


But still the dead-eyed peasants stared. Did they know her dark hair was long and streaked with blond under her scarf? Did they care that her mother had called her daughter Sunshine, or that she was cousin to Desiderius, rightful king of Lombardy?... Or did they see only a big-boned maid, almost fourteen and still unmarried, leaving Bavaria in heat and disgrace this autumn of 788...

Was death better or worse than walking half a continent to slavery?

 Set on a path of humiliation and despair, thirteen-year-old Desiderata is forced to march alongside her family on the long and treacherous road to the court of their conqueror, King Charlemagne (Karolus).

The headstrong young duchess has become a pawn in the political intrigues of her time. In this period piece set in eighth-century France, Desiderata lives a life of duality, of nobility and peasantry, unwillingly betrothed to Young Pepin, the despised son and heir to the throne of Karolus, while falling in love with his older brother. Readers will identify with her young adult exploration of fate, control, and free will. Her father, Odillon, said that Karolus had left them no choice, but Desiderata disagreed. For her, fighting was a choice, even when victory was not.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Judy (Willmorth) Ferro was born into an Idaho family of readers, teachers and story tellers. She was just five years older than her students when she started teaching government, world history and geometry in Middleton, Idaho. She taught in Seattle, Washington, then Meridian and Caldwell, Idaho, before becoming a school librarian in nearby Parma. She joined the Idaho Writers' League in 1979 and worked some years as a writer and editor for the *Idaho Press-Tribune* and The College of Idaho.

Her research into the early Middle Ages has taken her to Ireland, Scotland, France and Italy.

Widowed after 35 years of marriage to Bill Ferro, Judy has two grown daughters, Cindi and Toni, and four granddaughters—Amanda, Brandi, Catanah, and Dakatah. She continues to live in Caldwell, Idaho, where she is active in politics.

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by Judy Ferro

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