



*the*  
**David  
Years**

A PUZZLE HOUSE NOVEL

*Lillian Duncan*

# The David Years

Lillian Duncan

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons living or dead, business establishments, events, or locales, is entirely coincidental.

### **The David Years**

**COPYRIGHT 2019 by Lillian Duncan**

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission of the author or Pelican Ventures, LLC except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles or reviews.

eBook editions are licensed for your personal enjoyment only. eBooks may not be re-sold, copied or given away to other people. If you would like to share an eBook edition, please purchase an additional copy for each person you share it with.

Contact Information: [titleadmin@pelicanbookgroup.com](mailto:titleadmin@pelicanbookgroup.com)

All scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version<sup>(R)</sup>, NIV<sup>(R)</sup>. Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.<sup>TM</sup> Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. [www.zondervan.com](http://www.zondervan.com)

Cover Art by *Nicola Martinez*

Harbourlight Books, a division of Pelican Ventures, LLC  
[www.pelicanbookgroup.com](http://www.pelicanbookgroup.com) PO Box 1738 \*Aztec, NM \* 87410

Harbourlight Books sail and mast logo is a trademark of Pelican Ventures, LLC

### Publishing History

First Harbourlight Edition, 2019

Electronic Edition ISBN 978-1-5223-0220-9

**Published in the United States of America**

## *Dedication*

This and all I do is for God's Glory.



# Books by Lillian Duncan

## *Sisters by Choice Series*

**Betrayed  
Redemption**

## *Deadly Communications Series*

**Deadly Communications  
Deadly Intent  
Deadly Silence**

## *Standalone Stories*

**Pursued  
Game On  
Broken Trust  
Trapped**

## *Puzzle House*

**Puzzle House  
The David Years (Aug 2019)**

## *Christmas Holiday Extravaganza*

**The Christmas Stalking  
No Home for the Holidays  
A Christmas Stolen**







# 1

*Do you want to be a healer?* Rachel's words echoed in Nia's mind. The thought of helping others the way Rachel had helped her had seemed impossible until God's presence filled the room. At the time, it had been amazing—miraculous. But now she was confused—and scared. No way could she do what Rachel did. She was only fifteen. How would she heal anyone?

"So what am I 'sposed to do now?"

Aunt Margaretta shrugged. "I have no idea, sweetie, but I'm sure you'll figure it out."

"I need Rachel. To help me. To explain to me what to do. To teach me." Just saying Rachel's name brought fresh tears to her eyes. At Rachel's funeral, she thought she'd cried out every last tear. "I can't do this by myself. I don't know why God took her from me just when I need her the most."

"Not true. You need God the most."

"Now you sound just like Rachel, Auntie."

"Good. She was a godly woman. I could do lots worse than model myself after her."

"Maybe that's what I should do? Model myself after Rachel?"

"I don't think that's a good idea, Nia. God didn't choose you because you were like Rachel. In fact, in many ways you're quite the opposite of Rachel. He

chose you because you're Nia."

"I'm not so sure about that, Auntie."

"I am. God knows what he's doing."

"You just said she was a godly woman, and look at all she accomplished. All those people God healed through her. She built Puzzle House. I'll just copy Rachel's life, and then I'll become the healer she thinks—thought I could be."

"I don't think it works that way, sweetie. That's not something you can orchestrate."

"We could move to Puzzle House right now and I'll start. I'll teach people what she taught me. Would you come with me if I did that?"

Auntie closed her eyes. Was she praying? Thinking? Listening to God? She opened her eyes and picked up her suitcase. "Of course, I would go with you. But first, let's put these away. I'll cook something for us to eat."

Only a month ago, Auntie would have put Nia's things away as well. But God had healed her cancer. Grabbing her suitcase, Nia hauled it into her room then tossed it on the bed. The last time she'd been in this room, she'd just been hoping to survive cancer. God had not only healed her but chosen her to be a healer.

The doctors had told her there was nothing more they could do, but Auntie wasn't about to give up. She'd taken—no forced—Nia to go to Puzzle House.

Nia looked down, remembering the warmth, the tingling as Rachel held her hands and prayed with her. God had been in that room with them. God had given her the gift of healing. Tears filled her eyes again, not sad ones for Rachel but desperate ones because she didn't know what to do. "God, I believe You gave me that gift. I felt You in that room with us, but I don't

know what to do. I...I...don't want to disappoint You or make You mad at me. I don't know why You would pick me. There are people out there who are a lot smarter than me who could do a better job." She sighed and looked up at the ceiling. "I'm so confused."

Her aunt knocked on the door. "What'd you do? Fall asleep?"

"No. Just thinking."

"Well enough of that. Get yourself out here."

"Yes, ma'am."

Her aunt was at the stove when Nia got to the kitchen. "What's for supper?"

"Spaghetti. I'll have to go to the grocery store tomorrow after work." She tossed the frozen glob of meat into a pan. A few moments later, it was sizzling.

"You want me to do something?"

"There's nothing for you to do." She pointed at the mail tossed on the table. "There's a letter for you."

"For me?"

"It's from Rachel. She must have sent it...before. Or maybe Cooper sent it for her."

"I don't know if I want to read it right now."

"Up to you, sweetie."

"I'll read it later. The more I think about all this...I don't think I can do it by myself."

"You don't have to do it by yourself, Nia. Rachel said puzzles are meant to be done together. That's true for life as well. Things go much better when you connect with others."

"But...can you imagine what people would say if I tell them God picked me to be a healer? They'll think I'm crazy."

"God will put the right people in your life at the right time just the way He did with Rachel in the

hospital that day. Puzzles are meant to be done one piece at a time so you can't worry yourself into a frazzle thinking about the future."

"I guess."

"All you have to do is live out the next piece of the puzzle. Have you ever heard of King David from the Bible?"

"Maybe."

"Go ahead and put the spaghetti in the boiling water. Make sure you separate it."

"Yes, ma'am." Nia tossed in half the box and picked up a fork.

"Well you've heard of David and Goliath, right?"

"Yeah."

"That David became King David and did all sorts of amazing things for God. Anyway, when David was a young boy, the prophet Samuel anointed him as the next king of Israel."

"Oh, I didn't know kings were appointed."

"Not appointed. Anointed. It means chosen by God for a special job. Just as you've been anointed to become a healer. Anyway, Samuel was God's spokesman, so it was really God who anointed David as the next King of Israel. Just as Rachel anointed you to be a healer, but it was with God's blessing."

Nia twirled the cooking spaghetti.

"Anyway, there were a lot of years between the time David was anointed as the king and he actually became the king. David was tested many times during those years. Those years were very important to David's growth as a man so that he would be the king God wanted him to be when the time was right."

"So what are you saying, Auntie?"

"I'm saying these are your David years, my sweet

niece. It's a time for you to learn and to grow in your relationship with God. There will be lots of choices in the coming years. Sometimes you'll make the right choice, and sometimes you won't. You'll be crowned in God's timing not yours. So for now it's time to live your life as a fifteen-year-old girl."

"And then later, I get to be king?" Nia giggled.

"I meant that figuratively not literally. And since you're fifteen and getting healthier every day, that means going back to school."

"Back to school? I've been touched by God, Auntie. I think I have more important things I should be doing than school."

"David could have thought that as well. He'd been told he would be king, but you know what he did?"

Nia shook her head.

"He went back to taking care of his sheep. Tending sheep was his job, and school is your job." Auntie smiled. "I've been praying about all this since you told me what happened between you and Rachel. I'm pretty sure the next piece of the puzzle is about you going back to school and living your life. The other pieces will fall into place in God's timing."

"Just like you to find a way to turn this all around to get me back to school."

"I believe that's my part of the puzzle, my sweet niece." Auntie opened a jar of spaghetti sauce and added it to the ground beef. "Is the spaghetti cooked?"

Nia lifted a strand out with her fork and pinched it. "Almost. So you don't think I need to be going out and healing anyone just yet?"

"Not yet, sweetie. It will happen when the time is right. God will make sure of that."

"My David Years. I like that, Auntie."

## 2

After dinner, Nia went into her room, rolled her eyes at the suitcase, and then pushed it on the floor. She sat cross-legged on her bed with the letter in her hand. What was she afraid of? She opened the letter.

*My dearest Nia,*

*By the time you get this, I'll be in heaven with my Savior. I know you're probably very sad about that but don't be. I know I'm fine. In fact, I'm better than fine. I'm perfect. I can hear again and run again. I've tossed my cane and am listening to heavenly music. Right now, I'm probably dancing for joy with Jesus.*

*If things go the way I believe they will, you also will have made your choice to be a healer. I told you about my journey to becoming a healer, but I don't know what your journey will hold.*

*After all, everyone's puzzle is different. (smile)*

*Each of us must put our own puzzle together—with God's help, of course. So I know you want me to tell you what to do, but I can't.*

*What I can do is to tell you to study God's Word. There's a verse in the Bible that says God will give you all that you need to live a godly life. I've found this to be true over and over. The Bible is an amazing book.*

*As you spend time studying God's Word, it will help you develop a relationship with Him but also guide you to*

*make good choices in your life that will lead you right where God wants you to be.*

*I know without a doubt had I not started reading and studying God's Word, I would never have become a healer. Yes, I know Jesus promised me that, but if I hadn't done my part, I would have missed out on using that wonderful gift He gave to me.*

*God has given you the gift of healing as well, but how you use it will be up to you.*

*Cooper and I have talked about you a great deal these past few weeks. Eventually (when the time is right) you will become the sole owner of Puzzle House to do as you see fit. Cooper will guide you through all the legalities when the time comes. If not Cooper, someone else will be there to help.*

*Speaking of Cooper, I would be forever grateful if the two of you stayed in communication with each other these next few years. I think it would be good for both of you. I also think it would be wonderful if you could visit Puzzle House from time to time since it will someday be your home.*

*For the time being, I believe Cooper plans on keeping it as a spiritual retreat for those who are in need of just such a thing.*

*I know that however you decide to run Puzzle House, it will be wonderful. Do not feel that you have to keep it the same as I've done. After all, every puzzle is different. (smile) Perhaps, you'll even rename it and toss out the puzzle theme. That's up to you.*

*I trust you. I know it might be a little hard for you to imagine all this at your age, but not to worry. It will happen in God's timing. In the meantime, I pray that you will be happy and healthy.*

*Hugging you from Heaven,  
Rachel*

*PS. I've kept Bible study journals since I discovered the*

*power of God's Word. When the time is right, ask Cooper for them, and he will share them with you. In the meantime, you might want to start keeping your own journals.*

*And don't forget to listen to God—that's the Holy Spirit guiding you. Don't be afraid to be quiet. If things get too noisy, you won't hear that still, small Voice.*

*God bless you and keep you, my dear sweet Nia.*

Maybe Rachel couldn't tell her how to become a healer, but at least she'd given Nia the first step.

"Hey, Auntie. I need a notebook." Nia called.

"Why?"

"I thought I'd start a journal as I do my Bible study. Write down my thoughts and ideas. And questions. Lots of questions."

"That's a great idea, sweetie." Her Auntie's voice had a happy lilt.

Nia rested in the warmth of it, thanking God for having an Auntie who loved and cared for her. "Not mine. Rachel wrote that she had one. Oh, and she also wrote favorite verses on index cards so she could read them over and over."

"Your school notebooks should be in the closet, and I'll run down to the store and buy you some index cards."

"You don't have to do that. I can get some later."

"Not a problem. Be back soon."

Nia's gaze fell on her e-tablet. She downloaded a Bible app, then typed in David's name.

His name came up nine-hundred, seventy-four times. Wow! David really was a big deal in biblical times.

Nia went to the first verse—1 Samuel 16:13. She decided to read the whole chapter instead of that verse only. After reading it several times, she wrote down



verse seven in her notebook.

*But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."*

Thinking on Rachel's words, Nia added her own thoughts.

*God cares about my heart. How can I have a heart that God will approve of? What do I need to do?*

*Go to church.*

*Read the Bible.*

*Be nice to other people*

*Follow Auntie's rules*

She left several lines blank to add more. The account of David and Goliath was thrilling to read. Nia wrote more.

*1 Samuel 17-David and Goliath*

*David wanted to protect others.*

*David wanted to honor God.*

*David's past experiences could help him.*

*Believed God would help him.*

*Couldn't wear the king's armor. Had to be himself if he was to kill Goliath.*

Nia stared at the last words she'd written. Auntie was right. She wasn't Rachel. She had to do this healing thing with God's help in her own way—whatever that was!

### 3

*Four years later*

Graduation caps filled the sky. As they hit the ground, Nia's classmates jumped up off their seats to grab one. Not classmates any longer—former classmates. She picked up the graduation cap closest to her.

"We did it! We did it, Nia!" Keisha ran up, holding a cap in her hand. Her arms went around Nia. "Can you believe it? We did it."

"Of course, I can believe it. We worked hard enough to get here." She hugged her best friend.

"Yeah, that's true. And in a few months, we're going to college. Together."

"Yep. 'Joined at the hip' as Auntie always says." Nia pitched her Auntie's voice perfectly.

"It's not very nice to be mimicking me like that."

Nia hugged her auntie. "Thank you, Auntie. I could never have done it without you."

"Yes, you would have. But you're very welcome." Auntie hugged her back. "I'm so proud of you. Both of you. Keisha, great job and a full scholarship as well. My girls are growing up."

"Yes, Miss Retta. We sure are." Keisha grinned as she leaned in for her own hug. "So since we're all grown up that means Nia doesn't have a curfew

anymore, right?"

Cooper Summers walked up to them.

"You made it, Cooper." Nia smiled and hugged him.

"I wouldn't have missed it for anything. I'm so proud of you, and Rachel would be, too."

The two of them could talk about Rachel now without getting over-emotional but they both still missed her. Grinning, she said, "She's probably too busy in heaven to even notice."

"I doubt that very much."

"This is Keisha Banks. My very best friend in the whole world." Nia touched Keisha's arm. "I've told you about her."

Cooper held out a hand. "You certainly have. It's so nice to finally meet you, Keisha. Congratulations."

"Nice to meet you too, Mr. Summers." She looked at Nia's aunt "So what about this curfew thing?"

"Why? What's the plan for tonight?"

"A class party, Auntie."

"Nia, I trust your judgment. You come in whenever you want for tonight. After that, it can be midnight instead of eleven until you leave for Puzzle House. Then it's up to Cooper to decide when you're with him this summer. How's that?"

"Works for me, Auntie." She grinned at Cooper. "And don't worry, curfew won't be a problem at Puzzle House. It's not as if there's a lot of nightlife around there."

He wiped his brow in an exaggerated manner. "Phew...for a minute I was more than worried. I was terrified."

Nia giggled. Keisha tugged on her arm. "We should get going."

"OK. OK."

Her aunt hugged her once again and whispered in her ear, "I'm so proud of you, sweetie. And I do trust you. Don't make me regret that."

"I won't. I promise."

Nia looked at Cooper. "I'm sorry you drove all this way just for a few minutes. Maybe we could go out for supper first. I can always go to the party later."

"No way. You go have fun at your party. I'll see you in a week or so at Puzzle House, right?"

"Right." Nia hugged Cooper and her Auntie once more before leaving.

They walked toward Keisha's car arm in arm.

Keisha looked at Nia. "I think I'm gonna do it tonight."

"Do what?"

"You know. It. Sex."

"With who? You don't even have a boyfriend."

"With Marcus, of course. Who else would it be?"

"But you're not really his girlfriend. He hasn't even taken you out on a real date."

"But I will be after tonight." Keisha grinned.

"Marcus is a player, Keish. Besides, it's wrong and you know it."

Keisha got in the car.

"I'm tired of being a goody-two-shoes all the time. I'm an adult now. And I want Marcus to be my boyfriend." Keisha looked away from Nia. "And that means a girl's got to do what a girl's got to do."

"That's not true, Keish."

"Why would he want to be my boyfriend if I don't do it with him? Plenty of other girls out there will." She held up a hand. "Don't try to talk me out of it. Let's go back to my house and change clothes and then get to

the party." She slid the key into the ignition and started the car.

Nia stood by the car but didn't get in. "No."

Keisha looked at her. "What do you mean, no?"

"Just what I said. If you're planning something that stupid, you're doing it without me. I'm not going to the party. I'll just catch up with Cooper and Auntie."

"Don't get holier-than-thou on me, Nia. I just want to have some fun. There's nothing wrong with that. Get in the car so we can go. Please."

"Can't help it. I am holy and so are you. We are set apart for God. I thought this was something we both agreed on. We're going to go to the same Bible college and then we'll work together at Puzzle House after we graduate."

"I'll still do all that. I just want a boyfriend for the summer. I want to have some fun. Nothing wrong with that."

"It is if it's Marcus, and it means you have to have sex with him."

"What's wrong with Marcus? He's fun. And he's really cute."

"And a player. You can't trust him. Please, Keisha. Don't do this. Not tonight. Let's go have fun at the party together, and then we can talk about it some more tomorrow."

Keisha tapped her fingers on the steering wheel as she stared straight ahead for a few moments. "OK."

"OK, what?"

"OK, we can talk about it later. Now will you go to the party with me? You win."

Nia got in then smiled at Keisha. "Good. Now let's go have fun."

There were people everywhere at the party. The