



# The Brother's Tale

by

**Betsy Wragg**

Dear Father in Heaven; I don't mean the Lord, but the Father who actually watched me grow...

Everything I knew to be true has departed, and everything that has until now lurked in some unimaginable shadow is beginning to emerge. I wake every day with a terrible pain in my chest, like a sword has been stuck through me, nailing me to my bed. Perhaps that is why getting up feels like dying. Well, dying seems to have worked for just about everyone around me. First you, then Edward, and I'm sure mother won't be far behind.

I am praying that she dies in her sleep one night, from the grief and shame of killing Edward. Then I won't have to see her flesh turn inside-out as I run a dagger through her. Murder is a necessity after she left me standing over a corpse I knew all too well. She made me king before I was a man, and now I must fill your shoes. I'm not ready. I'm not ready, and that's all people are willing to see. You were the only one who cared enough to probe me for purpose. You wondered if perhaps I wasn't as bad as they all said.

Mother never even got to know me; after you died, there was only silence. We cradled that breakable closed-mouthed secrecy like our clothes cradled our fragility. Fragile is all humanity will ever be. Since Adam and Eve succumbed to an apple we've been perpetually on the brink of something. For you and Edward, it was death. For mother, it's insanity. For me, it's being a total waste of space. Once everyone realises just how bad a king I am, there really is no point in keeping me around.

You saw what mother did to Edward. I assume you roam the halls of this castle, disembodied, in the whipping of the wind over the turrets. If you did see, tell me this: did she look at peace? If it did, I suppose I'll be glad when she inevitably pushes me off a balcony. Did you really think I was going to kill her first? It was but a fantasy. You know as well as anyone what a coward I am. Too cowardly to toil through a torturous reign. Not only will killing me ease mother's mind, it will also save me from what I will otherwise have to become.

Every night, she paces the route she took to kill Edward in her sleep. I do not have long. Father, please advise me. I am incurably confused, and my days are unquestionably numbered. Please, give me hope to cling onto like a leech sucking your bloodless corpse. Give me proof that I haven't bound myself to feeble memories of you in vain. Give me strength to face the life I now belong to. I have been summoned; I must leave you now. I am not ready to go. Maybe I never will be.

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## **Author's viewpoint**

*"I chose to write from the point of view of Ethelred the Unready because it gave me a chance to explore interesting themes like unreadiness and being compared to a "more competent" sibling. My favourite part of my entry is the poetic rhythm and religious imagery in paragraph 3. I have enjoyed writing poems and fiction for as long as I can remember. I attend the Saturday Young Writers' workshop at Poole Lighthouse. It has been a great way to meet people with similar interests to me and I find the instructors very engaging. I am proud to have won the competition and it has encouraged me to keep writing and entering competitions."*