

Duke *Most* Wicked

🌹 A Wallflowers vs. Rogues Novel 🌹

LENORA BELL



AVONBOOKS

An Imprint of HarperCollinsPublishers

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously and are not to be construed as real. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, organizations, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

DUKE MOST WICKED. Copyright © 2022 by Lenora Bell. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews. For information, address HarperCollins Publishers, 195 Broadway, New York, NY 10007.

First Avon Books mass market printing: September 2022

First Avon Books hardcover printing: September 2022

Print Edition ISBN: 978-0-06-299348-9

Digital Edition ISBN: 978-0-06-299337-3

Cover design by Guido Caroti

Cover art by Paul Stinson

Cover photograph by Shirley Green Photography

Cover image © Shutterstock

Carol composed by Nancy Nash

Carol art created by Maura Lefevre

Avon, Avon & logo, and Avon Books & logo are registered trademarks of HarperCollins Publishers in the United States of America and other countries.

HarperCollins is a registered trademark of HarperCollins Publishers in the United States of America and other countries.

FIRST EDITION

22 23 24 25 26 BVGM 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

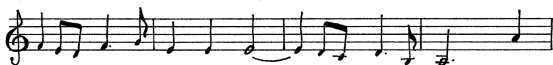
If you purchased this book without a cover, you should be aware that this book is stolen property. It was reported as “unsold and destroyed” to the publisher, and neither the author nor the publisher has received any payment for this “stripped book.”

Wild Bells

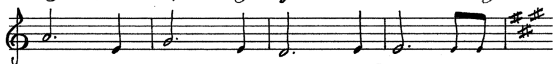
Viola Beaton



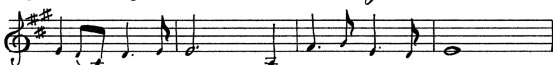
All color re-signed and left: Cold white embraced the land,



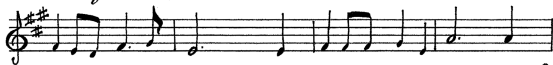
causing the place be-ri-ft to beg— for a kind-er hand. No



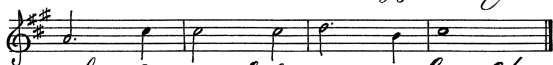
light, no jewel, to spice our Yule? Do we



hear so-faint a peal? In dark-ness comes a chime,



wild bells, un-seen but real, to col-or our joyous time. Not



right, but sound, does now a-hound!

Author's Note



*M*Y MOTHER, NANCY Nash, composed the lyrics and music for “Wild Bells,” the original carol in the book. You can find the full choral arrangement of the carol and a link to a vocal performance on my website. Talented musician and visual artist Maura Lefevre created the hand-calligraphed sheet music. Check out her shop PenandPear on Etsy! The inspiration for the character of Viola Beaton came from my mother, and from numerous women musicians, composers, and conductors whose works have been overlooked, forgotten, or attributed to men: Fanny Mendelssohn, Clara Schumann, Louise Farrenc, Teresa Carreño, and Chiquinha Gonzaga, to name just a few. I’m overjoyed that these brilliant composers are being re-discovered and their works reevaluated.

Acknowledgments



AS ALWAYS, MY heartfelt gratitude to my brilliant agent, Alexandra Machinist, and to my editor, the inimitable Carrie Feron. Huge thanks to everyone at Avon Books, especially superstars Asanté Simons, Holly Rice, and Guido Caroti. I wrote this book surrounded by close family in a small town in Alaska. The love and encouragement of my partner, Brian, my parents, and my siblings infused every page. I'm so lucky to collaborate with fantastic beta readers, Rachel and Neile! I'm deeply grateful to the wonderful readers, bloggers, reviewers, librarians, and booksellers who enjoy my books. You're the reason I keep writing. Thank you!