



## 'Catalina'

**By Madeleine Wood, Junior Winner, aged 14 From Australia**

In the heavy dusk cloaked sky,  
the moon lights  
my granddaughter's face.

*Catalina.*

She will grow up  
in an ever-changing world.

She will learn  
to be strong,  
to be kind,  
to be good.

So, I tell her the story  
of her namesake,  
of a woman  
who had the respect of the  
world, but was subject to  
patriarchy.

"And so,  
the story begins  
in the gilded renaissance age,  
with a girl born to a United  
Spain. She had the will of her  
mother and an intellect that  
could best the finest men.  
From young,  
she was taught to lead,  
to be a queen."

"Well versed in Latin,  
the art of diplomacy  
and military strategy.  
An observer and thinker,  
she learnt from the victory  
over the Moors at Granada.  
A passionate girl.  
An unbreakable spirit."

"Barely 15,  
she ventured  
across the sea  
to a fragile England,  
to wed the prince.  
A man she knew not,  
but was duty bound to be  
with."

"They wed,  
in the ethereal halls  
of Old St Paul's,

escorted by the youthful second son. An alliance of power."

"But as winter turned to spring, the prince fell ill. Succumbing to his sickness, he left in his wake, a widowed foreigner."

"All alone, she was left in limbo. Neither Spain nor England ready to relinquish their claim, yet neither prepared to negotiate her fate. 1 year of tenuous dependency, uncertainty, insecurity, became 7. But each year she fought for her rights as Princess, for her promised crown, And she became the first female ambassador in European history."

"Then, on a fateful spring night, the king died. And heir, the youthful second son took the throne. Now eighteen, he was the picture of a valiant prince, and he took her as his bride."

"And once again she stood outside a church, ready to seal her fate to a Tudor heir."

"They wed, in the enchanting halls of the church of Observant Friars, and within days, she was crowned alongside her king."

"Many a time  
she found herself with child.  
And each time,  
she would glow with joy,  
but as night cast its shadow,  
fatigue and terror waged a battle."

"During  
one such struggle,  
her king  
set out  
to conquer France,  
leaving her alone  
to govern over England.  
A show of trust.  
And here, she outdid even her king.  
Organising defence against the  
Scots, riding out to inspire her  
soldiers, claiming victory at Flodden.  
Claiming the hearts of her English  
people. A warrior Queen."

"But despite this victory,  
each time  
he would say,  
"My love,  
I have faith it will be a boy."  
And each time,  
she would scream  
in wretched, wretched pain  
as she lost another son.  
She could feel him slipping from her  
grasp, as she failed to give him what  
he wanted. But each time,  
she would gather her dignity,  
remain generous,  
and loving,  
and loyal,  
in the eyes of her subjects.  
The perfect queen."

"But in the King's displeasure,  
perhaps they poisoned his ear.  
Knowing in his vulnerability  
he would seize any solution,  
even from advisors  
whose intentions  
were clothed in deceit.  
Coerced to turn from her.  
A desperate man,  
lost to fear."

"Fear of what?" Catalina  
whispers, eyes wide.

"Fear of ending the Tudor line.  
Fear of being remembered as  
incapable and weak."

"Gradually,  
as the years turned  
4-and-20,  
he no longer confided in her.  
He no longer saw her.  
And she no longer recognised him.  
Her grasp had slipped,  
because of a sin  
that is not a sin,  
but a twisted expectation."

"He cast her aside,  
like she had never  
been the world to him.  
Like her loyalty and love  
meant nothing.  
Torn from her daughter,  
she was sent away."

"In all this time,  
though lost to her king,  
she remained true to herself,  
for she had done nothing to fault.  
It is not a sin,  
to give the king a daughter  
instead of a son.  
So, she fought  
with grace and virtue,  
and the strength  
and voice of all women  
who were subject to  
the rule of men.  
And even the advisor,  
who crafted her downfall  
admitted that,  
"If not for her sex,  
she could have defied all the heroes of  
history.""

From the tapestry of the night,  
the moon lights  
my granddaughter's face.  
She sleeps,

her last thoughts,  
holding the  
memory of her  
namesake.

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<sup>1</sup> Catalina's Badge.

Featuring a pomegranate, also called the Apple of Granada.  
Ironically, this symbol which she adopted as a child, represents  
fertility.