

TREASURE HUNTERS!

A Daniels Sisters Mystery



Chapter two

— GOLDEN DREAMS —

WRITTEN BY JANEL RODRIGUEZ-FERRER



*"But seek first His kingdom
and His righteousness,
and all these things
will be given to you as well."*

MATTHEW 6:33



— Chapter Two —



Kitty tilted her head and looked at me with a puzzled expression on her face. “Are you saying you want to be a *treasure hunter* when you grow up?”

“No!” I laughed. “A television host or presenter or something like that. You know, like Vita Majors on the *Traveling Treasure Trunk Show*.” I pointed at the TV.

“Ooooooh,” Kitty nodded. “She looked really cool.”

She *had* looked really cool—like the perfect person for me to interview for my “What I Want to Be When I Grow Up” essay. And I was going to get to see her in person! At least, I hoped so. I just had to figure out some way to meet her when she was in town next week.

The best way to do that, I thought as I rubbed my hands together, is to get on the show. And to get on

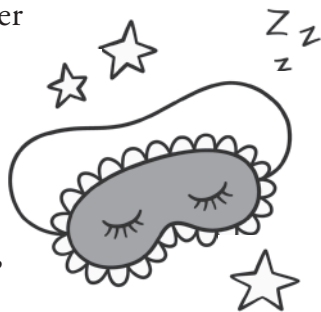


the show I would need to bring over some kind of antique treasure for the experts to examine. *Did we have anything like that in the house?* I wondered. I could hardly wait to start searching. But it would have to wait until tomorrow when my sisters and I didn't have school and could search.

That night I decided to go to bed early. I figured the sooner I got to bed, the sooner tomorrow would come. But that plan didn't really work. Maybe I was too excited, or not really sleepy. Whatever the reason, I ended up lying there, staring up at the dark ceiling. I kept telling myself over and over again (through gritted teeth), "*Fall asleep ... fall asleep ...!*" (Not exactly relaxing!) Then I decided to try another way to help myself relax.

I got up, kneeled by the side of my bed, closed my eyes, and began to pray. But just as I opened my mouth, I paused. I didn't want to ask God for anything, because I had already asked for His help before. And I had already told Him that I wasn't going to worry and that I was going to trust Him. So, what should I say? I wondered. Then I knew.

“Hi God. It’s me, again. I just wanted to say ... thank You.” I whispered. Then, after I cleared my throat, I said it more loudly and firmly. Thank You, God. Thanks for listening to me. For caring about me. For being there for me and for being ... well, amazing! Just ... thank You.” My eyes still closed, I shrugged my shoulders.



“That’s all I wanted to say, I guess. So ... good night!” I climbed back onto my bed and added a final, “Oh—and I love You!”

Then, with a happy sigh, I fluffed up my pillow, snuggled down under the covers, and felt my eyelids begin to grow heavy. (*Finally!*) But just as I started drifting off to dreamland, a sudden thought made my eyes fly open.

“Oh no!” I whispered into the dark. “I forgot! I have gymnastics tomorrow!”

Normally I looked forward to gymnastics class. I loved it! Only now I knew that I wouldn’t be able to get started on our Daniels Sisters “treasure hunt” until I



came back from the gym tomorrow afternoon.

“Oh, man!” I threw my blanket over my face and groaned.

The next morning after breakfast, I hopped off my counter stool, grabbed my gym bag, and turned toward my sisters, who were still eating. “Remember,” I told them, “Don’t start the treasure hunt without me!” Lena sighed. “How can we forget? You’ve only said it three times already.”

Kitty crossed her arms. “It’s not really fair, you know. Are we just supposed to wait here and do nothing until you get back?”

Aunt Sam, who was putting dishes away in the dishwasher, chuckled. “Oh, you won’t be doing nothing. You can help me run errands. Your dad will be home tonight from his business trip. We need to get groceries for dinner.”

Kitty and Lena groaned.

“Well, I can’t help with that,” Cammie said. She grinned as she wiped her mouth with a napkin. “I have dance now. June’s mom is picking me up. I’ve got to get ready, too.”

Knowing that all of us would be busy outside of



the house that morning made me feel better. It meant no one would get a head start on the treasure hunt. *And we'll probably all get back home around the same time, too*, I thought. *We can start looking for treasure after lunch.*

Just then, a car horn honked outside. Cammie and I exchanged glances. Was it my ride or hers?

“ANSLEY!”

It was mine.

I dashed outside.

“Hi, Ansley,” my friend, Guadalupe, called out from the backseat of her parents’ car. She popped the door. “Come on in,” she said. Her tiny gold cross dangled from her chain as she held the door open. Her hair, which was usually styled in two long black braids, was arranged in a neat bun. (Just like mine! Aunt Sam had fixed my hair earlier in the morning so that it would be neat and away from my eyes—perfect for gymnastics.)

“Where’s Nikki?” I asked. Our friend, Nikki, also took gym with us. And on those Saturdays when Guadalupe’s mom took me to class, she usually picked

Nikki up first. And once all three of us were together, we would chat and giggle our way the whole ride over to Grace-N-Power Gym.

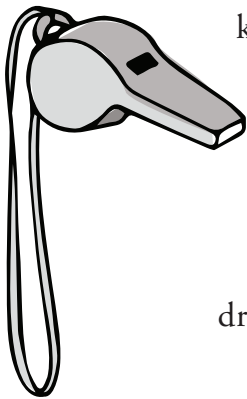
“Nikki’s out of town with her family this weekend, remember?” Guadalupe said.

“Oh, right.” *Drat*. I hadn’t remembered. I’d spent half my morning looking forward to seeing and speaking to Nikki. Especially because her family was from Australia. I was hoping maybe she had heard of Vita Majors. I wanted to know what she thought of her. I pressed my lips together in disappointment. But thinking about the *Traveling Treasure Trunk Show* got me all excited again. (One thing about me: I don’t stay down for long!)

“Hey Guadalupe,” I said, cheerfully. “Do you know who you are interviewing for your essay about what you want to be when you grow up?”

Guadalupe nodded. “I bet it’s the same person as you!”

“*What?*” My heart suddenly dropped. “You mean ... you mean ...?”



“Coach Well, of course.” Guadalupe said.

“Oh!” My heart flew back to its rightful place.

Of course.

Guadalupe went on. “You know, since he’s a gymnast who made it to the Olympics and everything. My mom already called and asked if I could speak to him after class.”

Phew! Although I was relieved that we hadn’t had the same idea about Vita, I was also feeling just the teensiest bit sorry that I wasn’t the one interviewing Coach Well. I really *did* love gymnastics. I sighed to myself. Sometimes it was hard to be interested in so many things.

I decided to change the subject. “Have you ever heard about the *Traveling Treasure Trunk Show*?” I asked.

Guadalupe squinted her eyes. “I ... think ... so.”

“I have!” her mom piped up from the driver’s seat. She met my eyes in the reflection of the rear-view mirror. “Whenever I come across it playing on TV, I stop changing the channels, sit down, and watch the show. There are not only lovely collectibles and



antiques on it, but some of the stories people tell about why they have those things can be so interesting!

“Did you know the show is coming to town in a couple of weeks?” I asked her.

Mrs. Gonzalez nodded. “There was an email from the school last night. Apparently, they’ll be setting up on the school grounds and using the auditorium, too.”

I leaned forward excitedly, pulling on my seatbelt a bit. “Will you and Guadalupe be bringing anything to have ...” (*Now what was that word that Aunt Sam taught me?*) “... appraised?”

“I’m not sure we have anything we could bring to the show,” Mrs. Gonzalez said. “Will you be bringing anything?”

“I don’t think we have anything like a painting or a vase or jewels or anything,” I said, a little wistfully. “But my sisters and I are going to search the house later!”

I watched as the back of Mrs. Gonzalez’ head nodded. “You know, it doesn’t have to be something like that. Sometimes old photographs are worth something. Also diaries. Tickets to concerts or trains. Lots of things. You’d be surprised what turns out to

be worth something.”

Hearing that made my heart pound. I wondered what I would find later.

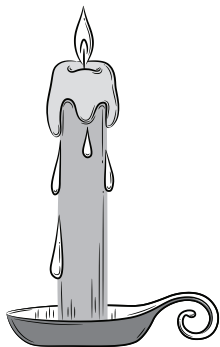
“Ooh,” Guadalupe jiggled her legs up and down. “Can we look through some of the trunks and boxes in the attic when we get home, Mommy? Maybe we can find something worth a lot of money!”

“You have actual trunks in a real attic?” I asked Guadalupe, amazed. It sounded just like something out of a Nancy Drew book. “How cool!” Suddenly, I pictured myself dressed in an old-fashioned nightgown, holding a candlestick, searching through an attic during a thunderstorm, trying to solve *The Mystery of the Antique Trunk*.

“Okay, ladies, we’re here,” Mrs. Gonzalez said, waking me out of my daydream. She waved us out of the car. “You’d better hurry. Class is just about to start.”

Guadalupe and I quickly unbuckled our seatbelts, jumped out of the car, and ran into the gym.

Even though I was in a bit of a rush, a feeling of





peace came over me the minute I entered the gymnasium. This was because Grace-N-Power—and most gyms really—felt like a “home away from home” to me. I found the familiar sights and sounds of gymnasts at work to be comforting. After all, there’s nothing else quite like the thumps of a gymnast making tumbling passes across gym mats, or the squeaks uneven bars make when someone swings their full weight around them.

After dashing into our locker room and changing into our leotards at record speed, Guadalupe and I joined the rest of our team members who had already gathered around a tall blond man wearing sports-friendly glasses.

It was Coach Well—or Flip, as we also called him. At the sight of us, he clapped his hands a few times to signal the start of class. “Let’s get started. We have that meet coming in a few weeks. You will all need to be ready.”

Nikki held up a finger. “And don’t forget to be ready for when I interview you for my school essay later!”

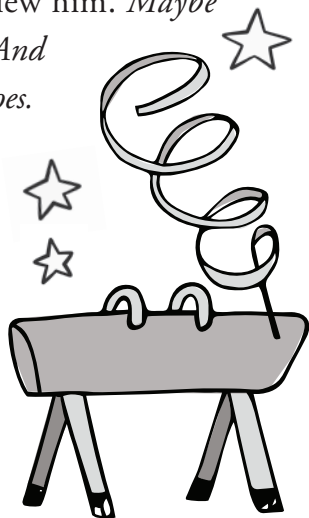
“I won’t forget!” Coach Well assured her with a grin.

We got straight to work practicing. At one point, Flip stopped one of the students and showed her how she could better perform a series of jumps and turns.

As I watched him, I remembered how he had won an Olympic medal for his floor exercises when he was younger. *Where was that medal now?* I wondered. *And did Coach Well consider it a “treasure”?* I suddenly very much wanted to see Guadalupe interview him. *Maybe I can ask him questions, too,* I thought. *And practice interviewing people the way Vita does.*

As it turned out, I *had* to stay with Guadalupe while she interviewed Coach Well, because she and her mom were my ride home! So once class was over, we changed back into our regular clothes and headed over to his office. Actually, it was the office for all the coaches at Grace-N-Power. There we found not only Flip waiting, but Mrs. Gonzalez, who was there to record the interview on her cell phone. That way Guadalupe could watch it at home later when she was writing her essay.

Mrs. Gonzalez lifted her phone to start recording. I smoothed down my T-shirt and patted my hair, hoping I looked video-ready.





Guadalupe turned to Coach Well and took a deep breath. “So, we have to write an essay about what we want to be when we grow up. And we need to interview a person who is what we want to be.” Suddenly, her cheeks got red and her voice got softer. “I want to be a gymnast.” She giggled. “That’s why my first question is, ‘How old were you when you decided you wanted to be a gymnast?’”

I leaned forward to hear his answer.

Flip looked off to the side for a moment. “Well, even when I was a small child my favorite thing to do was to go to the playground and climb the jungle gym! But it wasn’t until the day I watched the Olympics on television that I decided that I wanted to be a real gymnast.”

“It takes a lot of hard work, doesn’t it?”

Guadalupe asked.

“Yes, it does. Being a gymnast means making sacrifices. Like getting up early—really early. Before the sun. Training for hours and hours every day. Not eating much junk food. You know, eating healthy and balanced. For years and years. But if you really love doing something, you make the sacrifices you need to get it done. Especially

if you have a goal like competing in the Olympics.”

Guadalupe nodded, her eyes wide. For many athletes, I knew making it to the Olympics was their biggest dream—actually, winning a gold medal in the Olympics was their biggest dream! It meant you were the best in the world at what you did. The *entire* world! And, amazingly enough, Coach Well had won the Olympic gold medal for the floor exercise event a few years before I was born. He had accomplished his dream!

I looked over my shoulders and scanned the shelves around the office. “Where do you keep your gold medal, Coach Well?”

“I usually keep it in a glass case in my living room. Whenever I have visitors, they always want to see it. So I realized that it was best to keep it on display.” Guadalupe made a disappointed sound. I felt my shoulders sag.

“*But*,” Coach Well went on, with a sneaky grin, “because I knew you were interviewing me today, I thought it would be a good idea to bring it in and show it to you!”

Guadalupe and I gasped happily and wriggled

in our seats. Even Mrs. Gonzalez was excited. I was sure she was shaking the camera. Then we all held our breath and watched as Coach Well unzipped his backpack and slowly took out a velvet drawstring bag. From inside that, he slid out a large black box.

Almost like the kind you keep rings in. Only this was jumbo-sized.

He handed it to Guadalupe. “You can open it. Go ahead.”

Blinking fast, Guadalupe carefully pried the top open, and we all leaned in to get a better look. My heart skipped a beat when I saw the shiny gold disk nestled inside its velvet “bed.”

Guadalupe, her mom, and I all said at the same time, “Cooooooool.”

“You can pick it up.” Coach Well gently took the box from Guadalupe’s hands and held it out to her. “See how heavy it is.”



Guadalupe lifted the medal out of the box as though it were made of fragile glass. Then she nodded. "That's surprising."

"Let me see! Let me see!" I begged.

Guadalupe handed it over. I weighed it in my hands, holding it as carefully as though I were holding a small bird in a nest. "That's funny. It's both heavier than I thought and lighter than I expected," I said. "Is that weird?"

Coach Well shook his head. "Not at all. I totally understand what you mean."

"Why is that?" I wondered out loud.

"Maybe you were expecting it to be heavier because you know gold is a heavy metal. But this is not made of solid gold. It's only gold-plated. They stopped making these medals solid gold a long time ago." Coach Well picked up the medal and looked at it almost as if he were looking into a mirror. "If this were all gold, it would be worth a lot of money."

"Oh," I said. "But isn't it *already* worth a lot of money?"

"Not really. If I were to sell it for what the metal is



worth, it would just be a few hundred dollars.”

I was shocked. “You mean, if you were to take this to say, the *Traveling Treasure Trunk Show*...”

Coach Well nodded. “It wouldn’t even hit the thousand-dollar mark. But that’s okay. Because even if it were worth a million dollars, I would never want to sell it. Never!” He held it up high. “This is precious to me. I worked hard for this. It’s a symbol of the proudest moment of my life. Well, so far, anyway. And it has more value to me than it could ever have to a stranger.”

Coach Well looked straight into my eyes. “Treasures are not things that are made of silver or gold—or even diamonds. They can’t even be measured in dollars. They are those things that are most precious in your eyes.” He handed the medal back to Guadalupe so she could take a final look at it before putting it back in the box.

Remembering Coach Well’s words kept my brain bouncing the whole ride back home. I couldn’t wait to see my sisters and tell them about the things he’d said. I was also dying to tell them that I’d been able to hold the treasure of an honest-to-goodness Olympic gold medal in my hands!



Finally, I was dropped off at my house. I waved goodbye to Guadalupe and her mom and walked through the front door. As usual, I was greeted by Austin and Zette, who barked loudly and jumped on my knees in welcome. Their tails wagged like crazy as I bent down to pet them. Then, as I rubbed their chins, I looked over their heads and noticed that all three of my sisters were sitting on the floor. They were searching through what looked like a cardboard box filled with ... old ... things.

“Hey!” I called out. “No fair! You got started on the treasure hunt without me!”

— 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***.



And the adventure continues for YOU
through the ***Reflections Journal***!
SO, JUMP IN, AND FIND THE TREASURE IN YOUR STORY!