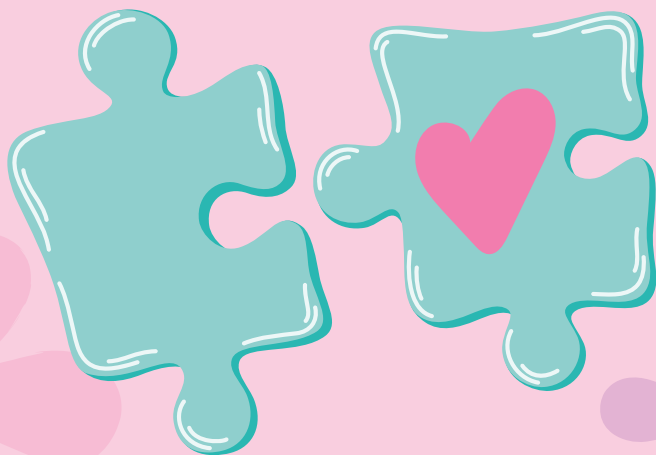


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# TREASURE HUNTERS!

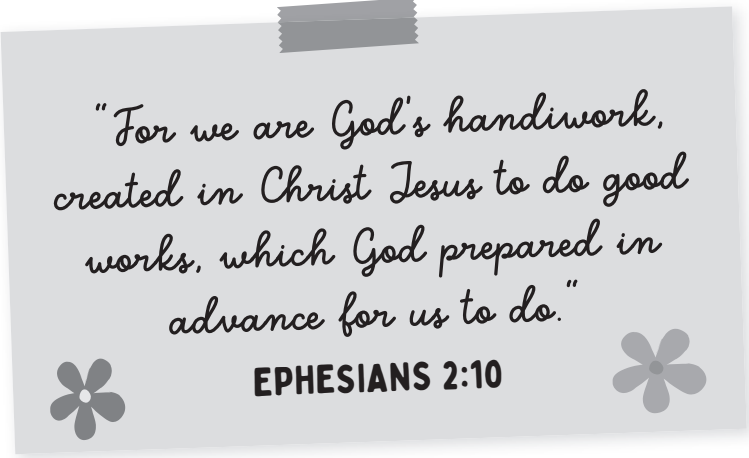

*A Daniels Sisters Mystery*



## Chapter seven

— A MAJOR BREAK IN THE CASE —

WRITTEN BY JANEL RODRIGUEZ-FERRER



*"For we are God's handiwork,  
created in Christ Jesus to do good  
works, which God prepared in  
advance for us to do."*

**EPHESIANS 2:10**



— Chapter Seven —

**A MAJOR BREAK  
IN THE CASE**


As he drove us to the Whittakers' home for our dinner with Vita Majors, Dad shook his head at us and chuckled. "I don't know who's more excited. You, Sam," he said to his sister (our Aunt Samantha), "or you four!"

We all laughed.

"But I love the *Traveling Treasure Trunk Show*," Aunt Sam said from her seat next to him. "And I can't believe we're going to meet Vita Majors!"

Me neither, I thought to myself from the backseat of the car. And I turned to look at my reflection in the window.

Vita Majors, the host of the *Traveling Treasure Trunk Show*, was very pretty and cool-looking. She also seemed really nice and made the job of being a television host look like a lot of fun. Plus, she had a wonderful smile.



She also had a great Australian accent and wore the most beautiful clothes. She was a glamorous television figure we were all excited to meet. But I was extra excited for two reasons. First, I wanted to interview her for my school assignment, and second, because I thought she could help us with a mystery my sisters and I were working on.

“Go faster, Dad, go faster!” I said.  
“I’m going fast enough,” Dad said, his voice suddenly sounding a little more serious. “Just relax, ladies, please. We’ll be there before you know it.”

“Oh, all right,” Aunt Sam said. She sounded like a disappointed little kid, and this made everyone else laugh again.

Dad was, of course, right. And soon we were pulling into the driveway of the Whitakers’ home.

I loved their house. It was big and old and had probably belonged to another Tennessee family for one hundred years before Pastor Whitaker and his family came along. It looked sprawling and historic and impressive from the outside. But on the inside, things were always falling apart. Sometimes the roof needed retiling, or the chimney



sweeping, or the basement sump pumped after a flood. It was a lot of work and some of the repairs could be expensive. It made Pastor Whitaker sometimes say that he wanted to move out. But Mrs. Whitaker would say that it was fitting that a house that looked so grand on the outside was so imperfect on the inside. “It keeps us humble,” she would say. “So we cannot boast. And it makes us ask for help.”

And help they got. There were people in our church who were plumbers and roofers and soil scientists who were always ready to lend a helping hand. It always warmed my heart to see the way the people in our



church looked out for one another.

I let my gaze follow the slate path through the front garden and up to the front door. *Where was Vita?* I wondered.

Suddenly, Nikki bolted out of the house and began jogging towards us. “Hi, guys!” she waved.

“Hi!” I waved back with a grin. Then I glanced back at the front door in case Vita decided to pop out, too.

“Where’s Vita?” I asked.

Nikki looked behind both of her shoulders. “She’s around here somewhere.”

“Here I am!” A beautiful woman stood up from where she had been crouching in a flower bed. A breeze was blowing her long, silky hair, and ruffling her flowery wrap dress. It made her look like she belonged in the garden as much as the flowers. She smiled brightly and waved us over. “Come here,” she said, “I found it!” I didn’t know what she was talking about, but Nikki seemed to, so my sisters and I all ran over to her side.

“Hello, everyone,” she said, greeting all of us with a bright smile. “I was coming back from the gazebo—you know, from having a little ‘God and me’ time ...”

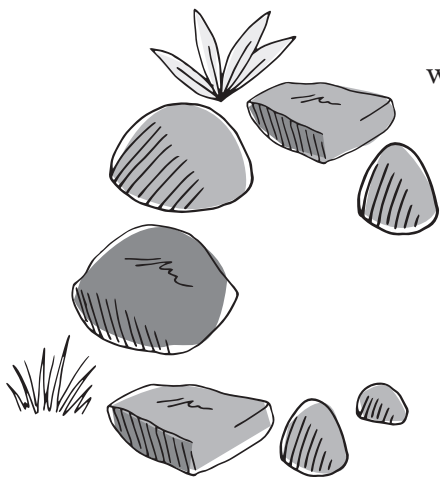


I stared at Vita and gulped. “‘God and me’ time?”

“Oh, yes,” Vita turned towards me. “Everyone needs to have a little alone time with God. Every day, I think. Don’t you? He loves us more than anyone else we know, and we should love Him more than anyone else we know. And if two people love each other that much, they need to spend time with each other. Not watching TV or scrolling on their phones or anything. Just being together. It’s important to give God that time.” She shrugged her shoulders. “Otherwise, how else are you going to hear Him in your heart?”

I was stunned. When I found out that Vita was a friend of the Whitaker family, I hadn’t realized that she was also a praying woman. And hearing her use the phrase “God and me time”—just like Mom used to say—made me like her even more. “Yes,” I said. “I like to spend time with God anywhere and anytime. All my sisters do.” I gestured at them.

Vita shook hands with them all. “Lovely to meet you,” she said and gave them each a smile that seemed to be just for them. “But this is why I called you all over. Look!” Vita pointed to a collection of small rocks that



were arranged on the ground to form the letter “C.”

“What are we looking at?” I asked.

“Well, that’s just it, it’s a bit of a mystery,” Vita said, laughing.

My sisters and I exchanged glances. *Another* mystery?

“Nikki was showing me the front garden earlier and told me how her mum has been clearing it out to plant some things now that it’s spring. And that they found these—different letters made of rocks that can be found hidden in the bushes and the grass.”

Nikki nodded. “We found the letter ‘A’ back there, the ‘B’ near that tree, and the ‘C’ here. So we’re now calling it the ‘ABC’ garden.”

My sisters and I all nodded. Little details like this were what made living in an old house so neat. There was a history to a house that other families had lived in before. My own house wasn’t like this. It was new, and



we were the first family ever to live in it.

“The mystery is—what do the letters stand for?” Vita asked. “It’s not for the flowers or plants that are around them. For instance, here around the ‘C’ there are some beautiful tulips, but nothing beginning with the letter ‘C.’ And around the letter ‘A’ there are some climbing rose shrubs—they’re not in bloom yet, obviously—but nothing beginning with the letter ‘A.’ And over where the ‘B’ is, well, that’s a jacaranda tree, so ... what do these letters mean?”

“Maybe there *used* to be plants and flowers beginning with those letters when the letters were first put there long ago?” Lena guessed.

“Maybe a hundred years ago a mom was teaching her kids about the alphabet and gardening at the same time?” Cammie shrugged.

“Maybe the letters stand for the names of the people who used to live here?” I suggested. “Although it’s weird that it’s literally ‘A, B, C ...’”

“... and D!” said Kitty in an excited voice. She pointed to a space on the ground near a bush sprouting yellow flowers.



We ran over to where Kitty stood. There was a capital D just as she said, neatly arranged into the packed soil.

“Yep,” Lena said. “That’s a D all right.”

Vita pursed her lips into a small smile. “Mysterious-er and mysterious-er!”

“Maybe we’ll find the whole alphabet!” Nikki said, taking a quick look around the ground around here.

“Hmmm,” I said, thinking for a moment. “D’ for ... dirt?”

Everyone laughed.

Vita clapped her hands. “Finally, we’ve got a match!”


I felt warm inside. Vita approved of my joke!

Mrs. Whittaker nudged her friend. “You know, this is exactly the sort of mystery that Zu-Zu Booth, Super-Sleuth would have solved.”

Vita crossed her arms and nodded. She looked over at the rest of us and explained. “Before I was on the *Traveling Trunk Show*, I played a teen detective on a kids’ show in Australia.”

“*Cooooool*,” my sisters and I chorused.

“I guess that’s why they thought I’d make a good host on a show about looking for treasures and stuff.”



“That’s something you can write down for your interview essay,” Nikki told me.

This time I felt hot when Vita turned to me. “Oh, are you the one who wants to be a television presenter?” “Kind of,” I said shyly.

Vita placed an arm around my shoulders as we headed back to the house. “You can sit next to me at dinner,” she said, “and ask me all the questions you want.”


*She really gives people her attention.* I thought to myself as we walked together, side by side. That’s probably a really important thing to know how to do when you work with and interview people. Out loud, I asked, “How do you do that?”

Vita tilted her head. “What?”

“Make people feel special.”

“Oh. Do I? I’m glad you think so.” She leaned in a little bit. “But to answer your question, the secret to making others feel special is—well, it’s not a secret at all. It’s just to remember to treat everyone like *they* are Jesus. But also to treat everyone like *you* are Jesus. So, you know, with love and kindness and attention.”

I nodded. “I know about that. That is, I know I’m



supposed to do that. And sometimes I remember. But a lot of times I forget.” I sighed.

But Vita laughed. “Oh, I forget, too! It takes a lot of practice! But if we are treating people like Jesus or acting like *we’re* Jesus, that means we have to forgive *ourselves* whenever we mess up.”

I laughed. “That’s a good point!”


“Ah! Now, see, with that great smile? I can see you as a television presenter for sure.”

I had thought *she* had a great smile, and now she was saying *I* did! Still feeling shy, I could only giggle and say, “Thanks!”

“Dinner is ready,” Mrs. Whitaker announced, waving us all over to the dining room table. It had been expanded somehow. And extra chairs had been arranged around it. All the chairs and people made the room look smaller, but cozier. “Please find a seat anywhere,” Mrs. Whitaker continued. Then she crooked her finger at her daughters. “Come on, girls, help me bring the food out from the kitchen.”

“Let me help, too!” Vita began to follow Nikki.

“Me, too!” I said, getting ready to join them.



But Mrs. Whitaker shooed us away. “Don’t be silly. You’re our guests. Just find a seat and get to know each other. We’ll have everything out in a jiffy.”

Aunt Sam sat on Vita’s right side, and I sat on her left. My three sisters sat across from us and Dad was given a place at one of the ends of the table. When he and Pastor Whitaker quickly got into a private conversation, I turned to Vita. But before I could speak, Aunt Sam asked. “Vita, would you please tell us more about your acting days?”

Vita laughed. It was the kind of sound that made people around her feel good inside. “You mean about my life as a teen detective?”

At the word “detective” my sisters and I all looked at each other and leaned in.

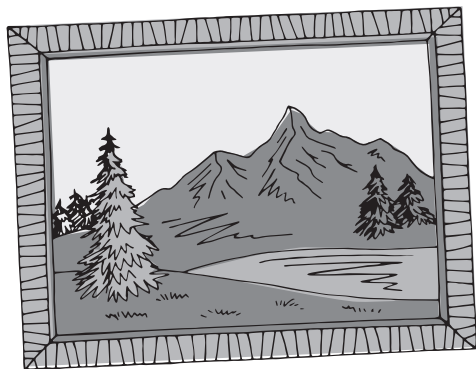
“Well, let’s see. The grandmother of my character on the show ran an antique shop,” Vita explained. “And a lot of the mysteries in the episodes centered around the antiques. Because of this I ended up learning quite a bit about them in real life. And now, with *Treshz*,” (for a moment I didn’t understand that she called the *Traveling Treasure Trunk Show* that for short) “I’ve learned even more.”

“Really? Do you know about jewelry? Like about pearl necklaces and stuff?” Kitty asked. Then she blurted “Ow!” I was pretty sure it was because Cammie had kicked her under the table.

Vita didn't seem to notice. She nodded. “Oh, sure, and art, and silver, and furniture. All sorts of things.” “What's the most expensive thing you've ever discovered on your show?” Alena asked.


“Oh, it was an oil painting done by a famous artist. It was sold at auction for almost a million dollars.”

“What about pearls?” Kitty asked, glaring at Cammie so she wouldn't get kicked again. “Did you ever see someone present an old pearl necklace, for instance? Was it worth a lot of money?”



My sisters and I all leaned in even closer.

“Well ...” Vita sighed. “I don't want to disappoint you, but, to be honest, it's kind



of rare for a pearl necklace to increase much in value. There are a lot of factors that need to be present to make a pearl necklace valuable. An old strand of pearls is often worth just as much as a new one. Pearls being old doesn't tend to make much of a difference."

"Oh." I sagged a little in my seat.

"Isn't it just nice to wear a pretty piece of jewelry that belonged to your grandmother, without it having to be worth thousands of dollars? I think it's even better that way." She shuddered. "I've seen families fall apart because of greed over an object that turned out to be worth a lot of money. They completely miss the point of the treasure of family." She made a circle in the air with a pointer finger. "Look at you four. What blessings you sisters must be to one another."

Kitty rubbed her shin and looked at Cammie like she wasn't quite convinced that her sister was such a treasure.

Cammie mouthed out the word, "Sorry."

"It's funny you should say that," Lena said to Vita. "Because we know of two sisters who had an actual falling out over their mother's pearl necklace. The only thing is, neither of them ever got to sell it that we



know of. And apparently, it disappeared!”

Vita gasped. “Another mystery!”

“Yes,” I jumped in. “And we wanted to ask you for help.”

Vita gave me and my sisters a long, serious look. “You know I’m not a real detective, right?”

“Oh, yes, of course,” I said. “But we thought there might be a *slim* possibility that whoever has the necklace might try to sell it at the Traveling Treas ... that is, at *Treashz*.”

“Exactly,” Lena chimed in. “And we wanted to ask you to let the people on the show know. So they could keep an eye out for it. That sort of thing.”

“Maybe we can even catch the thief on TV!” Kitty said, her eyes shining.

“Well, I don’t know about that! But I’ll do anything I can to help you young ladies,” Vita told us. “Would any of you happen to have a picture of the pearls?”

“No, but Kitty can draw them.” Cammie pointed at her twin. “Can’t you Kitty?”

Kitty nodded and asked Nikki (who had just finished putting the last of the food on the table and sat down),



“Can I get a pen?”

With a nod, Nikki sprang up from her chair and returned immediately with a pen.

“It’s purple,” Kitty said, with a giggle.

“That was all I could find close by.” Nikki shrugged.

“I like it!” Kitty said, and she began sketching on a paper napkin that had been lying on the table.


Vita cupped her chin with her hand and watched Kitty draw. “I wish drawing came as easy to me as it does to you. I love art.” And after Kitty handed her the drawing, Vita looked at it closely. “I feel like I’ve seen this necklace before.”

“Really? When? Did someone bring it in already?” My sisters and I all peppered her with questions.

Vita held out a hand. “No, it can’t be that. We haven’t started filming yet,” she said. She pouted, looking a little stumped. “It’ll come to me.” Next, she pulled out her phone and took a photo of the sketch. “In the meantime, I’ll email and text this piccy,” (she meant photo) “to the appraisers from the show and tell them to keep an eye out for it, shall I?”

“Yes, please,” we all agreed. “Thank you so much!”

“No worries! Like I said before, ladies, I’m happy to help.”



Dad suddenly spoke up. “Uh-oh. Have my girls roped you into doing something?” he asked Vita.

“Oh, no, it’s okay,” Vita said.

Dad met my eyes with a look that said, “You’re not asking a person you’ve just met for any favors, are you?”

I grabbed a roll from the bowl closest to me and began to butter it nervously.

“Ansley,” Dad said.

I looked at him from the corner of my eye. “Yes?”


But *his* eyes were twinkling. “I have good news for you. All of you girls, actually. I found the retirement home where Miss Cynthia’s sister is living. And it’s close to town.”

“You did? That’s great!” I clapped my hands together.

“It’s called Silver Springs ...”

“Retirement Village?” Vita finished for him. “Sorry. I didn’t mean to break in like that. It’s just that that’s the name of the place I’ll be visiting tomorrow for a meet-and-greet. The *Traveling Treasure Trunk Show* is popular in retirement homes and senior living spaces. I always make it a point to stop by such places in whatever town we’re staying in.”

“You’re going to be there? Tomorrow?” I couldn’t



believe my ears. “Can I come?”

“But you have school,” Dad reminded me.

“I know! But can’t you give me permission to go along? I can write about the experience as part of my interview-essay assignment. Or for extra credit or something! Please Dad?”

“Well, you don’t just need my permission,” Dad said. “You didn’t even ask Ms. Majors if it was okay to go with her.”

I clasped my hands together and turned to Vita. “Please? Can I? One of the ladies we mentioned—the sisters who lost the pearl necklace—lives there. I would love to try to see her!”

“I can probably work that out,” Vita said. “But when I visit these places I do all I can to help out. I serve food, I entertain, and I listen to people. I treat them all like Jesus, remember? If you come along, will you help me do that?”

I nodded. “Oh, yes! Yes! I promise. I will. I’ll help!”

Vita held out her hand. “All right, then. Tomorrow we visit Silver Springs together?”

I shook her hand. “It’s a deal.”

— 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!