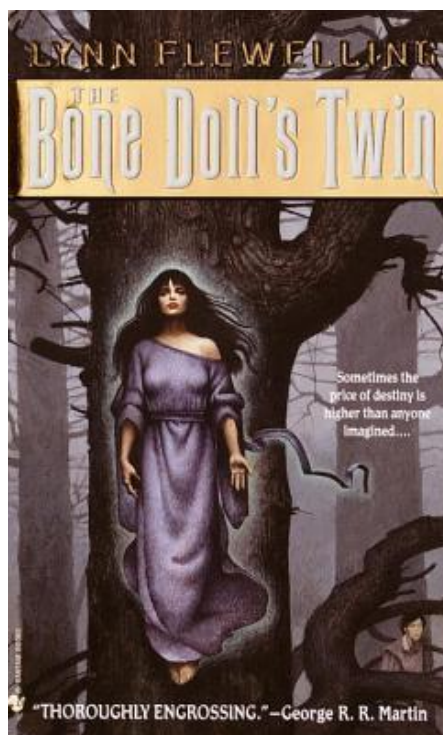




The Bone Doll's Twin

Lynn Flewelling

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Sometimes the price of destiny is higher than anyone imagined....

Dark Magic, Hidden Destiny

For three centuries a divine prophecy and a line of warrior queens protected Skala. But the people grew complacent and Erius, a usurper king, claimed his young half sister's throne.

Now plague and drought stalk the land, war with Skala's ancient rival Plenimar drains the country's lifeblood, and to be born female into the royal line has become a death sentence as the king fights to ensure the succession of his only heir, a son. For King Erius the greatest threat comes from his own line — and from Illior's faithful, who spread the Oracle's words to a doubting populace.

As noblewomen young and old perish mysteriously, the king's nephew — his sister's only child — grows toward manhood. But unbeknownst to the king or the boy, strange, haunted Tobin is the princess's daughter, given male form by a dark magic to protect her until she can claim her rightful destiny.

Only Tobin's noble father, two wizards of Illior, and an outlawed forest witch know the truth. Only they can protect young Tobin from a king's wrath, a mother's madness, and the terrifying rage of her brother's demon spirit, determined to avenge his brutal murder....

The Bone Doll's Twin Details

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From Reader Review The Bone Doll's Twin for online ebook

Nafiza says

Okay, so I love fantasy when it is well done. There's something so immensely *satisfying* about reading a well constructed world. All that "world-is-going-to-end-and-then-a-hero-comes-along" (see what I did thurr?) stuff is totally my thing, ya know? So when the lovely Dominique (I was stalking your book haul youtube clips) said this was one of her favourite books, I pounced on it like a cat on string of yarn only not as graceful. Anyway, so, this book, I had great expectations and I am pleased to announce to all and sundry that my expectations were FULFILLED.

Lynn Flewelling uses the framing technique to tell this story and does some very interesting things with time that can, at moments, confuse the hell out of in by which I mean that you are unaware if you are in a flashback within a flashback or just in the first flashback...you get my point. Anyway, so the whole story, because of the initial framing, gets a grandiose, epic feel to it and I totally expected to see Mordor burning when the old Wizard whose name I have forgotten, woe is me, is looking out the window talking about history. Anyway, for a second there I paused and wondered what I had gotten myself into but then the narrative got over its hiccup and we righted ourselves and got back to the starting line.

I love it when the world building is well done. No, seriously, I totally (what's a stronger word than love?) adore? (that sounds weird) - okay, let me just say I love it a LOT when things are logical and the fabric of the world created makes sense and is solid instead of constructed flimsily and borne on the backs of other much better fantasy novels. The Bone Doll's Twin, by dint of the childhood years spanning the entire first book, allows not just for character development but also detailed world building. Now when I say detailed, I don't mean that everything is described because it's not, I mean that Flewelling builds a world that is very easy to visualize and she populates this world with characters who can be actual people and are not two dimensional renderings of characters plucked from the stock trade. I also appreciate how she doesn't take the easy way out and paint people either as black or white. It's all about the gray areas for Ms. Flewelling.

The novel is told in third person omniscient so it's possible, at times, to get glimpses of everyone's thoughts and this is not an easy style at all, not matter what anyone else says. I like how the narrative has this skein of melancholy, of poignancy running through it that is only reiterated by the visage of the dead twin who despite his few lines is one of the strongest characters in the novel. The mythology is well thought out and the divisions of magic also smart. I particularly liked the distinctions made between the two types.

There's some sexy times in the novel and they are a bit weird but I liked the fact that this time around, the one with the power is the female and there are some very interesting gender reversals that might make a fascinating essay. I liked where the book ended. There are so many possibilities and so many directions that it can go on in the next two books. Anyway, I really liked this one and I recommend it to you if you like high fantasy. It is very readable and lacks the usual verbosity that are usually a trademark of high fantasy.

Ab says

Although slow paced, this one is a beautifully written book. It is also the best audiobook I've listened to so far.

Lauryn says

An interesting premise and a compelling read. I knew it would end with a cliffhanger, and it ended almost exactly the way I expected it to. Normally that would be a sign of a predictable story, but that is not the case here. Instead, Flewelling gives the reader an ending that both fulfills expectations and creates new ones. I need to read a few other things before I can continue this series, but I will definitely read the rest of the trilogy.

Kathryn says

This is set in the same world as *Nightrunners*, but five hundred years in the past. It came about from a quick reference in *Luck in the Shadows*. A Skalan sailer was explaining the tradition that, "As long as a daughter of Thelatimos rules, Skala shall never be subjugated." But of course there was a usurping uncle who insisted that the prophecy was misunderstood, that as long as *the* daughter of Thelatimos ruled....and claimed the throne, then quietly killed all the girls in the royal family, except one, who was hidden in a rural estate and kept disguised as a boy. Eventually she was able to defeat her uncle, shed her disguise and claim her birthright. *The Bone Doll's Twin* tells the story of that girl, Tamir, and how very much more complicated and dark her story was.

When King Erius took the throne after the death of his mother, Agnalain, no one raised much fuss. The old queen had been paranoid and mad, and her rule had been a terrifying one, filled with unfounded accusations of treason and horrifying executions. When the royal girls started slowly dying, one by one, a few eyebrows were raised, but no one challenged Erius, since he was doing such a good job running the country. Everyone told themselves that the old tradition of matriachal power was just an old story, that nothing bad will happen just because a man sat on the throne. Everyone, that is, but a handful of wizards and priests who believe in the prophecy.

This is a very dark novel, and while as the plot is as typical and unoriginal as it can be, it's executed in a such a way that you don't care. Lynn gets away with writing a cliched plot, in a cliched Medieval Europe setting, because she has clearly done plenty of research. The world is packed with details that make it absolutely come to life, without getting bogged down by them. And of course, the whole she's-a-girl-disguised-as-a-boy thing got a whole new twist, too. Because of a very questionable spell, Tamir physically appears to be a boy, and in fact for most of her childhood she truly believes that she is Tobin, who was actually her male twin who died at birth. Heck, even though I knew better, I pretty much forgot that she was really a girl, myself.

Kathi says

9/10

Dark, yet very readable. Wonderful world-building; well-drawn, three dimensional characters; magic, mystery, plots, and ghosts—plenty to like. A little slow in parts, but I assume some of that is due to setting up later events.

Excited to read the rest of this trilogy and will be on the lookout for the author's *Nightrunner* series.

Martel says

Re-read in audio. I adored the story when it came out, a while ago, and wondered if I would still enjoy it as much a few years later. I did.

I didn't focus much on the gender theme the first time, and honestly, even if I got much more of the various gender switch symbolisms this time (the very obvious and the more subtle ones) it's not what caught my attention the most.

I was wrapped up in the powerful gothic ambiance (ghosts, skeletons, guilt, sorrow, ambition and mysteries: what's not to like ?) as well as in the story of the lonely child growing up in this dark atmosphere, surrounded by danger and lies, a pawn in a plot he/she knows nothing about.

I found the tale was more about one major question: does the end justify the means?

Here we get some more or less decent people perpetrating the worst crimes in the name of the greater good.

In fact, each faction, even the worst of villains, is convinced to act in the name of righteousness. A bit like in life, you know ? You are never the bad guy. Whatever you do or say, there is always a justification.

And in the middle of all this, there are the innocents. Most of them expendable, of course. There is a considerable body count on one side, and a tiny little murder, coupled with one huge lie and their consequences on the other. The balance should be obvious, but...

I can only recommend the read of this masterfully written, subtle, gripping, and profoundly human novel.

5 Stars, no doubt about that.

Warning : It's the first part of a trilogy and can't really be read as a stand alone.

Monica says

This was a pretty good book, but there were parts where I lost interest in the plot. I definitely want to give Flewelling another chance because I liked her writing, and I think it was simply the plot of this book that did not keep me completely engaged.

bruin says

okay people. i see what books y'all add when i post 'em.. you're not fooling me! and i know all your biases against fantasy. but i gotta tell you, that lynn flewelling is pretty fucking gifted.

she writes super detailed, complicated characters who have lots of internal and external struggles.

these books focus on a girl who was turned into a boy for survival and how that "survival" happens and her gender dysphoria when she is "turned back" into a boy among other things.

i couldn't stop reading.

yum. highly recommended. give 'em a chance. :)

Algernon says

[7/10]

If you are searching for a well written, engaging, completed epic fantasy series, you have come to the right place. All three books of the Tamir trilogy are published: a major factor in my decision to pick it up, since I don't like to wait years for each episode. It's only three books, so the readers know beforehand they will not get saddled with ten + 'never-ending' stories. It is character driven, with an attention to detail that reminds me positively of Robin Hobb or J V Jones. It has an interesting magic system: necromancy is underused in fantasy, and I welcome the change from the usual spellmaking with fireballs and lightning strikes. It deals in a modern way with gender roles, both by putting women in positions of power and by questioning the sexual identity of the protagonists.

That said, while the series showcases some of the best features of epic fantasy, it also suffers from some tired, overused cliches: heavy handed use of prophecy, young protagonist with a future as the saviour of civilization, generic worldbuilding with warring medieval kingdoms, generic villains / evil kingdoms.

I am not going to write a synopsis, as I was more interested in the characters than in the actual plot. We meet Tobin in a dramatic presentation a twin birth in the royal family of the kingdom of Skala. The rest of the first volume follows Tobin through troubled childhood years and into early adolescence as a knight in training to the heir of the throne. The bone doll from the title plays a major role in the life of Tobin. Secondary characters are very well written, especially Tobin's young squire, a sort of hedge knight, and a trio of mages whose actions fall in the grey zone between the forces of light and darkness: does the end result justified the evil done to achieve it?

The pace is slow, and there is a lot of build-up, of positioning of actors for future conflicts, yet the novel is an easy, fast read. It is also very much not a stand-alone book, but the first part of a longer story, so it ends pretty much in the middle of the action, with Tobin going through a rite of passage (view spoiler).

I will continue with the Tamir Trilogy, with moderate hopes of being further entertained. I may even revise the initial rating with an extra star, and write a more detailed review, depending on how original and well handled are the events in the next episode.

Recommended mostly for fans of epic fantasy.

Stephen says

3.5 stars. A good start to what looks to be an above average fantasy trilogy. I am a big fan of world building and the world that Ms. Flewelling has created is well-thought out, complex and believable. Add to that an original twist to the standard coming of age warrior tale, quality writing and some good characterization and you have all the ingredients for a great story. This one ends on somewhat of a cliff hanger so be ready to go right into the second installment. Recommended!!!!

vylit says

This is a strangely difficult book for me to review.

The Good:

I love Ki and Tharin, and I think their characters are charming, likable, and whenever they are in a scene, I don't want the scene to end.

I like the fact that the major horror in this book is done by the "good" people trying to save their country. There's shades of gray that I find fascinating.

Brother is intensely creepy.

The author obviously put serious thought into the ramifications of the characters actions, both personally and with the other characters.

The Bad:

At this point, I don't love the main character. I feel bad for him, but I don't love him.

I feel like the book never properly explains why the witch couldn't have used magic to hide the child, rather than turning her into a boy.

The author needed a strong editor. The book should be 20% smaller. There are parts that seemed to drag endlessly for no reason that I could discern and were just boring. And given how long it dragged out, I can't believe the author ended on a cliffhanger without a single story line sewn up. I haven't read book 2 yet, but if it follows how book 1 did, I think they probably could have been one tight book rather than two rambling ones.

Kat Hooper says

Originally posted at FanLit. <http://www.fantasyliterature.com/revi...>

I finished listening to the audio version of The Bone Doll's Twin, the first in Lynn Flewelling's fantasy epic THE TAMIR TRIAD, around midnight a few days ago. Instead of going to bed, like normal people might, I immediately downloaded book two, The Hidden Warrior, and listened for a couple more hours. That's how much I was involved in this story about a young girl who doesn't know she's magically hidden in the body of a boy.

Tobin, who's really a girl, has had a difficult childhood. When he was born, his uncle, the king of Skala, was covertly killing off the royal women and girls because a prophecy says that the land must have a queen as ruler. King Erius had gained his throne through treachery and he intends to keep it. Tobin's parents asked a magician to hide their newborn daughter, but they didn't realize what kind of dark magic they were getting into. The cost was heavy and now Tobin's mother has gone mad and Tobin's twin brother is an evil ghost. On top of that, Tobin's family has moved to their country estate because they fear that the king's magicians might be able to detect the cover up. Tobin is an odd child already, so it doesn't help that he's being raised so far from noble society. His father and the magicians who help him must mold Tobin into someone worthy to take the throne someday.

These days I don't have as much patience as I used to for long epic fantasies involving prophecies and boys coming of age, so I was pleasantly surprised to find myself enjoying The Bone Doll's Twin so much. Lynn Flewelling's writing style is pleasant and her story gently moves along at a pace that's leisurely without

becoming dull, most comparable perhaps to Robin Hobb's FARSEER saga. There is a large cast of male and female, young and old, magical and normal, common and noble characters who are well developed, not simply stock characters. It helps that we see the story from several of their perspectives, not just Tobin's.

A main theme in The Bone Doll's Twin is gender identity and Flewelling handles this very well. While Tobin, who doesn't know he's a girl, wants to be a famous warrior like his father, and is successfully working toward that goal, he has a softer side, too, which he thinks is a weakness and fears to show others. He sleeps with a doll but we're not really sure if that's because he's a girl and it's natural for him to like dolls, or if the doll is a connection to his mother who made it. Similarly, he loves to spend his time building a model of the capitol city, a pursuit that could be seen as either a masculine or feminine hobby. While we see hints of Tobin's feminine side, it's all tantalizingly ambiguous so far. Things will begin to look different when Tobin reaches puberty in the next book, The Hidden Warrior.

I'm listening to the audio version of THE TAMIR TRIAD which was produced by Audible Frontiers and expertly narrated by Victor Bevine. Lynn Flewelling reads her introduction to the book. As I mentioned at the beginning of this review, I immediately downloaded and started listening to The Hidden Warrior when I finished The Bone Doll's Twin. This is a story that's worth my time.

Meg says

The Bone Doll's Twin

OR

There Are Probably More Awkward Ways To Save a Kingdom But I Can't Think of Them Now

This is not a happy book, but for all the darkness, all the discomfort inherent in it, it's not a hard read. It doesn't make the reader miserable, but rather intrigues and invites them further into this strange story.

The book works for two reasons. One, Flewelling has an excellent grip on how to write children and teens. Tobin reacts to everything the way a child does. He doesn't grasp how strange and messed up things are, he has never known anything else. The rest feel like actual kids, not devils drawn up to torment the hero or idealized visions of innocence. Just kids, prone to mistakes and cruelty without even thinking about it.

And two, she doesn't beat us over the head with the gender tensions. Yes, it is present, but often in a subtle way. The most obvious gender tension is when Tobin is taught, by action more than words, that Boys Do Not Play With Dolls. And this tension keeps cropping up because dolls are also a strong theme in the work. But it does not come up constantly that Tobin Cannot Have Dolls Because Tobin Is A Boy, but rather, it crops up in a quiet, unease that leads to certain plot points without a hammer to our head.

A very interesting and thoughtful read, I will be picking up the rest of the series.

Carol. says

This is, without a doubt, one of the most interesting books I've read where almost nothing happens. It is the fantasy equivalent of Something Happened, by Joseph Heller, when almost assuredly, very little does. Honestly, I'm a little surprised I haven't heard fans of The Way of Kings raving about this, the three-dimensional statue to Sanderson's bas-relief; though there is a solid sense of world-building, the focus here is thorough character development. And that is, perhaps, why I couldn't ultimately throw this on the DNF pile

(besides Cillian's threat of terrorizing me with nitrite-filled intestinal casings), and why a part of me is considering continuing the series.

The writing is, quite honestly, some of the most solid I've read in epic fantasy in a long while. Descriptive and evocative; Flewelling does atmosphere very well. Which is fortunate, as a ghost is a critical character.

The blurb, as almost always, gets it wrong. This is about the kingdom Skala in the microcosm of the king's sister and her child. It begins with the well-known foretelling, **"so long as a daughter of Thelatimos' line defends and rules, Skala shall never be subjugated,"** the Oracle whispered." A sympathetic advisor offers the king another explanation and female relatives to the throne begin meeting mysterious accidents. An elderly female wizard, Iya, and her protégé receive a vision from their god about how to save the kingdom from invaders. They develop an awful plan to protect the king's sister's unborn child. The king's sister is due with twins, and the night they are born, some truly awful magic is done. Tobin, of course, knows none of this growing up, only that he has a ghostly brother haunting him and his mother. His mother has gone mad and doesn't seem to notice the ghost, at least not in the same way. From there, the narrative follows Tobin through the next few years of his life.

"The princess sat by the fire, sewing away as madly as ever. For the first time since the birth, she had changed her nightdress for a loose gown and put on her rings again. The hem was wet and streaked with mud. Ariani's long hair hung in damp strands around her face. The window was shut tight as always, but Nari could smell the night air on her, and the hint of something else besides. Nari wrinkled her nose, trying to place the raw, unpleasant odor."

Although Flewelling plays a bit with the early narrative--the first couple of chapters from the point of view of the wizards, Iya and Arkoniel; the third from a hill-witch, Lhel; and the fourth from Nani, the witness to the birth and wetnurse--the majority of the remaining story is from Tobin's, with occasional forays into Arkoniel's thoughts as he works to protect Tobin, the future queen.

It's a great premise, and quite honestly, I think I picked it up partly to see how a fantasy book would deal with gender identity/assignment. Alas that this part of the trilogy is very straightforward (ha-ha); young Tobin is convinced he is male, although he has moments of feeling troubled by wanting a doll when very young. I'm almost tempted to pick up the next book for the psychology of the issue; it's a very cruel thing that Iya, Arkoniel, Lhel and Tobin's father have done. You see, Tobin is not gender dysmorphic--his belief in his gender matches his appearance--but will have to be told, eventually, that (s)he is not what (s)he thinks.

What I ended up with instead of an exploration of gender is Tobin learning to deal with the ghost/poltergeist Brother and his efforts to find his place in the household. It is an immersive story; when I read, I could see it happening very clearly in my mind's eye and was engrossed in the detail of the story. But--and this is a big one--when I set it down, it was without deep regret, and there was no particular impetus to pick it up again. I don't know what to make of that; the combination of absorbing without addicting is very rare in the books I read. Had I felt like being unkind, I might point out how each chapter has a semi-significant event. For instance, in chapter 16, Arkoniel comes to visit Tobin and becomes his tutor; in chapter 18, Arkoniel suggests to Tobin's father, the prince, that they find him a young companion, and in chapter 23, Tobin gets his own squire. This is, perhaps, *The Belgariad* at quarter speed (with better writing).

Would I read it again? Hell, no. Would I read the next? Possibly. It depends on what ~~threats~~ incentives Cillian offers me.

As an aside, this has been on my TBR list since 2011. I'm not quite sure what that says, but it seems appropriate.

Roze says

I read Flewelling's other set of book but for one reason or another I found myself reluctant to read this trilogy. I will admit that in a brief summary this book sounds cheesy, it is hard to imagine this done in a skillful way. After getting pushed in to reading it (with recommendations from more than one person) I found myself pulled into this unique story. This is truly an original plot done in great taste and with definite skill. The characters are believable and you find yourself being pulled into the book. Not only is this good but it left me thinking. You can't help but relook at gender and the whole nature versus nurture theory. The book doesn't try to make a statement, it is an interesting story that pulls you in and makes you feel for the characters but it does make you think....and that for me is the sign of a good book, something that makes you think without making you feel that is what is trying to do. I would definitely recommend this anyone that enjoys a unique and slightly darker fantasy. As with any of Flewelling's books you need to have an open mind to gender and same sex relationships.

Chris says

This plot hinges on a rather interesting idea.

What if a boy was really a girl, but didn't know it?

I don't mean didn't know it in the sense of the *The Ill-Made Mute*, but truly didn't know it, and most people didn't know it.

Flewelling starts to answer such questions in this book. She also looks at how a land that once used women warriors slowly changes its view on them.

It's strange because there is not much "action" in the traditional sense of the word in the book. It is more about family, faith, cost, and a willingness to pay. It ends rather suddenly.

Yet, it is very good. Perhaps this is because Flewelling paints the characters so well. Even minor characters have a realness about them, and Flewelling is smart enough to let her readers make judgements about the characters, not force judgements about characters on readers. One author who constantly forces judgement about her character on her reader is Laurell K. Hamilton. Anita is always right. Or think *CSI: Miami* where Horatio is always right (and why I stopped watching. Well, that and Rory left). What happens makes one supposedly good character rather untrustworthy, if not outright hated. It's a brave author who does that and doesn't soften the blow or excuse the action. A good challenging book.

Nancy says

I loved this story! I was swept away by the setting, the characters and the adventures of a young boy finding his way in a complex world and learning his true nature and purpose. This is a beautifully written, dark and compelling fantasy that explores gender roles and identity.

Felicia says

I really like this trilogy. It sounds weird when you read the synopsis, but it's really good.

Vanessa Baldwin says

Another really excellent, dignified fantasy series. But other than the big 4 (Martin, Hobb, Flewelling and de Lint), I haven't found more great authors. Well, yeah, Tolkien, but come on. The movies are so much better-- (kiss my -ss, Tolkien die-hards, I don't have time for the listing of every family name of every Hobbit in the Shire)

Sandi says

The Bone Doll's Twin is fantasy at it's finest. It's creepy and thought-provoking. It handles gender issues in a way that isn't at all prurient. My only complaint is that it ends quite abruptly. It seems to me that the three volumes of this series should probably be one book. Fortunately, I can download the second volume from Audible in about 20 minutes and won't have to wait to start it.

The narration on this particular audiobook is excellent.
