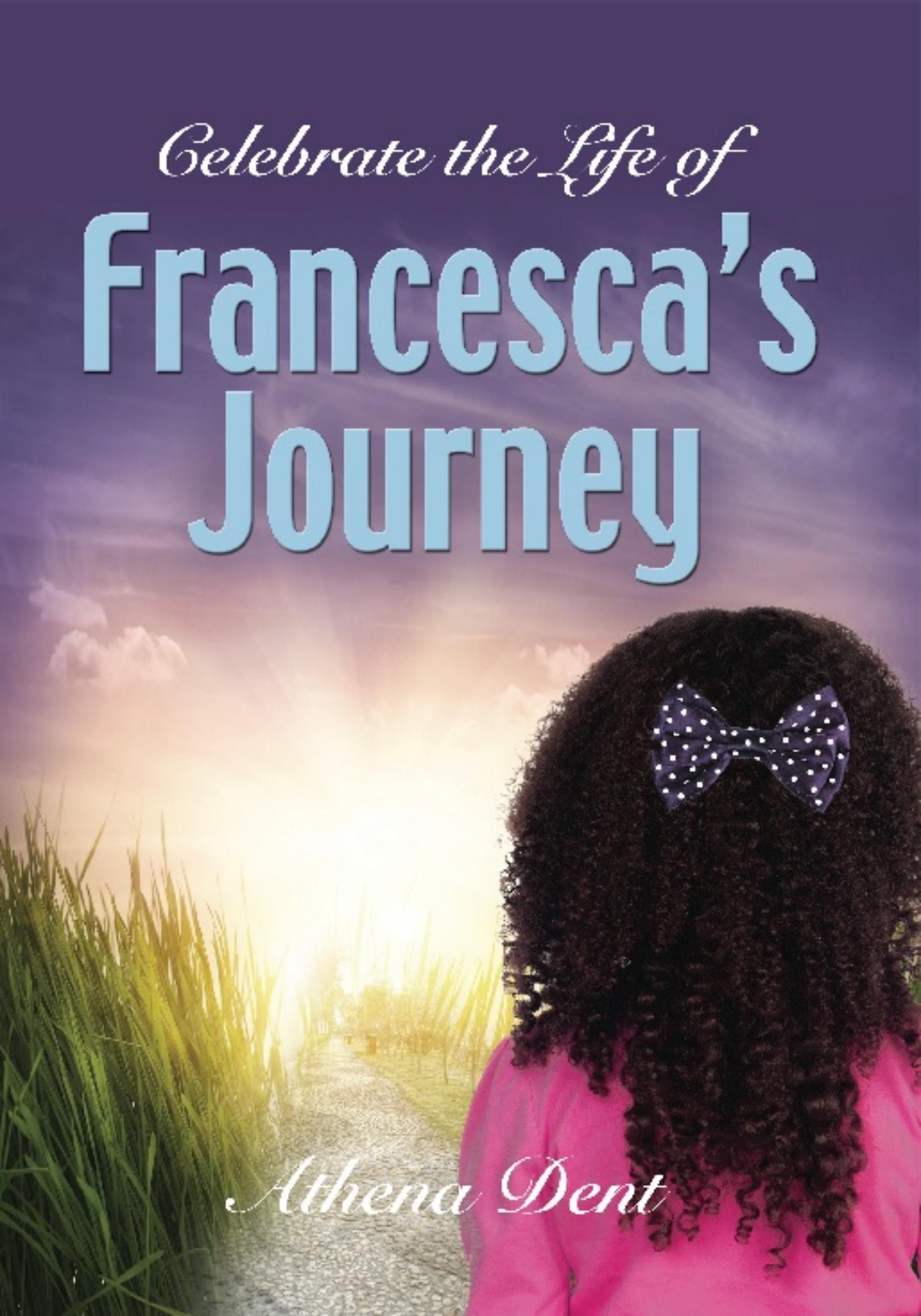
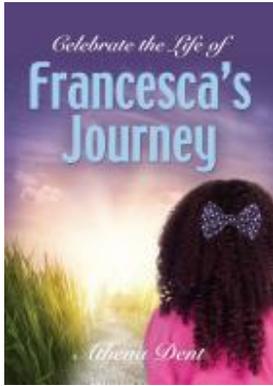


Celebrate the Life of
Francesca's
Journey



Athena Dent



"Francesca's Journey" addresses an issue that still exists at the present time. When a little girl, Francesca, finds that her life is about to make a DRASTIC change, will her beginning become her end? The Author explores the journey of what thousands of children have gone through and are still going through on a daily basis...becoming a foster child. Has this lifestyle become accepted or is it still a stigma?

Francesca's Journey

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(Celebrate the Life of)

FRANCESCA'S JOURNEY

Athena Dent

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First Edition

TWO

It's freezing outside. The snow is so high that if I stepped in it, I would probably be buried up to my neck. I'm leaving today. I'm at my neighbor's house, Mrs. Robinson. She's an older woman; about 90 years old. She's fragile now and can't get around like she used to. I've been staying at her house for the past 7 years, because my mother is gone.....she's gone.

I remembered that day.....

"Francesca..... Francesca. Come and eat your breakfast," she says in a loud, raspy voice.

I'm writing as fast as my fingers could move.

"I'll be there in a minute."

I'm just finishing my journal-

Today is going to be a nice day.....I hope. It's my birthday and I am going to be 8 years old. My mommy does not have a lot of money, but she said we would have a cake and ice cream. She has not been feeling well lately. She's had this bad cough for a while and she coughs a lot, when she lays down to go to sleep. She does not smoke.... I mean I've never seen her smoke. But one time when she coughed, she spit up blood. It looked **SCARY**. She told me not to worry, but I do.

I LOVE MY MOMMY. It is just my mommy and I. My daddy died two years ago. He was sick, too. He was in the hospital, when he died. I saw him a few times, when he was in the hospital. But, I didn't want to see him anymore. I felt scared. The smell in his room.....I use to get a stomach ache. Even though I stopped going to the hospital, **I STILL LOVED HIM**. I don't know what he died from. My mommy wouldn't tell me. I don't want mommy to die.....I mean; I know we all have to die someday, but she's still young. She's only 35 and so **BEAUTIFUL**. I would like her to hang around for a long, long, long time. Until she is about 100 years old. I know she is going to get better. She just needs some vitamin C. Well, I've got to go. Today is going to be a **GREAT** day!.

I am running down the hall, "Good morning, mommy."

I wrap my arms around her waist.

"Good morning, birthday girl."

Mommy squeezes me so tight that I feel like I can't breathe.

“Mommy made you a *special* breakfast,” she says with a big grin on her face.

“We are having French toast with maple syrup, scramble eggs, blueberry muffins and juice.”

“Wow, look at all of this food!” I quickly sit down at the table and mommy sits across from me.

“Oh, thank you for my pretty dress, mommy.”

Mommy smiles back at me, “You are welcome, baby. You look so beautiful.”

I get up, go over to mommy and give her a big hug and kiss her all over her face.

“Come baby, sit. Your food is going to get cold. Let’s eat.”

I sit back down and my mother puts a pink napkin around my neck, so that I won’t mess up my dress.

“Francesca, would you like to say grace?”

“Yes, mommy,” I hold out my hands and mommy holds them.

“GOD, I thank you this **VERY** special day. First, I want to thank you for my mommy. I have a *great mommy* and I love her very much (mommy smiles back at me). I thank you for my pretty dress and all this delicious food. I also want to say that I *miss my daddy*. Lastly, I will grow up to be a smart and rich person, so that I can take care of my mommy and help others who are in need. Thank you for listening, Amen.”

“Amen. That was beautiful, baby.”

We start eating and then mommy stops, because she starts coughing. It’s like a deep, hard cough. It sounds like a old person, who smoked all their life.

“Mommy, are you okay?”

My mom is sweating and she wipes sweat from her forehead.

“I’m fine, baby. Finish eating. You don’t want to be late for school.”

My mother and I begin eating, again. I stare at my mom.....*with concern*. I have this feeling.....and it’s *not* a good one.

It turns out to be a beautiful day, sunny day and I enjoyed every minute of it. I couldn’t wait to get home.

“Mommy, I’m home.”

The door is normally left open for me by my mother, so that I can just come straight in. I drop my book bag in its regular place, the chair.

“Mommy!”

My mother doesn’t like when I yell in the house, but I didn’t hear an answer. I run to the bathroom to wash my hands and when I come out, I notice something different.....I’m alone. I go into my mommy’s room and she is not there. I start looking around the house frantically; in the closets, under the beds, in the kitchen.

You see, my mother is **ALWAYS** home, when I get home. If she is not home, she would leave a note on the inside of the front door. But, she didn't do that this time.

“MOMMY, MOMMY. WHERE ARE YOU?”

I'm standing in the middle of the living room.....thinking.....what could have happened?. Why is today different?. Where is the hug and kiss I look forward to every day?. I look around again; my eyes are **pivoting** from one wall to the other. My eyes are getting watery. I hear this loud beating sound.....

BA- BOOM, BA- BOOM, BA- BOOM

I look around again, look down and realize.....it's my heart. My heart is pounding so fast and hard that it is pushing out my chest through my blouse. I put my hand on my chest to hold in my heart beats. I notice something on the floor..... a pair of rubber gloves. And just as I pick them up, I notice something else. There are white cotton pads and small ripped packages. I pick up the pads and see that there is blood on them.

“What's going on here?!. Where's mommy?”

The sight of blood **scares** me, so I drop them quickly. But, the pads seem to drop in **slow** motion as they left my hand and when they hit the ground, they sounded like a boulder crashing into a building-

BOOM!

Did she get sick?. Maybe she was at the hospital?.

I ran out of my house, “Ouch!” I hit my toe on the chair.

I go and knock on my neighbor's door-

BANG, BANG, BANG, BANG

I hear someone unlocking the door and it opens.....it's Mrs. Robinson.

“Francesca, how are you?. Is there something wrong?”

“It's my mother. I think something happened to her. I came home and she wasn't home. She always home, when I get home. Please, come quickly!”

I grab my neighbor's hand and **pull her** towards my apartment. We get to my apartment in record time. I forgot my neighbor was an elderly person, but she didn't look like it (I'll apologize to her). We go in and I point to the cotton pads on the floor.

“See, this is what I found on the floor.”

I bend over, pick them up and show them to Mrs. Robinson.

She looks at them, “This is blood alright.”

“**IT IS!**” I responded loudly.

“Something happened to my mother!”

“Francesca, calm down. Don't get upset. I'll call around to find out which hospital she may be in,” Mrs. Robinson says as she rushes back to her apartment.

I decide to stay in my apartment. I start to look around again to see if I find any more evidence and then.....I hear keys jingling. I run to the front door thinking it was mommy-

“MOMMY!”

And when I open the front door, there is *nobody* there. It was another neighbor from across the hall. My smile quickly disappear and so does the neighbor. The neighbor shuts the front door-

SLAM!

“Mommy must be lonely. I have to find her. Mommy don’t worry, I’m coming.”

I decide to go back to Mrs. Robinson’s apartment to see if she located my mother.

TICK TOCK, TICK TOCK, TICK TOCK, TICK TOCK

It seems like *forever*. The seconds, the minutes. Just waiting to hear something from someone. Mrs. Robinson had this clock on the wall that looked like a cat and the eyes were big and round. The eyes and the tail are going back and forth with every passing second. It is driving me **CRAZY**.



The phone rings-

RING, RING

Mrs. Robinson picks up the receiver, “Yes, this is her. Okay, okay. I understand. Thank you so much for calling back.”

She hangs up the phone and turns to me, “I have good news. I found your mother.”

My eyes lit up like a night light.

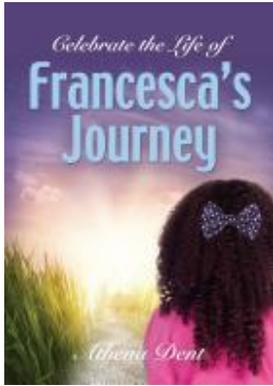
“You did, where is she?! Will you take me to her?”

“Yes,” Mrs. Robinson says quickly.

“Oh thank you, thank you, Mrs. Robinson,” I give her a big hug.

But there is one thing I noticed, she was *not smiling*. Why?.





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