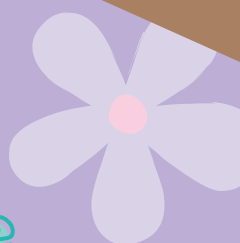
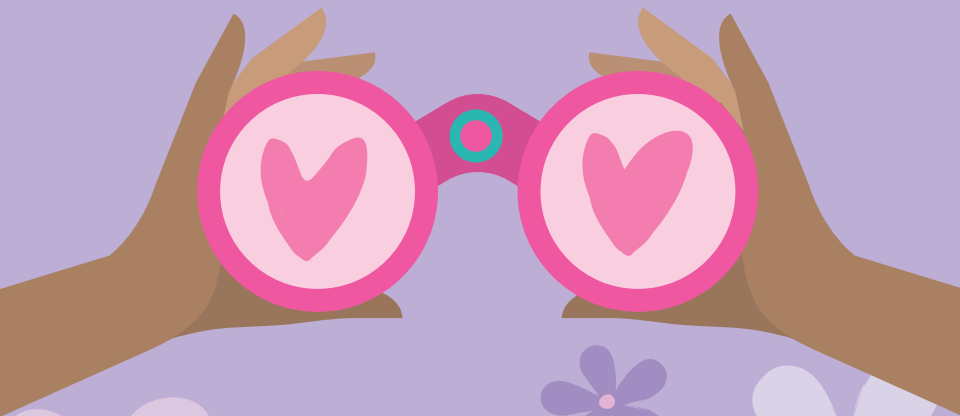




TREASURE HUNTERS!

A Daniels Sisters Mystery



Chapter one

— **DECISIONS, DECISIONS** —

WRITTEN BY JANEL RODRIGUEZ-FERRER

– Chapter One –

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

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

MATTHEW 6:21



It was just after school. I walked in the front door of the house, threw my backpack onto the bench of our entryway, and slid onto a chair at our kitchen island. Then, after propping my elbows on the countertop, I rested my chin on the palms of my hands and let out a sigh.

My younger sisters, the twins Cammie and Kitty (also known as Ashton and Amber), didn't hear me. That's because they were busy laughing and petting our two dogs, Austin and Zette, who were barking and wagging their tails in welcome.

But our big sister, Lena, heard me. She had been looking in the fridge for a cold drink when she turned around to look at me. Lifting an eyebrow she said,

“What’s going on? You were happy and chatty the whole ride home. Are you suddenly sad or something?”

“I’m not sad,” I said with a groan. “I just remembered the assignment I have due next week and I’m worried about how I’m going to do it.”

“What’s it supposed to be about?” Lena poured herself a glass of milk. “Maybe I can help you.”

“We’re supposed to interview a person who works in a career we’re interested in. Like a kind of ‘What Do You Want to Be When You Grow Up?’ essay—but with a twist.”

“Oh!” This time not one, but both eyebrows shot up Lena’s forehead. They almost disappeared under the pretty purple floral scarf she had wrapped around her hair. “But I thought you already knew what you wanted to be when you grow up.” She gestured at the row of cookbooks lined up on the counter behind her. “A chef. Or at least a baker. Right? Why not interview Taylor’s Grandma Lynda?” Taylor Lang was a friend of mine from school. Her grandmother owned and ran the cutest little bakeshop in town called Lynda’s Lovin’ Oven.

I tilted my head in thought. “I *do* love baking....”

Cammie, who had finally stopped petting the dogs, slid into the chair next to mine. “I thought you wanted to be a gymnast.”

I tilted my head in the other direction. “I *do* love gymnastics...”

“Then it’s simple.” Cammie flicked some of her long braids with a wave of her hand. “Just interview Coach Well at Grace-n-Power Gym. Problem solved.”

“But I don’t think I can make a living as a professional tumbler,” I said. “And I’m interested in so many other things. It makes it hard to decide! Not to mention, figuring out who to interview.”

Kitty was trying to sneak a cookie out of a jar without the rest of us noticing. But she gave herself away when she suddenly waved that cookie in the air in her excitement.

“I know! What about working in a church, or as a missionary? That way you can interview Dad, or even Pastor Whittaker!” Our dad co-pastored our church



with Dennis Whittaker, the father of my friend Nikki and her sisters.

“I *do* love sharing the Word of God,” I said. “But see? This is exactly what I meant about my being interested in too many things!” I hopped off the stool, grabbed my backpack off the bench, and headed for the stairs. “Thanks for trying to help, guys,” I called out as I trudged up the steps, “but I think I have to figure this out myself.”

Once upstairs, I threw my bag down on the rug and flopped on my bed. The bedspread smelled fresh and clean, like Aunt Sam had just taken it out of the dryer. (Aunt Sam was our dad’s sister. She helped him to look after us four girls ever since Mom died.) As I ran my hand over the pink unicorn pattern, I had a thought that made me giggle. *I guess I can scratch unicorn catcher off my list, too—especially since I don’t know any unicorn catchers I can interview!* Then, with another sigh, I laid back and stared at the ceiling for a while. *What DO I want to be when I grow up?* I asked myself. *What should I even DO with my life?*

But it wasn’t until I finally asked myself, “*and WHO can I speak to about all of this?*” that it hit me.

I sat bolt upright. *Why didn’t I think of this before?*

I shook my head and began to unzip my backpack.
I can ask God for help!

I reached into my bag and drew out my Bible and my journal. My Bible teacher, Ms. Johnson-Jones (we called her Ms. J-J), had given the whole class a “motto” on our first day of school. It was “Speak Lord, for Your servant is listening.” This was from the Bible story of Samuel. And it was supposed to be the theme for our whole year to help us to pray always and to listen to God speak in our hearts.

I closed my eyes, put my hands together and prayed, “Dear Lord, I come before you this afternoon because ... well, I have questions! Please be with me as I search for the answers. And help lead me to find the right ones. I make this prayer in Jesus’ name. Amen.”

Then I lay on my stomach, opened my prayer journal to a fresh page, and wrote:



Hi, Jesus. It's me again.

Okay, so here are the questions I was just talking to you about. What should I be when I grow up? Who should I interview for this school assignment? What do you want me to DO??

Then sliding my journal aside, I grabbed my brown leather Bible with its gold-edged pages and took a moment to think. Should I just open the Bible to any page? Or should I look for a particular passage?

I decided that I wanted to read a story from the life of Jesus Himself. That is, read from one of the Gospels (Matthew Mark, Luke, or John). Since they are the first four books in the New Testament, it was easy to flip over to them. Once I did, I found myself reading the story of when Jesus visits the sisters, Mary and Martha.

In the story, Mary is sitting at Jesus' feet, giving Him her full attention. Meanwhile, Martha is doing all the work of preparing and serving the food. Martha complains to Jesus that her sister isn't helping. But Jesus says to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things. There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her."

It's a very short story, so I read it over a few times before putting the Bible aside to think about what I read.

Then I wrote again in my journal:



So, basically, God, I think you're telling me to stop worrying — like you told Martha — and instead to turn all of my attention to You. Like Mary! Right? Only . . . isn't that what I'm doing right now? But what about my assignment? I still don't have the answers to my questions!



I tossed my pen aside with frustration. I was about to lie back down on the bed when I suddenly burst out laughing—at myself! I had *not* stopped worrying. That meant that I wasn't really giving God my full attention either. In fact, He *had* even answered all of my questions, I just hadn't realized it.

Okay, so that means the answer to ALL of my questions is to stop worrying. So I will ... for now, I thought as I jumped to my feet and changed out of my school uniform. And I'll try harder to listen to Him. "Lord," I whispered, "I wish I knew what You'd like me to do right NOW."

“Ansley!” Aunt Sam called out from the floor above me. “Please come up and help fold the laundry!”

I guess that’s my answer! I thought with a chuckle. “Coming!”

With four girls, two adults, and two dogs in the house getting things dirty all the time, Aunt Sam had our washer and dryer running almost 24/7. To help her with this and the rest of the housework, all of us Daniels sisters were given daily chores to do. One of them was to help fold and put away our own clothes.

The top floor of the house was where our laundry room, Aunt Sam’s bedroom, and the family room were all located. It was in the family room that I found Aunt Sam, sitting on one of the white couches and arranging freshly cleaned clothing into short stacks on the coffee table.

“Those are yours,” Aunt Sam said, pointing to a clean but rumpled-looking pile of clothes.

I sat down, picked up one of my school polo shirts, and began folding. It was still warm to the touch.

“What are you watching?”

“The Traveling Treasure Trunk Show,” she said, picking

up the remote and turning the volume down a little. “I love it. These appraisers travel the United States—”

“Wait. ‘Appraisers’? What’s that mean?”

“Oh, sorry! Let me explain,”

Aunt Sam began. Just then, Lena and the twins entered the room to fold their own piles of laundry. Lena and Cammie settled onto spots on the other couch. Meanwhile Kitty sat on the floor and began folding her clothes directly into a laundry basket.

“Appraisers are experts, Aunt Sam went on, “who can tell you how much something is worth. Or at least, its value in terms of money. For example, on this show, appraisers travel all over the US, visiting town after town. At each place they stop, they pitch tents for about a week and—”

“Tents?” Kitty blurted out, her eyes wide. “Like for camping?”

“Not really, more like for fairgrounds.”



I sat up straighter. “You mean like how the bakeoff was set up?” Earlier in the year I had participated in a baking competition and some of it had even been shown on the morning television program, *Awake with the Lake*.

“Yes, more like the bakeoff. Although sometimes they set up in barns or school gyms, or other community spaces and don’t really need tents. Anyway, once they’ve set up, they invite people from all over town to bring in antiques, collectibles, heirlooms—or even old junk they found in the attic—to see if it’s worth anything.”

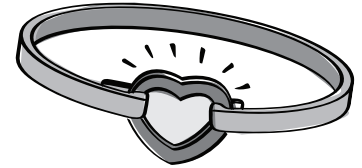


“When you say antiques, you mean really old things, right?” Cammie said as she smoothed out a T-shirt she’d just folded.

“Yes, like old clocks, or dolls, or vases or jewelry.”

“I thought ‘heirlooms’ *meant* jewelry,” Kitty said looking from the clothes she was folding to the television screen. On it, two people were admiring a fancy-looking jeweled necklace.

“Actually, ‘heirlooms’ are objects that are passed down a family line. They are things you inherit. Like something from a grandparent.”



“Or *great* grandparent,” Lena said with a small smile.

“Or great-*great* grandparent,” I added mischievously.

“Or great-great-*great* grandparent.” Cammie chuckled.

“Or great-great-great-*great* grandparent!” Kitty said, with a dimpled grin.

Then we all burst out laughing. We always enjoyed being silly together.

Still laughing, I said, “Can you imagine? What if one of us actually *did* inherit an ‘heirloom’ from a great-great-great-*great* grandparent?”

“We’d be rich!” Kitty said, throwing some socks in the air like confetti.

“Not necessarily,” Aunt Sam said. “Not to disappoint you, but a lot depends on the condition of the object. Like, if it was ever used and how often.

The history of the object itself also has something to do with it. In fact, that's what I like about this show so much. Things you are sure will be worth a lot of money are sometimes not worth very much at all. And then the oddest things that you might consider to be ... well, junk, really ... can turn out to be worth thousands of dollars!"

"Wow!" My sisters and I all started looking around the room with new eyes. What if one of the old board games on the shelves or lamps that we used every day turned out to be a priceless antique?

Just then, a voice I heard coming out of the television made me turn my head. On the screen I saw a lady speaking directly into the camera. Something about her voice sounded familiar. What was it?

I guess she's one of the hosts of the show, I thought. I pointed at the screen and asked, "Aunt Sam, who's that?"

"That's Vita Majors," Aunt Sam said. "She's one of the presenters."

"She sure is pretty." I loved how the woman's reddish-brown hair and flowered dress danced in the breeze as she walked from guest to guest, asking them

questions about the items they had brought in.

Some of the people squealed excitedly when they saw her coming. They nudged one another and said, "It's Vita!"

The people like her a lot, I thought. *She seems really nice—and she's good at interviewing, too.*

I began picturing myself in her place.

Dressed in the same beautiful dress but with my curly hair dancing in the breeze instead. I imagined that I was the one going from person to person—family to family—and interviewing them.

"And what have we here?" I'd say, just like Vita. "Tell me about that beautiful painting you're holding."

I could do that, I thought to myself. *It would be so fun! I could totally be a television host. I bet I could be good at it, too ...* then I stopped myself. *Oh no! I've found yet another thing I'd like to be when I grow up!* I shook my head. Still ... I looked back at the TV. Being a television host sure would be cool.



But what was it about the way Vita spoke that sounded so familiar to me?

Just then, Vita called someone “mate” and I snapped my fingers. “That’s it!” I said aloud. “Nikki! She sounds like Nikki and her family. I bet she’s Australian!”

“Who, Vita? Yes, you’re right. She was a TV star in Australia before coming to the US.”

I watched as Vita turned to face the camera once more. She spread out her arms and asked the viewing audience, “Do *you* have a family heirloom that you’d like appraised?

A work of art? A piece of jewelry?

Perhaps a historical artifact?

Why not let us have a look?

The Traveling Treasure Trunk

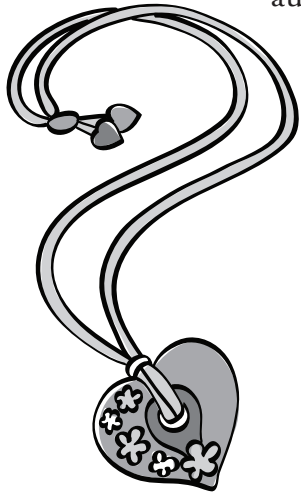
Show will be coming to your area soon. And who knows?

Perhaps there’s a treasure—

hidden in your home—

right *now*!”

My arms broke out in goosebumps.



Aunt Sam shook her head and smiled as she shut off the television. “She always ends the show that way,” she said, sounding amused.

“Can you imagine if we really *did* have something just lying around the house that was worth hundreds of thousands of dollars?” I asked my aunt and sisters. I gave the room a sweeping glance over the puzzles, games, sofa pillows, and books. “I wonder what—”

But I didn’t get to finish my thought, because my aunt was staring wide-eyed at the television. “Look! *The Traveling Treasure Trunk Show* really *will* be coming to our town soon! They’ll be here next week!”

My sisters leapt up from their spots on the couch. They knocked over some of their neat stacks of clothes. This startled the dogs, who began barking again.

“Looks like they’ll be setting up on our school playing field, too,” Lena said, reading the information off of the television screen.

Kitty jumped up and down and clapped her hands.

“That means we’ll really get to see them,” Cammie said.

“Maybe we should all go on a ‘treasure hunt’ tomorrow!” Lena suggested. “You know, search all

around the house for something old and of some value. Maybe we can find something to bring down to the tents!”

“Maybe we could get on TV!” Cammie’s eyes shone with excitement.

Kitty grabbed one of her wrists. “Maybe we’ll even get *rich*!”

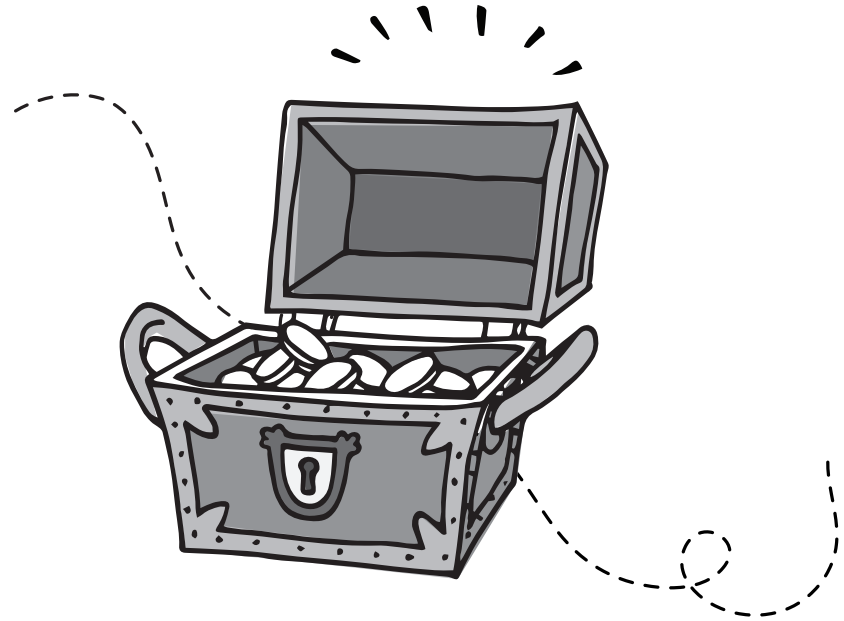
I hoped we found something all right. But not because I wanted to get rich. “I want to meet Vita!” I announced as I scooped my folded laundry into my arms. “I think it would be great to talk to her. She’s so cool. I’d love to ask her what ... wait! That’s it!” I shouted and dropped some of my T-shirts on the floor.

Aunt Sam clapped a hand onto her forehead. “Would you girls stop dropping all of the clean laundry?”

But my sisters were all asking me, “What? What’s ‘it’?”

“I know what I want to be when I grow up—and who I want to interview for my school assignment.” I pointed at the presenter who was waving goodbye as the camera pulled back from her smiling face.

“It’s Vita!”



— MEET THE — **DANIELS SISTERS**

*They're back—for an all new adventure!
And the story has just begun...*

**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***.

And now the four of them are off to search for new treasures, in a story that invites you to join them as they discover their place in God's story—and the greatest treasure of all!



And the adventure continues for YOU
through the ***Reflections Journal***! The Journal is full of
prompts and activities based on the story you just read
and will help you grow in your faith.

SO, JUMP IN, AND FIND THE TREASURE IN YOUR STORY!