



## The Tribute Bride

*Theresa Tomlinson*

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## **The Tribute Bride** Theresa Tomlinson

A flood ruins King Alle's kingdom. His crops are destroyed and he does not have the necessary grain to pay his yearly tribute to neighbouring war-lord, Aethelfrid. Instead he offer's him his daughter, Acha, who, aged 16, must become a peace-weaver bride to the most brutal and feared warrior in the land.

But will she be accepted? Can she produce an heir? What will happen to the lines of inheritance in both her father's kingdom and her new husband's?

Acha finds herself alone, distrusted, and constantly in danger, but even she could not have imagined the deadly consequences her father's plan.

This is a story of resilience and survival, courage, love and loyalty in one of history's bloodiest eras, and the founding of the vast Anglo-Saxon kingdom that came to be known as Northumbria.

## **The Tribute Bride Details**

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Author : Theresa Tomlinson

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## From Reader Review The Tribute Bride for online ebook

### Ginger Rogers says

Read first few chapters, would finish. Paganism, moves quickly, a bit bleak

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### Cora Tea Party Princess says

**5 Words: History, love, power, family, royalty.**

I'm sat here pretty speechless. Because this book is awesome. It's a hidden gem, a bright ray of well-researched, historical sunshine. It's amazing. It's breathtaking.

And everyone has to read it.

When it comes to this period in English history, it's called the Dark Ages for a reason. We're in the times before Bede, the father of English history, and even the great scholar and historian himself couldn't dig up much about the rulers of Bernicia. The Tribute Bride takes the pivotal characters of this period and weaves them into a delightful story full of twists and turns and dilemmas, with a central character who changes and grows dramatically between the pages.

The descriptions are insanely vivid. You can smell the woodsmoke, the damp, the horses, the perfume. You can taste the feasts. You can feel the cold wind and warm fires and encroaching flood waters. You can hear the waves crashing on rocks and sand, the rush of a tumultuous river, a crying child. It's amazingly written and as I read I was transported there.

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### Linda Wallis says

Great characters & great writing.

Areas that were strange, yet familiar.

Vivid descriptions of costumes & places brought this leaping off the page.

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### Emma Bull says

\*\*\*RECEIVED FROM FIRST READS GIVEAWAY\*\*\*

Acha is strong main character, sent as a peace weaving bride by her father to king athelfrid, she accepts her place with courage. Until her husband does something in his ambition for more land to throw off the balance. I couldn't put this book down. The story telling is wonderful, although I felt the second half of the story was rushed slightly, but nonetheless a compelling read. A definite for the historical fiction fans out there.

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## Richard Abbott says

I have previously read and reviewed "A Swarming of Bees" by Theresa Tomlinson. so I was thrilled to be given a copy of her latest book.

The Tribute Bride is set a little earlier in time, almost entirely within the two kingdoms of Deira and Bernicia, which together made up the old kingdom of Northumbria – basically the area from modern Hull up to Edinburgh, so a rather larger region than modern Northumberland. The book traces the fortunes of Acha, a princess of Deira (the southern half) from her marriage as a secondary wife to Aethelfrith, king of Bernicia. The marriage is a political necessity for Deira, and an opportunity for male heirs for Bernicia. Acha is caught in the middle of the royal male political games being played out north of the Humber. However, she proves herself well able to manage the situation, forging alliances and friendships with key women – including Aethelfrith's principal wife Bebba – and men – including senior priests of Woden and Christ. It is a difficult path to tread, and Acha faces considerable suffering and disappointment over the years before finally achieving a form of resolution.

The period Theresa has chosen to write about here is one that I find fascinating, and as synchronicity would have it I have had a lot to do with key locations in the book this year. Northumberland is a county I have loved for many years, and I have recently returned from visiting there. In the time that Theresa writes about, however, the old names such as Metcalfe (Medcaut) and Dun Guardi were being used rather than Lindisfarne or Bamburgh. At that time already, Lindisfarne was recognised as a sacred, liminal space, alternately joined to and separated from the mainland. Earlier in the year, I saw Radwald's former home at Sutton Hoo, as well as the associated exhibits at the British Museum. Radwald makes a brief but significant appearance towards the end of The Tribute Bride.

Theresa successfully blends detailed characterisation of the main characters with a credible retelling of the social and political context they move in. An additional ingredient in the mix is the vivid flow of religious activity as the newcomer Christianity starts to displace the older religions. Aethelfrith himself is memorable, along with both of his official wives as well as the bed partner he takes campaigning. The remnant of the royal house of Deira is present, and the cast is rounded off with a fair number of supporting characters up and down the land. That list sounds as though the book could be confusing, but in fact the near-consistency of focus through Acha's eyes resolves the world into a comprehensible – if painful – whole.

The documentary sources recounting this era are few, and typically, because of the interests of the chroniclers, scanty on details other than battles and the rise of Christianity. Theresa is clearly familiar with these sources, as well as the growing store of archaeological material which is slowly filling out a more rounded picture of the age.

A few minor comments which do not detract from the quality of the book as a whole. As mentioned, most of the book is from Acha's viewpoint. However, there are occasional interjections where we jump to another viewpoint – for example we suddenly switch at one point to Aethelfrith musing on his future cunning plans – and for me these were rather intrusive into the main flow. On occasion, these also served to defuse narrative tension by giving away too much information about a coming crisis.

These, however, are very minor points, and I have no hesitation in seeing this as a five-star book. The technical production of the soft-back book is good, the storyline and the people that populate it are credible and fascinating, and for a time you can feel yourself thoroughly immersed in northern England around the start of the seventh century. Highly recommended if you like this setting.

I received a free copy of this book in exchange for a fair review.

## Rebecca says

This book for me was boring, the writing seemed tired and though it was aimed at a much younger audience it didn't have the same interest that other YA books have. I'm going to keep my review short because I don't want to bore people but I can't say I'd recommend this book to anyone. The history of the book might have interested some but it wasn't such a serious plot point that it was hugely of interest to me.

The writing wasn't particularly very good either, as it felt as though the text was talking down to its readers.

This book was a read that I did for a bookclub and I can honestly say we were pretty unanimous in our thoughts on this book.

I'm sorry for this scathing review 1 star.

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## Kathleen says

"A flood ruins King Alle's kingdom. His crops are destroyed and he does not have the necessary grain to pay his yearly tribute to neighbouring war-lord, Aethelfrid. Instead he offers him his daughter, Acha, who, aged 16, must become a peace-weaver bride to the most brutal and feared warrior in the land. "~

What a terrific book this was! I found it while starting to reread "A Swarming of Bees" which I loved.. I may have even loved this book more but will know when I finish my reread ( which is the same group of people more or less)

These people from Anglo Saxon Chronicle "A.D. 617. This year was Ethelfrith, king of the Northumbrians, slain by Redwald, king of the East-Angles; and Edwin, the son of Ella, having succeeded to the kingdom, subdued all Britain, except the men of Kent alone, and drove out the Ethelings, the sons of Ethelfrith, namely, Enfrid. Oswald, Oswy, Oslac, Oswood. Oslaf, and Offa"

Mentioning here that Oswald, Oswy and Oslac were his nephews from his sister Acha, these nephews did not go away so this book and "A Swarming of Bees" are must reads!! I just loved the characterization and the historical details were superb.

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## Livi Michael says

A story of the founding of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom now known as Northumbria told in an immediate and compelling way. Acha is the tribute bride of the title, offered as second wife to neighbouring war lord Aethelfrid for the price of peace. The relationship she forms with his first wife is both moving and unexpected. This is a world in which people are torn by conflicting loyalties, and a complex network of relationships is convincingly portrayed. It is a textured world, lovingly created with vivid, sensuous detail. This is not a period that is regularly written about, even though it is crucial to understanding our modern world and the development of our nation. I read it in the course of a single day, and hope to read many more books by this author.

### **Michele says**

Very engaging, and very enjoyable novel set in the Anglo Saxon period.

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### **Lynn says**

Reading group choice. An interesting read especially as I live in North East England and know very little about this period of history. It really kept my interest and is well written.

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### **Kirsten says**

A pleasant, positive read. I don't know much at all about Saxon history, but Tomlinson really seems to know her stuff, and her portrayal of Britain as a patchwork of different cultures, languages, and religions rang true. Acha's growth from naïve teenage bride to assured woman was well done, and there were some touching moments throughout. I liked the portrayal of friendships between women who might otherwise have been rivals - very refreshing! Even the ruthless Athelfrid is portrayed with nuance.

The main flaw, for me, was that I had a feeling of being more often told the characters' emotions and dilemmas, rather than shown them, so the emotional resonance and dramatic tension wasn't always as strong as it might have been. And I felt the pacing of the second act was a bit rushed. These together kept me from getting fully immersed in what was otherwise a very compelling read.

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### **Indiebrag says**

We are proud to announce that THE TRIBUTE BRIDE by Theresa Tomlinson is a B.R.A.G. Medallion Honoree. This tells a reader that this book is well worth their time and money!

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### **Carla Nayland says**

When a severe flood ruins the harvest and her father cannot pay the grain tribute demanded by his overlord, the fearsome Athelfrid of Bernicia, young Princess Acha is sent north as a tribute instead. Athelfrid already has a queen, the beautiful and commanding Bebba, but they have no living child, so Athelfrid accepts Acha as a secondary wife. But Athelfrid is as cunning as he is ruthless. Does he want more from Acha than an heir? And how will the queen, Bebba, react to this potential rival?

Gentle tale of kindness and friendships found in unexpected places, set against the background of early

seventh-century Northumbria.

Review: <http://www.carlanayland.org/reviews/t...>

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## **Edoardo Albert says**

One of the unanticipated pleasures of finishing *The Northumbrian Thrones* trilogy is the freedom that has brought in its wake to read other books set in 7th-century Northumbria. While writing *Edwin*, *Oswald* and *Oswiu*, I read one other novel set in that time and place, Jill Dalladay's *The Abbess of Whitby*, and while I enjoyed the story, reading 'my' characters filtered through another writer's perception of them produced a strange disorientation: it was like looking at a scene where everything is doubled. What was worse, that disorientation carried over for a while to my own writing. So I had to resolve to leave aside reading any other books set in 7th-century Northumbria until I had finished writing my own.

Now they're done, I've been released. I've read, with great enjoyment, two of Matthew Harffy's *Beobrand* novels (and am looking forward to reading the third as soon as time allows), with his own takes on the characters of *Edwin*, *Oswald* and *Oswiu*, and now I've finished Theresa Tomlinson's *The Tribute Bride*. The heroine of the book, Acha, figures large in *Oswald* and *Oswiu*, as mother to kings, but in *The Tribute Bride* we see her as a girl and young woman, entering into her fateful marriage with Aethelfrith. So the vast majority of the events of the book occur before the start of *Edwin*, and I thoroughly enjoyed Tomlinson's ingenious solution to the historical question of how Acha came to marry Aethelfrith and why her husband killed her father and sent her brother into exile. Because of the paucity of our sources, we can never know for sure exactly what happened in this bloody family saga, Tomlinson's version rings with the verity of dramatic truth - if it didn't happen like this, it should have!

So, for an engaging and engrossing journey into the deep roots of the struggle for mastery in 7th-century Northumbria, I commend this book to anyone who has enjoyed *Edwin*, *Oswald* and *Oswiu*.

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## **Frances says**

Review originally posted on Nightjar's Jar of Books.

### **SUMMARY**

When his lands are flooded and the year's crops destroyed, Acha's father, the ageing king of Deira, is left unable to pay the tribute demanded by Athelfrid, the powerful ruler of the neighbouring kingdom of Bernicia. To avert war, he decides to send away his daughter as a peace-weaver bride. Athelfrid already has a queen, but she has given him no heirs, so Acha's role is that of a secondary wife, struggling to find a balance between her own desires, and her need to keep both Bernicia's king and queen content.

*The Tribute Bride* is a standalone novel, and was published in April 2014.

### **STORY [3/5]**

Historical fiction set in a time period I've never read about? A strong heroine making the best of a really tough situation? A look at obscure ancient cultures? Yes, please, to all of the above! The story follows a princess of Deira during the lead-up to the founding of Northumbria (which was once comprised of the

kingdoms of Deira and Bernicia), and takes place over the course of about twelve years; a pretty long time, where a great deal happened.

The book is actually quite short, though (around 250 pages), which was the cause of my only real issue with it: The pacing is all over the place. In some places, there were a lot of long, drawn-out sections where nothing much was going on; but in others, the plot felt incredibly rushed (particularly near the end of the book, where there were time-skips galore).

### **CHARACTERS [3/5]**

The main character of the book is Princess Acha - a real woman, though apparently only mentioned in one historical source, and then only in passing - and most of the story is told from her very interesting perspective, as both wife and captive to Athelfrid. She's a very strong character, and the challenges she's faced with, and how she chooses to deal with them make her both relatable, and very likeable.

Other important characters include: Athelfrid himself, who is a delightful mix of charming and tyrannical; Bebba, who made a great antagonist in the very early parts of the book, and was wonderfully fleshed-out as it continued; Megan, Acha's elderly nursemaid; Donal and Finn, two fellow hostages in Bernicia with whom Acha becomes friends; and her brother Edwin, who became very significant towards the end of the story.

In terms of characterisation, my main problem was that - again, probably because the book was so short - many of the characters felt under-developed, and only had very fleeting parts in the story. For instance, a lot of time was dedicated to fleshing out Bree and Megan, but Clover and Emma, Acha's other two companions, were almost entirely silent characters - often present, but never saying much, or given anything resembling personalities. Similarly, Edwin was a great character at the beginning of the book (and, like I said earlier, at the end) but in the middle section he seemed almost entirely forgotten. He and Acha even made an oath to one another before she was sent away, symbolised by locks of their hair plaited together, and promised to carry it with them always, but while Acha seemed to draw great comfort from it at the beginning of her journey, by the time they met again I had almost completely forgotten its existence.

### **RELATIONSHIPS [4/5]**

Acha is able to form a lot of different bonds during her time in Athelfrid's court, but most of them do not have any significant impact either on the story, or on Acha as a character. There are a few exceptions, however, and the most important of these - to my thinking, at least - was her relationship with Bebba, Athelfrid's first wife, which starts off quite antagonistically (as you might expect), but develops beautifully as the story goes on.

Her relationship with Athelfrid is also quite a prominent part of the story, but it's not really a romance; there's physical attraction between them, but nothing like love, or even friendship - and certainly not trust. The balance of power between them is also skewed tremendously in Athelfrid's favour, and it's interesting that although Acha is aware of her own importance in Bernicia after her marriage, she always thinks of herself as a hostage.

Lastly, Acha has wonderful relationships with both her brother (who, though he's not often physically present, is often in her thoughts) and her children (for whom she's willing to give up anything), which were really well developed, and wonderful to read about.

### **WORLD-BUILDING [4/5]**

This book was incredibly well-researched. I'm not a historian, and I know almost nothing about the Anglo-Saxon period, but she managed to paint an incredibly intricate scene of Acha's world and the challenges that she faced, and particularly of the importance of the gods in her society - it's the carlin (the High Priestess of

"Goat-Headed Freya") who has the final say on whether Athelfrid may marry Acha... She also included a list of her sources, which was a very nice addition for people like me, who like to know exactly how much of their historical fiction is purely fictional.

### **WRITING [3/5]**

For the most part, the writing was quite good; both engaging and easy to follow, even with all the (inevitable) unfamiliar words. There were, however, a couple of things that really bothered me: Firstly, Tomlinson didn't seem to be able to decide how to spell many of the names of her characters, and while I know that there are often lots of different interpretations of the names of historical figures (particularly those from societies with very different writing systems), I would have expected her to just pick a spelling that she liked and stick with it, if just for the sake of consistency.

The other, thing that annoyed, me was that, there were a huge, number, of, unnecessary, commas. Not as bad as in that last sentence, of course, but my point stands. This isn't something that would necessarily bug everyone, but poor punctuation is a pet peeve of mine.

### **OVERALL IMPRESSION [3/5]**

A solid, and thoroughly-researched historical novel, which looks at a rather obscure period of history through the eyes of an unconventional heroine. Overall, it was a very interesting read, with a few great relationships, but an unfortunate number of the characters were quite difficult to connect with, and the writing was not the greatest I've ever come across...

### **RECOMMENDED FOR...**

Fans of Rosemary Sutcliffe's *Eagle of the Ninth* trilogy (and probably her other work as well; these are just the only ones I've read), Marcus Sedgwick's *The Dark Horse*, or Joanne Harris' *The Gospel of Loki*.

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