

A Magical Christmas Wish Santa Really Does It This Time



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Samantha Tarrington White was blue. It was the Christmas holiday season, she was once again alone, no relationship, she'd changed zip codes the last few years like some people change purses, and the only thing she felt certain of was her 14 year old cat Fred who ignored her 18 hours a day. She wouldn't be having Christmas Dinner with her family because most of her earth family now lived "on the other side" – and the ones who didn't hadn't been in touch in years.

The hard part was her dreams. Sam had the magical mind of a child and had such grand dreams. The chasm between her dreams and her "real world" was truly painful. "Why did God give me these grand and glorious dreams – and even let me taste parts of them – if I'm not meant to know them?" she thought. It seemed very cruel – or maybe it was because she just hadn't found the right puzzle piece.

Or possibly she was trying to put together the wrong picture. Maybe the picture on the box wasn't what she thought. But throwing the puzzle pieces on the floor and starting over again was getting old. Sam was flat out tired. Her world was upside down in most ways; she wasn't connected to anything really except her dreams, the words she loved to read and write so much, her cat and her daily talks with God and her angels.

No one knew it, but Sam had a secret friend: her teddy bear Bifford. She talked to Bifford at night before going to sleep, hugged him tight as she drifted off to dream land, and often Bifford was wet from her silent tears.

Sam was a grown woman, so of course she would never divulge this secret, but Bifford made her feel safe somehow. Bifford promised her that magic still happened and happy endings could come out of the mist. Bifford kept her child heart alive. Sam was proud of that. In all of her journeys, through all of her losses, she had kept her child heart alive. Again and again it would trust – and even when broken or betrayed, it would come right back and try again.

Sam smiled to herself as she finally dozed off. She had her teddy bear, her child heart and her relentless belief in magic.

Sam dreamed.

“So, Sam, I’ve come to answer your Christmas wish,” said Santa, standing right there in front of her bed.

“Santa, is that you? Can that be you? I must be dreaming.”

“Of course you’re dreaming. You are in the world where magic happens – in your dreams. Now come along. We’ve got a ways to go and you’re not the only one on my list.”

Just then Santa’s sleigh appeared outside her window and then Sam and Santa were in the sleigh. Sam didn’t know how they got there, but there they were. It was a cool, wintry night, and the sea breezes were coming in from the ocean but Sam wasn’t cold. She was actually very excited.

“Now Sam, let’s grant that Christmas wish of yours.” Sam’s child self had actually written out her Christmas wish and mailed it to the North Pole. That was another secret she would never tell. Right up there with her teddy bear Bifford.

With that, the sleigh took off, the reindeer bells sang their song to the night, and the full moon smiled on their magical journey.

Sam felt like she was dreaming inside the dream. From somewhere she was watching herself in this dream, and another part of her was actually in the dream. She leaned forward, not wanting to miss anything.

Santa guided the reindeer to turn right, head downward, and land near the gas pumps at the convenience store. Before she knew it, she and Santa were inside. She didn’t know how they got there, it was just like how she went through the window to get into the sled. Santa walked up to the counter and with his big gruff laughing voice said to the attendant, “So, Mary, I’ve come to grant your wish.”

Mary, who thought Santa was just another rented actor, smiled nicely but somewhat impatiently. “Oh, is my Mercedes outside?” she playfully retorted.

“Not exactly,” Santa twinkled. “I’ve got something you might like better. Your real wish.”

Mary played along. “Oh, and what is my real wish?”

“It’s right here.” Santa reached into his overstuffed bag (where did that come from?) and pulled out a small wrapped present.

“May I open it now?” Mary asked, intrigued.

“Not until Christmas morning,” said Santa. “Promise me, now.”

Mary tucked the little present under the counter, smiled and said thank you to this mysterious stranger who’d suddenly shown up.

“OK, I promise,” she said. Regardless of whether he was a rented Santa or not, a surprise

present on this Christmas Eve when she couldn't be home with her son was a happy thing. Truly unusual in this Southern California suburb.

Suddenly, Santa and Sam were back in the sleigh heading for the skies. Observing herself within the dream, Sam thought, "I could get used to traveling like this. Certainly beats traffic on California highways." She smiled. This was a magnificent dream. Now who was thinking that? This was very strange.

Santa wasn't much for words, Sam noted. In fact, he seemed only to talk to his reindeers and he kept reviewing that list of his. Sam tried to peek at it, but when she did, the words and lettering disappeared. The page looked blank.

Now the sleigh began another downward descent. In a flash, they were in the parking lot of an aged home, where half a dozen scruffy people were standing in line outside. "Wonder what this is," thought Sam.

Santa whisked himself right up to the line, carrying his over stuffed bag and started reaching in and handing little presents to everyone in line. They too must have thought he was a rented actor, but like Mary at the convenience store, they played along. It was a pleasant change.

Sam discerned these were homeless folks, probably standing in line to get a free meal on this Christmas Eve. Santa moved very quickly through the small outside line, then they were inside and Santa was reaching into his bag to give gifts to everyone there, including the ones serving the hot dinners.

"Wow, that turkey smells fabulous. And that gravy and the hot bread. Man, it's making me hungry," thought Sam.

Santa had the most contagious laugh, and pretty soon everyone was talking to everyone else, holding their little presents, shaking them, and smiling. The joy that filled the room was amazing!

"Now, promise me," Santa said to everyone as they left. "Do not open until Christmas morning."

"We promise," a choir of voices shouted! "We promise. Thanks Santa, Merry Christmas."

Once again Sam and Santa were in his sleigh, and this time Santa spoke. "Only one more stop, then I'll be on my way."

Sam nodded, but wondered inwardly, "what about my wish?"

Their last stop surprised Sam. It was an elegant estate, with massive gates at the entrance. The decorations on the property illuminated the beautifully groomed grounds, and laughter and music could be heard from inside. The circular drive was filled with luxurious cars and limos, and there was a doorman at the front entrance.

Once again, Santa and Sam were "just there" with a thought, and the doorman asked, "May I see your invitation?"

"Sure," said Santa, pulling out a beautifully engraved invitation from inside his jacket. Somehow Sam knew that invitation was another of Santa's creations.

The doorman examined it, smiled, and ushered them into the massive room filled with hundreds of elegantly dressed people, tables covered with every gourmet food imaginable, waiters throughout the room distributing champagne and other cocktails.

“Not bad,” thought Sam. “My dreams are definitely upgrading. Not bad.” Even in her dream state, Sam had an observer self that was always taking note. She also had an observer self that truly loved elegant back drops. “Santa knows his stuff,” thought Sam, as she smiled in her dream.

This time, Santa went up to only one person. An elderly woman seated by herself at the back of the room. “That gown and jewelry would pay for a couple years of my life,” thought Sam, again taking inventory of what might be in it for her. Her observer self immediately admonished her. “Stop that.”

Sam moved back into the dream and watched as Santa reached into his bag and said, “Grace, I’ve come to give you your Christmas wish.”

Grace smiled. She, too, thought Santa was a rented actor, a surprise one of her children must have ordered, but she graciously played along. “Well, thank you Santa. I’ve never had a Santa personally visit me in all of my 83 years. What a happy surprise.”

“Well, I’ve got one more for you, Grace,” Santa said, as he reached into his bag and pulled out a little present that pretty much looked like all the others he’d given out that night.

“Now, promise me, you won’t open this until Christmas morning,” Santa commanded.

“Grace smiled. She had a twinkle in her eye that hadn’t been there before. “I would never disobey Santa,” she giggled. “I promise.” She clutched the little present to her chest as though to protect it, a wide smile radiating from her.

Sam noted the amazing change in just a few minutes – from a woman who looked very tired and bored to an 83 year old woman who had the radiance of a child.

“Wow,” thought Sam. “Santa has some kind of magic.”

Almost before that thought was competed, they were once again in the sleigh and headed back to Sam’s home. “I wouldn’t have minded staying at that last party a little longer,” thought Sam, but it was a dream after all, and Santa was in charge.

They arrived back at her home, and Santa stood beside Sam at the foot of her bed. “How did we get through that window,” Sam wondered, once again observing herself from within the dream.

Santa reached into his bag and handed a little present to Sam – one that looked like all the others.

“Alright, Sam, here’s your Christmas wish. You must also promise me that you won’t open it until Christmas morning.”

“Sure, Santa, I promise. And hey. Thanks for the sleigh ride. Very cool.”

Santa's eyes twinkled as he laughingly said, "I think so too. I keep that sleigh in tiptop condition. Glad you liked it."

Santa waved good buy from his sleigh, and the dream continued.

Sam was in a strange home in what appeared to be the living room and it was morning outside.

There was a tiny tree in the corner with a few strands of lights, and a few presents wrapped underneath it. The woman named Mary from the convenience store came into the room, wearing her bathrobe, yawning.

She went into the kitchen and made a pot of coffee. Just as the coffee started brewing, a young boy came running into the room, also in his pajamas. Laughing he ran up to Mary, hugged her knees and pleaded, "Can I open them now? Can I? Can I?"

"Just a minute, Aaron" said Mary. "Let me get a cup of coffee first."

The little boy ran into the living room and sat down by the tree, eagerly shaking the few presents that were there. Sam watched curiously. She didn't see the little present Santa had given Mary there. Maybe she'd already opened it? Maybe she just forgot it.

Mary got her coffee, walked into the living room and sat on the worn stuffed chair near the tree. "Ok, Aaron, you can start now."

Aaron shrieked, grabbed present after present, wildly tearing off the wrapping paper, and with each one, he seemed happy but a little disappointed.

"Thanks, mom. They're great, really."

Mary smiled a sad smile.

"Don't worry, Aaron. Next year, we'll have a better Christmas. Every year won't be this hard, I promise."

Just then Mary looked up as though remembering something and got up and went into the bedroom. She returned carrying her purse.

"Oh, I just remembered. I have a present in here. For me."

Mary opened the present slowly, as though savoring the moment. Sam could see her thoughts and they were sad.

Mary had lost her husband that year to cancer, she'd also lost her high paying job because she'd taken so much time off work, and they'd had to move to this tiny apartment because she couldn't afford the house payments. Now she worked in a convenience store and struggled to get by week to week.

It had been a very hard, difficult year.

Inside the little present was a small card signed by Santa. Folded in half behind the card was what looked like a one page letter. Mary opened it slowly, tears filling her eyes as she read it. She read it several times, tears falling freely now on the paper. Sam tried to read the letter, but like Santa's list, it appeared blank to her. Guess Santa had secrets too.

Mary got up, hugged Aaron tightly, and said, "Get dressed. We are going out for a fabulous Christmas dinner. "

Aaron asked, "Why are you crying mom?"

"They're happy tears, Aaron. Santa gave us a brand new life!"

As she walked into the bedroom to dress she stopped, thinking. How could that rented Santa have known her real wish? That letterhead was real ... who could have done this? How? She didn't know who or how, she just knew that she was happier than she'd ever dreamed possible.

She also knew at 3:30 today she would meet the one who granted her Christmas wish. The letter said a car would come for her then. She'd have to drop Aaron off at her sister Sandy's on the way back from dinner. A whole new life! A whole new life!

Sam smiled, her heart filled with joy at seeing Mary's joy.

Then Sam was transported to another location.

That old worn down house that Santa had taken her where those homeless people were eating.

Inside, there was a big tree, the smell of hot coffee, and the folks from the night before were sitting on the floor in a circle, talking. They were holding their little presents that Santa had given them – the only presents they had.

One by one they opened their presents.

They agreed to open and examine their presents one person at a time. They were a community and it was evident they truly cared for each other.

Jim was the first to open his present. Jim looked to be a man in his fifties, balding, and not in very good physical condition. Mostly he looked sad.

As Jim opened his present, the same little card was in there as in Mary's present and behind it, a letter just like in Mary's present. Sam couldn't read Jim's letter or card either.

Jim unfolded the letter and read it. He, too, got tears in his eyes and had to catch his breath several times.

Sam could see his thoughts. Jim used to be an accountant, but his company was downsized, and he'd been unemployed for 2 years. His wife had left him a year ago because he couldn't support her upscale life style, he had no family support because he'd ignored them while he climbed the corporate ladder, his "friends" were embarrassed at his fall from grace, so they wouldn't help and the end result was he'd been homeless and in despair for more than a year.

Jim's voice rang out in joy!

"I can't believe this. It says I cannot tell anyone about my wish until this afternoon. A car will be coming for me at 4 p.m. Oh my God, if this is really true it WOULD be a miracle. Oh my God."

Everybody looked happy and confused. What could be such a secret? And why wouldn't he share it?

Sam's heart felt so full. So much love in this room where others might think there was nothing. She read Jim's mind again. He was thinking how these homeless strangers were greater friends to him than any he'd known. He was so grateful.

The next person to open his gift was Ron. Ron looked surprisingly young to be homeless – maybe early forties. He looked healthy if poorly dressed, but his demeanor too, was very sad.

Sam read this thoughts. Ron had been a successful sales manager for several companies, that eventually moved their marketing to the internet, and he'd been unable to translate his skills into other companies. He'd always lived pretty high on his income, saving nothing, and leveraging everything, so when he couldn't find work, he quickly lost most of his assets. Like Jim, he'd been so focused on his career achievements, that he'd maintained only superficial relationships with friends and family and had no net to fall back on. And like Jim, he found the people in this room more "real" than most of the ones he'd known when he thought he was successful.

Ron opened his present, read his card from Santa, and quickly unfolded his letter. He, too, had tears in his eyes as he read it over and over.

"Look, I don't have any idea what this is about, but I, too, am to keep this a secret and there is also a car coming for me at 4 p.m. I don't know what to think. Oh well, it's Christmas, maybe I'll just go along and pretend this is real. Sorry guys – but I can't stop the magic now."

He kept reading the letter over and over Stopping only to wipe his tears which were copious by now.

One by one, each one in the group opened their letters, and one by one, they all said the same thing: it was a magical promise and if it were true, it would be the happiest gift anyone could give them. They were all supposed to be ready at 4 p.m. so someone could pick them up.

"Well, I don't know about you all, but if this is real, then that Santa must be a human angel. Don't you agree?"

Collectively, they smiled. But they all vowed to hold on to their secret and see what the next part of the mystery was.

Annie, the only woman in the group, spoke up. "I say it's Christmas and it's about damn time everyone of us got a miracle. I'm going to choose to play this game to the end – and something inside me says it is real. We just have a wait a little while longer."

With Annie's continued reassurance, the group decided they would just "wait and see." 4 pm was only a few hours away.

As each one took their separate letter and card and got up, Sam saw the confusion in their minds. Racing between hope and wonder and fear and dismay, they were still all hanging on to the hope. This couldn't be a hoax – it was just a really kind man who liked a little drama with his giving.

Sam laughed. They got that one right!

Almost instantly, Sam was transported in her dream to the beautiful mansion that was her last stop with Santa. The room was filled with people, more food, lots of presents, laughter, waiters with their champagne and cocktails.

In the same corner sat the stately elderly woman, dressed fabulously in a long red skirt and green silk blouse. Again Sam couldn't help wondering the value of all that jewelry. Again, her observer self told her "I said, stop it!"

The frail but elegant little woman was holding her present from Santa in her lap. Around her were many opened gifts with elegant bows and lavish decorations on the outside of the packages. But the little gift from Santa was still unopened, being held preciously by this tiny little lady.

Sam watched as Grace finally began to open her little gift. Again, Sam couldn't read the card, but she could read Grace's thoughts as she read the letter.

"How is this possible? Who did this? Oh, my God, if this is true, I will die a very happy woman."

Tears were also falling down Grace's face as she read the letter again and again.

One of her sons came over and asked, "Mother is everything alright? Why are you crying? What is that letter?"

Grace nodded gently. "Oh, I'm just being a silly old woman. It's just a letter from an old friend."

"Who?"

"No one you'd remember, dear. Now go along and enjoy your friends and family."

Her son shrugged, then walked off.

Sam could read his thoughts too.

"Old bitty. Why won't she just die and get it over with? All that money and I can't touch any of it. Merry Christmas, Ho Ho Ho."

Ouch! That made Sam quiver. So much hate in his thoughts. So much anger.

Sam went back to viewing Grace's thoughts. She was still in wonderment.

Grace picked up the letter again. "Hmmm...what's this? I am to get my limousine ready and collect these people from these addresses? In only a few hours.

There were no further instructions, only that Grace was to send her largest limousine to the two addresses shown. The names of the ones she was to pick up were included by the addresses:

Mary
Jim
Ron
John
Harold
Annie
Jose
Fletcher
Franklin
Carlos
Minh
Katherine

“What a clever and inspiring man this person is,” thought Grace. “It’s like a treasure hunt!”

Grace thought a lot like Annie and Sam. She had no questions. Someone had created a grand surprise for her and she was SO ready for it!

“Charles, will you please have Harold bring the Mercedes limo about 3:00?”

”Certainly maa’m. Who are we driving and where?”

”No one from here, Charles. We’ll be picking up some people. I’ll be going along, so I’ll give Harold instructions once I get in the car.

“Certainly, maa’m. I’ll take care of it.”

Grace refolded her letter into the little package, and again Sam could not see what was written on the letter or the card.

Santa certainly liked his mysteries, thought Sam. Sam liked a good mystery too. She certainly was wrapped up in this one!

Then her dream took her back to her own room and she was hovering above the bed, watching herself sleep. She saw herself smiling in her sleep. Clutching that fluffy bear and Santa’s present. So confusing – the dreamer watching the one being dreamed while in the dream.

Of course, with dream time, all things are possible, and immediately, Sam was transported back to Grace’s mansion. Grace was just emerging from her grand front entrance, luxuriously dressed, leaning ever so slightly on her cane.

Her butler Charles was holding her left arm as the same son who’d had those terrible thoughts came walking up behind her quickly. “Wherever are you going, mother? You didn’t tell me you had plans.”

Grace didn’t look back. “Charles, help me into the car.”

”Mother, I asked you where you were going?”

"John, I'm 83 years old. I do not have to report to you – or anyone. Now get along. I have something to do."

John's face contorted. Clearly, he hated not having control. He stomped back inside like a three year old having a tantrum as Charles helped Grace in the back of her first town car.

"Harold, here are the addresses we are going to and here are the names of the people we are picking up. Let's go fetch them – in this order.

Grace leaned back, pulled her letter out of the little purse and began reading it again. It was a big mystery, and she was very excited. Thrilled, actually. A tiny tear dropped down her cheek, falling onto her blouse.

Just then Grace noticed that there was another tiny slip of paper in her little present. She pulled it out to examine it. "I don't remember seeing this in here," she thought. "That's strange."

The little piece of paper simply contained an address. Grace assumed this was a true treasure hunt and she would go to that address once she'd gone to the others.

When they arrived at Mary's, Mary was pacing. She kept looking out the dingy window of the little apartment, wondering how this could be happening. WHO could have known about this? WHO would create this kind of mysterious experience?

The town car pulled up in front, Harold got out, and walked to the door.

"God, it's a limousine," thought Mary. Who ARE these people?"

Mary answered the door.

"Are you Mary?"

"Yes, I am."

"Merry Christmas, Mary," Harold said, as he gestured for her to follow him to the limo. He opened the door and Mary got in the seat across from Grace.

"How do you do?" Mary asked, excited and a bit intimidated at the same time.

"I'm doing fabulous! You must be Mary."

"Yes, and you are?"

"My name is Grace, dear, and it seems we are in a shared mystery right now. All I know is that I have a letter here from a Santa and I am going along on his treasure hunt. It seems several of us are in the same Santa gift club."

Mary leaned back and drank in this luxurious interior. The leather seats, fully stocked lighted bar, two Plasma TV's, a DVD and CD player, and room for a small classroom! "This limo must hold 20 people" she marveled. What a magical day this was turning out to be.

Harold started the limo and began driving. Mary was unsure what to say to Grace.

"You said you had a letter from Santa. So do I. What was yours about?"

"Well, I'm supposed to reveal what my letter said after all of us get together and go to this final address. Once there, I am to reveal Santa's gift and somehow all of you are connected with it."

Grace smiled inwardly. Sam could read her thoughts.

"This Santa is a clever, mysterious and loving soul. I'm beginning to see what he might have up his sleeve."

Sam was disappointed. Grace didn't go any further in her thoughts, so Sam couldn't either.

In a few minutes time Harold pulled up to the house Sam had been to with Santa where the homeless folks were having their holiday dinner. Now they were all standing out on the lawn, eagerly looking up and down the street.

When they saw the limousine, they started hugging each other and slapping each other on the back! Annie just stood there in awe. She was like a little girl who really had caught Santa putting presents under the tree. Her innocence was beautiful, Sam thought. Annie had a child heart like Sam. Sam knew she'd like her.

Harold pulled up to the curb, stopped the car, got out and with the list Grace had given him, read aloud the names on it, one by one.

"Merry Christmas, all. Will the following people please come with me?"

As he read their names, it became clear that everyone on the lawn would be getting into the limousine, and as they followed Harold to the car, they were still nudging each other, grinning, acting like kids at a carnival!

But when Harold opened the doors and they got in, one by one, all 11 of them, Sam could hear their thoughts and her heart welled up with joy. What a beautiful and thoughtful surprise Santa had given these people. Except for Grace who was used to this luxury, none of these people had ever personally experienced this. It would be a memory they would hold forever.

When everyone was in, all doors were closed and everyone was seated, Grace made an announcement.

Hello everyone and Merry Christmas to you! My name is Grace Graham, and like you, I have a mysterious letter from Santa.

We have only one more stop before our Christmas mystery is solved and we are going there now. I'd love to know who each of you are, so could you please introduce yourselves?

Shyly, the group introduced themselves, not sure what else to say. It was strangely quiet in that big vehicle with all those people. No one wanted to break the magic by talking.

For almost fifteen minutes the limo drove and for almost fifteen minutes, no one really spoke, except Jim who asked Grace, "Did your letter tell you not to say what was in it? Were you supposed to keep your letter a secret also?"

"Yes," Grace answered. Then she added teasingly, "But only for a little while longer."

The car fell silent again and everyone just took in the ambience of the limo, the day, the group, the mystery, and the secret letters from Santa.

The automatic window between Harold and the back of the limo rolled down, and Harold announced, "We are here madam. This is the final address you gave me."

Grace looked out of the car and saw an office building that she recognized as her previous attorney's. She had so loved that man, what was he up to now?

Grace announced to everyone, "Alright my friends. Let's go see what the last of Santa's surprise really is." Harold opened each door of the limo and everyone emerged, slowly, as though careful not to do anything wrong.

When they were all on the sidewalk, Grace led them up the steps to the main door of the office building.

On the door was a note, "Grace and group – ring the buzzer and I'll buzz you in."

Harold rang the buzzer, held the door and everyone filed into the building. Grace motioned, "To the right, over there."

Just to the right was a large glass office door, which was being opened by an older man, dressed in a red silk shirt and casual pants. He was smiling.

"Merry Christmas, Grace. Merry Christmas all! Welcome – come on in."

"Joseph," I am so delighted to see you. I was saddened when the changes took place and the board decided to retain another firm. I have missed you."

Joseph hugged Grace tightly, smiling. "Well, Grace, that has changed. My firm has now been retained to represent you once again and that is partly why you are here."

"How did that happen? How is that possible? I fought so hard and got nowhere."

"I'm not really sure, Grace. I was just notified by the other firm that the board had changed their decision and required that I be re-appointed as your attorney and as attorney for your holdings. All of them."

Grace gasped. How could this be possible? She had tried everything she could when her children attempted to replace Joseph's legal firm, and they had fought her relentlessly. They convinced enough voting members of the board, replaced Joseph's firm, and soon Grace's desires for her estate were no longer in her hands. It had been a heartless and cruel act, and had wounded Grace deeply.

“Now, let’s get on with why we’re all here on Christmas day. I cannot tell you how fun it is to be in on this kind of mysterious surprise. And I cannot wait to see who orchestrated it,” said Joseph.

“Please, everyone, come into the conference room.”

Everyone followed Grace and Joseph into the large conference room, complete with high backed leather chairs, another stocked bar at the front, a video screen on the other end, and a magnificent view of the valley. They hesitated, not sure where to sit.

Joseph motioned to them. “Take a seat anywhere. Let’s get going. I believe this will be one of the best Christmas’s we will ever have.”

Grace was getting excited now. Was it really possible? Could this really be happening? “I should pinch myself,” she thought. “This is I don’t have a word for it. It is just fabulous.”

Once everyone was seated, Joseph pointed them to the video screen, and they could see he was about to give them a presentation of some kind.

Across the screen were the words “The Grace Graham Foundation”

The audio began:

“Welcome to everyone in this room. I am Joseph Barrington, Grace Graham’s attorney, and I would like you all to watch this short video that will explain what you are doing here. Please, sit back and enjoy.”

”Many years ago, Grace had a dream. When Grace was a young girl, she watched her father lose his job in the depression, leave their family, and die homeless – on the streets. Her mother and brothers had to work at anything they could to just get by, and Grace realized that it was the family support that enabled them to make it. All of Grace’s brothers and sisters became successful in their own professions, and all of them remembered the loss of a father because he couldn’t find a job.

A life for a job.

So Grace decided to set up her foundation to create that kind of support for others. The foundation will act as a transitional opportunity for those who find themselves without work, or suffering some kind of loss from which they cannot seem to escape. It will offer opportunities for retraining, learning new skills, and also offer temporary financial support until these individuals can begin again. Once these individuals have created their new lives, part of the foundation’s structure will require them to volunteer back to the foundation to help others.

Not only will this build a strong “extended family” concept, but Grace’s hope is that the idea will catch on and others will come to know the greatest joy possible: helping others.

Why you are all here today is the beginning of that dream.

Mary, you will be the administrator of the foundation. It will be your job to get this going, create the format, and bring in the support staff you will need. I have right here your request for a grant for this very idea, and as you can see from the letter you received in your Santa present, your grant has been approved with one change. You did not allocate sufficient funds for the size and scope of this project. As of now, the Grace Graham foundation is approving your grant for exactly five times the initial amount requested. You also seriously understated your salary as administrator, so we have adjusted that as well. You will also be excellent for this, because you created the idea from your own losses and you can relate on a heart felt level to the ones you will eventually help.

Jim, if you decide to accept, the foundation would like to employ you as their primary accountant and overseer of the funds. You and I and Mary will work closely together, but your skills from your past are exactly what we need and we would love to have you on board.

Ron, you have demonstrated the ability to sell in different industries, and you clearly are very persuasive and intelligent. We would like to employ you to travel internationally and educate others on the value of this kind of project and bring in partners who can expand the idea Mary put in her grant. We believe this can be far reaching and we believe you can effectively communicate that to those who need to hear it.

John, you have an excellent background in computer animation and programming. We would like to employ you to create marketing pieces that are animated, exciting and will really communicate our message. We want to have the heart of this project come through, and before you were downsized from Disney, your work was innovative, cutting edge, and frankly, I am amazed they would let you go. Their loss, our gain, should you decide to come on board.

Harold, you have a strong background in Human Resources, and you would be an excellent person to interview and assess an individual's possibilities. You are familiar with profile testing, and personality matching to career, so we would send our candidates to you first to see where best they could be supported, and if they needed training, in what area. And like Mary, you will be able to relate at a very deep level to those who find themselves replaced by technology or simply replaced by corporate machinations.

Annie, you have been in many careers but one thing shows through in all of them. You were the cheerleader. You were the cohesive connector. You were the one who was able to communicate with everyone from the CEO to the stock clerk. You made things work, and we'll leave it up to you to create your own title.

Jose, you are superb craftsman and carpenter, and the Grace Graham foundation is going to need a new building. We would like to hire you to be the general contractor to pull that together. We have seen some of your work, and you will have a free hand to use your innate creativity and design abilities as well as your in depth knowledge of the construction world.

Fletcher, Franklin and Carlos, you are also excellent and skilled contractors, and we would like all of you to be on Jose's team. This might be the first time you will experience someone really "seeing" how good you are AND my guess is that Jose will give you a lot of room for your own creative ideas.

Minh, you are an extraordinarily talented architect. We would like you to create the plans for the building, and stay on after the building is completed to create plans for the next ones we will build, because we plan to build many of them.

And Katherine, now you can do what you truly love. You will be our interior decorator and furnish these buildings. We know you do not have a degree in this, but we have seen what you have done for the estates you worked for, and you have simply worked magic. No more working on someone else's estate, Katherine, now you may work on your own!

Tears were flowing at the table and not one person tried to hide them. Including Grace and Joseph. One by one, they pulled their Santa letters out of their little presents, which they had each brought with them, and one by one they read them again, touching the paper lovingly, as though it were gold.

Because to each of them, it was gold. The wish they had each asked for.

Laughter and hugs and shared letters and amazement and enough joy to light up the world filled that elegant conference room. The changes in everyone's face was extraordinary. They looked years younger, joyful, ALIVE!

Grace looked up at the ceiling and whispered, "I don't know who you are, or how you made this happen, but thank you. Thank you."

As the video screen began moving back into the ceiling, the dream began to fade. Everyone at the table was still laughing and talking and hugging and sharing and the joy was outside of words. Sam didn't want the dream to end.

But it did, as those kind of dreams must.

Sam slept.

When she awoke the next morning, the little present Santa had given her was right beside her!

How could that be?

Sam touched it and it was real. Very real indeed. Sam blessed her child heart and belief in magic once again. In Sam's world this kind of thing could happen.

How could she possibly wait until Christmas to open hers? How could she?

Well, Christmas was only a few days away Sam would wait. This was truly some kind of magic.

The days leading up to Christmas were tortuous. Sam looked at the little present, picking it up again and again. Shaking it, willing herself to know what was inside.

But she kept her promise to Santa. She waited.

Until exactly 12:01 a.m. on December 25th.

Her alarm rang, she grabbed her present, and ripped off the paper.

Inside was a card from Santa and her letter.

She didn't read the card, just opened the letter.

"Dear Samantha:

Here is your Christmas wish. When someone makes this kind of wish, I go into realms you cannot possibly understand to make it happen. You see, this kind of wish fills MY heart and I want to be sure that the one who makes this kind of wish has extra help. So, here is your wish and have a very merry Christmas dear. Toodles, Santa"

P.S. Your dream wasn't really the kind of dream you thought it was. Grace Graham's attorney Joseph is expecting your call tomorrow. You will write the stories of the ones whose lives were changed because of Grace's foundation and the resources will be made available for you to create inspirational and motivational programs for others who are going through significant transitions.

Yes, Sam, there is a Santa Claus (I just had to use that line!)

Sam picked up the card from Santa that she had cast aside. On it was a picture of Santa, and in her own handwriting the wish she had sent to the North Pole – the same wish every person in her dream had made – in their own words.

"Santa, I want to fly again. Show me the right way to use my gifts so I can really fly and so I can then help others fly also."

Wishes from the group:

Grace. Make my foundation real so I can use my assets to help others develop their own. So not one more person believes that losing a job is worth giving up on life.

Mary. Get my grant approved so I can help others who lose the landscape of their lives and don't know where to go or how to get there. Help me help others believe there is hope.

Jim. Help me find a place where my work is valued, and where I can really make a difference, not just with assets & liabilities. And help me find and value a "family."

Ron. I'm good, but now I want to be good for something that matters. And I want to be doing something that means more than beating my last sales record.

John. Let me use my animation and computer skills to teach AND touch hearts. Not just sell toys. I want to leave a legacy. Just one person who decided to become better because one of my programs inspired them.

Harold. All those years and I never really got the phrase "human resources." Help me use my talents with identifying people's real gifts to help them find a life that is meaningful and joyful. Help me really "see" the true resources of those I want to help.

Annie. Help me be in a group that cares about caring. Help me make them better at what they do and help me know that what I am doing does make a difference to others.

Jose. Find me a place where I can really use my gifts and create beautiful structures that will sing. That will be more than just a building - they will be a creation that will inspire others.

Fletcher. I'm good. Find me a place where I can be better and where I can help others like me be better too.

Franklin. I want a really good boss who will really show me how to improve, let me develop my ideas and then I want to help my friends and others like me who are not "seen" as valuable.

Carlos. I have some great ideas. I want a place to create them, and I want a purpose that has more meaning than just hammering some nails. I've learned a lot. There must be a way I can go farther and help others do the same.

Minh. I want to use my gifts to design buildings that hold within them beauty, and joy and love and caring. I want to use my gifts so others will be inspired and want to develop their own.

Katherine. Give me a chance to really use my gifts in a place where they are seen and appreciated. And where they will inspire and touch the spirits of others.

Samantha: I wish to know the joy of helping others believe in themselves. Then I wish to know the greater joy of watching them take flight. And I wish to be with others who wish to do the same. I wish to find my flock.

"Mind is the builder; knowledge not lived becomes sin. In every person of whatever station, look not for something to criticize, but for something you admire in your Creator. For the only sure way of getting into heaven is leaning upon the arm of someone you have helped." Edgar Cayce

"Fletcher, your wingspan from tip to tip is nothing more than thought itself. Free the bonds of your thought and you free yourself to fly anywhere." Jonathan Livingston Seagull

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