

## Catherine

That you don't recognize me by name is but the first of my complaints about my tale. Oh you know *me* alright. I'm the main character--in a tale titled with the name of one of the men in the story. But what's in a name? A lot. Especially if it's a man's name. This man's name is the answer to the question upon which rests the fate of myself and my newborn child. So his name is very powerful, it is very important. mine apparently is not.

Nor is my life. For whether it is to be filled with joy and delight from being with my newborn, or empty with grief and loss from separation is *to be decided by a mere guessing game*.

Nor are my words important. I denied my father's boast. I told the King I most definitely could not spin gold out of straw. But he didn't believe me. Of course not. He chose instead to believe the words of an immature, egotistic, vain *man*. And I suffer the consequences.

The consequences. To pay for my father's ridiculous lie I lose my sanity, my freedom, and my dignity for three nights--and almost my child, forever. (And one sentence--*one* sentence in the whole tale is devoted to that 'choice', that decision to give up my child in return for my life.)

Because I 'succeeded' the third night, I was 'rewarded' with marriage to the King. Thus, for all intents and purposes, I also lost my life. Can you imagine what it is like to be married--legally bound to honour and obey until death, and socioeconomically bound with little option but to stay and make the best of it--to a man who didn't believe me, a man who locked me in a room for three nights, a man so greedy that he said three nights in a row he'd kill me unless I did as he wanted--and all that was *before* he owned me.

But as the tale says, I am shrewd and clever. And I have learned the force of threat, and the importance of a name--especially if it is male. Proud fathers want very much to pass it on. But *royal* fathers--dear husband, aging Highness, what would happen to your precious lineage if my, your, only son were to suddenly--

Since I am not dead, and am living still...