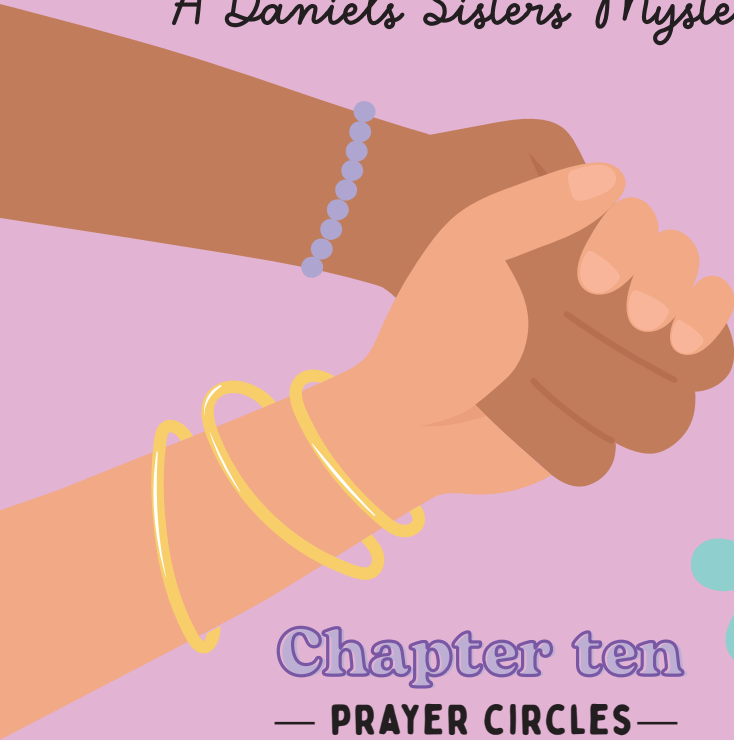




TREASURE HUNTERS!

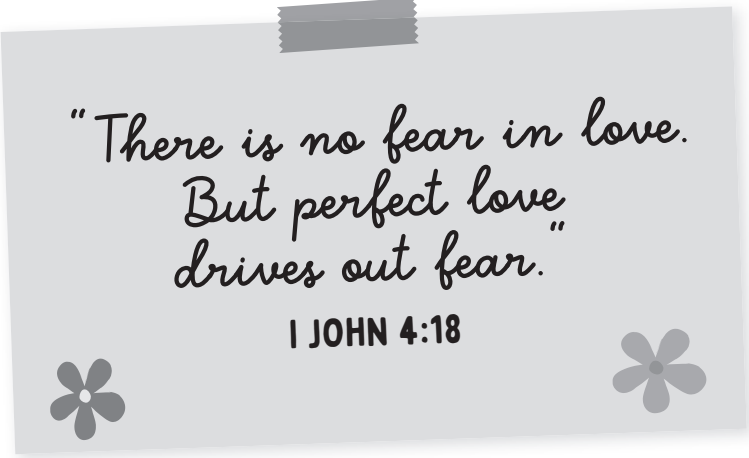
A Daniels Sisters Mystery



Chapter ten

— PRAYER CIRCLES —

WRITTEN BY JANEL RODRIGUEZ-FERRER



*"There is no fear in love.
But perfect love
drives out fear."*

1 JOHN 4:18



— Chapter Ten —

PRAYER CIRCLES

My knees were actually shaking a little. I had found her! Miss Cynthia's sister! Or, actually, she had found me. Because she was the one who had grabbed me by the wrist in the middle of the dining hall of the Silver Springs Retirement Home. Just as I was losing hope of ever finding her, there she was ... and she was even wearing a double-strand pearl necklace!

Although it was tucked under the collar area of her hoodie, a small section was showing where the zipper was still a little open.

I swallowed hard. "Did ... did he just call you 'Belinda?'"

The woman looked across the table at the man in the checked shirt and chuckled. "Why, yes. Because it's my name."

My voice came out in almost a whisper. “But ... your name tag says, ‘Delphi.’”

The woman looked down at her blouse. “Oh. Well, that’s because it’s my nickname. After my favorite flower, you see. The delphinium. They’re kind of ... *different*. You know. They’re nothing like roses or lilies or your other typical favorite flowers. And I like to be different. Plus, they come in all shades of my favorite color—blue! I was always wearing blue. So my husband took to calling me that. ‘Delphi.’ And I loved it! Not a typical nickname, either, is it?”

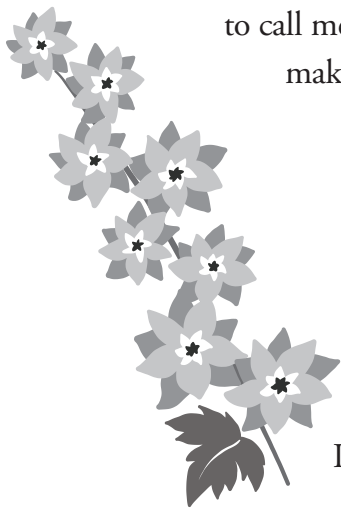
I shook my head.

“Even though he passed away years ago and is not around to call me that anymore, I kept the name. It makes me feel special and loved.”

I nodded. “I have younger sisters named Ashton and Amber. But we call them Cammie and Kitty.”

Belinda/Delphi gave one of my hands a squeeze. “And what do they call you, hon?”

“Oh,” I giggled. “I’m called, I *am*, Ansley.”





“Pleased to meet you, Ansley. You can call me Delphi, too, if you want,” Delphi said, her blue eyes sparkling. Then she pointed to the purple apron I was wearing. “You work for this TV show? You seem a mite young to be employed.”

“Oh, I don’t. That is, I’m volunteering. It’s a thing for school.” I cleared my throat and asked shyly. “Don’t you want to show your ... um ... necklace ... to the appraisers? Or let Vita Majors look at it?”

“My necklace?” Delphi blinked hard at me.

I gently pointed (feeling she wouldn’t find it rude since she had just pointed at me). “The pearls that you’re wearing.”

“What, these?” In a swift move, Delphi pulled the double-strand necklace out from where it had been lying tucked under her hoodie. “These are plastic!” She burst out laughing.

It was good-natured laughter, but when everyone else seated at the table joined her, it made me feel hot and uncomfortable. I wanted to slide under the table and not come out until they were done. Instead, I stayed standing at Delphi’s side, feeling my cheeks burn until the laughter died down.



When she finished (by wiping away a tiny tear from the corner of her eye) she flashed me a look of pity. “Oh, Ansley, I’m sorry, baby. The truth is, I only bought these because I used to have a real pearl necklace just like it when I was younger. Or rather, my mother did.”

I felt my heart begin to beat faster. “You did? What happened to it?”

Delphi crooked her finger at me so that I could lean in close. “It’s a mystery!” she whispered.

I pulled back. “What? What do you mean?”

“I mean, they disappeared! My mother wore them to church and for special occasions. But when she got sick, she stopped wearing them. And when she died, I thought my sister and I would share them. But instead, we argued about who would get to wear them at the funeral! And when we went looking for the necklace together—to argue about it some more, I suppose—it was gone! Even the jewelry box it was kept in was gone!”

“That’s terrible,” I said. It was a sad story no matter which sister told it. And a frustrating one, too.

Delphi nodded. “It sure was! And you’ll never believe it. My sister, Cynthia, accused me of taking it! And I swore to her that I did not. But she never believed me.



Sometimes I think she only said that to hide the truth.”

“What truth?”

“That she was the one who took it.” Delphi looked around the table at the others who were there and nodded.

I was feeling confused. “Why would Cynthia do that?”

“Because she said that it was Mama’s last wish that she should have the pearls. And that I was there in the room when Mama said so, too. But I don’t remember any such thing. What I do remember is Mama calling out her name—and mine—a few times to tell us to stop arguing about the necklace.” Delphi sighed. “But maybe she didn’t take them. Maybe Mama gave the pearls away to someone else to teach us a lesson. Would have served us right.”

At these words, the others around the table who had been listening to our conversation looked lost in thought. Then, the man in the checked shirt asked, “But, Del ... didn’t your mom leave a will or anything? Any written instructions about what each of you girls should get after she died?”

Delphi grunted. “That’s what’s even worse. We couldn’t find Mama’s will either. So we can never be sure who she officially left it to. I guess we’ll never know.”



“Could anybody else have taken the necklace?
Besides your sister, I mean,” I suggested.

“You mean could someone have stolen it?” Delphi shook her head. “No one else even knew about the necklace besides us three—and Frances, of course.”

“Frances?” I asked.

“Who’s Frances?” People around the table asked.

“She was everything to our family. Kind of like our housekeeper. But also sort of a nanny to us girls. She was our playmate, our cook, our gardener, and eventually, even a nurse to our mother when she got sick. She was very loyal to Mama, too. A good, God-fearing woman. She never would have taken the necklace.” When she saw us exchanging suspicious glances with one another, Delphi waved as if shooing away flies.

“No, no. Really. She would never take something that wasn’t hers.”

I crossed my arms and paused to think for a moment. “But ... what if ... your mom *gave* the necklace to her? I mean, since she was so great and all, and you and your sister were arguing. Could that have happened?”

Delphi sighed. “We’ll probably never know. I never asked Frances, and she must be long gone by now.



When our mother died, I was already married and had moved away. And after the funeral, I just went home. But my sister never married and continued to live in the house where we grew up. Years later, Cynthia got sick and couldn't afford to pay her hospital bills, so she sold the house and moved into a small apartment."

"That's sad," I said.

"It is," Delphi agreed. "I offered to help pay her bills. Not that I had a lot of money. But my husband and I had retired by then and had put aside a little nest egg. That is, we had saved some money to help cover expenses for when we were no longer working. After talking it over, we agreed to give her some. I mean, a little help is better than no help at all, right? But Cynthia refused to take anything from me."

"Why?"

"Because she said the money I was offering must have come from my selling the necklace!"

"Wow." I covered my mouth.

"... And that was the last time she ever spoke to me." Delphi grew quiet, and the ends of her mouth sagged downward.

There was an awkward silence around the table for



a moment. No one seemed to know where to look. Finally, I felt I had to say it. “I think ... it’s time to make up with your sister.”

The other people around the table nodded in agreement.

“Those are wise words, child.”

“The girl is right, Delphi.”

“It’s high time.”

And, to my relief, instead of being mad, Delphi agreed with me. “I know it. I’ve tried. But she just won’t speak to me.”

“Maybe there’s some way we can get you two together and ... *well*, fix this,” I said.

Delphi shook her head. “Only God can fix this.”

“That’s it!” I said. “Do you want to pray about it?” I looked around the table. “Like, right now? Let’s ask God for help!”

Delphi held out her hand for me to take. And I held out my hand to the lady in the pink sweatshirt who was sitting on my other side. Both of them took the hands of the man in the checked shirt. Then we all bowed our heads.

“Go ahead, child,” Delphi said.

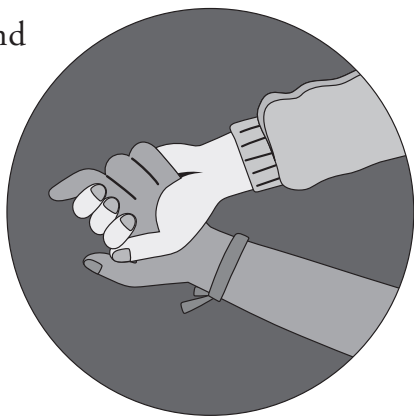
Before speaking out loud, I closed my eyes and prayed to the Holy Spirit silently. *Let the words come so that I say only what is right and pleasing to You.* Then I began:

“Merciful Father. You do not like it when brother fights against brother or sister against sister. You want us to make peace with one another in forgiveness and love. This is also what Delphi wants. To finally make peace with her sister, Miss Cynthia. In fact, all of us here at this table are in agreement about this. And together we ask You, Lord, to please help these two women heal the wounds they share between them so they can be friends and love each other again the way two sisters should.” I opened my eyes. “Amen.”

“Amen!” The voices around the table echoed.

Delphi grabbed my elbow and gave it a little shake. “Thank you, Ansley. That was beautiful.”

At that moment, Aunt Sam approached the table. “Everything good here?”



“Good? Everything’s great here!” Delphi said.
“Especially with this angel.”

I suddenly remembered. “Oh!” I smacked myself on the forehead. “You all wanted drinks! I’ll go get them for you!”

“I’ll help,” Aunt Sam said. And we returned to the kitchen together.

The second we were behind closed doors, I blurted, “That was her! That was Delphi—I mean, Belinda! We just prayed about her and her sister!” I was speaking so fast my words sort of tumbled over one another.

“Slow down, slow down,” my aunt said, smiling. She began filling cups with some punch and handed one to me. “Here, take a few sips of this, and then start from the top.”

After a few gulps of punch, followed by a few deep breaths, I explained everything I could as quickly—and clearly—as possible.

“Well!” Aunt Sam said, clearly impressed. “It sounds like God is on the move all right.”

I nodded. “We’ve got to go visit Miss Cynthia soon and get her and her sister together. We’ve just got to!”

Aunt Sam patted me on the shoulder. “I just said that God’s on the move. He’s got this. Don’t worry.



He's working something out. Trust Him."

"I know, I know. I just really want to help these ladies out. Before it's too late." I was a little worried about how old Miss Cynthia and her sister were. And was even a little afraid that one of them might die before they got the chance to make up.

"Well, don't worry," Aunt Sam said. "Did you forget your dad was going to let you and your sisters all visit with Miss Cynthia after school this week? I think he was arranging that visit for tomorrow."

"She did ask us all to come over," I said (more to myself than Aunt Sam). "This is perfect! But ..." I tapped my chin in thought. "We might need to stop at the grocery store on the way home. I'll need to do some more baking tonight! I wanted to bring Miss Cynthia something soft to eat."

Aunt Sam looked around the kitchen. "Aren't there any leftovers from what we made last night?"

I shook my head.

Aunt Sam put her hands on her hips. "I guess your baking is just too good! Okay, we'll stop by the market later. But for now, let's go back out there and give those thirsty people another cup of punch!"

When we got home and stepped through the front door, I found myself immediately surrounded by sisters and dogs, who jumped up and down and peppered me with questions (and barks).

“How was it?”

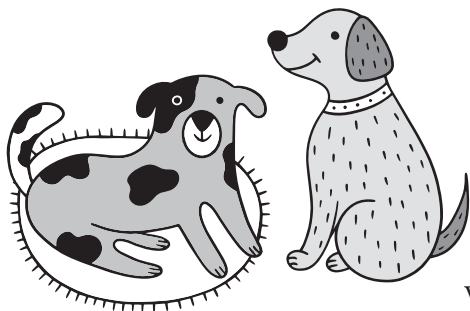
(Bark, bark, bark!)

“How did it go?”

(Pant, pant, pant.)

“Tell us, Ansley!”

(Grrr—ruff! Ruff!)



I was bursting to tell them all about it. “It was awesome!” I began.

“Just ... awesome.” But ...

then I trailed off because Kitty and Cammie had begun slowly circling around me and staring at my face.

Kitty narrowed her eyes. “Are you wearing ... makeup?”

I laughed. “I sure am. Wait till you hear why I’m wearing it, too! Come on.” I ran up the stairs, leading them to the bathroom so I could wash my face. “And wait till I tell you about meeting Delphi!”

“Delphi? Who’s Delphi?” I heard my sisters asking each other as they followed behind.

Once we were all crowded into the bathroom, Lena handed me a pack of facial-cleansing wipes that were specially made to remove makeup. As I scrubbed my face, I told them all about what had happened, and especially about meeting Belinda/Delphi.

“Wow!” Kitty said.

“That’s crazy!” Cammie said.

“Nope! That’s God,” I said.

“Right,” said Lena. “So, when are we going to see Miss Cynthia?”

“I hope Dad can arrange a visit tomorrow,” I said.

“But we still don’t know what happened to the pearls,” Cammie grumbled. “And we need to solve this mystery!”

Lena tugged at a towel that was hanging on the wall next to her. “*Um*, guys? I just had a thought: What if we never find out what happened to the pearls? What if it just stays a mystery forever?”

We all stared at her with wide, disappointed eyes. “Don’t say that!” I said. “We’re supposed to be detectives, remember?”

“I know, but ... well, what’s more important?”



Lena said. “To solve this mystery? Or to reunite these sisters in forgiveness?”

We were all silent for a moment.

Finally, I said, “They’re both important. Just in different ways.”

“Yes, but,” Lena said with a little laugh, “which one is more important?”

Kitty, who was sitting on the countertop near the sink, spoke up. “You mean more important to God, don’t you?”

Lena nodded.

My shoulders sagged. “I know it’s more important for the sisters to make peace than for us to find the necklace,” I said, “And I really do want to help them—so much! But what if it turns out the only way we can is by finding out what happened to the pearls?”

“Then we really have to solve the mystery!” Kitty said.

“Then I have another question to ask you.” Lena led us out of the bathroom and toward the stairs. “Which do you think will be harder? To help the sisters make up? Or to solve the mystery of the missing necklace?”

We stopped at the top of the stairs and thought for a moment. Then we all answered at once. It sounded like, “*Helolvingthesistery!*” And we burst out laughing.



“One thing for sure is, we can’t do either without God’s help.” I said.

“And we’ve got to do more than ask for His help on this,” Lena said. “We’ve got to hand it all over to Him.”

“You mean ... give up?” Cammie asked.

“No. More like ... let go,” Lena explained. “Once we put it all in God’s hands, He will show us what we need to do. Give me your hands!”

And for the second time that day, I joined hands with others in prayer. My sisters and I formed a tight circle and closed our eyes.

“Dear God,” Lena said, speaking for us all. “Nothing is a mystery to You. You know everything. So we are handing this case over to You. We believe You have called us to help Miss Cynthia and Belinda—or Dephi—to reconcile with each other. We’re not really sure what to do next. But we know with Your loving guidance, direction, and support we will do what is right and pleasing to You and best for these two women.” Then she nudged me.

“*Um ...*” I began. “Yes, show us the way to help them make peace with each other.” Then I added quickly, “And we still very much want to find out what happened to their mom’s pearls. If it is Your will that we



solve this mystery, please help us find the answers they need. Thank you. And amen!”

“Amen,” my sisters chorused.

As we headed down to the kitchen, I confided to Lena. “I still don’t know how I’ll explain to Miss Cynthia that I met her sister. Or how I’ll even get the two of them to talk to each other!”

“Don’t worry,” Lena patted me on the shoulder. “We put it all in God’s hands, remember? All you—(I mean all we sisters)—have to do is visit Miss Cynthia tomorrow. We’ll leave the rest to Him.”

“You’re right!” I said as we reached the bottom step together. “I can hardly wait for tomorrow. I’m excited to see how God solves this case!”

Lena nodded. “It’ll be awesome!”

“How are we going to get the sisters to talk to each other?” Cammie asked.

“Well, what we need to do is get them to be in the same place at the same time first,” I said. “Once they are face-to-face, it’ll be easier to make them talk.”

“Let’s hope so, anyway,” Cammie said.

“Well, it sounds like Delphi is ready to make up



with her sister. Let's hope we can help Miss Cynthia want to be ready, too." Lena said.

At dinner, Dad told us that yes, he had arranged for us to visit with Miss Cynthia after school the next day. So, for the second night in a row, we Daniels sisters (and Aunt Sam) baked some cinnamon rolls. And after such a long day and night, I was more tired than I had been in a while. Once I was in bed, I felt myself begin to fall asleep almost immediately, but my last thoughts were wondering about how I was going to get the sisters together.

It wasn't until the next day when I was in school, looking out the window of my classroom and seeing the crew of the *Traveling Treasure Trunk Show* setting up outside that I got the idea.

— MEET THE — **DANIELS SISTERS**

**THE DANIELS SISTERS ARE FICTIONAL, BUT DID YOU KNOW
THEY WERE INSPIRED BY FOUR VERY REAL SISTERS?**

We first met the Pitts Sisters (and their Daniels Sisters characters) in a series of books: ***Lena in the Spotlight***—three books featuring Alena Pitts' character, Lena Daniels, followed by Kaitlyn Pitts as Ansley Daniels in ***Ansley's Big Bake Off***, Camryn Pitts as Ashton Daniels in ***Ashton's Dancing Dream***, and Olivia Pitts as Amber Daniels in ***Amber's Song***.



Now that you've read this exciting new chapter,
don't forget to start this month's ***Reflections Journal***
as we dig into God's Word to learn more about the truths
the Daniels sisters are discovering!