



'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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¹ Catalina's Badge.

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