

TREASURE HUNTERS!

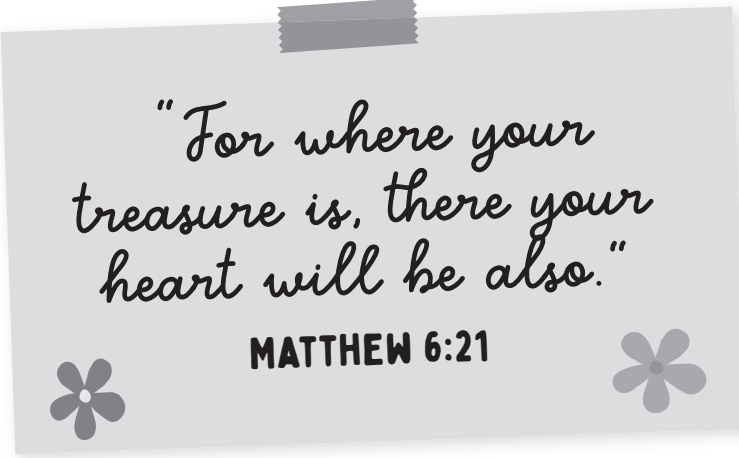
A Daniels Sisters Mystery



Chapter twelve

— A LOST TREASURE IS FOUND —

WRITTEN BY JANEL RODRIGUEZ-FERRER



*"For where your
treasure is, there your
heart will be also."*

MATTHEW 6:21



– Chapter Twelve –

A LOST TREASURE IS FOUND

I slowly rose from my chair and walked over to the sisters. “This ... is for you,” I told them. I held the envelope out to them with a trembling hand. “From your mom.”

Miss Cynthia and Belinda held on to each other more tightly.

“I can’t,” Miss Cynthia said. “I don’t think I can manage.”

“Me neither,” Belinda’s voice was shaking as much as my hand. “Won’t you read it for us?”

“Please?” Miss Cynthia added.

I flashed a look at Aunt Sam, who nodded encouragingly at me.

I sat back on the wing chair, cleared my throat, and began:

My Dearest Daughters,

I have told Frances to give you this letter once I have gone home to our Lord and to His Heavenly Kingdom. But, I told her, she must be sure to wait until there is peace between you.

I have always loved you both equally, and with so great a love that I would have given you the world if I could. But I never did have much money, struggling as I did to raise you without your father. And I never had much in the way of heirlooms to pass on to you, either.

As you know, my mother came to America from Ukraine during the fall of the Russian Empire. She arrived to the US with hardly much more than the clothing on her back.

Years after she settled in the US, she was given the pearls as an anniversary gift from my father. They were only ever worth a modest amount, but they meant the world to her. Not only because he worked so hard to buy them, but because he never came back from the war. This made the necklace very precious indeed.

She told me that at first she used to see the two strands of pearls as representing herself and my father. How they were meant to always be at one another's side. It was only when I lost my husband that your grandmother passed them on to me. Giving them to me as a

sign of the love between a mother and her daughter.

After she died, I began to see the pearl necklace differently. I began to see the double strands as representing my two precious daughters. It made me feel, in a way, like I could still "carry my babies" with me wherever I went. Even when you were quite grown and too heavy for me to lift.

So, when you began fighting over the necklace, well, I must tell you—it broke my heart. You two should have never let an object (even a meaningful one) get in the way of the love you have for one another. Because you allowed this to happen, I made the decision to have Frances hide the necklace away. That is, until you realized that the treasure of your sisterhood is greater than the worth of the pearls.

But if you are reading this letter, it should mean that you two are friends again—and ready to find it. For this I give praise to God!

And now, thanks to Him, I can leave you with these parting words:

Always Believe in Christ, my Daughters, and true treasure will be yours.

Love always,
Mother



There was silence when I finished reading, and I looked up from the letter to scan the faces around the room. “That’s it,” I said. That’s all there is.”

“Beautiful,” Aunt Sam said under her breath. She dabbed at her eyes with a napkin.

“But ... that can’t be it,” Miss Cynthia said. I saw her squeeze her sister’s hand.

Belinda nodded. “We still don’t know where Frances hid the pearls.”

“Well, let’s just ask her,” I said, eagerly. “Do either of you have her number?”

Miss Cynthia shook her head. “No. That is, she joined our mother in Heaven long ago.”

“Oh, that’s right. You told me that before.” I sagged in my chair.

“Did she have any children?” Lena asked hopefully.

“Maybe she told a son or daughter about the necklace.”

The Martin sisters shook their heads.

Lena pressed her lips together. “I should have realized. If she had, one of her children would have had this letter.” She turned to me. “But you found it by accident instead.”

“Not by accident,” Cammie corrected her. “There are no accidents with God.”



“God knew it was time for them to get the letter, so He made sure they got it.” Kitty agreed with her twin. Then she turned to me. “You even found it inside of a Bible and everything!”

I looked down at the Bible on my lap. “Frances must have tucked it in here for safe keeping.”

“Is there anything else inside the envelope?” Miss Cynthia asked, wrinkling her already wrinkled forehead with the question. “Anything from Frances, maybe? Did she leave any clues about where she hid the pearls?”

I turned the envelope upside down and shook it. “Nothing.”

Miss Cynthia and Belinda were still holding hands when they turned to look at one another.

“Maybe it’s time we put those pearls to rest,” Belinda said. “We argued over them long enough. They aren’t what’s important.”

“You’re right,” Miss Cynthia said. The sisters reached out with their other hands and clasped them together, too. “This is what’s important. This is the real treasure. We’ve found each other and made peace.” “Let’s never lose one another again,” Belinda said, her voice sounding tearful.





The two sisters pressed their foreheads together and stared into each other's eyes.

"I love you, Bel," Miss Cynthia said.

"I love you, Cyndi," Belinda replied.

After placing their arms around each other, they wiped tears from their eyes and kissed each other on the cheek.

The scene of forgiveness and love between the two of them soon had Aunt Sam and my sisters wiping tears from their eyes, too.

I was blinking really fast when I said, "Well everyone, we said we were going to pray with this Bible before all this happened. So let's do that now." I looked down at the page where the letter had been kept. It was the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 18. A verse caught my eye (verse 20), so I decided to read it aloud. "*Where two or more are gathered in My name, there I am in the midst of them.*" I smiled at the others.

"That means Jesus is here with us. Right now. Let's give Him our thanks."

Miss Cynthia started. "I give thanks to You, Lord Jesus, for using this sweet girl and her equally wonderful sisters to lead me back to my own sister, Belinda."

"And I thank you, too, Lord," Belinda said, "for



reconciling me and Cynthia, and for the help of the Daniels Sisters in bringing it about.”

Lena began to fiddle with her necklace. “Thank you, God, for bringing us all here today and showing us how good You are.”

“Thank you for hearing our prayers,” Cammie said.

“—and for answering them!” Kitty added.

“Thank you, Jesus, for loving us and for reminding us of what’s really important,” I finished. “And please take care of Miss Cynthia’s and Belinda’s mother, Frances, and Mommy in Heaven.” Then, because I couldn’t help myself, I added, “And, dear Jesus, if you want to give us an idea of where the pearls might be, so we can finally solve this mystery, we’d love it!” I heard giggles around the room. “*Um*, amen.”

“You know, Frances probably hid it somewhere in our old house,” Miss Cynthia said. “But we sold it. The people who bought it might have found it long ago.”

“Unless!” Cammie jumped up with excitement and began scanning the shelves on the bookcase. “What if one of these books is not a book at all?”

Kitty ran over to her side. “You’re talking about those boxes that are made to look like books, aren’t

you? Like maybe there's one in this bookshelf and it's hiding the pearls, right?"

"Right!"

"Are all the books on this bookcase from your old home?" I asked Miss Cynthia.

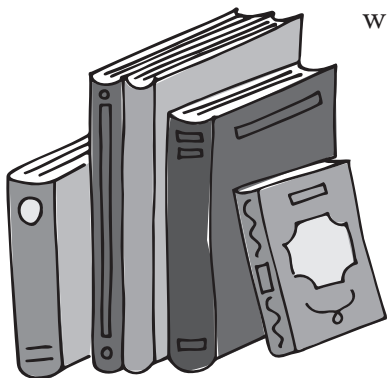
"Yes," she said, watching the twins with interest. "But I doubt the pearls are in there somewhere ..."
Both she and Belinda craned their necks to try to get a better look at how Cammie and Kitty's search was going, though. So she must have had a little hope my sisters would find something. Unfortunately, they didn't.

I patted a dejected Cammie on the back when she slumped back to her place on the couch. "It was a good idea, though," I said.

"It was a great idea," Kitty said with a disappointed sigh.

"What about if we visited your old house?" I asked the Martin sisters. "If it's still there, that is. I don't know if it was torn down or anything."

"Oh, it's still there," Miss Cynthia said.





“Do you think whoever is living there would let us in and let us ... search around the house?” The question sounded stupid to my own ears after I asked it.

But Miss Cynthia didn't seem to think so. “Actually, maybe they would. The family I originally sold it to later sold it themselves a few years ago to a nice family. The Whitakers.”

“The Whitakers?” My sisters and I said at the same time.

“Yes ...” Miss Cynthia began.

“You mean Pastor Whitaker and his family?” Aunt Sam almost shouted.

“Where Nikki lives and Vita Majors is staying?” (I actually did shout.) My sisters and I all leapt out of our seats. “Let's go there right now!”

Aunt Sam made a few quick phone calls. Soon Pastor Whitaker came to drive the sisters to his (and their former) home while my sisters and I piled into Aunt Sam's car. When we arrived we found Nikki and Vita waiting for us. They both stood in the front garden waving and jumping up and down.

“This is amazing!” Nikki said, her eyes shining bright. “There could be a treasure hidden inside my house!”

“I know, it's wild, isn't it?” I asked.



Pastor Whitaker and Vita gently helped the sisters out of the car. As my sisters helped Miss Cynthia into her chair, I took Belinda by the hand and led her over to her sister's side. Then they both took a moment to admire their old home.

"It looks much the same, doesn't it?" Belinda said with affection in her voice.

"It does, it does," Miss Cynthia agreed.

I could hardly wait to start searching the house, but I suddenly thought of something. "Maybe you could help us solve another mystery while we're here," I said to the sisters. "We were all wondering about the ABC garden," I said.

Vita, my sisters, and Nikki all chimed in, "Yeah!" "The what?" Miss Cynthia asked. "You know, the rocks in the garden that form the letters A, B, C ..." The blank looks on the sisters' faces told me they didn't know. "Nevermind," I said.

But then Belinda suddenly laughed. "Oh, yes! That was us. Mother taught us gardening and gave us each our own patch of earth to plant our favorite flowers in. 'A' was for mother, whose name was Amelia, 'B' was for me. 'C' was for Cyndi."

"And the 'D'?" I asked. "Was that for your dad? Or



did his name begin with ‘D’?”

“Or maybe for Delphi?” Kitty asked.

The two sisters turned to look at me with confused expressions.

“There was no ‘D’,” Miss Cynthia said.

“But there is a ‘D’,” Vita said, “Over there, under the forsythia.”

This time the Daniels sisters and the Martin sisters all turned to stare at Vita.

“What did you say?” I asked. “Did you say, ‘for Cynthia’?”

“No,” Vita said. “The forsythia, that bush over there blooming in yellow flowers is called ‘forsythia.’”

My heart began pumping hard and fast. But as much as I wanted to run over to the yellow bush like my sisters, I stayed behind with Vita, Pastor Whitaker and Aunt Sam to help Miss Cynthia and Belinda get there, too.

Once we were all gathered around the forsythia, Kitty pointed at the ground with one hand while she nervously bit the thumbnail on the other hand. “There it is. The ‘D’.

I crouched down. “Look at it. The back of the ‘D’ is made of dark stones. The ‘u’ shape of the D is made of white stones.”

“Two rows of white stones,” Lena said.

“That’s not a ‘D’,” Cammie said. “That’s a picture of the double-stranded pearl necklace.”

“It’s like ‘X marks the spot!’” Kitty giggled. “Only it’s a ‘D’!”

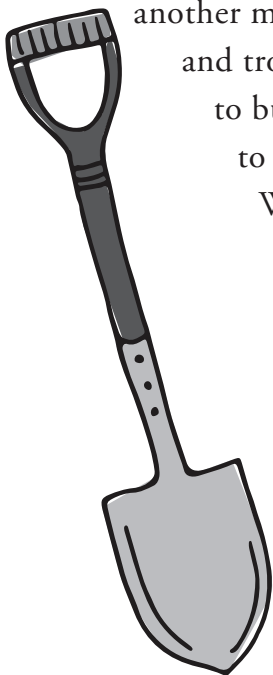
The Martin sisters looked astonished. “Do you think ... the pearls are actually buried? Underground?” Miss Cynthia asked.

“Like a real treasure?” Belinda added.

My sisters and I all nodded. “Like a real treasure.”

We were all so excited we didn’t want to wait another moment. Pastor Whitaker got shovels and trowels from his garage, and we got down to business, digging away. It actually got to be quite tiring, and after a while Mrs.

Whitaker took the Martin sisters to the porch where they could watch us from the shade. Aunt Sam called Dad to let him know what was going on, and he joined us a little while later. By the end it was really he and Pastor Whitaker who did the most digging, while Mrs. Whitaker kept trying to protect the roots of the forsythia bush.



Finally, just when Dad threw a shovelful of earth out of the hole, something glinted through the dirt, "I see something!"

Dad tapped a metal sounding object with his shovel. "Yeah, this must be it."

And after some more digging, a large and beautiful silver box was lifted out from the ground.

"It's kind of heavy." Dad grunted as he laid it before the sisters on the porch.

"Can you open it? Or does it need a key?" I asked worriedly.

"Want to give it a try?" Dad asked the sisters. He held the box up with both arms.

The sisters each took a corner of the top and tried to open it.

It gently lifted up.

They both gasped and opened the box all the way. Inside was a silver key (which I guessed was for the box) and two velvet pouches. One a rich red, the other a deep blue. Belinda took the blue one and Miss Cynthia took out the red one. Together they opened the pouches, and each took out a single strand of pearls.

"There seems to be a note, too," I said.

"Read it, please," Miss Cynthia said. "I can't with

these tears in my eyes.”

Across the envelope were the words: “For my darling Belinda and Cynthia”— in what I now recognized as their mother’s handwriting. I opened it and read:



Dear B and C,
I pray that the clue in my letter has led you, my most precious treasures in the world, to now have in your possession my humble gift to you. As you can see, I had the necklace separated so that you can each have a strand of pearls of your own. Wear them in good health, knowing that your mother's love for you is never ending.
God bless you both,
A

When I was done, the Martin sisters asked if I could read it again. When I began again, Cammie stopped me. “What does that part mean? The clue in the letter. What clue in the letter?”

Miss Cynthia handed me the letter from the Bible and I scanned it a few times. “I’m not sure,” I said.

“Why is this part underlined?” Lena asked. “Here at the bottom.”

Always Believe in Christ, my Daughters, and
true treasure will be yours.

“Oooh, look,” I said. “The ‘A’, ‘B’, ‘C’, and ‘D’ are all capitalized.”

“That must be what she meant.” I smiled and thought. Clever.

Suddenly Vita, who was sitting cross-legged on the porch inspecting the silver box, spoke up. “Um, guys?” she said. “This box. It’s real silver. And this brocade lining ...” She looked at the Martin sisters with wide eyes. “You should come on to the show with this. Have the appraisers take a look. I think it’s worth some money ...”

And it was during my class tour of *The Traveling Trunk Show* on the school grounds that we got to see the Martin Sisters tape their segment on the show and hear from the appraiser that their mother’s silver box was worth more than fifty thousand dollars.

The sisters turned to each other. “With this money you can live with me in the senior center,” Belinda told Miss Cynthia. “We can be together again! They really take care of us over there. We’ll have so much fun!”

“And I won’t have to be lonely anymore,” Miss Cynthia

said, using a handkerchief to dry her eyes. “Thank you, Mama,” she whispered.

Vita in her role as hostess, approached the sisters with her microphone, “And how are two ladies feeling after hearing that news?”

“Just wonderful,” Belinda said.

Miss Cynthia waved me over.

I looked at my teacher, at Vita, and at the cameraman, unsure if I should step forward. But they all nodded, and with my classmates cheering me on, I stepped over cables to join the Martin sisters and Vita.

“It’s all thanks to this young lady and her sisters that we were able to find our treasure,” Miss Cynthia said. Both sisters patted the strand of pearls they wore around their necks and winked at each other.

“That’s quite a testimony,” Vita said. “Do you have anything you’d like to say about that?” She asked, placing the microphone under my chin.

“Well, it all started with a paper I had to write for school about what I wanted to be when I grew up,” I said. “And thanks to you, my sisters, *The Traveling Treasure Trunk Show* and Miss Cynthia and Belinda here, I was able to finish it last night.”



“Well ...” Vita prompted me. “What do you want to be when you grow up? A TV show host? An appraiser? A baker? A detective?”

“I want to be ...” I took a breath and faced the camera. “Someone who helps people. Someone who brings them together. And I guess I can do that no matter what kind of job or career I end up having in the future.” I reached for the pendant I was wearing and gave it a few strokes. It was the silver scroll that used to belong to my mother and now belonged to me. “I just want to always try to be the kind of person who would make my mom—and most all, Jesus—proud.”

“Well, I can think of no better goal than that,” Vita said, giving me a pat on the shoulder.

“Amen!” Miss Cynthia and Belinda chimed in.

“Amen!” my classmates echoed from behind the camera.

Then, as I left the spotlight to rejoin my friends, I quietly thanked Jesus for leading the Daniels Sisters Detective Agency to solve the Case of the Lost Pearls. And I smiled with the secret hope that sometime soon we would get to solve another mystery.

— 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***.



Don't forget to continue **YOUR ADVENTURE**
in this month's ***Reflections Journal***!

**Just like Ansley and the Daniels sisters, you can
discover His plans for your life when you study His Word.**