

RESOLVE

*An Introduction into Daisy and Connor's
World*

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Connor, Bailey and Mark Langley raced with all their might through the hospital parking lot. They dodged cars and jumped curbs left and right trying to catch Andy Victor. Andy grinned largely as he left his buddies in the dust. He slid through the motion sensed, glass hospital doors, just barely missing an elderly couple as he aimed for the staircase. Connor and Mark maneuvered recklessly around patients and nurses attempting to reach the staircase entrance that Andy rushed into. Andy was taking the stairs by twos loving the fact that he was going to be the first one into Ms. Debbie's hospital room.

When Mark and Connor hit the staircase entrance, they heard Daisy calling them from behind, "Wait for me Connor! Wait for me!"

Mark laughed and took the stairs in giant leaps just like Andy had. He left Connor to deal with "the baby."

"Wait up Connor!" Daisy Ray called out again.

"Aw, man," Connor moaned. He hit the staircase railing with the palm of his hand then spun around irritated that he had to stop.

"Hurry up Daisy! You're so slow!"

For an 11 year old, Daisy Ray was fast but not fast enough to keep up with Connor and his buddies when they were racing. She often held Connor up, and he didn't like it much.

"I'm coming, I'm coming." Daisy dodged this way and that way making it through the crowded hospital lobby to the staircase entrance.

Once she caught up to Connor, they ran up the stairs to the second floor where Ms. Debbie, Connor's mother, resided. The cancer floor. Where everything smelled funny, and everybody looked like they wanted to go home. Connor and Daisy entered Room 211.

"Hey Mom. How do you feel today?" Connor asked as he leaned over her bed and gave her a kiss.

Ms. Debbie patted his cheek affectionately. "I feel great now that you are here." Although her breathing was labored, they could tell she was happy to see them. "Do you have much homework?"

"No, ma'am. No homework. I can hang around today."

Connor looked up at Andy and Mark. They were both grinning ear to ear because they'd beaten him up the staircase. "That race doesn't count, man. I had to wait for Daisy," Connor defended himself to no avail.

“You didn’t have to wait for her. I didn’t wait. You had a choice ya know.” Mark flashed a triumphant smile.

Ms. Debbie ignored the boys chatter and looked over at Daisy. She was still panting from the long run that had started at school and ended at the hospital.

“Oh my goodness! Daisy Raymond Greene...come here. Look at your hair! You look like you’ve been playing... in the bushes,” Ms. Debbie chided as she patted the side of her hospital bed.

Daisy quickly moved to sit on the bed next to Ms. Debbie while explaining her messy hair, “I wasn’t playing in the bushes, Ms. Debbie. We cut through some back yards on the way over here. It’s quicker than the streets.”

“Daisy’s such a Velcro head! Her hair picks up everything she passes,” Andy laughed rubbing Daisy’s head playfully. A few leaves drifted from her hair to the floor.

Mark choked back laughter. “Velcro head,” he repeated the new nick name with pleasure.

“Cut it out, Andy.” Daisy pushed Andy’s hand away with irritation, making Andy laugh even louder.

Connor popped Andy in the chest with the back of his hand. “Leave her alone man,” Connor defended Daisy with a repressed grin.

Daisy folded her arms across her chest and pouted.

“Boys, please...” Ms. Debbie hushed them. “Daisy dear, hand me my brush. I’ll fix your hair ...while I tell you a Bible story.”

“Yes, ma'am.” Daisy handed Ms. Debbie her brush from the bedside table. Ms. Debbie brushed and braided Daisy’s hair as she told the story of the fiery furnace from memory.

When she finished Daisy’s hair, she opened her Bible and read a portion of the story out loud to Daisy and the boys. "Daniel 3:16-18. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego answered, 'Your Majesty, ...we will not try to defend ourselves. If the God whom we serve ...is able to save us from the blazing furnace and from your power, then He will. But even if He doesn't, ...Your Majesty may be sure that we will not worship your god, and ...we will not bow down to the gold statue that you have set up'." Debbie closed her Good News Bible. She took a look at her son Connor first, then his friends, Mark and Andy. Lastly, she looked lovingly into the eyes of her best friend’s young

daughter, Daisy.

“Go on Mom, finish the story. You haven’t gotten to the good part yet,” Connor urged his mother impatiently.

“I think I did get to the good part.” Debbie smiled.

“No Mom, the best part is when they get thrown into the fire and they don’t get burned.” Connor knew the story well.

“Yea, they showed that king who was boss,” Andy piped in energetically.

“I don’t think it mattered what the ending was. Those young men’s resolve to serve God ...no matter what happened to them, in my opinion, ...was the best part of the story.” Debbie smiled at her son and his friends. Connor, Andy and Mark were only 13 years old. Daisy Ray was 11 years old. All four of them stared at her blankly. In their young minds, standing up to a king and refusing to bow to an idol meant little if you died as a result.

Debbie laid her head back down on her hospital bed and shut her eyes for a moment. You could hear her raspy breath moving in and out of her tired lungs as she tried to find a little more energy inside herself to continue talking to her son. She’d been in the hospital for a whole year now receiving cancer treatments, but it didn’t seem to be helping. Her condition was diminishing rapidly. Everyone could see it but no one dare say it.

As much as Debbie loved conversing with her son and his friends, it took every ounce of strength she possessed. She often had to speak in intervals.

“I want to tell you something Connor. Just let me rest a minute.. first,” she managed to get out in a tired voice.

Connor sat down on the side of her bed and held her hand. “Ok Mom, we can wait a minute.”

The other kids gathered around closer to the head of the bed so they could hear what she would say once she got her second wind.

“Children, listen to me. Think about Daniel and his friends in the Bible. They lost their families in war, yet they resolved to believe in God anyway. They were brought to their captor’s land and forced to study the language of the people who’d killed their families... just so that they could serve the rest of their lives in that foreign land. But they resolved to believe in God anyway. They would not bow to any other gods. They had been saved

in battle, ...but their families had not been saved. They still refused to forsake God, and that is what those boys said to that king. 'Whether God delivers us or He doesn't deliver us we will only serve Him.' That is what they said. Those boys were great men. They weren't great because they lived through the fire. They were great ...because they resolved to be true to their God no matter what the outcome might end up being." Debbie paused to breathe and rest again.

The children watched her quietly as their young minds processed what she was trying to say to them.

Debbie rolled her head to the side to look at Connor. He was still holding her hand. She softly rubbed his hand with her thumb, and she smiled at him. "Connor, resolve to do what's right in life no matter what. No matter whether you get what you want or not. The resolve to do what's right... is a very important trait in a young man."

"Okay, mama."

Debbie shut her eyes to rest. She was out of strength again. She rolled her head back across the pillow in Daisy Rays direction. Debbie raised her free hand and drew a little circle lightly on Daisy's chest in the spot that Daisy's heart was. "Don't forget I love you Daisy."

"Yes, ma'am."

Debbie's hand dropped to the side of the bed where Andy's hand was. She touched his hand softly and gave it a weak squeeze. "Andy, darling, could you and Mark take Daisy down the hall and visit Maria for a while? When you are done make sure Daisy gets home safely so Connor can sit with me a little longer."

"Sure." Andy smiled at Ms. Debbie.

He looked across the bed at Connor. "I'll see you at school tomorrow."

"Yea, see you at school."

"Let's go Velcro head." Andy elbowed Daisy in the ribs.

"Shut up Andy," Daisy mumbled.

Mark followed the quibbling pair out of Ms. Debbie's room and down the hallway. The three of them moved silently through the white halls towards Maria's room.

Daisy's eyes were tearing up. She was trying not to cry. She knew Andy and Mark would tease her if she cried, but she couldn't help it. She wiped her eyes with the back of her hand as quickly as she could.

Andy looked down at her. "Cut it out Dumbo. She's gonna be okay."

"My name's not Dumbo." Daisy punched Andy's arm. She quickly started untying the braids that Ms. Debbie had done. She wanted to cover up her ears so Andy wouldn't think to call her Dumbo anymore. She hated that name more than any other name he teased her with.

"You don't know if she's gonna be okay or not," Daisy mumbled.

"Well, don't cry the whole time we're visiting Maria," Andy bossed.

"Yea, don't cry around my sister, man. If you get her all worked up then everybody will be crying. It will just be a big crying mess," Mark said with a roll of his eyes.

They stopped at Maria's door. Andy turned around and pointed at Daisy, "No crying."

"Kay." Daisy sucked it up as best she could.

They all walked into Maria Langley's room.

"Hey, everybody," Maria responded cheerfully when she saw them.

"Hey, Maria. How's my favorite sister?" Mark plopped down on the corner of her bed.

"I'm your only sister, stupid. The Doctor told Mom this morning that I can go home tomorrow. All the tests I had last week came up clear! I am now cancer free!" Maria held her fists up in the air, elated with the news.

"That's great!" They all cheered.

"I brought you something," Andy said as he dug in his pocket. He pulled out a folded piece of paper and handed it to Maria. Maria opened it. It was an article out of a magazine about the stars.

"Thanks, Andy. I haven't seen this article yet."

Maria loved anything to do with the stars, and Andy knew it. He was as sweet on Maria as any 13-year-old boy was capable of being on a girl. He smiled at her eagerness to read what he'd brought.

They all sat on the bed and listened as she read the article out loud. They chatted about the stars, then about school until the nurses brought Maria's dinner.

"We better get going Maria. Mom will be ticked off if I'm late for dinner again," Mark reminded her.

"Yea, okay. I'll see you tomorrow at home!" Maria said with extra excitement.

They said good bye and left Maria to her dinner.

“Shouldn’t we go back to Ms. Debbie’s room and see if Connor is ready to walk home with us?” Daisy asked Andy shyly.

“No. He said he’d see us at school tomorrow. Ms. Debbie wants to be alone with Connor tonight,” Andy reminded her. “You can run with Mark and me as far as the Family Mart.”

“Aren’t you going to take me all the way home? Connor always does,” she whined.

“Connor lives in the apartment right next to yours. I don’t. You can get home from Family Mart yourself, and don’t you dare start crying about it either.” Andy scolded.

“Kay.” Daisy was disappointed she wasn’t going to get to see Connor and Debbie again before they went home. They were so much nicer to her than Andy and Mark were, plus Debbie wasn’t looking so good, and it worried her.

That night Connor stayed late with his mother. She had so much to say but barely enough strength to get it said. It took her a long time to get everything that was in her heart out.

Eventually, Davis, Connor’s Dad, arrived at the hospital from work. “Hey, Babe.” Davis kissed Debbie’s forehead.

She smiled tenderly at her husband.

Davis sat down next to Connor. The three of them talked long into the night together.

It was a night that Connor would never forget because the next day when Connor ran up the stairs to his mother’s room, Room 211, he found his Dad already there grieving over her. She’d passed away while he was at school. Connor stood at the door of his mother’s room frozen.

Andy and Mark had gone to the Langley house to see Maria. Only Daisy had followed Connor to the hospital on this day. He felt little Daisy’s arms wrap around his waist. She hugged him and cried. Some might have thought that a 13-year-old boy wouldn’t have liked it, maybe some boys wouldn’t, but her crying helped him to cry. She helped his shocked heart feel what was actually happening to him. He squeezed her tight and cried into her unkempt hair.

COMPANIONS

The next few weeks were a blur of relatives, grieving friends and pot luck meals. Connor would have been lost in the sea of mourners had Daisy not been there. Even though he hardly said a word to her, she never left his side for anything besides school. Her loyal nature brought a certain amount of stability to his confused world. Tiny, uncoordinated, cry baby Daisy was his friend.

His other two loyal companions were Mark and Andy. Every day after school they would race Connor to his home and help him raid his kitchen for pot luck leftovers until Daisy arrived. Once she checked in with her Grandmother, they would all race to the Langley's house to see Maria.

Maria was finally home, but not yet back to school. She'd spent an entire year in the hospital so the schools weren't accepting her at her current grade level. Mr. and Mrs. Langley went through a mini battle with the school system over it, but it was no use. Maria would just have to repeat a grade when the new school year rolled back around.

One day, Daisy and the boys ran up the front steps and through the Langley house like lightning.

"Boys! Come to the kitchen!" Mrs. Langley hollered when she heard them galloping through the house.

They entered the Langley's bright, blue, country kitchen out of breath and looking for water. "Hey Mom, what's up?" Mark cheerfully responded to her calling as he pulled glasses out of the cabinet for his friends.

Daisy filled each glass with water as Mrs. Langley explained her request, "Kids, Maria needs to build up her strength. I want you to start taking her out every afternoon. Get her to run around and start using her muscles again. Do you think you can do that for me?" Mrs. Langley looked over the friendly bunch of kids.

"Sure, Mrs. Langley," they each said.

Maria entered the kitchen wearing shorts. She looked down at her knobby knees with a crooked grin. "I've been wearing pajamas for so long I forgot what funny looking legs I had."

"Who cares, let's go Maria," Andy encouraged. The group followed him out the front door.

"Let's go down to the beach and run on the Boardwalk," Andy

suggested to the group.

They all agreed enthusiastically.

THE BOARDWALK

Andy and his gang stood on the wooden planks of the beach boardwalk looking out over the ocean. The boardwalk platform ran parallel with the ocean water front. There were food stalls and picnic tables facing the ocean all the way down the platform for hungry beach bums to sit, eat and shoot the breeze with their buddies. And if you came in the late afternoon, like Andy and his friends had done, you could watch a beautiful sunset. They all stood speechless as the huge, orange sun slipped slowly down beneath the ocean waves. The tumbling sound of the waves combined with the gentle laughter of children playing along the beach front had a peaceful affect upon Andy and his friends.

Eventually Connor broke the silence, “Which way are we running North or South?”

“South.” Andy began running the moment he answered Connor. The others automatically followed him.

Connor and Mark ran side by side behind Andy. Daisy and Maria ran side by side behind Connor and Mark. Maria had no choice but to run with baby Daisy. She couldn’t keep up with the boys any better than Daisy could.

After a short while, the boys were long gone down the boardwalk. Maria stopped running and squeezed her sides in agony. Daisy sucked back tears as quietly as she was able. She was upset for two reasons. Number one, she didn’t like getting left behind. Number two, Maria looked like she was in serious pain. Daisy didn’t know what to do.

“Quit crying Daisy. I just finished a whole year's worth of cancer treatments! Do you really think a few cramps are going to kill me now? If I was supposed to be dead, I’d have done it already,” Maria scolded.

“Are you sure? I could run ahead and get the boys to come back for you,” Daisy suggested tearfully.

“No way. Don’t you dare say a word to them!” Maria commanded with fire in her eyes. She did have a certain amount of personal pride that she wished to keep in tack after all. Maria squared her shoulders, let go of her sides and began running again silently. Daisy jogged along at her side. Maria

wasn't strong physically, but she was very strong mentally. Grim determination to run was plastered all over her 14-year-old face.

Daisy, being the impressionable young girl that she was, saw it and tried to copy Maria. She sucked up her tears and put on the same grim expression she saw Maria wearing. Together they moved at a snail's pace down the boardwalk. Every now and then Maria would stop and squeeze her cramping sides, then without a word resume running. She didn't shed a tear or utter a single complaint. She just focused and stared grimly ahead.

After another short while, the boys appeared. They were running in unison at a brisk pace back down the boardwalk towards the girls.

"Don't say a single word, Daisy," Maria commanded under her breath.

"Kay," Daisy agreed.

When the boys finally reached them, they slowed down and jogged a few playful circles around the girls.

"Come on Maria, run back with us. I'll buy you an ice cream," Andy offered.

"No thanks. We're running to the end just like you did," Maria answered as she jogged straight forward ignoring his playfulness.

"We didn't go all the way to the end Maria, just half way," Andy corrected her assumption.

Then Mark pitched in, "Yea, and besides it will take you forever at this pace Maria. Come on. Go back with us. We'll come back out tomorrow and run again."

"Nope. Daisy and I are running to the end," she answered. Her focused gaze remained straight forward.

Andy was surprised at her steely gaze and strong response. He hesitated, not sure what to say next. "Ummm." Andy looked quickly at Connor for help.

"Well, I don't mind running all the way to the end. Besides it's getting dark. We should stick together," suggested Connor.

"Yea, okay. Let's do it. I've never run all the way to the end before anyway." Andy returned to the front of the group again. Connor and Mark ran behind the girls this time. Every now and then the girls would stop and walk. Connor and Mark would give a quick whistle up front to Andy so he'd know when to stop. They all would walk a while, then resume running when Maria felt up to it. This was the first of many boardwalk runs together.

Eventually Maria's stamina improved. By the end of the following school year, she'd moved to the front of the pack and took the lead right next to Andy.

HOME LIFE FOR CONNOR & DAISY

School, Daisy and running were the three constants in Connor's life that kept things stable for him after his mother died. School stretched his mind to think beyond what was happening at home. He was naturally curious about the world around him and loved learning new things. Running was an excellent way of relieving stress and unwanted pain from his heart. Plus, it was just plain fun. Connor loved the freedom he felt when he ran. Then there was Daisy, his loyal tag-a-long. She was just real sweet and always around. She believed everything he said no matter how strange it sounded.

Both of their homes were often empty. Davis always worked late. He'd acquired tons of hospital bills due to Debbie's long illness. In order to pay off the debt, he had to sell all the stocks he owned in the company that he worked at to his best friend, George. George had promised him that he would hold onto the stocks until Davis was able to buy them back from him.

Across the apartment hallway, Daisy lived with her Grandparents, Joe and Rose Greene. Daisy's parents had died in a car accident when she was just an infant. Grandpa Joe was an Army officer. His work was very demanding therefore, Grandpa Joe was rarely home. Rose was a full time Red Cross Representative. This work kept her just as busy as Joe's job did so Connor and Daisy were often left to fend for themselves.

They went to school in the mornings and ran with their friends every afternoon. Then in the evenings, they'd walk home together, each to an empty apartment. They cooked together, did homework together and even shared secrets and dreams together. They were never alone because they had each other.

They spent most evenings in Daisy's room because her room was bigger than Connor's room was. It had more floor space for them to spread out their school books when they did their homework. It was simply furnished with a white desk and matching dresser in one corner and closet in the other. Twin beds with Strawberry Shortcake bedspreads were separated

by a night stand with a lamp on it. Toys and books were scattered here and there throughout the room. Not all the clutter belonged to Daisy. Some of it belonged to Connor. Connor hung out in this room so much that he also had his own little stash of things in it.

Connor bounced his soccer ball on his knees around the room for a few minutes then he dropped it and let it roll to the corner of the room. He then picked up a paddle ball from Daisy's floor and threw himself down on one of her twin beds. He counted quietly to himself as he bounced the ball rhythmically up into the air above his head. Daisy turned on her music and danced around the room absentmindedly.

Connor smiled at her uncoordinated attempt at mimicking popular dance moves. "No Daisy, not like that. Do it this way." Connor jumped up and tried to teach her the move she was working on. She giggled because he wasn't any better at it than she was. He went back to the paddle ball. He wasn't a dancer. He liked sports better anyway.

"Daisy," Connor said slowly, as he counted hits on the paddle ball.
"Yea?"

"I bet I could go next door to my kitchen and get two beers from the refrigerator and Dad wouldn't even notice them missing. Do you want to try one?" Connor smiled with mischief.

"No way, we'd get caught for sure." Daisy shook her head.

"Not if I only took two. Let's try," Connor attempted to persuade her.

"No, Connor. I like what your Mom said. We need to resolve to do what's right no matter what happens." Daisy ran over to her bed where Connor was sitting paddle balling. "Let's find something else to do Connor," she encouraged.

"Well, we could.....run to the beach and back," Connor suggested.

"Yea, let's run," Daisy agreed.

RUNNING IS BETTER ANYWAY

They raced down the back staircase of their apartment complex into the warm night air. At first they jogged, zigzagging all over the street just happy to be outside. But after a few minutes, they fell into a running pattern beside each other. Their feet hit the pavement simultaneously. They raised their eyes to the evening sky. Their lungs inhaled the night air deeply. The

steady beat of their breathing combined with the pounding of their feet somehow brought release to their souls. They let go of the worries of the day and ran freely.

As they approached the boardwalk, the warm ocean breeze blew across their faces. The tumbling ocean waves greeted them in a friendly way. They slowed down to a fast walking pace as they walked over the platform and down the steps onto the sand. The sun had already set so it was dark. There was nothing but the moonlight glittering atop the tumbling waves. They stood silently and listened to the air move through the delicate dune grasses behind them, then across the gentle rippling water in front of them.

“I love the beach,” Connor finally said in a soft voice.

“Yea,” Daisy responded, even though she didn't want to speak yet. She was still enjoying the comforting sounds around her.

He chuckled at the dreamy way she'd answered him, “We better get back home. Your Grandma will be home soon.” Connor turned reluctantly away from the water and Daisy followed him. They jogged back up the beach to the platform.

“Hey, Connor, I want to use the bathroom before we go.” She started to turn in the direction of the public toilet.

“No, Daisy. Use it when we get home. Come on.” Connor pulled her arm gently back in his direction.

“Why not here? Our house is a mile away,” she whined.

Connor tipped his head slightly in the direction of the public bathrooms. “You see those two guys standing there near the bathrooms?”

“Yea. Hey, they look like twins,” Daisy answered as she eyed them curiously.

The guys that Connor was referring to were leaning against the bathroom lockers smoking cigarettes. “Yea they're twins. They come straight from 'bad-news-ville' too. Never go near them Daisy. Do you hear me? Never go near them.”

Connor still had a hold on Daisy's arm and he shook her just a little as he spoke. “You'll just have to hold it until you get home.”

“Kay.” Daisy gave the strange pair one last glance, then she turned and began bobbing along next to Connor again. He matched her pace with little effort. The stars twinkled over head. They forgot about the twins. The fresh breeze blew unwanted thoughts away. They relaxed into a steady,

rhythmic pace all their own.

Resolve is just a short glimpse into the young lives of Daisy, Connor and their friends. Take a running leap into their High School days. Experience firsthand the life and love of these determined young runners in Daisy and Connor's World Volume I. This warmhearted and eventful story will be online soon for your enjoyment. Author Julia Ann French