

# His Colonial Rose

By

Vanessa Brooks & Beth Bennett

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This book is dedicated to the memories of both Pippin and Holly the Collie, R.I.P.

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# Prologue

1773

Frederick, Lord North, the Prime Minister of England, approached the chambers of King George III within the sanctum of St. James Palace. Two guards stood with crossed pikes as he approached the enormous ornate white and gold double doors that led into His Majesty's inner sanctum. Recognizing the Prime Minister, both guards uncrossed their weapons and stood aside allowing the venerable man to pass.

Lord North sallied forth as a King's aide hurriedly flung wide the door for the statesman to enter. The King sat at the table eating sweetmeats; he waved his hand and lace covered wrist in welcome. Lord North made a leg, before approaching his liege.

"Be seated, North, and so to what do we owe this... ha, we were about to say 'pleasure' but we somehow doubt that this is a social call, hmm?"

"You are correct in your assumptions as ever, your Majesty. I am here with grave tidings from your Majesty's American colonies. There has been a serious backlash to the Tea Levies and the Molasses Tax that we placed upon your colonies."

Here Lord North paused. The King was apt to fly into unexpected rages and he needed to keep the King calm, so that he could gain the Royal Assent to his proposal.

"Continue, man, we do not have all day," the King replied tetchily.

Lord North cleared his throat before saying, "I have a rather *unusual* proposal, your Majesty. My sources have informed me that a subject living in Virginia, one Henry Randolph, a wealthy plantation owner by all accounts, has the ear of the radicals. He is, according to our sources, a known greedy man but his one love appears to be his daughter Rose. My proposal is thus, sire; we offer the man an advantageous and titled match for his beloved daughter Rose with a peer of the realm, in return for his services as spy and promoter of your Majesty's cause within the American colonies."

"Sounds to be an excellent plan, North, so now do tell, who is the lucky scapegoat to be?"

"I rather thought the Earl of Straddock, Sire, Lord Benedict Mortimer."

"Good God, man! Is that not choosing valuable pedigree rather than a well-trained mongrel for the job?"

"Lord Mortimer refused to entertain the idea of my god-daughter, Lady Margaret Beauchamp, as his Countess and he refused any matrimonial suggestions put to him since then."

"Frederick that is hardly a crime, the man is a peer of the realm. It is only two years since his father died of apoplexy. Give the puppy a chance to choose his own mate. After all, he is still a young man!"

"You are, as always, correct, sire, but we need his help with this situation out in the colonies. There are no other young men of rank, breeding and prestige of his age available to be of sufficient inducement to Henry Randolph."

"We are now becoming mightily bored of the subject, North. What exactly do you want us to do about this?"

"Since Mortimer is a peer of the realm, I request your help in convincing him to marry this chit from the Americas, your Majesty. I would ask that you sign this document so that I might then be permitted to write to Mortimer and instruct him accordingly."

"You really think this match will work, Frederick, and go some way to appease the Colonies?"

"Indeed I do, Sire."

"Very well then, hand me the damned paper!"

*"Thank you, sire."*

\* \* \* \* \*

Virginia, America 1774

Henry Carter Randolph sat and stared at the missive that he held within his hand. He stilled his mind that was racing with possibilities. Henry was an astute man of standing within the Colonies. He owned a plantation of some value, he was wealthy by colonial standards, and he was fiercely patriotic to the American cause. Henry knew that the discontent with British rule would eventually lead to bloodshed on these colonial shores. The thing that Henry Randolph prized, above all else in the world, was his beautiful daughter Rose. This offer from the English

Crown gave him a way of protecting Rose, effectively removing her completely from the dangers of inevitable conflict.

It would mean that he would have to play a dangerous game of double bluff, but he was prepared to risk his own life to save that of his daughter.

Henry knew that he had been a somewhat neglectful father, mostly due to absence caused by political necessity but that did not mean that time spent in his duties lessened his love for his daughter.

This was an offer worth serious consideration....

# Chapter One

Rose Randolph sped from the open meadow towards the Ash Grove Plantation. She called to Pippin, her jaunty white terrier as she ran, "Come, Pippin, good boy, run home now!" Pippin raced beside her as the two sprinted homeward at breakneck speed. A beautiful plantation house sat at the top of a bluff overlooking the James River in the colony of Virginia. Rose's father, Henry, would be arriving from Williamsburg today and she could hardly wait for his return. He had promised to fetch her something new from the milliner's shop. She hoped it would be a jaunty pink bonnet to match her French silk gown.

Rose desperately wanted to show off in front of that hoity-toity Ellen Eubanks. Ellen had worn a new bonnet to church last Sunday and had taken the opportunity to make Rose feel like an underdressed country bumpkin. Just because Rose preferred riding horses and more strenuous activity to poring endlessly over the latest London fashion pamphlets, didn't mean she was uncivilized. They were, after all, living in the Colonies, whether Ellen liked it not. Ellen had moved here from London and she seemed determined to make everyone think she was much too grand to be stuck in a backwater like Virginia.

Rose loved Virginia but, in truth, she had never known anywhere else. The stories of English living that she had heard Ellen tell sounded stilted and rather dull in her opinion. Ellen told of soirees and parties that sounded quite grand, but, to Rose, the tales also told of the expectations and pressures from society. Hmm, sniffed Rose, she wouldn't trade the wide open spaces of Virginia and the beauty of Ash Grove for anywhere else.

Spying her father's carriage coming up the lane, her heart jumped with expectation. Rose's father wasn't the warmest of men, but he usually indulged her in her girlish whims. Henry Carter Randolph served in the House of Burgesses and was often called to the Governor's Palace for political meetings. The sabre rattling against the British crown continued to increase and King George III was not happy. Leaders of Virginia were forever coming in and out of Ash Grove but Rose didn't pay very much attention to politics. In fact, she deliberately tried to avoid her father after such meetings. Henry was often in a mood and would set up a tirade afterwards

and it generally took him a day or two to calm down. He was trying to straddle the difficult position of neutrality and things didn't seem to be going well. The meetings left him even more sullen and angry than usual.

Rose's mother had died several years ago. Rose was the only child of Henry and Ann Randolph. Rose missed her mother terribly. The ability to soothe her father's rages belonged to her mother alone. Henry doted on his daughter, however, and afforded her much freedom, perhaps a little too much. While Rose had her own way, she possessed a sweet temperament and rarely behaved in an untoward manner. However, like many overindulged young women, when crossed, she was stubborn and petulant.

Rose stood now on the steps of Ash Grove as her father's carriage wound its way to the front of the house. The coachman alighted and folded down the carriage steps for her father to descend. Henry greeted his daughter warmly, with a hug.

Pippin danced up and down and placed his paws on Henry's thigh. The elder statesman rubbed the dog's scruffy neck. "Still running wild with Pippin I see, daughter. He's been digging again, look at these filthy paws. My breeches shall have to be cleaned. Keep him outside until he has been cleaned as well."

"Yes, sir. Father, how was your time in Williamsburg?"

"Oh, ever the same, my girl, ever the same..."

Rose hated to bring up the subject of her desired pink bonnet when her father looked so weary. She quietly watched with eager anticipation as the boxes and luggage were unloaded. She eyed a beautifully wrapped package, just the right size for a milliner's box, as it was handed down from the luggage rack and placed into Henry's arms. He turned and smiled at her.

"You didn't think I'd forget did you?"

"Oh goodness, the box alone is beautiful!" Rose's hands were clasped in expectation as her father held the package. She looked up at him with open adoration.

"Go try it on, my lovely." Grabbing the box, she ran up the steps into the house, then flew upstairs to her room. Once inside, she carefully unwrapped the paper and gently folded it back. Even the wrapping was a luxurious commodity to be saved and reused. Imports of everything were valuable, including paper. Judiciously opening the lid, a cry of joy escaped her lips. The loveliest hat she had ever seen sat amidst matching pink tissue paper. Rose carefully lifted out the bonnet to admire before setting it upon her head.

Rushing to the mirror, she tied the silk ribbons into a bow under her chin. Ellen was going to be absolutely green with envy!

Rose had never seen anything so lovely. Eloise Smithson, her lady's maid, appeared at the door. Eloise was much older than Rose but the dear spinster was ever her ally.

"Oh, how beautiful you look, Miss Rose." Rose ran to kiss Eloise, who, as far as Rose was concerned, was far more a member of the family than a servant.

"Father chose well don't you think?" Rose gave a sweet smile.

"Oh yes, indeed he did, little Miss, indeed he did. Run and show your father the bonnet. I have no doubt that he will be pleased with the result of his gift."

Rose rushed from the room and into her father's study. "Look Father, the bonnet is perfect, thank you for the gift." Pippin had managed to wiggle his way inside the plantation house door and accompanied his mistress into the room. The dog gave a sharp bark of approval.

"Rose, I thought I told you that dog was to stay outside when muddy."

"Yes, Father, I'll put him out right away but look, Papa, do admire my bonnet!"

Henry lightly pinched his daughter's cheek. "It is almost as lovely as the face that wears it, my dear."

"Thank you, I love it, Papa." Rose skipped delightedly into the hall, her mind on her bonnet and forgetting her promise to put the dog outside. She climbed the stairs to her room again and watched as Pippin wagged his stubby little tail from side to side while he clambered up the steps beside her. His affectionate eyes gazed at Rose when they reached the landing and the entrance to Rose's room.

Opening the door into her room, Pippin preceded Rose inside and promptly jumped high and plopped into the middle of the bed mud and all. Rose gave a deep sigh. "Oh, Pippin, you really are such a little piglet." The small dog simply grinned back, his tongue lolling out of his mouth with pure joy. Rose knew her bed was his favourite spot to roll about and wallow in—especially when muddy, it appeared. The sight of the dirt on his paws had a twinge of guilt pricking her conscience, reminding her she'd just assured her father she'd put Pippin outside. Rose shook her head at her adored pet. Well, it was too late to worry about that now. "If you want to stay inside, you'd better stay out of father's purview. At least until you get a bath."

Rose gently placed the hat back inside its box and tucked the tissue paper carefully around it. Closing the lid excitedly, she smiled and could hardly wait for Sunday; she could just

imagine Ellen's face. It would be difficult not to stick out her tongue when she passed by on her father's arm to take their family seat in the meeting hall sanctuary.

Rose joined her father for dinner in the dining room that evening. Suzanna, their house keeper-cook had once again produced a delicious meal. Poached fish from the James River, sprinkled with chopped walnuts was accompanied by fresh vegetables from their own kitchen garden. Rose watched out of the corner of her eye as Pippin judiciously squeezed in through the kitchen door behind the maid and came to sit beneath her chair. Oh dear, she had forgotten all about him, and he'd evidently forgotten her instructions to stay out of her father's sight. Now she would have to keep him quiet until dinner was done.

As the fish was served and the wine poured, Henry eyed his only child. "Relations between the Colony and England continue to deteriorate, my dear. The call for open rebellion will no doubt soon be upon us."

Rose's attention was split between eating, listening to her father, and trying to keep Pippin's presence a secret. She nodded to let her father know she was paying attention as she dropped yet another tidbit to the dog. Clearly hearing Pippin smacking his lips as he chomped away on his treat, she prayed the sound didn't carry.

"I will have to be very careful, if I am able to maintain the security of Ash Grove, both for myself and for you and your children." Rose took a large bite of the delicious spoon bread; it melted in her mouth.

"I am going to have to go to England, Rose."

His words finally won her undivided attention as Rose looked up from the table in shock. "What? Father, no... must you?" Anxiety caused her to stop eating. Travel across the ocean to England! Oh my, things must truly be serious for her father to do that. It would take such a long time too; he would be away for months on end.

"Yes, my dear. I'm afraid there is no help for it. It will be a long journey but it is my wish that you accompany me." The statement came as such a shock that Rose leapt to her feet.

"Father, I cannot! I do not want to go to England!" Realizing her rudeness, she slowly took her seat but her appetite flew out the door. "Really, Papa, I will be just fine remaining here."

"I'm afraid in this instance that you do not have a choice in the matter, daughter. It will indeed be a long trip. We will be away from Virginia for over six months, perhaps even as long as a year. Rose, I shall require your presence and Eloise shall accompany you. My dear, you are

to be presented to the Prime Minister, Frederick, Lord North and perhaps even to King George the Third and Queen Charlotte of England!"

Rose swallowed hard. She could feel the tears flooding her eyes and choking her throat. Knowing that nothing irritated her father more than tears, she struggled to keep them at bay. Pippin took that moment to spy a chipmunk perched on the window ledge just outside the dining room. His sharp bark of excitement startled both Rose and her father. Pippin raced from under the chair. Leaping towards the window, he began to scratch on the glass furiously. His bark was piercingly loud and Rose's hands moved to cover her ears.

Her father jumped to his feet so fast that he pulled the table cloth and upset the wine glasses. "Get that damned dog out of here!" The shouting stirred Pippin to further action and his bark became even more frantic. Rose let out a shriek of dismay at the little terror.

"Stop Pippin!" Pippin tore out of the dining room and ran into the kitchen and then back again. As Rose dove to catch him, she fell into the table and the platter of fish was knocked to the floor.

"Damn it," Henry demanded, "where's my rifle? I'm going to put an end to that nuisance of a dog right here and now!"

Rose implored her father, "Papa, *please I beg you no!*" Finally managing to grasp Pippin's wriggling body, she raced through the kitchen and out the back door. The little dog wiggled down, escaping her protective arms and took off at top speed to disappear behind the hedge. Rose ran down the steps through the garden and out toward the James River.

Sure that her father would never carry out his threat to shoot Pippin, her mind was centred on the unsettling news her father had imparted at dinner. Rose decided she would never go to England, not ever! She didn't care how mad her father became. Virginia was more than home, it was in her blood, it was where her mother's remains lay. Rose thought she would rather die before she would leave these shores and travel to that strange land called England.

Two weeks later, Rose found herself aboard the British passenger vessel, *The Gwendolyn*, commanded by Captain Horace Littleton. Rose had done everything within her power to persuade her father to allow her stay behind but nothing she said had swayed him. Though he had foregone punishing her for her disobedience in keeping Pippin outside that day, his threat of a sound spanking finally put an end to Rose's opposition. Although Henry had never before spanked his daughter, she understood that this time he was sorely tempted when he made

his threat. Sensing her father's resolve, she resentfully acquiesced to something that was now beyond her control.

Aboard ship, Rose looked up at the massive sails of *The Gwendolyn* as they caught the wind and helped move the vessel away from Norfolk, Virginia. Her father's one concession was to allow her to take Pippin along on the voyage. Rose had a little carrier built for him and had asked their blacksmith in town to make Pippin a leash. The saucy pup sat panting on deck as the ship rolled to and fro. Rose stood to one side and watched as the sailors danced their way up and down the rigging while the ship pulled out of the harbour. *The Gwendolyn* was loaded with all manner of passengers travelling to England.

Nearby, several children argued over a hoop. Rose sighed, six long weeks aboard this horrible block of wood and all for what? For all sake and purposes, she felt that she was sailing into the heart of enemy territory. Rose had never paid much attention to politics before but she considered herself an American as did nearly everyone she knew. She couldn't understand why her father would not move forward and declare himself a patriot instead of behaving as a loyalist. He told her over and over that he meant to maintain ownership of Ash Grove and he was going to make any political moves carefully.

When Rose told her father that she believed principle to be more important than financial gain he abruptly told her to keep her own council or she might otherwise find herself begging bread on the streets of Richmond and Ash Grove held in the grip of the British crown.

How sick and tired she was of being told that she was too young to understand the difficult path her father trod in these duplicitous times. After all, many of her ex-school friends had long since married and a few even already had their first child. Rose felt that eighteen was plenty old enough to have an opinion. However, her father, it seemed, did not agree.

Rose gently rolled Pippin's rubber ball up on the deck and watched as he chased it. She moved to the ship's rail and surveyed the shores of Virginia growing ever fainter in the distance before finally the shore line disappeared completely. She settled herself on the quarter deck and slipped her mother's locket from around her neck. Popping open the latch, she peered at the tiny miniature the locket held. The face that looked back was so much like her own that she felt she were gazing at herself. "If only you were here, Mama," Rose whispered. "I am certain that Papa would listen to you."

The days became one monotonous bore and Rose wondered if time had decided to stand entirely still. She felt marooned in the middle of the never changing grey Atlantic. The very sameness of each and every day was utterly tedious. The sea was calm and the weather set fair and, thankfully, they were not plagued with any major storms. Captain Littleton seemed pleased with his ship's progress, as the prow of *The Gwendolyn* sliced through the endless grey expanse of water.

Rose watched with interest while the navigator sighted the horizon with the sextant and even talked him into explaining how the instrument worked. She asked about star constellations that were so bright in the clear evenings and she learned to spot the Bear and the Plough.

Walking around the deck one morning, Rose met a young lady named Emily Jones from Brookneal, Virginia. Emily was travelling with an old lady, a Miss Endicott, who explained that after disembarking at Greenwich they would be travelling on to Bath. The old lady had inherited a small cottage from her mother's side of the family and she was on her way to claim it.

Emily's parents had been indentured but their seven year commitment was finished when Emily was old enough to find work. She had applied to Miss Endicott's advertisement for a lady's companion and was lucky enough to be chosen. Emily was a little older and worldlier than the protected Rose. Though Emily did not have the education to become a governess, she had found her employment as a companion to Miss Endicott the perfect placement.

Rose enjoyed hearing about the frontier where Emily's family had lived. Her exciting tales of Indians and the less civilized areas of the Colonies helped to pass the time of day. Rose had seen an Indian or two but Native Americans had been forced from Virginia over a century before and Rose's father did not let her go traipsing about in the wild.

Before long, Emily and Rose became fast friends and spent many hours during their days at sea.

Emily adored Pippin and the two girls played with the dog endlessly trying to keep him busy and active. Although Emily and Rose came from two very different worlds, social class was not quite as strictly enforced aboard the ship amongst the passengers and so these two young women formed a unique bond of companionship.

"I've four brothers, Rose," Emily told her one day. Rose simply could not imagine such a large family. "They're all younger than me and so I had to help Mama an awful lot; I know that she will miss me."

"Oh, Emily, I am certain that she will," replied Rose, "and I for one have been so very glad for your company. This voyage would have been interminable without your friendship to sustain me." The two young ladies shared their hopes and dreams for the future and both wondered what life in England would be like for them.

Being wealthy, Henry could afford a small private cabin which accommodated both himself and his daughter. Eloise, as a servant, was stowed away with the other third class passengers down below deck. Despite the far better accommodations, Rose wondered if perhaps she'd fare better if she shared even a tiny cabin with her friend. She'd no idea her father snored so loudly. If that weren't distraction enough, Pippin often lay beside her head and snorted his doggy breath unpleasantly across her face. She thought that if she did not get off *The Gwendolyn* soon she would surely go quite mad.

She was still quite angry with her father and they had barely spoken two words the entire seven week voyage. Silence was difficult to maintain in such a small space and by the time they pulled into Greenwich, Rose's nerves were frayed.

The morning land was finally spotted, all the passengers rushed to the ship's rail. The shores of England grew ever larger on the horizon and Rose's stomach dropped. When they finally reached Greenwich, the docks were even uglier than she imagined. Dark and dirty, the wharves were full of busy seamen shouting as they unloaded cargoes. Never had the rolling hills of Virginia seemed so far away, indeed they were almost a world away.

The sailors nimbly scrambled up and down the rigging as the ship made port. Pippin rested happily in her arms while they watched the entire goings on. She tied the sturdy little leash around his neck and bid him follow her as the gangplank was lowered. Several sailors lugged the passenger trunks and her father led the way as Rose followed him out into the dreary dockland.

Emily and Rose hugged good-bye on the dockside. Emily slipped a piece of paper into Rose's hand. "This is the address of Miss Endicott's new home. If ever you get a chance, please come and visit me. I will miss you terribly, Rose."

Rose's eyes welled up with tears. Emily had no idea how much Rose would miss her too. "Oh, Emily, I don't know how I would have survived this journey without the comfort of your presence. I don't know where we will be staying in London but I promise that I shall send word as soon as I am able. Thank you for everything." The two embraced long and hard. Rose slowly

turned to face her father, who had procured a carriage for them to take them into London and their lodgings.

Rose had to hold Pippin's leash with both hands when he made a run for a nasty yellow eyed rat scampering across the docks. Climbing quickly inside the carriage, she shuddered at the sight of the enormous rodent. Pippin placed his front paws on the window to watch the sights go by. Eloise took her place beside Rose and Henry tapped the carriage roof with his cane. The carriage moved off with a lurch. Henry finally turned to talk to his sulking daughter.

"You will have only a short time to adjust to your new surroundings, my dear. London will be quite different from home, I know, but given time, you will come to appreciate this country. It is the mother of our colony after all. I expect that you will willingly show deference to me as your father and end this wall of silence you have managed to erect between us these past weeks."

Rose gazed out the window with Pippin and refused to answer. If her father thought she would ever forgive him for forcing her to come to this God forsaken country, he had another think coming. Henry knew her as sweet and amenable but he had no idea just how stubborn she could truly be. Her father could force her to leave Virginia but he could not force her to talk to him.

"Very well then, Rose, if that is how you wish things to be, I tell you I actually prefer your silence to your insolence." Rose stubbornly set her jaw as she watched the world go by outside the window. The docks gave way to town and then to city as London began to look more medieval by the minute. Rose had to admit the sheer age of the place was impressive. The old Tudor houses leaned over the streets and hawkers and merchants lined the thoroughfares. The carriage finally pulled up in front of a most impressive town house. Rose disembarked and descended into a cacophony of street noise.

"Oi gov'nor, gotta penny for a rose?" An old lady with no teeth and a basket full of flowers accosted Henry.

"Be gone, foul beggar!" he spluttered whilst Rose looked on with sympathetic eyes on the old lady. Pippin wagged his tail at her but the lady turned and morosely left. If Rose had been speaking to her father, she would have asked him for a penny for the beggar woman but as it was, she wasn't willing to break the silence between them just yet. Thankfully, her father disappeared into the house and went off with the butler leaving Eloise to help Rose explore their

new home. The house had four bedchambers on the first floor and attic bedrooms for the servants. Pippin settled into the bedroom that Rose selected for herself at the back of the house, away from any street noise. Pippin sniffed around the floor and found his way into a corner where he promptly turned about three times before he curled into a ball. Rose found a little bowl and filled it with water for him and set it upon the floor. So then what now...

Her father informed her that he had urgent business with the English Crown and that he absolutely needed her presence to complete a particular business transaction. He made everything sound so desperate and dire that Rose wondered what he could possibly be up to. What could having her here in London possibly accomplish for him? She knew how to pour tea and make Johnny Cake, but beyond those things, she was like a fish out of water in this vast place. She doubted looking pretty at the dinner table was necessary for her father to accomplish a business transaction. Her father had been extremely mysterious about the whole trip and no matter how Rose pried, he refused to give her any real information. She finally gave up and thus began not a wall of silence between them but a war.

Henry was an ambitious and wealthy man and he was set on expanding his wealth within the Colonies. Rose thought that perhaps it was the reason they had travelled so far. The original land grant of Ash Grove had been granted to her grandfather but Henry didn't seem to be satisfied with that. The crop of tobacco that the plantation raised netted him a handsome profit but that didn't seem to satisfy him either. Perhaps he was here to negotiate a higher price for shipment to England?

Rose could not guess her father's plans and since Henry was not forthcoming, she decided to make the best of a difficult situation and see as much as she could of this exotic new country. Exhausted by the journey and weary to her very bones of travel, Rose undressed down to her chemise and lay across the bed to sleep. Pippin, hearing her settle, hopped upon the bed, turned around three times and curled next to her. Despite the fact that she could still feel the sway of the ship though on unmoving soil, the lack of the resonant tone of her father's snores allowed her to quickly fall into a deep sleep.