

A Reader's Guide



The Winter Queen

by Jane Stevenson

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About *The Winter Queen*

An immensely moving account of a strange and magical interracial love affair, *The Winter Queen* illuminates the Netherlands of the seventeenth century. In the dark ambiance of the time, the exiled Queen Elizabeth of Bohemia and Pelagius, a West African prince and former slave, fall in love and secretly marry. With great erudition and compassion, Jane Stevenson vividly renders both a portrait of an extraordinary relationship and a tumultuous political history. Set against a historical backdrop enriched by the art, philosophy, and religion of the Dutch Golden Age, "scene succeeds scene in Vermeer-like richness of color" (*Memphis Commercial Appeal*).

"A startling love story that transcends race and culture." — Charles Johnson, author of *Middle Passage*

"Deploying a remarkable depth of knowledge with offhand grace, [Stevenson] writes with a casual versatility . . . making vivid a world no less complex and capricious than our own." — *New York Times Book Review*

"Beautifully, carefully told . . . Though the love story is affecting, Stevenson also gives us a painterly, learned image of seventeenth-century Holland, a court intrigue, a treatise on theology, and . . . an investigation into difference." — *Seattle Times*

About Elizabeth and Pelagius

In order to re-create vividly the seventeenth century setting for her novel, Jane Stevenson conducted extensive historical research. Stevenson notes that the monarchs in her novel down to Omolaju actually existed: the Alafins of Oyo are no more fictional than the kings of

England. The family trees of Elizabeth and Pelagius included here may enrich your enjoyment of *The Winter Queen*.

Stevenson has taken the Alafins of Oyo tree from the Oyo Kinglist, which records names of kings but not their wives. Adasobo's name was preserved because she acted as regent for her son Onfinran. Egonaju, who usurped power from Onfinran, was a cousin on the mother's side. The story assigned to Omolaju (Pelagius) is fiction: he may well have died in Africa.

About Jane Stevenson

Jane Stevenson teaches comparative literature at the University of Aberdeen in Scotland. Her literary debut was the highly acclaimed *Several Deceptions*, a collection of novellas. Her first novel, *London Bridges*, was selected as a Los Angeles Times Best Mystery of 2001. *The Winter Queen* is the first novel in a trilogy that continues with *The Shadow King* and the forthcoming *The Empress of the Last Days*.

For Further Reading

The following books may be of interest to readers of *The Winter Queen*.

[Several Deceptions](#) by [Jane Stevenson](#)

[London Bridges](#) by [Jane Stevenson](#)

[The Blue Flower](#) by [Penelope Fitzgerald](#)