

Chapter 1
Castle Raby, Scottish Marches
The Feast of Saint John
June 24, 1424

'Today they tell me I must behave.
I'm not allowed to laugh loudly, stare, or make
remarks.

I must put on my best gown, the pink silk
damascene with the long train, balance my heavy
headdress on my head, and play my psaltery. The
king's uncles are coming to visit.

Today, they decide if I'm suitable enough to
be made Duchess of York, and maybe queen.
Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York, the boy I'm
supposed to marry, is only thirteen, but they say he
will be the richest peer in the kingdom when he
reaches the age of twenty-one.

"But that's not for years," I point out. "I'm
only nine years old. Why do I have to do this now?"

"Richard is the king's cousin," Audrey, my
mother's maid, tells me. "If the king were to die,
Richard would be king. Your father wants to secure
your future now."

I sigh. Sitting in stuffy rooms listening to
Mama and Papa and all those important people they
know wearies me. If you are the Earl of
Westmorland, like Papa, and the king has given you
the task of guarding the English border against the
heathenish Scots, then you must want to know many
such people. But I prefer to frolic under one of the
huge trees that surround the castle.

I turn my head slightly, and Audrey mutters as
she stuffs my thick blond hair into the netting under
the headdress. Sliding my eyes to the right, I can just
make out the shapes of the trees through the newly
glazed windows of our rooms in Bulmer's Tower.

Bulmer's Tower is a five-sided tower shaped like an arrowhead that stands apart from the rest of the towers comprising Castle Raby. It can be easily defended from a sudden raid on the castle, so Papa decreed that all of us should live here. The trees seem small and very faraway.

Mama enters my chamber, carrying my psalter. Her eyes look pink. Silently, she scrutinizes me, her lips pinched, as Audrey curtsies and steps aside. Then she takes my hand and leads me up the steep spiral stairs to the solar.



"How much are you willing to pay for her?" says a deep voice.

Mama clenches my fingers so tightly I yelp.

"That is John Plantagenet, Duke of Bedford, the senior uncle to the king." Mama, Joan de Beaufort, Countess of Westmorland, turns me around so that I have to look into her eyes. "He's just been made regent of France, and rarely comes to England. It is a high honor for him to visit us, Cecylee."

"But you don't seem happy," I remark as we peek through the arras.

Mama shakes her head and puts her fingers to her lips.

"Two thousand marks," replies Papa.

Through an opening in the richly woven tapestry, I find Richard standing in one corner, his hand running through his hair. For the past six months, he's been living at Castle Raby. When I asked why, Papa pinched my cheek and said it would be well if we got acquainted. I try hard to be pleasant, but he is so serious. He's dressed in black. Couldn't he think of some other color?

Duke John looks around the solar, his sharp eyes taking in Papa's glazed windows, the newly installed hooded fireplace on the north wall, and the rich hangings. He reminds me of a merchant at a fair.

“Four thousand?” he says.

Papa stares at his lap as if he’s just discovered something fascinating, perhaps a pulled thread, on his silver and blue robe. Ralph de Neville, Earl of Westmorland, must never be too quick to compromise.

A cough erupts as a gentleman enters from the door opposite and bows. I turn to Mama.

“That is Duke John’s younger brother, Humphrey Plantagenet, Duke of Gloucester. He lives in England and acts as regent for the king.”

“How old is the king?”

“Three years old.”

“He’s ten years younger than Richard then.”

Mama quietly shushes me.

Duke Humphrey smiles at Richard. Perhaps they are friends. I did hear someone say that Richard always stays with him when he visits London.

Duke Humphrey shakes his head.

Richard smiles faintly.

Duke John sighs. “Three thousand?”

“’Tis a goodly sum,” says Duke Humphrey. “Three is the sign of the Trinity. ’Tis the perfect number.”

Papa strokes his white beard. The corner of his mouth quirks. Then he roars with laughter.

“Done. Let us drink to it.”

Mama gives me a look, which means to stay here behind the arras and be quiet. She goes to Papa. “You know I am not happy with this.”

“Cecylee needs to marry,” replies Papa. “This betrothal will make her Duchess of York, and you know where that might lead.”

A duchess! I wiggle with excitement. That would make me more important than Mama! She says softly, “I care little for that kind of future. I want my Cecylee happy in her life.”

“Don’t be ridiculous,” snaps Papa.

Duke John looks surprised. He holds his wine cup high in the air and stares at Mama. To my surprise, she kneels.

“She is my youngest daughter, and only nine years old. Do you have to do this now?”

Papa bangs his cup on the arm of his chair, ruby-red liquid sloshing to the floor. “Mind yourself, my lady,” he hisses, wagging his finger, as Jenkin rushes to clean it up. “Never contradict your lord in public.”

Drawing a handkerchief from her long triangular sleeve, she dabs her eyes.

Papa helps her up, leads her to her seat, and signals for wine.

Mama looks straight at me and nods.

I run into the room. Suddenly all eyes are upon me. I dip a deep curtsy, rising smoothly and without wobbling, the way Mama taught.

Richard bows and smiles, then frowns. I smile back, trying to coax that frown away, and when his features smooth out, I turn to Mama. “What shall I play for the company? Shall I do *I Cannot Help It If I Rarely Sing*?”

Papa slaps his thigh and bellows with laughter.

Mama smiles: “Why not sing *This Lovely Star Of The Sea*?”

Settling onto the window seat beside Richard, I nestle the psalter into the crook of my elbow, pluck it, and began to sing. I love to sing, it’s so good for the spirits.

“This Rose of Raby has spirit as well as beauty,” says Duke Humphrey after listening for a few minutes.

“She’s not shy,” replies Papa, smiling.

Duke John winks at Richard. “I know you must be eager to wed.”

Richard colors a fiery red, making the gentlemen laugh heartily. I sigh.

"When is the ceremony to take place?" asks Duke Humphrey.

"I wonder if it could be this year," says Papa, "in October, on the Feast of Saint Luke."

I strum my psalterly with a flourish and finish the song.

"What are you going to sing now?" whispers Richard.

"Wait and see." I glance at the adults, who are busy talking, and play softly *I Cannot Help It If I Rarely Sing*.

"Cis!" exclaims Richard, laughing softly. "Your lady mother—"

"It's too late now, isn't it? Shush! How can I talk to you if I have to sing?"

Richard smiles and sinks back onto the cushions next to me. He looks less serious.

"Where will they live?" asks Duke John.

"Where would you like to live?" whispers Richard.

I think for a minute. I don't want to be far away from Mama. "Do you have a castle close by?"

"I have many castles, Cis. But not here."

"Oh." I turn away. "I don't wish to move."

"I know that you, my lords, have much on your minds," says Papa, bowing. "So I wondered if they could be betrothed rather than married. That way both Richard and Cecylee could continue to live here."

Richard nudges me. "Did you hear what they said?"

I nod and smile. I pluck my psalterly and take a deep breath:

*A gardyn saw I ful of blosmy bowes
Upon a ryver, in a grene mede,
There as swetnesse evermore inow is,
With floures white, blewe, yelwe, and rede—*

"What is that song, Cis?"

“It was written by Granduncle Chaucer. I made up the tune myself. Shall I teach you?”

Richard puts a hand on my arm, for Duke Humphrey speaks. “Is it not true that you have a large number of soldiers garrisoned here at Castle Raby?”

“Indeed,” says Papa, “I am warden of the western march, and I have to patrol the land from here to Scotland.”

“I like not the idea of rough soldiers being so close to this pretty rose.”

Duke John stares at me. “Why not have little Cecylee and young Richard live at court with their cousin King Henry?”

“But Cecylee will be safe here with me,” says Mama, hands tensing on her chair.

“This is a serious issue,” says Papa slowly. “It is true that I have a large garrison of soldiers here because of the Scots raids, and because of the lawless nature of this country.”

“We would not want our wild rose plucked before her time,” says Duke Humphrey. “Young Richard here is close to the throne. It would not be seemly if his wife-to-be were caught in a rough soldier’s embrace.”

Confused, I turn to Richard. “What are they talking about?”

“Your virtue,” he replies, reddening.

“But there is no blemish on my virtue.” I frown.

Richard pats my hand. “You would not be able to defend yourself against any man determined to take you. You have not the strength.”

“I have a good kick. And I know where to aim.”

“Cis!” Richard pulls down the corners of his mouth. He looks strange, but then I see he is trying not to laugh. “How do you know that?”

“Audrey.” My mother’s maid has been with her for hundreds of years, and knows everything. I ease the psaltery into a comfortable position, strum for a minute of two, and then sing a song I composed to please Mama:

*I once was in a summery dale,
In one such little hidey-hole,
When I heard a great debate
Between an owl and nightingale.
Their brief was stiff and stark and strong,
Sometimes soft, and sometimes loud,
As either side swelled up against
The other, and cursed each other out.
Letting fly their evil thoughts,
They said the very worst they could,
And on and on about their songs,
They argued vehemently and long.*

‘Tis my favorite song, and it always makes Mama laugh. She says it is very old, perhaps one hundred and fifty years old, written by someone unnamed, but I make it my own by strumming loudly on the heavy accents of the poem, particularly the words “stiff and stark and strong”. I look up, expecting her grin, but Mama looks pinched around the lips. She signals for me to stop.

“How would you guarantee her safety?” asks Duke John.

“I could give her apartments in the keep for her very own use,” says Papa. “They are accessible only through a flight of steep and narrow stairs. There is a guardhouse underneath those rooms, which could be garrisoned by my most trusted men.”

Duke John comes closer. “You want this marriage so much, you are prepared to lock your daughter up?”

My mouth opens, I look at Mama.

She stares at the floor, her fingers tensed
around the bunched fabric of her silken skirts.
Suddenly she looks up and glares.
She glares at Richard.

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Title: Thwarted Queen: The Entire Saga of the Yorks,
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Synopsis

Angelina led a life which required her to fib. When Angelina, the black sheep of the Pagano family, meets the mysterious Mr. Russell, she has no idea that she has seen him before...in another country.

And so begins *Farewell My Life*, a novel in three parts, which spins an operatic tale of dangerous love and loss. *The Lost Mother*, the first part of this novel, slices back and forth between time and space, opening in the charming village of Georgetown, Washington D.C. while reflecting a family's troubled past in the lovely village of Marostica in the Italian Veneto.

An Unsuitable Suitor, the second part of the novel, is a Cinderella-ish tale with not-so-charming princes who inhabit the edgy setting of 1920s Berlin.

Farewell My Life, the last part of the novel, set again in Berlin, Germany, during the dark 1930s as the Nazis gain power, takes comfortable lives, assumptions and civilizations and crumbles them into ash.

And all of this revolves around Grace, Angelina's younger daughter, whose fabulous talent for the violin promises a shimmering career.

Reviews of Farewell My Life:

"Every person in the book is masterfully shaped by the era, showing both prejudices, which would be overcome by living in the modern-day and inner strength and drive to claim what one wants that has existed throughout time. By not shying away from either, the author has made a masterpiece, one readers can easily lose themselves in." - Jo Niederhoff, *San Francisco Book Review*.

"A unique, deftly scripted, and extraordinary novel by an author with a distinctive narrative storytelling style that will hold the readers dedicated attention from beginning to end, "Farewell My Life: Buona Notte Vita Mia" is one of those rare novels that will linger in the mind and memory long after the book itself has been finished and set back upon the shelf." - *Midwest Book Review*