

Princess Matilda Is Not a Nun

By Mikayla Barreiro





Princess Matilda liked to talk. She liked to talk, and, because she was smart, she was good at it.



But no one ever listened to her.



You know, if we built a bathroom in London, it wouldn't be so smelly," Matilda told Lord Robert.

Lord Robert chuckled. "You're very pretty."



When Matilda's beloved Prince Henry became *King* Henry, he announced, "Now I shall marry Princess Matilda!"

But then, Archbishop Anselm called out, "Matilda is a nun!"



“I’m not a nun,”
Matilda laughed.

Archbishop Anselm didn't hear her. He didn't even look at her. He just proclaimed, "I *saw* Matilda dressed as a nun. And it's illegal to marry a nun."



“But you’re wrong!
I’m not a nun. I love
Henry and I’m going
to be queen!” She
shouted.



Except no listening.



one was

“Matilda is a nun,”
Archbishop Anselm told
Lord Robert.





“I’m not a nun!” Matilda
cried.



“Matilda is the prettiest nun I’ve ever met,” Lord Robert said to his servant, Edith.



“I’m not a nun!” Matilda
hollered.



“You’re lucky, Your Highness,” Edith sighed.
“I’d like to be a nun.”



“I’m not a nun,” Matilda snapped, though then she felt bad. “But you could be, if you wanted to.”



Edith did want to be a nun, so, she became one.

Then, she told all the other nuns, “Matilda is a nun.”



“I’m not a nun!” Matilda howled.



Soon, Henry wouldn't quite look her in the eye.

“Matilda? Are you a nun?”



“I’m not a nun!” Matilda insisted. Then, she burst into tears. Why did no one ever listen to her?

“Okay.” Henry pulled her into a tight hug. “So let’s tell everybody and get married.”



“I have told them,” Matilda reminded him.

“But no one ever listens to me.”



Henry rubbed his head and knocked his crown right off.
“Wait! I’m The King! Maybe if *I* tell everyone, they’ll listen.”



Matilda thought about it. They probably would listen, if The King told them. But she was going to be queen. Shouldn't they listen to The Queen too?

“No,” Matilda shook her head. “Call everyone. I am not a nun. I am a princess, and I will be heard.”



Everyone
came.

Matilda was
nervous. How
was she going to
get them to
listen? They
never had
before.



“I’m not a nun,” she reminded herself again and again, until she felt brave.



Then, Matilda looked up at everyone and told them for the last time, “I’m not a nun.”

“When I was little, I’d dress up as a nun, so no one knew I was a princess. But it was just a game. I’m not a nun. I’m a princess, and I’m going to marry the king I love.”





“And then I’m going to build a bathroom in London, so it won’t be so smelly!”



Everyone stared at her. Matilda's heart pounded. Had they heard? Did they care?



Finally, Archbishop Anselm stood up and called out, “Matilda is not a nun!”



“Matilda is a princess,” Lord Robert told his new servant, Mary.



“Matilda is a queen,” Edith and all the nuns said.



And she lived, as The Queen, happily ever after.

Fun Facts About Matilda of Scotland, Queen of the English

AKA: Edith and Good Queen Maud

Parents: King Malcolm III and Queen (later Saint) Margaret of Scotland

Lived: 1080-1118

Husband: Henry I, King of the English and Duke of the Normans

Children: William Atheling and Matilda of England (sometimes known as “Empress Matilda”)

Matilda of Scotland proves medieval princesses were anything but damsels in distress. As the daughter of Scotland's king, she came from an old royal line, but it was Matilda's determination, intelligence, and goodness which allowed her, despite her gender, to rise to power.

As a girl, Matilda was educated at the renowned abbey of Wilton. It was there that the alleged 'dressing as a nun' occurred, which I modified slightly for this story. It was not Anselm, but King William Rufus, who saw Matilda veiled. In 1093, Rufus rode to Wilton demanding to see Matilda. Fearing the king wanted to either kidnap—or kill—the thirteen-year-old princess, Wilton's abbess dressed Matilda as a nun. The ruse worked, and Rufus left as quickly as he'd come.

When William Rufus died in 1100, Henry I took the throne and immediately wanted to marry his beloved Matilda. Just as in our story, Matilda first had to combat the old rumors that she was a nun, since Church law at the time assumed any woman who dressed as a nun was a nun.

To settle the matter, Archbishop Anselm of Canterbury called a meeting of Church officials, and Matilda demanded she be allowed to speak in her own defense—rare for a woman of the time. Eloquent and passionate, she convinced the council with ease, just like in our story. On November 11, 1100, Henry and Matilda were married by Anselm himself.

Throughout their marriage, Henry regarded Matilda as his equal. They jointly signed royal decrees, and whenever Henry left England, Matilda ruled alone. She was not exaggerating when she frequently called it “my court and the court of my husband.”

Matilda's letters to bishops, lords, and popes, many of which still exist, reveal both her political skill and kind, caring demeanor. She was so respected that her intervention prevented at least three wars. The Duke of Normandy once gave up his claim to England simply “because the Queen desired it.”

Matilda was also a patron of the arts and the Catholic Church, commissioning important literary works such as her mother's biography “The Life of Saint Margaret” and “St. Brendan's Voyage.” And, just as in our story, Matilda adored London and built its first public bathroom.

Henry I and Matilda of Scotland had two children, William Atheling and Matilda of England. Prince William died in 1120, leaving his sister as Henry's heir. Though often forgotten by historians, Matilda of England was the first woman to claim the English throne. Her son, Matilda of Scotland's grandson, was King Henry II, and so the descendants of our Matilda still sit on the English throne today.