



# **A King Ensnared: A Historical Novel of Scotland**

*J.R. Tomlin*

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On the dangerous stage of medieval Scotland, one man--in an English dungeon--stands between the Scots and anarchy.

Robert III, King of the Scots, is dead, and Scotland in 1406 is balanced on a knife's edge. As he eyes the throne, King Robert's ruthless half-brother, the Duke of Albany, has already murdered one prince and readies to kill young James Stewart, prince and heir to the crown.

James flees Scotland and his murderous uncle. Captured and imprisoned by the English, he grows to be a man of contradictions, a poet yet a knight, a dreamer yet fiercely driven. Hardened by his years in the Tower of London and haunted by his brother's brutal murder, James is determined to find some way to recover his crown and end his uncle's misrule. But the only way may be to betray Scotland and everything he believes in.

## **A King Ensnared: A Historical Novel of Scotland Details**

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Author : J.R. Tomlin

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# **From Reader Review A King Ensnared: A Historical Novel of Scotland for online ebook**

## **Helen Robare says**

I know quite a bit about ENGLISH history but am not well versed in Scottish history(except for Mary Queen of Scots) so this book was new knowledge for me.

I found it to be quite interesting. It did not read like a history book as it was written in first person from James' point of view. He lived a sad life.

I did not know he was captured by the English at the age of 12 and stayed in England (not by choice) for almost 25 years.

If I had a problem with the book...it was the ending. It ended much too abruptly which was a shock. I realize that it was simply to be able to lead into the second book of the chronicle...which is good. :) However I feel like the ending could have been handled better.

I liked it though. It was interesting and educational in a non text book manner.

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## **Caddy Rowland says**

I really loved this book. It is my favorite of J.R. Tomlin's historical fiction, for a very unique reason. Ever since I was a child, one of my greatest fears has been that I would end up in prison or (when I was in school) sent away to a boarding school. I guess it's because I've always been a nonconformist and don't do well serving authority figures...but for me, it would be the worst thing imaginable to have my freedom taken away and be a prisoner.

James was treated decently enough, but make no mistake, he was not free. That haunted me throughout the whole novel. I'm a fan of angst and underlying drama and, for me, this setting produced that.

As always, the characters were well-developed. Something happened in this book that was different from the rest, too. We actually get to see James become infatuated with a woman. Yes, there were hints of romance in the author's other books, but this one made me feel the development of love in James's heart. Infatuation grows into lust and then love. I thought his feelings when he first saw her were expressed perfectly. When they finally came together and made love, the scene was tender, healing, and poignant—far different than most sex scenes written today, but it worked extremely well and fit the whole feel of the book. I could sense their love instead of their lust, and saw the beauty in their mating instead of the heat.

Well done. I will tell others about this book, encouraging them to read it for sure.

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## **Erin says**

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I didn't have many expectations going into J.R. Tomlin's *A King Ensnared*. This being my first experience with her work, I didn't really know what I was getting myself into, but looking back on the book I can honestly say I was somewhat surprised by this piece.

First off, and I'm grateful for this since it's a pet peeve of mine, Tomlin doesn't overwhelm her readers with an overabundance of political exposition. Those familiar with the facts don't have to wade through exaggerated accounts and those new to the material won't feel like they're drowning in facts. She struck a really nice balance which is something I really appreciated considering the turmoil against which the story takes place

James himself is an interesting character. Not to put too fine a point on it or make comparison to a grossly inaccurate movie, but he's something of a warrior poet. There is an intensity about him, a drive to obtain both his freedom and his crown, but there is another side to him as well, softer endearing qualities that really round out his personality and endear him to the reader.

The romantic story line was not expected but again, I think it played well within the narrative. To be fair I've been reading a bit of heavy romance of late so the observation isn't entirely unbiased, but I really liked how Tomlin developed the emotional attachment between James and Joan.

Well-researched and pleasantly entertaining, I enjoyed the time I spent with this piece and look forward to future installments.

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### **Eileen Iciek says**

My first novel by J.R. Tomlin, and it was impressive. Attention to the historic record, colorful details, a great plot that really drove the story forward, interesting and complicated characters.

The story concerns the Scottish King James I, starting with his childhood and into young adulthood. He was captured by the English and held as their prisoner for, it appears, decades (most of this novel), but the book ends at the death of Henry V when James was in his late 20s. I believe there are more books in this series about the Scottish kings of this period, and this one definitely whet my appetite for them.

Highly recommended.

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### **Pamela says**

Historical fiction account of King James of Scotland set in 1400s. At age 12 he is taken prisoner by the King of England and this book tells of his years in captivity under King Henry 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>. Much of the narrative is about his years fighting under the King's flag to take France.

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### **Ioanna says**

While this is a good and interesting story, James, the main character, is extremely passive, not making a single decision until about the last tenth of the book. He serves more as a narrator for Henry of Monmouth

and others rather than a compelling protagonist - and I don't believe that the fact he is imprisoned is enough of an explanation for that.

Nevertheless, it's an interesting read and believe I will eventually continue the series.

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### **Dean McIntyre says**

Just finished *A KING ENSNARED* by J.R. Tomlin a historical novel of early 15th century Scotland and the life of young James Stewart, prince and heir to the throne. He has to flee Scotland and his uncle who intends to kill him. As he is fleeing Scotland, James is captured and imprisoned by the English King Henry, who over years educates and trains the prince, enlists him in his battles, and eventually makes him a knight. James declares he will never swear complete allegiance to the king, but serves him nevertheless. The book is the first of a trilogy and ends with the death of Henry, leaving the reader uncertain of Henry's future, presumably revealed in volume two. As much as I enjoy reading Scottish historical fiction, *A KING ENSNARED* was not nearly as well-done or satisfying as the *OUTLANDER* series and other volumes. I'll probably forego the remaining two volumes of the series. Three stars.

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### **Wendy says**

"A King Ensnared" which I won from Goodreads Giveaways is an intriguing look at the tumult in Scotland after Robert III, the Scottish King dies and his merciless brother ascends the throne. After murdering King Robert's eldest son, the youngest Stewart while escaping the Duke of Albany is captured by the English and incarcerated in the Tower of London.

What is fascinating about this story is not only James Stewart's struggle to be free of the English, to recover his crown and to save his realm from a foreign power, but the contest of wills between two stubborn rulers; one denied his title, and the other determined to add Scotland to his royal dynasty. Will James be able to hold on to his honour in the face of King Henry's deception and trickery or will he have to betray Scotland to get what he wants?

This well-researched historically based plot flows rapidly , realistically bringing to life the wars and political intrigue that dominated the two countries. Strikingly depicted are the main characters, both studies in strength and tenacity, although they bargain from different positions of power. James Stewart, the Scottish heir as a twelve year old is reckless and proud, haunted by his father's lack of action after his brother's murdered. A man toughened by his stay in the Tower, of being used as a political tool he's a conundrum; a person of contrasts. On one hand James is a poet and musician with a compassionate heart who detests war, while on the other he's a scrapper who loves to wrestle, a battle-hardened knight skilled in fighting and an honourable king intensely driven to regain his throne. Henry Bolingbroke, the King of England is insolent, quick-tempered, arrogant, and calculating, loving conflict and the power that comes with victory. Even in an atmosphere of war, bloodshed, betrayal and lies that seem to dominate this story, the women in the lives of both kings are warm-hearted and determined, like Lady Joan de Beaufort with her sweet strength, in love with her charming Scot. But, the romance between a prisoner and a English noble woman could be costly for both.

I found this novel captivating and couldn't put it down. Even the ending has a cliff-hanger that won't be resolved until the sequel. I highly recommend it especially to those who love historical fiction.

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## Cathy says

Thoroughly engaging. My husband is more of a historical novel reader than me, but I really enjoyed this book. Tomlin truly evokes sympathy for the plight of James Stewart. The reader easily becomes frustrated with the length of his imprisonment as James Stewart is in the novel.

Tomlin doesn't overuse detail or get bogged down with facts not needed for the story. This makes it easy and enjoyable to read.

I looked forward to getting through my day so that I could sit down and read the book. Incidentally my husband read it too and quite liked it.

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## Cathy says

I received a free copy of this book from the author. I had the opportunity to review or not.

Being a Scotswoman I am interested in Scottish history and enjoy reading about the leaders of my heritage. Therefore, I know some of the history and had a slight knowledge of King James, but found this book so much more informative than I knew previously. I ate this book up and look forward to reading more. I did not know he had been imprisoned at such a young age, nor did I know it was for so long a time. J.R. Tomlin's book enlightened this situation and so much more. It was a delight to read.

The characters might have been better explained, but the back of the book explained who was who. It might have been better had it been put in the front of the book. People who know/knew nothing of this history might have been better served.

Young James was trying to escape an uncle who would put him to death so that he could become King of Scots himself. James was betrayed and captured by the English King who wanted to rule Scotland and France as regent. He was put into situations that were untenable at best and suffocating at worst. An older man used a very young, unknowledgeable youth as a tool to improve his situation. A common occurrence in the time of James, as well as today.

James grew up a prisoner, but kept his hope and sense of honor, while King Henry IV tried to control him and use his youth to trick him into signing commands that benefited Henry. His demands to have James force his people to help Henry or at least not interfere with his war against France were not honored. James would not do as requested and eventually was forced to join Henry in war against France. The treatment of prisoners by Henry was harsh and appalled James who held hope of release in his heart and did all he could to keep Henry from keeping him in chains, while always dreaming of becoming King of Scots in Scotland, where he belonged.

This book takes James from the time of his capture through Henry's death where it abruptly ends. While there is much more to James' life, we must wait to read the sequel to find out. I definitely intend to do that and I would recommend this book to anyone who loves historical fiction.

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## Melissa says

**A King Ensnared**, the latest release from J.R. Tomlin, is the first book in a planned series about Scottish King James I. This opening novel chronicles James' life from his childhood in Scotland to his eighteen years as prisoner of English King Henry IV and then his son, King Henry V.

The novel begins in Scotland, where King Robert III's hold on power is tenuous. After Robert's death, his son and heir James is forced to flee Scotland when it is revealed that his uncle, the powerful Duke of Albany, seeks to murder James and take the throne for himself. Before reaching safety in France, however, James is taken prisoner by the English and sent to the Tower of London. As the Duke of Albany solidifies his hold on Scotland, James spends his time in the Tower being tutored and practicing arms with other political prisoners. Just prior to his death, King Henry IV presses his son, Henry of Monmouth, to release James. While Henry agrees to his father's dying request, he ultimately decides not to release James unless the Scottish monarch agrees to certain conditions. Not willing to compromise himself or his nation, James refuses Henry. It soon becomes apparent to James, however, that if he ever hopes to win his freedom he may have no choice but to capitulate to Henry's demands.

While I love to read about Scottish history, I confess that I knew next to nothing about James I or the period in which he lived prior to reading this novel. It is obvious while reading through **A King Ensnared** that J.R. Tomlin did a significant amount of research for it. As such, **A King Ensnared** provided me with some much needed insight into both Scottish and English history during the early 15th century. Although I felt the early part of the novel moved slowly, once Henry V assumed the English throne and began to interact more frequently with James the story became more interesting. While billed as a historical novel about Scotland, very little of the book actually takes place in Scotland given James spends the bulk of the story as a prisoner of the English. As a result, much of the background history conveyed is actually English, albeit told from the perspective of a Scotsman. Given the story is told from James' viewpoint, Henry V, who is often portrayed in a favourable light, doesn't come across quite so positively. I enjoyed seeing Henry V through James' eyes but must admit that I found Henry V to be the more intriguing of the two characters. Without giving away the ending, it is apparent that the next installment in the series will see James' return to Scotland, and I'm curious to see how he handles being back in his homeland.

At a little over two hundred pages, **A King Ensnared** is a relatively quick read. Readers interested in Scottish history, or the history of Scottish monarchs might want to check this one out.

Source: I received a copy of the novel from the author as part of her virtual book tour in exchange for a fair and honest review. This review first appeared on my blog, Confessions of an Avid Reader.

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## Viviane Crystal says

Prince James Stewart, son of the weak King Robert of Scotland, begins his youth lamenting that his father refused to save James's brother from starving to death in prison. Even after James is taken captive by the King of England, his father does nothing about a ransom and James is confounded when he tries to mourn his spineless father's death and yet mourns the loss of a father. King Robert's half-brother, the Duke of Albany, refuses to acknowledge James as King of Scotland and fights with the French against the King of

England. James pays the price of it all!

For many, many years James remains the prisoner of King Henry IV and V, a pawn which both Kings use to stop Scotland aiding the French and to bind their loyalty to the English Crown. James comes close to madness from his boredom but manages with reading courtly literature, learning to fight with sword and wrestling skills, writing literate poetry worthy of the noblest bards in history, and attempting to maintain his integrity as King. He frequently refuses to sign agreements to which he knows his Scottish leaders would never agree. The first King Henry made his son promise to free James, but that remained to be seen. James will first train in war and become an actual English knight before he fights with the King against France. There he sees justice supersede mercy, a belief that such acts guarantees people will obey out of fear rather than love and trust!

James comes across as a strong character, trained intellectually and physically to act like a King. He gradually earns the respect not only of his servants in prison but also his captors. The author presumes that the reader knows his or her history well and if not it might be difficult for the reader to figure out who is against who and why. There are lists of characters, a glossary and a short synopsis of previous novels which would help in this area; but this makes it difficult for this novel to be a stand-alone story that the reader can follow easily.

Still, all in all, *A King Ensnared* is an engaging story about the beginnings of a well-known historical character who had a significant impact on English, French and Scottish history!

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### **Joy Rancatore says**

This book follows James Stewart, heir to the throne of Scotland, during his years as prisoner of the kings of England. The reader skips along from his boyhood on a tragic and defining day in his life to his adulthood.

I may be alone in this thought, but I just didn't see much deep development of the characters. Yes, the story moved along. Yes, the young king learned things, including how to be (or not to be) king. But what I missed was a real depth in the characters.

I really wanted to like this book, and many parts were intriguing with good storytelling and well-constructed dialogue.

However, it seriously needed further proofreading to clear up a number of typos and incidents of missing punctuation throughout. Also, more thorough editing could have smoothed some rough spots and confusing moments. With so many characters--many going by more than one name or at least a name and a title--reading often became a bit of a memory game. The list of main characters in the back really did help. Unfortunately, I was reading the e-book and didn't discover that and the list of Scottish and archaic words until the end.

I would still like to read the second book in this series. My hope is that it received the editing and proofing a good story deserves.

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### **Barbara says**

I am very much looking forward to reading this. I know I'll enjoy it as much as I did her other books set in



Scotland.

I'm going to try this ONE more time! I loved this book. James is fascinating. I found parts difficult only because I got frustrated with the English King. Imagine his frustration! Despite his he grows to be an honorable, loyal man.

Ms Tomlin brings life to her characters. She wraps her story around historical facts and instead of being a dry essay the characters jump off the page. You don't even have to be a fan of historicals to enjoy her books. I can highly recommend this as well as her other Books of Scotland.

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### **Linda says**

The more I got into this book, the more I liked it. The author's writing mechanics were good, and the subject was excellent. The book was very descriptive. At times, I found it too descriptive to my taste, but I count for only one person. The author did not clutter the book with obscene language or overt sexual scenes.

James the First of Scotland was captured and indentured for ransom by the English in the 15th century. He got his military training and book learning during his captivity which lasted, by my count, over twenty years. King Henry of England is out to conquer all of France and needs the Scots to help him do so. James serves to rally Scotland to that purpose in exchange for his freedom.

Thank you, Ms. Tomlin, for a good read.

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