4:00PM at the Oakland Amusement Park, Sean said to Frances, as they observed their daughters having fun with other kids, “This is a Christmas to remember...the

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power of collective belief brought us this far... Yes, our countdown didn't go as we expected but everything happened for a reason"

"You're right honey."

They cuddled each other and kissed passionately.

The End

**Ben Anthony bio:** Paraphrasing the words of the great Greek philosopher, Socrates, "Employ your time by improving, using the writings of other men so that you can gain easily what they labored for", "Mr. Ben", as he is fondly called, is poised to impact humanity in all spheres of life and human recognition. With his knowledge zenith, he is willing to disseminate valued and ageless information to all interested persons, groups and organizations regarding what he toiled to gain over the years. To depict this feat, he has written over twenty breath-taking masterpieces that cut across almost every literary category to help improve the cause, shape and existence of many fields of humanity: sexuality, fictions (stories) business anecdotes, science, home affairs, marriage, relationships, friendship, self-help, gender issues, life matters, motivational and inspirational interests, educational/academic matters, and many more. He is still counting! Writing the literary genres as showcased in his blog, [www.mybookpublications.wordpress.com](http://www.mybookpublications.wordpress.com), Mr. Ben tags himself a G.A.N.G writer. In his words, "G.A.N.G is an acronym which means G-Generally A-Appreciating N-Notable G-Genres."