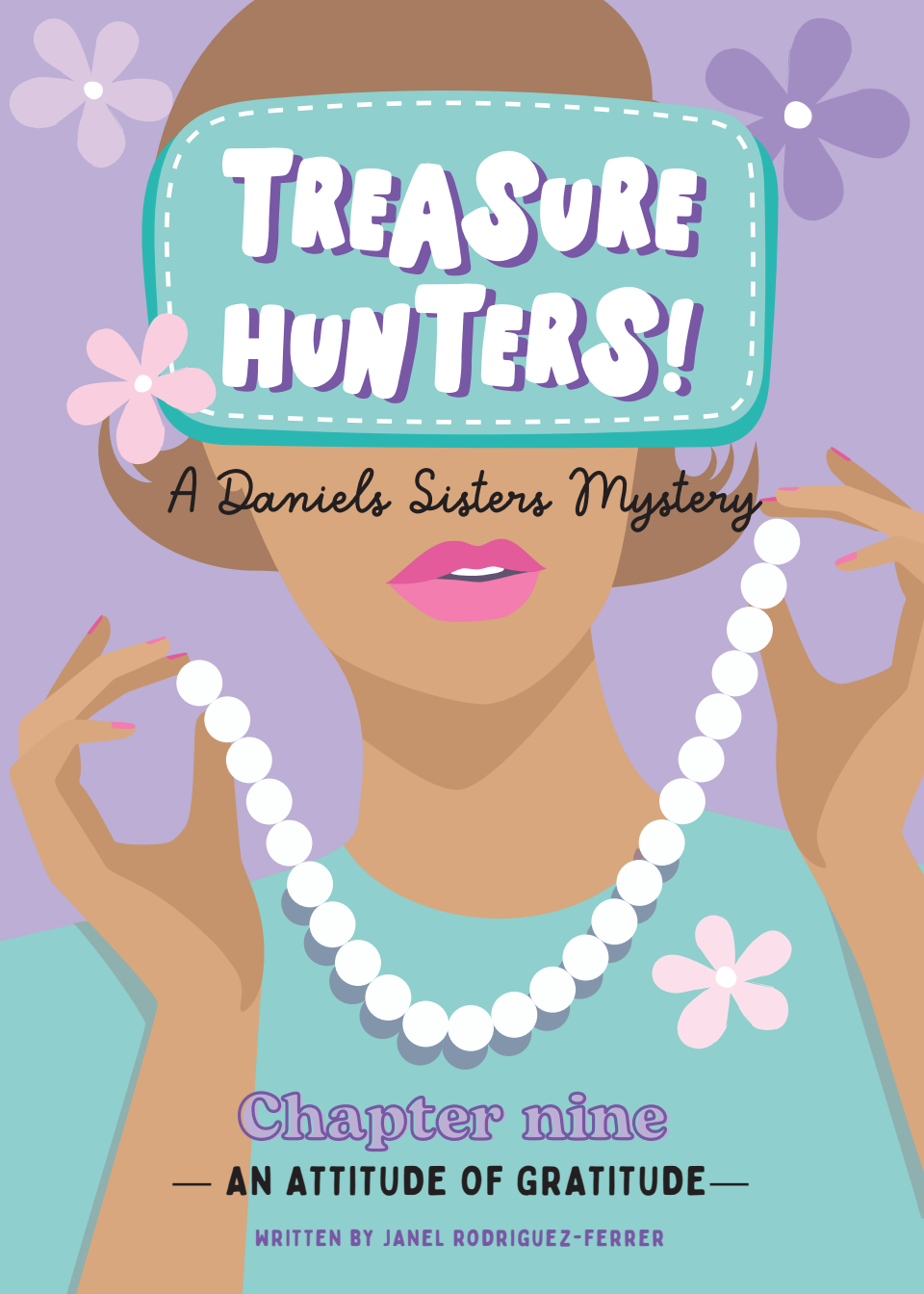




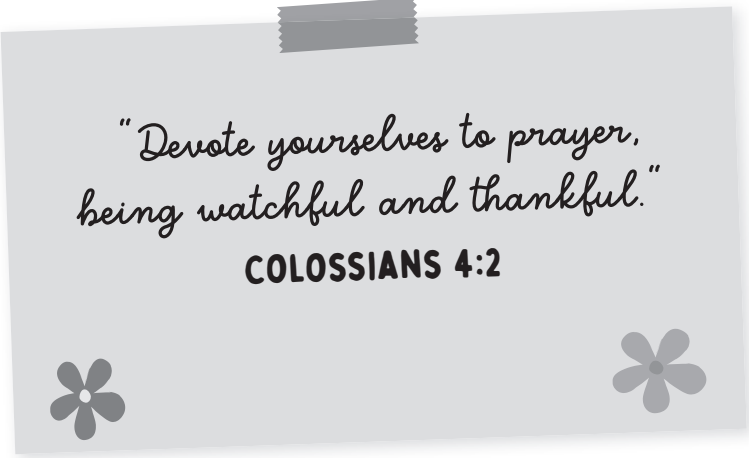
TREASURE HUNTERS!

A Daniels Sisters Mystery

Chapter nine

— AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE —

WRITTEN BY JANEL RODRIGUEZ-FERRER



*"Devote yourselves to prayer,
being watchful and thankful."*

COLOSSIANS 4:2



– Chapter Nine –

AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

“I’m just going to get camera-ready,” Vita told me and Aunt Sam. “Would you like to pop into makeup with me?”

I gave Aunt Sam my best puppy-dog eyes as I clasped my hands together. “Please? Pretty please?”

“You don’t have to if you don’t want to,” Vita went on as she led us towards a trailer parked down the street from the Silver Springs Retirement Home. “It’s just that the cameras sort of pick up everything. Much more than the natural eye can see. A tiny pimple that is almost invisible in real life might show up strongly on video. Then again, sometimes the lights we use are so strong that people’s faces can get sort of washed-out looking on screen.”

Aunt Sam and I nodded as Vita went on.

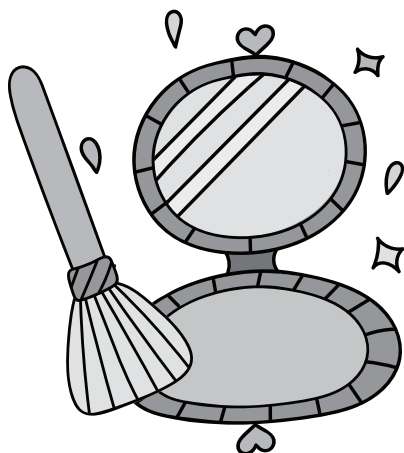
“Every actor or reporter you have seen—man or woman—wears makeup for the camera. There’s even makeup that looks like you aren’t wearing makeup!” She stopped in front of the trailer door and placed a hand on the knob. “So, if you’d like a little powder or lip gloss or something ...”

“Wait, I don’t understand,” Aunt Sam said. “Are we going to be on *The Traveling Treasure Trunk Show*?”

“It’s possible,” Vita said. “This visit will be filmed by a very small crew. It will be a featured segment on one of our episodes. They will record the whole visit, but probably only show about five or ten minutes of it when it finally airs. This is really more of a friendly visit, after all. And I

often stop by senior centers or schools for ‘meet-and-greets’ or to give presentations.

“As I’ve said, seniors in places like these are some of our biggest fans. But when they know we’re coming, they like to get dressed up for the cameras.





And of course, they can't resist showing me their antiques, in hopes of having them appraised. So we've learned to be prepared. In other words, yes, you might end up on camera!"

Aunt Sam patted her neat bun self-consciously. "Well, then, yes, maybe we should have a little makeup!"

I jumped up and down and squealed. I knew Lena had had this experience when she was in the film *Above the Waters*. I was excited to get a little taste of it myself. After all, if I was ever going to be a television host, it was something I would have to get used to.

Aunt Sam and I followed Vita and climbed the three short steps into the trailer. Inside we were greeted by a small team of people who waved and smiled hello. As I waved and smiled back, I looked around the space. I saw three mirrors, framed by lightbulbs, lined up in a row across one wall, with a table and chair positioned in front of each of them. On top of the tables were small metal boxes that resembled mini treasure trunks. Some of them were open, and as I walked along, I saw that neatly arranged inside them were all kinds of cosmetics. There were bottles of colored liquid in



different skin tones, palettes with different shades of eyeshadow, shiny tubes of lipsticks, fluffy brushes of all sizes, plastic bags filled with sponges and cotton balls, and more! The trailer looked sort of like a cross between an art studio and a science lab.

Vita placed one of her arms around Aunt Sam and another one around me and gently drew us forward to meet the makeup crew. Most of them were dressed in black shirts, black pants, and purple aprons that had a printed image of a trunk with the words, “The Traveling Treasure Trunk Show”, above it.

“These are my friends, Samantha and Ansley,” Vita told them. “I know they are already beautiful, but they would like a little touch-up to make them more camera-ready.”

“Oh, sure!”

“No problem!”

“Of course. Have a seat!”

They cheerfully guided each of us to a chair and began fussing over us.

“Hi, my name is Natalie,” a young woman with long, fiery red hair told me. She turned my chair

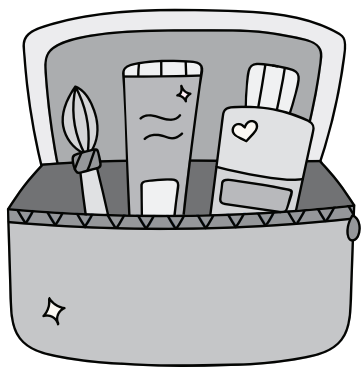
around to inspect my face more closely. And I saw she had a tiny gold stud in her nose.

“You’re so young and fresh-faced, you’re not going to need much,” she said with a grin. She turned my chair to face the mirror again. “So don’t be afraid when you see

me taking a lot of things out of my make-up bag. They will just be some brushes and combs and things. Like powder to make sure your natural glow shows up on camera, and gel to keep your eyebrows smooth in case you rub your face. And spray to keep your hair from frizzing. They’re all just to help you keep looking the way you already do—because you’re going to have a bit of a long day.”

“I am?”

“Well, I understand you’ll be working hard, helping with serving food, and visiting with the residents. You might get hot and sweaty and frazzled under the lights. Plus, senior residences are kept rather warm because





older people tend to feel the cold more. I'll help you to keep looking cool, calm, and collected the whole day through. The way Vita does."

"Television hosts can work long hours, can't they?" I asked Natalie's reflection.

Natalie nodded. "It's harder than it looks. But if you love what you're doing, you don't mind it much!"

I watched Natalie carefully select which products she wanted to use. As she arranged them neatly across the table, I giggled.

"What's so funny?" she asked.

"Oh nothing. It's just that before, I thought you were kind of like a scientist or an artist. But now I think you're kind of like a chef, too. Choosing ingredients and utensils before cooking something. Maybe it's because of the apron."

Natalie laughed. "Actually, you're right. I think a makeup artist is like all of those things."

Once we were done, Vita, Aunt Sam, and I thanked everybody. Vita, I noticed, thanked them a lot. "I couldn't do it without you guys! You're really the best! Thanks so much!" She even blew them kisses as she left



the trailer. Once we were outside, she began leading us back to the car so we could get the rolls and muffins my sisters and Aunt Sam had all worked on.

“Everybody on this show has an important job to do because their jobs help other people here to do their jobs,” Vita told me. “The better we do our work, the more help we are to one other. That’s why I’m always so grateful. Plus, letting people know when they’re doing a good job is a good thing to practice. Complimenting someone with the truth always makes them feel good.”

I knew she was telling me these things in case I grew up to be a television host. She wanted me to know professional ways to behave behind the scenes. But I couldn’t help feeling her advice would be good for any job. Like, if I grew up to work in a school or an office or a hospital, even.

As Aunt Sam handed me one of the sealed plastic serving pans from the car, I told myself, *Remember to always give thanks to everyone who gives. Whether it’s time, advice, or gifts.* Then I gasped, said “Excuse me!” and ran back into the trailer. “Thank you!” I said to everyone. “That was fun!” Even though I knew I had



already said my thanks, I wanted to be sure they really heard it. “Especially you,” I said to Natalie, my voice dropping a little as I suddenly felt a little shy. “Thank you for making me look so pretty.”

Natalie’s face lit up. “Oh, I didn’t make you look pretty. You already came that way. But you’re welcome, Sweetie.”

“Would you all like some rolls or muffins or something?” I asked, lifting a corner of the lid of the serving pan I was carrying. “My sisters and aunt made them.”

“Aren’t these for the seniors, though?” Natalie said.

“Oh, we made lots,” I assured her. “Go ahead, take one. All of you,” I said, gesturing to the others. “I made the ones in this tray.”

Everyone helped themselves by politely taking only one. Natalie took a bite of a cinnamon roll and licked some icing that got on her pinky finger. “Mmmm! Delicious! You’re a good pastry chef!”

I felt my face grow warm. Vita had been right about compliments to people for doing a good job. It did feel good to receive them!

“You know, since you are a chef, I have an idea,”

Natalie went on. “Would you like to wear one of these aprons while you serve your yummy rolls to the seniors?”

“Oh, yes!” I said, excitedly. Not only did I love the shade of purple it was, but I felt like wearing one would make me feel like I was part of the show. “Thank you!”

“Here you go,” Natalie said, taking a fresh apron out of plastic packaging. “Consider it a gift. A present from the makeup department here at Tresh.” (Like Vita, she called *The Traveling Treasure Trunk Show* “Tresh” for short.)

“A present?” My mouth dropped open as she slid the apron on over my head and helped me tie the bow on smoothly.

“Really?”

“Really!” Natalie said.

“For keeps!”

Finally, it was time to enter the Silver Springs Senior Living Facility.

Carrying our trays, we





walked up to the long, column-lined porch where we were greeted by a large group of people who were waiting for us. After they welcomed us, they took the trays off our hands and gave us a tour of the grounds and rooms.

One of the first things I noticed was that there were lots of windows all around, which let in a lot of sunlight. I thought it was nice because it made the place look cheerful, like my school. Another way it kind of reminded me of my school was the way there was a main building in the middle and two other buildings on the sides. What was different here was that the sides, or “wings” at Silver Springs were where all the private rooms of the residents were located. One of them was a special wing for people with memory problems. The main building had all the other kinds of rooms, like meeting rooms, a recreation and media room, a dining room, a chapel, and an infirmary. I also couldn’t help but notice that the hallways were very wide! When I asked about this I was told it was so at least two wheelchairs could fit in the hall at the same time.

“This is especially good in case they need to go in opposite directions,” the director of the home told us.



“Two-way traffic!” Aunt Sam joked. Everyone laughed except for me. Hearing the word “wheelchair” made me immediately think of Miss Cynthia and I suddenly found myself looking into the faces of every senior resident in a wheelchair to see if they looked enough like Miss Cynthia to be her sister, Belinda.

Finally, we were led to a large dining hall where a crowd of older people were waiting for us—well, they were waiting on Vita and her camera team, really. But it felt cool to enter the room to applause and cheers.

After Vita gave a speech, she went around the room with a single cameraman and interviewed people one-on-one. I kind of wanted to follow her around. What if she found Belinda? But that was when Aunt Sam and I had to start serving the food and chatting with people ourselves.

I was happy to do it. It was both fun and, well, kind of tiring to run around from table to table to give out the pastries. Aunt Sam couldn’t help me because she was standing at the buffet table near the kitchen, serving hot food and drinks. My Aunt Sam is like that, wherever she sees a need, she rolls up her sleeves and starts helping immediately.



A lot of the seniors seemed excited about getting the homemade cinnamon rolls and muffins.

They flashed me big smiles and said, “Thank you.” Some of them didn’t say “thank you” though. Sometimes they just grunted at me or grabbed a roll and didn’t look at me. I felt sad for those people because it was

obvious that they were not very happy. They also made me think of Miss Cynthia, and how her sadness made her cranky. And it made me want to find her sister, Belinda, more than ever.

I thought it would be easy to find her. But it wasn’t. Maybe because of the mistakes I made in searching for her. For instance, I kept looking extra hard at all the women in wheelchairs first. And since all the seniors were wearing nametags, I was sure I would be able to spot the name “Belinda” right away. But I didn’t.

When I served my last muffin, I walked over to



where my aunt was stationed, put down the empty tray, and sighed. “I haven’t found Belinda anywhere!” I whispered. “And I checked the nametags of every woman in a wheelchair!”

Aunt Sam raised an eyebrow. “How do you know she’s in a wheelchair?”

I slapped my forehead and laughed at myself. “I don’t,” I said. “I just thought because her sister was in a wheelchair that she would be, too! Silly me! I need to go back out there and look again.”

“Do you want to just ask someone who works here if she’s around?” Aunt Sam poured punch into the last few cups she had arranged on a tray.

“No,” I said. “I don’t want her to know I am looking for her.” I took the now full tray in my hand. “I’ll start giving these out and keep searching.”

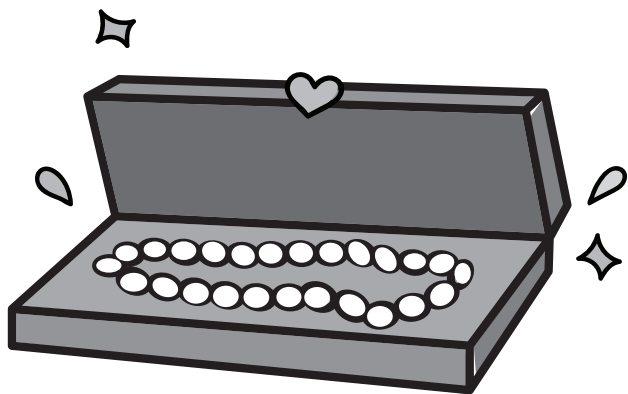
“Okay.” Aunt Sam reached out and adjusted the tray to make sure I was holding it steady. “And just a word of advice. Don’t forget that people can have nicknames. If you don’t find a Belinda, keep an eye out for a ‘Belle’ or a ‘Linda’ or a ‘Lin’.”

I gasped. “You’re right! I didn’t even think of that!”

Thanks, Aunt Sam!”

I left the kitchen with renewed determination. Now I was sure that I was going to find Belinda!

But after I gave out all the drinks and returned to Aunt Sam (twice) to get more punch to give out, I began losing my enthusiasm. And again I found myself wishing that my sisters were around to help me. Maybe they were right, I thought, pressing my lips together grimly. She might be sleeping in her room. Or maybe her memory is bad and she's in the memory care wing. Or maybe she's just not interested in *The Traveling Treasure Trunk Show*. Or maybe she just doesn't have the pearls. Or maybe she does, but doesn't want to sell them. Or maybe ... I thought finally, "...maybe, this was just a





big waste of time! With sagging shoulders, I tucked the round drink tray under my arm and headed back for the kitchen. I was almost there when I noticed an appraiser sitting at a nearby table. An old woman with a cane was slowly walking towards him. In her hand, she held a long, velvet clamshell box. Something like the one that held Coach Well's Olympic Medal, only a little bigger.

Is that ... Belinda? Is that ... a pearl necklace? I needed to find out! I spun on my heel to head in that direction when a hand suddenly clamped around my wrist, holding me in place. I glanced down to see who had grabbed me.

It was an older lady wearing a green tracksuit. Her nametag said "Delphi" on it. "Can I have another drink, Honeypie?" she asked me.

"Oh, sure I'll go get you one ..." I said, But I didn't move, because I wanted to keep an eye on the woman with the cane. Her hands were shaking as she slowly and carefully lay her jewelry box down on the table.

Suddenly another voice piped up on my other side. "Me too, child!" It was an older man wearing a checked shirt and suspenders. "That punch was delicious, and I

sure am thirsty!”

“Um, no problem,” I said. I gently tried to pry my arm away from the woman while still keeping an eye on what was going on at the next table. “I just need to ...”

A third person at that table (a woman in a pink sweatshirt with the words “Proud Grandma” across it) laughed. “I guess you should get another round for the whole table, Sweetheart!”

I gave a short laugh in return, trying to be polite. But it was just then that the appraiser opened the box and looked inside. I held my breath. Come on ... come on ... I thought. Take out the necklace ... let me see it ...

Finally, the man lifted the piece of jewelry out of the box. It was a bracelet made of coins. Cool, but definitely not what I wanted to see.

I let the air out of my lungs, feeling like a punctured tire.

The old man in the suspenders spoke up again. “Let the child go, Belinda,” he said to the woman in the green tracksuit. “She can’t get us punch with you holding on to her that way.”

I jumped in place and looked down at the woman.



Belinda? But her nametag said “Delphi.”

She let go of my wrist. “I’m so sorry,” she said to me, with a smile. “I didn’t mean to ...”

“That’s okay,” I said, my breath began to quicken. “I—”

That’s when I noticed the double-strand pearl necklace peeking through the neckline of her hoodie.

— 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!