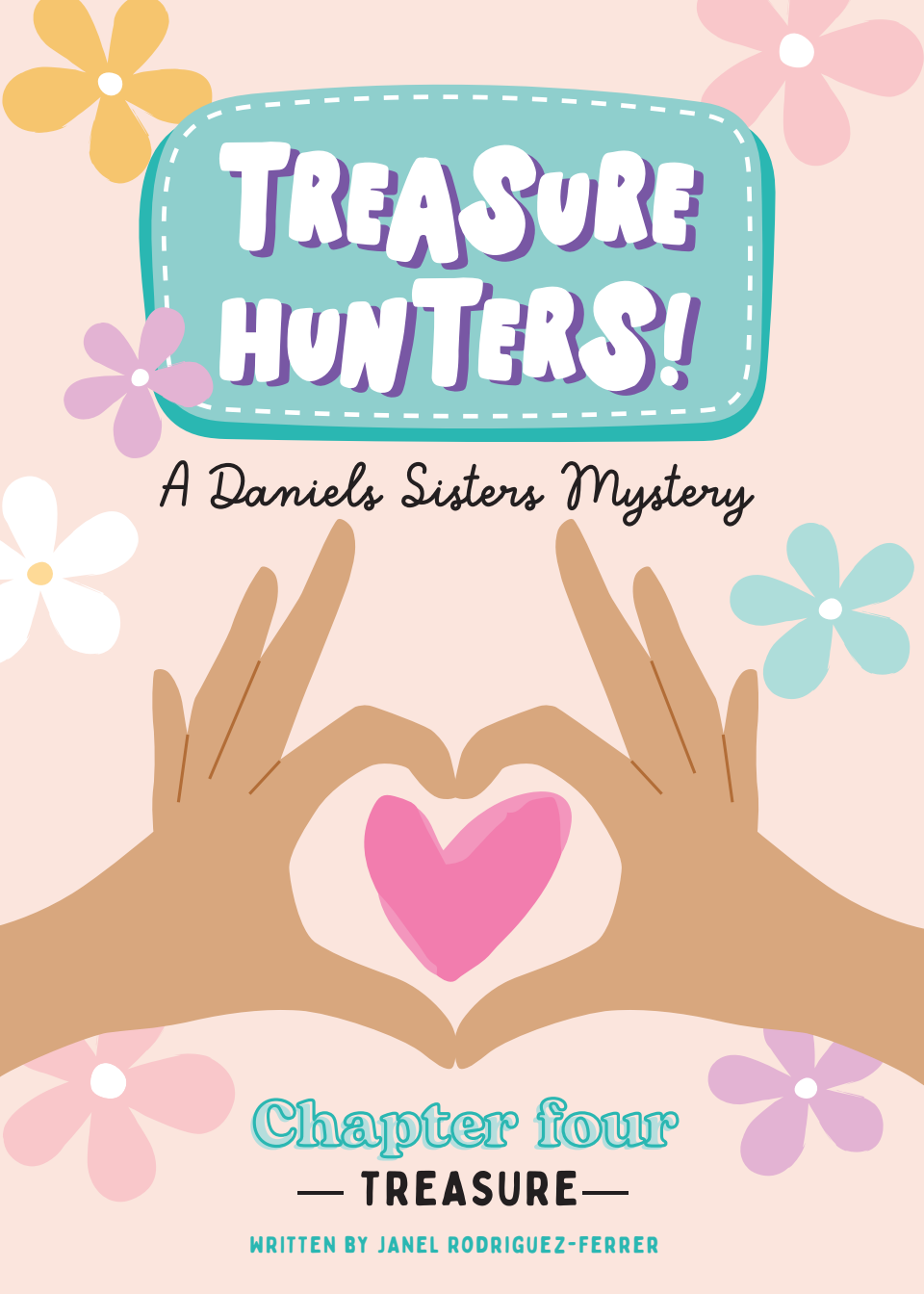




TREASURE HUNTERS!

A Daniels Sisters Mystery



Chapter four

— TREASURE —

WRITTEN BY JANEL RODRIGUEZ-FERRER



*"In the morning, Lord,
You hear my voice;
in the morning
I lay my requests before You
and wait expectantly."*

PSALM 5:3



– Chapter Four –



When I woke up on Sunday morning, I yawned, stretched, and reached for the Bible on my nightstand. Our parents had taught all of us to begin and end our days with God's Word. So even though I knew we'd all be praying in church, I opened my Bible anyway. I had gotten into the habit, and I liked it. My days just weren't the same if I didn't pray with the Bible first thing.

I had lots of bookmarks and sticky notes in my Bible, too. That was another thing my parents had taught me: to reread favorite passages and to write down whatever questions I had about them.

But when I put my hand on my Bible, I felt a sticky note on top of it. Right on the cover. I knew I hadn't left myself a note. So, what was it, exactly?

Confused, I picked the Bible up. Written in Sharpie on the blue square of paper were the words: Psalm 73:25 and Proverbs 2:1-6. I quickly flipped the pages until I got to chapter 73, verse 25 in Psalms. The Scripture read:

*Whom have I in heaven but You?
And earth has nothing I desire besides You.*

Then I looked up Proverbs 2:1-6 which was a lot longer:

*My son, if you accept My words
and store up My commands within you,
turning your ear to wisdom
and applying your heart to understanding—
indeed, if you call out for insight
and cry aloud for understanding,
and if you look for it as for silver
and search for it as for hidden treasure,
then you will understand the fear of the Lord
and find the knowledge of God.
For the Lord gives wisdom;
from His mouth come knowledge and understanding.*

I sat with that for a moment. What did it mean? Maybe that God is our greatest treasure and closest friend. And that God's wisdom is also a treasure. If God and His wisdom are treasures, then it was definitely something I wanted more of.

And, to be friends with God! Wow! I mean, I already knew that Jesus was a good friend to me. But the way this Bible passage made it sound, getting more wisdom and being friends with God meant I could have the greatest treasure on earth!

I wanted that!

I carefully pulled the sticky note off the cover and took a second look at it. Did Dad leave this? I wondered. Last night he had said something about setting up a treasure hunt at church later today. Was this somehow a part of that? How?

And if wisdom is somehow treasure, how exactly was I supposed to be hunting for it? I wouldn't know the first place to start. Well ... I'm not going to get any wiser just



**PSALM
13:25**

**PROVERBS
2:1-6**



sitting here, I decided. I got out of bed and went to the bathroom to brush my teeth. Which seemed, at least, if not exactly “wise,” definitely the smart thing to do.

When I came out of the bathroom, I quickly changed into the outfit I’d chosen the night before to wear to church. I liked dressing up for church. It felt good to not have to wear a uniform, the way I did for school. But it also felt good to dress a little nicer than I did on Saturdays. Saturdays were our most “dress down” days of the week. We wore jeans, or shorts, and T-shirts. But on Sundays, my sisters and I sometimes wore blouses or even dresses in bright and happy colors. And we always make an effort to look neat and clean.

I put on my pink top. It was neat and clean, I thought, looking at my reflection in the mirror. But also a little plain. It had no collar, no buttons, no flowers. I began to think about dressing it up somehow with a pin or something when I remembered: Mommy’s necklaces! The chain with the scroll pendant with the Bible quote on it would be perfect for me to wear to church!

I dashed out my door and ran up the stairs to Aunt

Sam's attic room. She wasn't there. But judging by the sound of praise music and the smell of crackling bacon coming from the kitchen, I knew exactly where she was and what she was doing.

I hovered in the doorway of her bedroom and craned my neck to peek inside. She said she would leave her jewelry box on top of ... I scanned the top of her dresser. There it was! The seashell-decorated box was exactly where she said it would be. I hurried over, opened the box, and found my necklace immediately. As I clasped the ends of the chain together, I heard movement behind me and it made me jump! Looking in the mirror, I caught the reflections of other people entering the room. I spun around.

"Lena! Cammie! Kitty! Don't tell me ... " I laughed. "Did you all have the same idea?"

"Yup," Cammie said, stepping in front of the others to get to her necklace first.

"I guess we all wanted to wear our Mommy treasure





necklaces,” Kitty said.

“But we are Mommy’s treasures, remember?” Lena smiled at her.

“Yes,” Kitty said. “But these are our treasured necklaces from Mom, so it works either way.”

“We can call them our ‘M-T-Ns’ for short,” I giggled. “What perfect things to wear for a treasure hunt!”

“Another treasure hunt? What are you talking about?”

I opened my mouth to explain. Suddenly Aunt Sam called from downstairs. “Breakfast is ready! Come on, girls! Let’s not be late to church!”

I closed my mouth and chose to smile mysteriously like Dad had last night. Then I copied him even more by telling my sisters what he told me. “You’ll see.” But my sisters wouldn’t leave me alone the whole way down the stairs.

“Wait! What do you mean?”

“Why are you acting so mysterious?”

“Tell us, Ansley!”

I burst out laughing. “I can’t tell you, because I don’t know myself. Dad said something about having a real treasure hunt at church today. But I don’t know what he meant.”



My sisters all looked at each other and then ran towards the kitchen. *“Daa-aad!”*

But Dad wouldn't tell them, either. He just kept chuckling and shaking his head. “You'll see what it's all about soon enough.” Then, after waiting for us all to sit down, he said, “But don't you already know that Jesus is the greatest treasure you can want? And you already have Him!”

“Yes,” we all said.

“Amen!” said Aunt Sam.

“With Jesus as your friend,” I said, remembering the Scripture I'd read that morning, “I guess you don't really need any others.”

My father tilted his head. “Do you really think you don't need any other friends?”

I squirmed in my chair a little. “Not exactly. I love my friends. I love making friends. But I was just thinking about ... friendship with God.”

“Ah, then you got my note!” Dad smiled.

“I knew it was you!” Lena said.

“We found ours, too,” the twins said.

“That Scripture is about how friendship with God is



the greatest treasure, and how the treasure of wisdom helps you to know this,” Dad said.

“Then ... I’m already wise?” I took a bite out of my warm pancake.

“Wisdom is a gift from the Holy Spirit. So if you have God’s spirit in you, yes. You can tap into that wisdom,” Dad said. “But let’s get back to friendship with God. What do you think friendship with God looks like? How do you know you are friends with God?”

“Ummm ...” I looked at my sisters.

“Let me put it another way. Did Jesus have any friends?”

“Yeah,” Cammie said. Her deep voice almost echoed in the glass of orange juice she was drinking. “Like, twelve.”

The rest of us giggled with our mouths full of pancakes.

But Dad nodded. “Cammie’s right. And He had more friends than that. Lazarus, for instance, and his sisters Martha and Mary. But the apostles are a good example. How do you know they were His actual friends and not just His followers?”



“Well, didn’t Jesus say, ‘I call you friends’ to them?” Lena asked, looking from Dad to Cammie and back again. “Isn’t that in Scripture?”

“Yes, it’s in the Gospel of John. But what about the friends in your lives? What do you all do when you are together that makes you ‘friends’?”

“Hang out,” Kitty said.

“You choose to hang out with each other,” Aunt Sam said as she poured Dad a cup of coffee. “It’s important to make that distinction.”

“You mean because we want to be together? And not because people make us?” Kitty asked her. “I never thought about it that way, but yeah.”

“We go places together,” I added. “To eat or visit and have fun. Have good times.”

“And what about when times are not so good?” Dad asked. “If you or your friend is going through a difficult time? What if your friend is hurting or sad? Do you still hang out with them?”

“Yeah, of course,” I said. “If they want. Then I’m extra nice to try to help them feel better. I listen to them if they want to talk. Or I just sit with them if they want company.”

“Real friends are there for you in good times and in bad,” Lena added, nodding with approval.

“Just like Jesus,” Dad said. “Let’s get ready to spend some quality time with Him. Finish up your breakfast so we can get going.”

As we drove to church, I began to think about all my friends, like Guadalupe, Krista, Taylor and ... Nikki.

That’s right! I reminded myself. I want to ask Nikki if she’s ever heard of ... “Vita Majors!” I suddenly shouted. And I pointed to a billboard by the side of the road.

It was an advertisement for *The Traveling Treasure Trunk Show* and how it would be coming to town. And since she was the host of the show, an image of Vita herself took up half the billboard. The other half read:

**GET READY
THE TRAVELING TREASURE TRUNK SHOW
IS COMING YOUR WAY!**

We appraise anything!

**Furniture, paintings, toys, memorabilia, souvenirs
and more!**

Is your “junk” really junk? Or a treasure in disguise?

Come and find out!



Dad, who had almost skidded off the road when I shouted, spoke a little sternly to me. “Ansley! What was that all about?”

“The billboard, Dad!”

Dad glanced up at it and continued driving. “Yes?”

“The lady on it. Vita Majors.”

Dad glanced up again. “She’s pretty. And?”

“And ...” I took a deep breath. I hadn’t mentioned this to anyone yet, but I figured it was as good a time as any. “She’s the person I want to interview for my essay. About what I want to be when I grow up.”

“You want to be a billboard when you grow up?” Cammie teased.

“No,” I snapped. “I was thinking more like a TV host.”

“But I want to be a TV host,” Cammie said, hotly.

“No! I do,” Kitty said. “You know we do those Kitty and Cammie Show videos,” she reminded me.

“You mean Cammie and Kitty,” Cammie growled at her twin.

“Neither of you has done those videos in a while.” I frowned and crossed my arms. “And neither of you



has an interview-essay thingie due for school, either.”
“But—!” the twins began.

“Hey-hey-hey!” Dad’s voice rose above the rest of ours. “No arguing, We’re going to church, remember?”

I softened my voice and leaned forward in my seat behind Dad. “You should hear Vita Majors speak, Dad, she’s Australian. She sounds like the Whittakers.”

Dad turned the car into the parking lot of the church. “So, is this the real reason you wanted to turn the house upside down to find a treasure, Ansley? To get to meet this woman?”

“Kind of,” I said with a shrug.

“Hmm,” Dad said. But he said nothing more. As he shut off the engine, we all unbuckled our seatbelts, got out of the car, and headed for the church.

The church was a simple white building that stood brightly in the sun. Going through its big main doors always made me think a little bit about what it might be like walking through the gates of Heaven.

Pastor Whittaker and his daughters greeted us all when we entered the church.

“Hi, Nikki!” I said, running over to the oldest of

the three. She was my age. And even though they all had long, blond hair, hers was the longest and the darkest shade of blond.

Nikki grinned. "Hi, Ansley!"

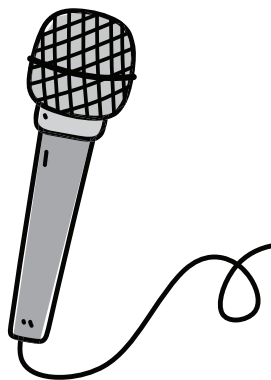
"You know," Dad told the Whittakers, "Ansley was just talking about you all. Or at least one of your fellow countrymen."

I felt my face burn. Still, I corrected him. "You mean countrywomen."

"Sorry!" Dad patted me on the shoulder and went on. "She wants to meet this hostess person from the Traveling Trunk Show."

"Oh! Vita Majors?" Pastor Whittaker raised an eyebrow and looked at me. "She went to school with my wife. We're having her over to dinner next week when she's in town."

"What?" I could hardly believe what I'd just heard. "Really?" Then I heard my voice drop to almost a whisper. "I wanted to interview her for that paper for school."





“Then why don’t you all join us for dinner when she’s over?” Pastor Whittaker said easily. “I think she’d like that. She’s on the road so much, she doesn’t get to be with her family that often. Being around other families is the next best thing. The more the merrier!” I balled my hands into excited little fists and jumped up and down. “Oh, thank you! Thank you! That is, we accept your invitation. Right, Dad?”

Dad laughed. “Of course!”

That afternoon the church service was all about different kinds of treasure. I wasn’t surprised. The idea of “treasure” was on everybody’s minds because of the TV show coming into town. Plus, Dad had told us he would speak to Pastor Whittaker about “treasure” since my sisters and I had been acting kind of obsessed about it. So I really did want to pay attention to what Dad and Pastor Whittaker were saying. But instead, I found myself getting lost in daydreams about meeting Vita Majors.

Then, just when I thought I must have missed what Dad had been saying about how there would be a “treasure hunt” at church today, I heard him say,

“And who are the people in a community that have the most wisdom? The elders. Because with age and experience come wisdom. And the senior members of this congregation are certainly a treasure. They have lots of knowledge, advice, and stories to share with us. Too often they don’t get to because they are not given the time or the space to do so.”

“Well, this afternoon will be different. After today’s service, some of our young worshippers will be matched up with some of our older congregants to share a meal and conversation. I particularly want our younger participants to remember to listen well, and to allow their elders the time to talk.”

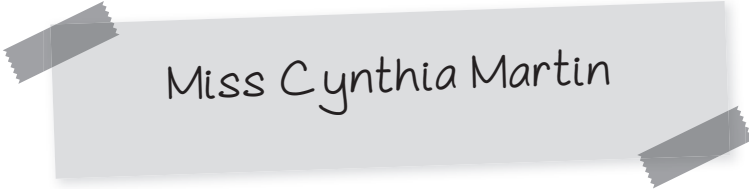
So that’s what he meant! Old people are our treasures! And we’re supposed to sit down, eat with them, and listen to their “pearls of wisdom” or something? I looked around the church and scanned for white-haired people. And how will we be matched up?





It didn't take me long to find out. Once service was over, I followed the crowd spilling out of the church and onto the lawn behind it to have fellowship outdoors. There was a large spread of food across four picnic tables. There were oversized bowls of potato salad, and cake stands that held cakes, pies, and cookies. Punch bowls and bottles of lemonade and sodas. Freshly baked bread and muffins, finger sandwiches, and more! I also saw that other picnic tables were spread across the lawn. But at each of them sat four older people, either sitting on the corners of each bench or at the ends of the tables if they were in wheelchairs. In front of each of them was a folded index card with a name written on it.

A woman wearing a sundress and matching cardigan stepped forward. In her hands, she held a large basket filled with folded slips of paper. "Choose a name and then go 'hunt' for your treasure!" She gestured towards elderly people sitting expectantly. I closed my eyes and picked a slip up by its corner. My sisters gathered around as I opened it and read aloud:



Miss Cynthia Martin

“Okay,” I announced to my sisters. “Let’s go find our treasure!”

And smiling, we all hurried towards the picnic tables together, unaware of the true treasure that awaited us.

— 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***.



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