

The Perfect Passion of Daniel Pon

By Janet Bray Attwood, Chris Attwood and Teresa de Grosbois,

In a south-end neighborhood,
In the state of Illinois,
In an ordinary house,
Lived an ordinary boy.

Ordinary in a way for which
We're most enthusiastic
Because ordinary children
Are always quite fantastic!

His name was Daniel Pon,
His love was basketball.
There was just one little challenge:
Daniel was not tall.

He was not exactly short,
But basketball's a game
Where height combined with talent
Will bring you the most fame.

Each day he'd shoot some hoops
With friends from up the street.
He'd work for every point.
He could take the heat.

But the taller kids were better.
They stood closer to the net.
They didn't have to work so hard
For every point they'd get.

On a rainy summer Sunday
He sat worried 'bout his dream
'Cause he knew it was unlikely
He'd make the new school team.

So he sat there without playing
Getting more and more deflated,
'Til he could barely move
From the pain of dreams negated.

Now Daniel had an Aunt -
Jani Ma was really fun!
When she walked into a room,
It lit up like the sun!

It wasn't just her clothes,
Though she always wore great fashion,
Jani Ma believed in dreamers.
She was all about her passion.

“Her passion?” you may ask,
“What was her great desire?”
To help others live their dreams:
To see what lights their fire!

So when Jani Ma
Saw Daniel’s fear and doubt,
She stopped and asked him if
She could somehow help him out.

“I’m never going to make the team”,
Daniel Pon began to wail
And he told her all his worries
And the fear that he would fail.

“Well” said Jani Ma,
“I can help you past your fear,
But there’s one thing that you need:
Your passions must be *clear!*”

“I don’t see how that will help.
I’m clear what to avoid:
What if I don’t make the team?
What if my dream’s DESTROYED!”

“Well” said Jani Ma,
“As strange as this may seem
Your fear can be a useful guide
To help you see your dream.

The things that you don’t want
Your fear will show to you.
If you look at your fear’s opposite
That’s what you want to do!

It’s never best in life
To focus on your fear.
Focus on your heart’s desire.
A *want* that’s crystal clear.

I’ll tell you a small secret,
That cancels every *but*.
Don’t worry ‘bout the *how*
Just focus on the *what!*

Your passions are the *what*,
The things you most desire;
When you’re doing them you’re happy,
Your heart is just on fire.”

“OK”, said Daniel Pon,
“If it will help me, then alright!”
Jani Ma smiled down and said
“Now, close your eyes, shut tight!

Make still your mind and listen
To your heart when it's at rest.
Tell me five things that you're doing
When your life is just the best!?”

So Daniel closed his eyes
And tried to truly feel
To see the way his life would look
When all was just ideal.

“I'm the king of basketball”, he said.
“And play 'most every day.
I have a lot of friends.
I teach others how to play.

I'm in the heat and action
Because I'm such a pro!
I help the other kids
Find ways that they can grow.”

“Great!” said Jani Ma,
“That's perfect for a start.
Now let's write that down on paper
So it stays clear in your heart.

When you're clear” said Jani Ma
“The desires you hold most dear
Will show up in your life
But only if you're clear.

Now hang that piece of paper up
To read each day” she said.
So Daniel taped his passions
To the wall above his bed.

She said “focus on your passions
And do small things each day,
To live the things you love,
Then you will find the way!

Your passions are a compass,
You need not know the trail.
It points you always true.
It will not let you fail.”

Daniel showed up at the tryouts
The next Monday at school.
He worked for every shot,
He followed every rule.

In great sportsmanship
He passed the ball a lot.
He congratulated others
With every well placed shot.

He could tell the other players
All had the right stuff.
He'd played his very best,
But would it be enough?

When try-outs were all done,
With the boys all in a line,
Coach gently said to Daniel,
"Sorry, not this time."

So Daniel shuffled home,
Dejected and deflated,
Not knowing what to do
With the pain of dreams negated.

And there was Jani Ma
"You're sad, my friend" she said.
He told her his bad news
As he slowly hung his head.

"It's normal to be sad,
Anyone would feel that way.
But that can't stop your passion.
Don't let that stop you play.

I'll tell you a small secret,
That cancels every *but*.
Don't worry 'bout the *how*,
Just focus on the *what!*"

So Daniel took his basketball
And signed up on a whim
To play on Wednesday nights
At the local Gym.

And somehow he felt better:
He still was on a team,
He was playing basketball
And living out his dream.

As Daniel grew in age
He grew in wisdom too.
The more he lived his passions
The more happiness he knew.

Every day he saw those passions
Taped above his bed
And he'd feel the joy of living
Every single time he read,

"I'm the king of basketball.
I play 'most every day,
I have a lot of friends,
And teach others how to play.

I'm in the heat and action
Because I'm such a pro!
I help the other kids
Find ways that they can grow."

At school he cheered the other kids,
No matter what their teams;
He'd offer his encouragement.
He knew they all had dreams.

That summer at the local Gym
Two kids sat by the stall.
He asked why they were sad:
"We can't play basketball."

"We're special-needs athletes,
With no coach" they said, deflated.
Daniel recognized the look
Of the pain of dreams negated.

So Daniel told the secret,
That cancels every *but*.
"Don't worry 'bout the *how*
Just focus on the *what!*"

"I can be your coach"
Decided Daniel Pon,
And suddenly the boys'
Defeat and pain were gone.

"That's great", they said at once,
Jumping right up from their seats.
So Daniel Pon became a coach
For special-needs athletes.

The next year at his school
His friends on the school team
Were fretting in the school yard,
Still worried for their dream.

“We’ll never make the college teams
At one of the big U’s,
There’s no way that the coaches
Would see us in the news.”

Daniel recognized their look:
Dejected and deflated.
He knew his friends’ frustrations
From the pain of dreams negated.

So Daniel made a Website
That answered all their prayers.
He wrote about the strengths
Of the hardest working players.

He invited the best coaches,
From all around the States,
To check the players’ progress
In his weekly game updates.

And coaches started flying in
To see the players play.
They always stopped to ask
What Daniel had to say.

And many of those players
Got picked for the best teams.
They knew that Daniel Pon
Had helped them live their dreams.

So players, coaches and their friends
Would praise young Daniel Pon
People from all over
Heard what was going on!

Even though young Daniel Pon
Would never ever boast!
The TV and the papers
Told his story coast to coast!

Later that same year
At the fall Home-coming dance
Something quite great happened
From ordinary chance.

On this auspicious evening
The most wonderful thing:
They nominated Daniel Pon
To be Home-coming King.

“But why would people vote for me?
An ordinary guy?”
Usually athletes were picked,
He had to wonder why?

But his friends all knew a secret
That cancels every *but*,
The bigger someone’s *why*
The easier the *what!*

Kids from every part of school
Had been helped by Daniel Pon
With encouragement and friendship,
So it didn’t take too long.

They cheered him to the stage
And put a crown upon his head.
He remembered then the passions
Taped above his bed.

“I’m the king of basketball”, he thought.
“And play ‘most every day.
I have a lot of friends.
I teach others how to play.

I’m in the heat and action
Because I’m such a pro!
I help the other kids
Find ways that they can grow.”

And Daniel knew the secret:
His passion he held dear
Had shown up in his life,
Because he’d been so clear.