



**DANA**  
THE AUTHOR

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says*

## The Story of “Trini Christmas Alphabet”

This book, like most books, started as just a thought. When the twins were first born, early morning feedings were inescapable. I would wake up in the wee hours to feed two hungry babies who would somehow manage to fall straight back to sleep as soon as they were full. But I couldn't fall back to sleep so quickly and would find myself wide awake in the silence of the mornings. In some ways it was wonderful - it gave me time to drink the twins in and to burn their faces and their smells into my memory. It also gave me lots of time to think and to dream.

I thought about who the twins might become and the type of lives they would lead. And it suddenly occurred to me that they wouldn't have the life I had growing up in Trinidad. Growing up here in London means they won't have dozens of cousins who they are close to like sisters and brothers. They won't have oodles of family within 15-30 mins of their home. They won't be able to go to their grandparents' house every other day. They won't know what it's like to grow up in Trinidad. But, I wanted them to know. I wanted them to be able to picture where mummy and daddy grew up and to see it in their minds' eyes. I thought to myself that I would tell them all about in their bedtime stories when they got older. Then I thought, 'I had better start writing down some of the things I want them to know'.

There were so many things, I couldn't find a starting point. When I realised that the twins' first Christmas would be in London and not in Trinidad, I knew where to begin. I started thinking about how I would describe a Trini Christmas to them and try to make it come alive, to prepare them for when they do finally get to spend their first Christmas in Trinidad and that became the foundation of this book.

Christmas in my family has always been a big celebration. When I was growing up there would be almost 40 of us under the same roof to celebrate on Christmas Day. But the lead up was almost as wonderful as the day itself. To this day, the smell of paint and furniture polish always makes me feel Christmassy. No matter where in the world I am, I always start playing parang, soca parang and other Trini Christmas specials from November. Even when I have Christmas in London I somehow manage to capture some of the magic by getting my hands on black cake, chow chow, ginger beer, pastelie, ponche de creme, sorrel, and on occasion even some local wine. And there is always ham on Christmas morning.

I started writing down all the things that make a Trini Christmas, especially for children, and suddenly realised I had the whole alphabet. After that the rhymes came pouring out of me as if it was meant to be. This book is a labour of love, a trip down memory lane, and a tribute to my beautiful sons in anticipation of their first Christmas at home.