

The Case of the

# Missing Notebook

featuring  
**the Crew**



Shirley A. Vine

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by  
Shirley A. Vine



Strategic Book Group

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*To Donny*  
*With love and my thanks*



# Chapter One

I lost my personal diary—my special notebook—at school. I was packing my pink backpack after school was over for the day when I realized my little pink-covered spiral notebook was missing. Not so little really, just smaller than my regular paper size. This notebook was where I wrote my thoughts about my new school, my new home, and trying to find new friends, all the thoughts I didn't feel free to share. All the thoughts I would have shared with my special friend who I missed so much.

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Shannie was my best friend from my old neighborhood. We both liked the third grade. I didn't see her now that we moved away. She helped me handle my sister, Ella, and a lot of other important things.

“Rachel,” she'd said, “you are too sad. You are worth all of the beads you wear in your hair. In fact, you are worth a special place in heaven for all the nasty things you put up with. That sister of yours is mean. You *need* to wear her hand-me-downs even if you don't like them. You *need* to sleep with her in your room, even if she only gives you a small corner of the loft.”

Yes, Shannie was good for me. My sister, Ella, was fifteen and thought she

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was the queen of the house. My mother just let her get by with everything. She wore short sweaters and low-cut pants that showed her belly button. Ella didn't wash dishes, she didn't clean her room, and she was always on the phone. When she wanted privacy (which was always) she would chase me out of *our* room and slam the door. My mother got a wireless phone so she could have *privacy*. She had *privacy* so much that the phone went dead and needed to be recharged.

My mother was happier now that we had moved to a nicer neighborhood. She got some friends together, and we all moved our stuff to this low-income apartment. Now we had two bedrooms—one bedroom for me

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and Ella, and one bedroom for Mom. Mom worked very hard cleaning the apartment building with Nancy, the other cleaning person. They moved big carts around that held window cleaner, cleaners for walls, and they also had the key to the closet where they stored the vacuum cleaner. I helped Mom on those days when we had no school. She worked from breakfast to mid-afternoon, and was home when I got home from school.

When we moved to this nice apartment, Ella said she would let me have more room, but she, after being there for a couple of days, still hadn't done it. I had a small bed and one little dresser on one side of the room. Next to the dresser, I had a little stand where

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I hung my clothes. Still, we were poor, and it seemed like I needed clothes all the time. I worried that I might be costing too much. But try as I might, I still grew one or two inches a year. So I wore Ella's hand-me-downs. I was ten years old and dressed like a teenager, and I didn't like that.

So, I started writing things in this little pink notebook. It couldn't take the place of Shannie, but it helped a lot. I wrote about things I would only tell a special friend. I didn't want anyone to see what I wrote. But I made a mistake and lost it in school.

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