

THE  
*Green  
Dress*

AND OTHER  
PARABLES FROM  
MY LIFE



DANIJELA SCHUBERT

“In these 52 short life stories, Danijela Schubert—university lecturer, church administrator and women’s advocate—is willingly vulnerable, openly sharing painful and joyful pictures from her life, inviting us as readers to reflect on our life choices.”

—Peter Roennfeldt, author, trainer, church planter, evangelist

“Are you caught in the trap of compartmentalising God’s work from the everyday rhythm of your life? *The Green Dress* challenges this separation, inviting the reader to explore God’s presence in both the mundane and the unexpected, as they journey through a delightful and, at times, amusing selection of reflections drawn from the life of Danijela Schubert.”

—Wendy Jackson, Head of Seminary, Avondale University

“Parables are short, sharp stories that drive home timeless lessons and, when inculcated, imbue significant value into our lived experience! These parables from Danijela Schubert’s life are exactly that! She shares values from her lived experience, which will make you think and bless your life.”

—Terry Johnson, President, Australian Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

“This beautiful book of bite-sized parables, in which Danijela Schubert vulnerably shares her life experiences, and how they have shaped her journey with God, will encourage you to reflect on Scripture and how it intersects with your life. In addition, it will challenge you to live your faith in new ways. Love it!”

—Edyta Jankiewicz, Associate Ministerial Secretary, Women in Ministry, South Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists

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# FOREWORD

There is power in our stories. Those little everyday stories we often brush off as insignificant; those stories we believe no-one would be interested in—yes, those stories are powerful. Especially when we catch a glimpse of God moving in those stories.

Dr Danijela Schubert invites us to journey with her through 52 short stories. Her stories. They may seem like little fragments of ordinary life, but look closer and you will find that although these stories reflect on a lifetime of experiences and cover a variety of topics, there is a unifying thread: they are her personal stories with God. She invites us to take a closer look at her personal stories with Jesus.

As Danijela shares moments from her childhood, her family and friendships, we experience her joys, frustrations, sorrows and learnings. In her moments of reflecting on nature, we see how God is visible in both magnificent ways and quiet ways—even through spiders! We too experience a God of wonder and awe in the smallest details of everyday life.

We are drawn into the heart of Danijela's stories because they are like the stories each one of us has. Sometimes we are too busy to notice God in the details; however, if we slow down, we will see that He is always there, inviting us to step into His bigger story.

There is power when we share our God stories with each other.

At the end of each story, you will find thought-provoking questions to reflect on. I urge you to take time to do so. These questions are important, as they will help you think about your own stories and how you might share the everyday moments of your own life with God.

Then as you recognise God in your stories and choose to share them

with others, they will see the power of God in your life too.

**Sylvia Mendez**

Director of Women's and Family Ministries

Australian Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists



# INTRODUCTION

Don't share what is inside you with others. They will only laugh at you and use what you've shared to discredit you." This was the philosophy I grew up with. "Don't let others see your struggles. Keep smiling."

I tried to live up to this advice.

I got married, moved countries and had children of my own, and I found that this philosophy wasn't working. In fact, I discovered quite the opposite was true. I found that if I opened my heart and shared some of my struggles and victories with others, a closer bond was formed between us. I was encouraged, and they were encouraged.

I grew up in Croatia, one of the republics in communist Yugoslavia, in a very poor family. My dad and brother were both alcoholics, my mum had a severe disability, and my sister married and moved away when I was still quite young. But by God's grace and some amazing circumstances, I completed high school in a boarding school in a castle, where I met my prince charming. Together, we have lived and served in France, the Philippines, Australia, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea and Australia again, and travelled many other places in the world.

About the time we came to Australia, I started sharing some of my childhood experiences and people began to tell me to write a book about my life. I just smiled. Sometimes I replied, "Perhaps I should." But in my mind, I couldn't find a reason to write one.

I reasoned that my life was not so significant that I should write a book about it. *There are so many books in the world—why add another one? How would mine be different? Who would read it?* I allowed these questions and doubts to stop me from writing.

Then one day I realised the answer was simple. Why should I write a

book? I should write it so that it was written. Those who read it could find out for themselves why it was important for their lives, but my job was simply to write it.

Once that was sorted, I started writing down stories from my life. I kept writing and writing. Memories kept coming and I kept writing. I considered those words as raw material, and I looked for a format to share what I had written. I decided that short stories would be best.

Here I open my heart to you. I share stories from my life—parables from which lessons can be learned. They are true stories—stories of struggle and victory, pain and healing, loss and gain. Some are sad, and some are funny. They are mostly in chronological order.

I have learned a lot, but I try not to sermonise. Instead, I leave you with questions so you can reflect on the stories and apply the lessons you learn to your life. These stories and questions could be a door that opens to a new way of thinking, a new way of living.

Some of the stories might touch sensitive spots in your heart. Please seek professional help if needed. I have greatly benefited from counselling, coaching and mentoring in my own life.

You can read this book by yourself, but I think you'll enjoy it more—and gain more benefit—if you read the stories and reflect on them with a group of friends. If you meet once a week, it will take you a year to go through this book. What an amazing year of discovery and growth that could be!

Of course, there is no way I could talk about my life without talking about the Bible. It has been my life's foundation, so each story has at least one Bible verse. Perhaps this book will help you to see those verses in a new light, help you to discover the path you should take, or help you to learn to love and trust Jesus more.

Thank you for joining me on my journey of self-discovery and discovery of God's love. May it be a sparkle of light on your own life's journey.

# ANOTHER CHILD

*“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. . . . Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be”*  
(Psalm 139:13, 14, 16).

How dare you bring another child into the world!” they exclaimed. “You will be giving it to Satan! Your husband is an alcoholic, an unbeliever, and you don’t even have enough money to raise the children you already have! You should abort this baby!”

These are not the type of words you want to hear when you announce your pregnancy. Especially not from your brothers and sisters in Christ. But this is the response my mum received in the 1960s when she announced that she was pregnant with me.

Mortified, my mum was grateful it was too late for such a procedure. She was only a few weeks away from full term. Still, the negative reaction of her fellow believers made her recall the despair she had felt months earlier when she first suspected she was pregnant.

She was in poor health, with scoliosis that was causing her spine to deteriorate, bending her upper body cruelly and causing physical and emotional pain. She had a cheating, alcoholic husband, an 8-year-old son with behavioural issues and a 9-year-old daughter who had been born under difficult circumstances. Life was extremely hard on multiple levels. They lacked food and other necessities.

Many of the troubles in Mum’s life seemed to come from men. So, when she suspected she was pregnant and considered the possibility she would have another son, she contemplated drastic measures. *If I’m pregnant and have a son, I will take my children with me to the sea and drown,* she thought. *I cannot live like this anymore.*

As shocking as the words from the Christian community and my mum's thoughts may seem to be, I recognise the terrible challenges she and others were enduring. The only family planning methods available in my mother's community were abstinence and abortion. Neither were good options, and people managed as best they could.

My mum went to the doctor. Although she had been in despair, when the doctor confirmed her suspicions of pregnancy, something strange happened. Incredible joy flooded her soul, and she felt delighted that she was pregnant. She dedicated her child—dedicated me—to God then and there.

Likewise, despite their initial negativity, the community came to join Mum in that joy.

There are many circumstances through which a person is brought to life. Some are wonderful, some are not. Regardless, each new child is precious to God, and He has a good plan for each one.

## REFLECT

What verse in Psalm 139 speaks most strongly to you?

What were the circumstances surrounding your birth?

Do you believe that each child is precious to God?

Have you discovered God's plan for your life?

Who will you share your story with this week?

# DOCTOR, YOU SAW MY ANGEL!

*“For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways”  
(Psalm 91:11).*

While I’m the president of the committee, you will never get the invalid pension!” Dr Bilanović announced.

These words were devastating to his patient Štefica Bratulić—my mother. In a communist country, Christians like her were not looked upon favourably. Still, she was shocked by the doctor’s attitude and felt quite desperate.

Serious problems with her spine had caused her health to deteriorate badly. She could no longer work and could find no other means of supporting her family. Her only hope was an invalid pension from the government.

As well as being Mum’s doctor, Dr Bilanović was the head of the committee responsible for granting invalid pensions. His refusal to support her pension application left Mum with little hope. It was a terrible personal blow, but it was also a test of her new-found faith in God.

Mum decided to fast and pray for three days leading up to the appointment where her pension application would be reviewed. She asked my brother and sister (I was too young), and her sister-in-Christ Mitza to join her in prayer.

Weak from her illness and lack of food, Mum barely made it to the appointment three days later. The committee members examined her and her documents. Then, to my mother’s great surprise, Dr Bilanović spoke in her favour. The committee voted and the decision was

unanimous. Mum could receive the invalid pension.

She was delighted with the outcome but intrigued by Dr Bilanović's change in attitude. He had vowed to go against her application but instead he had supported it. What had changed? She soon found out.

The next day she went to see Dr Bilanović to collect the documents she needed to take to the government agency that issued the monthly pension.

"Mrs Bratulić, I don't know what came over me yesterday," he said. "I wanted to speak against you, but I spoke in favour."

"Did you tell them anything that wasn't true?" Mum asked.

"Everything I said was true," he replied, "but I did not want to say it."

"So, why didn't you say what you wanted to say?" she asked.

What he described next was a miracle.

"The night before the committee meeting, I was about to fall asleep when a big, bright man came to my room and tapped me on the shoulder saying, 'What about the matter of Mrs Bratulić?' That startled me. Then he disappeared. I relaxed, and I was about to fall asleep when he came again, tapped me on the shoulder and asked, 'What about the matter of Mrs Bratulić?' Now I was afraid. This happened over and over again through the whole night. I did not have a minute of sleep! I could not endure another night like that, so I had to speak the truth."

"Doctor!" my mother exclaimed. "You had a privilege I haven't had—you saw my angel!"

## REFLECT

Have you experienced any miraculous changes to your life circumstances?

Are you aware of any things your angel has done for you?

What stories in the Bible about angels can you think of?

Which story about angels is your favourite and why?

# End of product sample

This product is available at:

[AdventistBookCentre.com.au](http://AdventistBookCentre.com.au)



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