



## *A Murder for Her Majesty* by Beth Hilgartner

**Subjects:** Choirboy training; England—Social life and customs—16<sup>th</sup> century

**Book List:** Europe

**Props:** White cap

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11-year-old Alice had managed to avoid her governess, slip outside her father's manor home and climb up into her favorite beech tree where she was hidden in the branches. As it turned out, it was a good thing. She heard some horses coming and saw it was her father and his London visitor, Lord Crofton. But as she watched, she saw an arrow fly into her father's chest, flinging him to the ground. "Dead?" asked a voice right beneath her tree. "Dead," said Lord Crofton as he examined her father. "The Queen will be pleased." Alice stayed up in the tree for a long time wondering what to do, where to go. Her mother had been dead for several years. She had no brothers or sisters. Finally, she remembered her father saying to her that if she was ever in need, she should go to Lady Jenny at Chellisford Hall in York.

She didn't dare even go back into the house so she just started walking. She walked for 3 days in the rain with nothing to eat, sleeping in a ditch by the side of the road each night. Finally, she arrived in York. Asking for directions to Chellisford Hall, she discovered it was eight miles outside the town. It was already almost dark. She knew she couldn't get there. They told her she might get food and shelter at the town cathedral and she was trying to find the cathedral when she was knocked over by two boys, Geoff and Nate, who came running around a corner.

They saw right away how wet and hungry and tired she was so they offered her food and shelter for the night in payment for knocking her down. They, with other boys, lived in a kind of dormitory and were the choir boys of the cathedral. Dame Agnes looked after them. They were feeding Alice some porridge for breakfast the next day when they heard Dame Agnes coming. Alice quickly got into a closet. (*Put on white cap, use English accent and ask as Dame Agnes*) "Where is the leftover porridge?" (*Remove cap*) Geoff said he'd fed it to a stray puppy. That's how Alice got her name, Pup. Before she could even realize what was happening, the boys had cut her hair, found her some clothes and she was a new choir boy.

It was just kind of a joke at first—to see how long she could be in the choir before the choirmaster noticed—but then Alice was exploring the cathedral while the boys were at lessons and she overheard the men who killed her father talking to one of the priests. They were looking for her, to kill her too and they were watching Chellisford Hall. How long before Dame Agnes saw her or before one of the boys told on her or the choirmaster or the priest discovered her? And where could she go?—not to her home, not to Chellisford Hall. (*Hold up book*) *A Murder for Her Majesty* by Beth Hilgartner.