

Excerpt from *A Princess in Disguise*

By April Michelle Davis

Excerpt taken from chapter 3

“Margaret.” It was Eleanor. “Margaret. Let me in. I need to speak with you.” When I opened the door, she walked to my bed and sat, directly facing me and my dresser. “Margaret, do you miss Mother?”

Eleanor sat on the edge of my bed with her feet dangling over the side. She twirled a ringlet of her hair with her left hand as she always did when she was in deep thought—well, deep thought for her.

I was leaning against the dresser trying to cover the fact that it was sticking further out on one side, but I was still shocked by Eleanor’s question. We never spoke of Mother. “Yes, I miss her, but I do not know what I miss because I never knew her. I think I miss what I would have known, and I miss not knowing her love.”

“I wish she were here. Why did she leave, Margaret? Did we do something wrong to make her mad at us?”

I was having trouble responding to Eleanor’s queries but not because of the position I was standing in. I had always thought she hated Mother for abandoning us, but here she was with mixed emotions.

“I do not believe we did anything wrong, for we were too young when she left. We were babies; we could not even walk.” I tried to sound confident, though I sometimes wondered the same.

“I used to think that, but now I am not sure.”

“We did nothing wrong, and deep down you know that. Besides, we do not need her anymore. Soon each of us shall be off on our own adventures.”

“Thank you, Margaret. I feel better. I guess I was just having doubts because tonight is such a big night. I know you are against these marriages, and I would prefer to marry for love, but as princesses, this is our duty. We have a responsibility, Margaret. We have such easy lives. We do not have to work, and we have so much more than our subjects. Our purpose is to become wives, bear sons, and make peace with other kingdoms. We are needed to prevent wars and to

bring new wealth to our kingdom, but our main goal as princesses is to get married and have male heirs.”

“Eleanor, it is just that I have dreamed since I was a little girl that I would be swept off my feet by a handsome man I loved, not forced into a marriage with a stranger I may never love nor dream about.”

Eleanor had stood and moved closer to the door, but then she turned to me. She could easily see the displacement of my dresser if she noticed. “Oh, you left your birthday gift from Father on the table at lunch. I did not open it. Would you like me to stay while you open it?” She handed me the small box.

“No, I do not need you to stay while I open the box. Thank you for bringing it to me. I guess I forgot it when I stormed out.”

“Yes, but this marriage is our duty. By doing what is right, we will be happy.” She paused as if she were about to say more, but then changed her mind. “I shall let you be so you can prepare for the ball.” Eleanor walked over to me, gave me a hug, and left. She did not seem to notice how crooked my dresser was, or that I remained in front of it during our entire conversation.

I centered my dresser on the wall and pulled out the bags from under the bed. Why was it my duty to give up love? Should I not have the same rights my people have? I was not a servant to be traded like an animal at the marketplace. I was ready to leave. I opened my door and peeked down the hallway. No servants or sisters were in sight. I entered the hall and ran toward the steps.