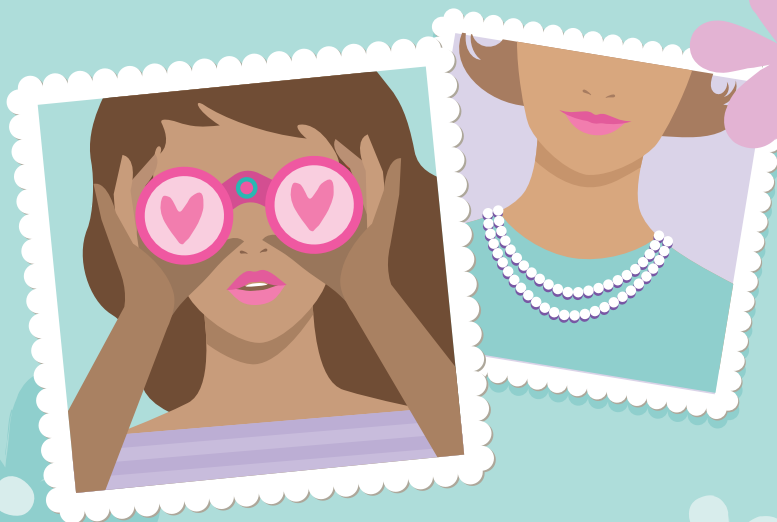


TREASURE HUNTERS!

A Daniels Sisters Mystery



Chapter six

— PEARLS OF GREAT PRICE —

WRITTEN BY JANEL RODRIGUEZ-FERRER



*"Trust in the Lord with all
your heart and lean not on
your own understanding;
in all your ways submit to
Him, and He will make
your paths straight."*

PROVERBS 3:5-6



– Chapter Six –

**PEARLS OF
GREAT PRICE**

All four Daniels sisters were sitting in a circle on the rug of the twins' bedroom. Three of them were confused and staring at the fourth one.

Guess which one I was.

Amber (or “Kitty” as we liked to call her), was looking at me with her head slightly tilted, like she was trying to hear a very faint noise.

Big sister Lena had her eyebrows raised in surprise and was blinking fast.

And Ashton (aka Cammie), just said, “Huh? What do you mean?”

I burst out laughing at all the different expressions on their faces. But when my sisters all shushed me, I suddenly remembered that we were in a secret meeting and were supposed to be whispering.



I explained in a soft voice, “I just think that if someone *really did* steal Miss Cynthia’s pearls, that person might want to sell them! And what better place to do that than at the *Traveling Treasure Trunk Show*?”

“Yeah, but ...” Cammie began.

I kept going. “And the place is going to be swarming with all those—what are those people called again, Lena? The ones who tell you how much the things are worth?”

“Appraisers,” Lena said.

“Right! They wouldn’t know that they were helping a thief find out how much the pearls were worth. Poor Miss Cynthia will never see them again!”

Cammie shrugged. “Haven’t they been missing for a long time? They might *already* be gone forever.”

I put my hands on my hips. “But there’s a chance, isn’t there? I won’t give up that easily. I want to follow every idea or lead we can think of to help Miss Cynthia.”

Cammie frowned. “Hey, I want to help her, too!”

“We all do,” Kitty added, hugging her knees.

Lena stroked her chin. “It’s too bad we didn’t take a picture of that photo of her mother wearing the

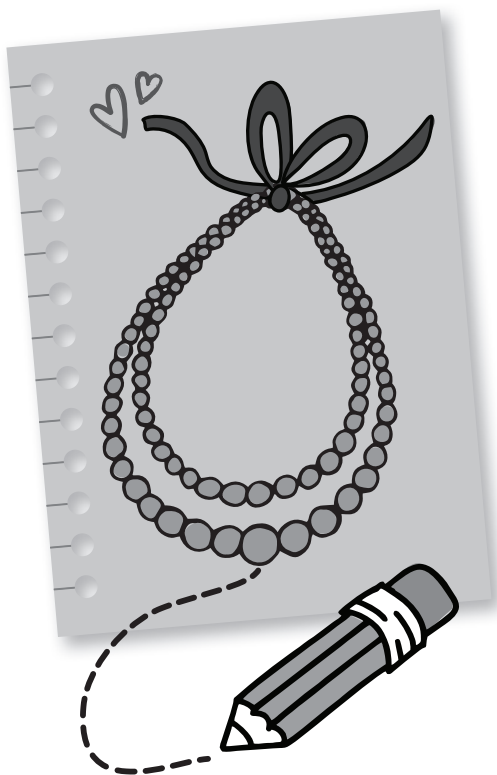
pearls. That would have been the perfect thing to show the appraisers.”

I snapped my fingers, disappointed none of us had thought of doing that.

After a moment of silence, Kitty piped up, “I can make a sketch of the pearls. Would that help? I remember what they look like and everything: two strands, black ribbon tie, uneven shapes.”

“That’s a great idea.” Lena nodded approvingly. “We could make copies of the sketch and give them to the appraisers.”

“Good thinking!” I gave Kitty a fake punch in the arm. “You’re like a real detective already!”





Kitty pretended to almost fall over and smiled shyly. “Can you imagine if we were able to find those pearls after all this time?” I clasped my hands together and squealed.

Lena shushed me again.

Cammie pinched an inch of air between her thumb and forefinger. “We have about this much time,” she looked sidelong at me, “to solve a mystery that’s years and years old. How long has it been since the necklace has gone missing, Ansley?”

“Oh,” I said, deflating a little. I don’t know. I can only remember that she said it happened after her mom died. I guess we need to find out when! But we can do it. I’m sure of it. And with God’s help, we’ll solve this case!”

“Then we’d better *ask* for it,” Lena said, taking one of my hands and one of Cammie’s.

We got the hint, and both Cammie and I reached for Kitty’s hands. Soon we were all holding hands and bowing our heads together.

“Heavenly Father,” Lena said, “We, the, uh, newly formed **DANIELS SISTERS DETECTIVE AGENCY**, come before You this evening to ask for Your help in solving

our first mystery. Please, Lord, if it is Your Will, help us to find Miss Cynthia's pearls and get them back to her."

When Lena prays, she sounds kind of like a pastor, I thought, opening one eye to peek at her. *Like Dad.* Then, out loud I added. "And please help Miss Cynthia and her sister make peace and be friends again."

"Yes, that, too, please Heavenly Father," Lena said, without raising her head. "We also ask for the guidance of the Holy Spirit on this case, in Jesus' name, amen."

"Amen," the rest of us chorused. When I raised my head and met the eyes of my sisters, we all smiled at one another.

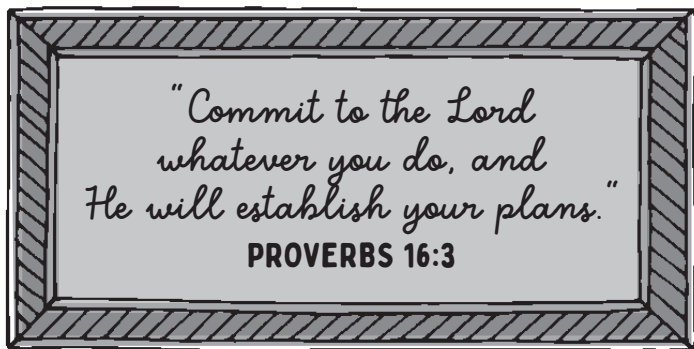
I can hardly wait to really get started on solving this mystery, I thought as I rubbed my hands together. *Tomorrow can't come soon enough!*



When the next day finally *did* arrive, it found my sisters and me rushing around, practically climbing over each other to get ready for school—in other words, a typical Monday. That particular morning, though, I got ready so fast that I was the first sister dressed and ready to face the day. I couldn't help it. I wanted to get working on the "Case of the Missing Pearls" as quickly as possible.

But how am I going to do that? I wondered as I made my way down the stairs. Suddenly I paused just before setting my foot down on the last step.

There, in the space above the French doors to my father's office, was a Bible verse painted directly on the wall. I read it every day going up and down the stairs. But that morning, it really stood out to me. It read:



That was it! I realized what we detectives needed was a plan of action. Something we forgot to think about at our meeting the night before! We needed God to literally let us know what our next steps should be.

I sat down on the second-to-last step at the bottom of the staircase and opened my backpack. Then, after taking out my prayer journal and a pen, I wrote on a fresh, clean page:

Good morning, Lord.

Thank you for blessing me and my family with another fresh new day! It is a gift I want to use wisely.

As you know, we committed the Case of Missing Pearls to You last night. Now I need to know what to do next. That is, what is Your plan? How should I begin this investigation?

I know the only way to be a good detective is to listen to Your guidance. Please be our light and lead me and my sisters in the way we should go.

Thank you!

Amen.

When I finished, I read over what I wrote and smiled. In mystery books, detectives carried around lanterns, candles, or flashlights. I didn't need any of those if I had Jesus!

I snapped my prayer journal closed and then craned my neck to look through the stairway banisters. I could see Dad in the kitchen, sprinkling some cinnamon into his coffee.

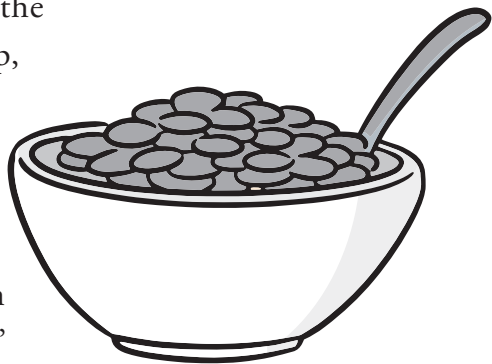
Seeing him made me remember our conversation in the car and how Dad said he would help us look for Belinda. Suddenly a plan started forming in my head. I sat back down on the step, opened my journal and began listing a series of steps.

1. Follow up with Dad about how to find Belinda
2. Get Kitty to make that sketch of the pearls ASAP

Hmmm, I thought. I held my pen over the page in case I could think of any more steps to write down.

When I didn't, I closed the book, leaped off the step, and headed over to my father.

Everything starts with a first step, I thought to myself. Then I called out, "Morning!" to my father as I opened a kitchen cabinet to get a bowl for my cereal.



"Good morning!" Dad replied, his eyes crinkling at me from over the top of his mug.

I looked at him from the corner of my eye. "Hey, Dad. You know how we talked about your trying to track down Miss Cynthia's sister?"

"Yes." Dad took a sip of his coffee.

"How exactly will you do that?" I opened a box of cereal that looked like mini puffed-out pillows, and began pouring them into the bowl.

"Well," Dad thoughtfully stroked his chin. "It will take a little detective work."

I jumped in surprise at his words, and some of the pillows spilled on the counter. “Whoops!” I said, brushing them into my hand. “Sorry, Dad!”

Dad nodded as we both settled into chairs that sat side-by-side at the kitchen table. “I will need to find out Belinda’s last name, for starters,” Dad explained.

“Do the sisters share the same last name? Or is ‘Martin’ Miss Cynthia’s married name? Or did Belinda get married and change her name? And what nursing home is she in? One in the neighborhood? Out of town? Out of state?”

“That’s a lot of questions,” I said.

And we don’t have a lot of time, I thought.

“Yes,” Dad admitted.

“I might be able to get





all the answers quickly if I call Miss Cynthia and ask her directly. But I have to be careful about how I ask her. I don't want to pry into her business. And I don't want her getting upset with me. We want to help her, not hurt her. And she may not want our help."

"Maybe she *would* answer those questions if I asked them," I said. "She really liked talking to us girls. She even said that we were welcome to visit her anytime." Remembering this gave me an idea. "Hey, Dad, can you call her up and ask if I can visit her after school sometime this week?" Before he even answered, I began making plans under my breath. "I can bake her something ... she likes soft food ... maybe a coffee cake ..."

"That sounds like a plan," Dad said.

I sat up straighter in my chair. Did he say "a plan"? I was definitely on the right track! "Great!" I said, "Thanks, Dad."

He kissed me on the forehead and got up out of his chair just as my sisters all entered the kitchen together. I couldn't wait to tell them how I'd already started working on the case! *But I'll have to wait until*

we're in school, I told myself. We don't want anyone else to know about the "Daniels Sisters Detective Agency" just yet!

But the whole ride to school I was just bursting to tell my sisters about my conversation with Dad. Still, I waited until after Aunt Sam dropped us off at the front gates of Roland Lake Academy. Once she drove away (and even though my sisters were still waving goodbye to Aunt Sam) I opened my mouth to tell them about the latest developments in the case. But just then, Nikki came running over to me, her long blond hair flying behind her like a streamer.

"Ansley!" she said, sounding a little out of breath, "You're just the person I wanted to see. Well, all of you are, actually. Glad I caught you all at the same time."

I knew exactly what she meant. Because even though it seemed like my sisters and I were always together, at Roland Lake we were not. Since our schools were in three different buildings, Lena, the twins, and I usually split up the moment we passed through the gates. The twins would go left, to the brick building that was the elementary school. It faced the courtyard and the high school on the right side



(where Lena went). In between them was the middle school. I liked it the best of the buildings—and not just because it was the school I went to. I loved the impressive white columns in the front. And the shiny, black front doors were often open in welcome.

“What is it, Nikki?” I asked. “Is everything all right?”

Nikki gulped some air. “Oh, yeah, I’m fine. I’m just panting because I ran across the courtyard when I saw all of you. I wanted to make sure you knew that you were all invited to dinner tonight.”

“Tonight?” I gasped, unable to hide my surprise. “But ... do you mean ... do you mean ...?” Nikki nodded excitedly. “Yes! Vita Majors is at my house!”

My sisters and I all squealed with excitement.

“Already?” Lena asked.

Nikki nodded again. “She came last night.” Nikki gestured behind us, pointing to the football field. “See? Trucks for the *Traveling Treasure Trunk Show* have already started arriving.”



We all whirled around to look over our shoulders. Large trucks were driving in a line, like a caravan, and slowly making the turn onto the school grounds.

I grabbed the arm of the nearest sister to me. Kitty said *ow!* under her breath when I clutched her just a little too hard. “Sorry!” I giggled.

Kitty rubbed her arm but giggled back.

“It’s just so exciting!” I bubbled.

We turned back to face Nikki and Lena asked, “Are you sure it’s okay with Vita? I mean, she only just got here. Will she be okay dealing with four, um, energetic, and ‘curious’ kids?” She glanced over at me, Cammie,



and Kitty when she said “kids.”

Cammie noticed and scowled. “We’re not exactly babies, you know, Lena.”

Lena smiled, looking slightly embarrassed.

“Oh, yes, I’m sure.” Nikki tucked a lock of hair behind her ear. “Vita told us she loves meeting people. And she especially loves families because she’s so far away from her own.”

Hearing this made me feel a little sad for Vita. Sometimes my family could get on my nerves. But doesn’t everyone feel that way about their family from time to time? Sometimes I even wanted to get away from them for a little bit and just have some alone time. Mom used to need this, too. She called it “God and Me Time.” But I couldn’t really imagine being away from Dad or any of my sisters for too long.

“Speaking of family,” Lena said. “Does Aunt Sam know about this? Or Dad?”

Nikki scooped her cell phone out of her pocket. “Dad was going to call them and ask. And ... oh!” She quickly read the text that appeared on its screen. “It



looks like they both said yes! So we'll be seeing you all tonight!"

My sisters and I joined hands and jumped up and down.

I couldn't believe it! I was going to finally meet Vita! I was excited, but suddenly a little worried, too. *I hope she's okay with me asking her a lot of questions, I thought, as I made my way to the middle school with Nikki. Especially since she's the one who usually does all the asking!*



"The Lord Himself
goes before you and
will be with you;
He will never leave you
nor forsake you.
Do not be afraid;
do not be discouraged"

DEUTERONOMY 31:8

— 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.**