



The First Lost Tale of Mercia: Golde the Mother
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The First Lost Tale:
Golde the Mother

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WORCESTERSHIRE
993 A.D.

“And this year the king and all his witan decreed that all the ships which were worth anything should be gathered together at London, in order that they might try if they could anywhere betray the army from without. But Aelfric the ealdorman, one of those in whom the king had most confidence, directed the army to be warned; and in the night, as they should on the morrow have joined battle, the selfsame Aelfric fled from the forces; and then the army escaped.”

—The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles, year 992
Translated by James Henry Ingram

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Even the lazy pigs stirred to life when Alfric and his men came riding over the hills. The hogs rolled and squealed, bobbing up and down on stubby legs as they ran around in mass confusion. The dog barked, lifting wiry haunches from the dirt to point his muzzle and boom his howl of alert. The horizon undulated as the ealdormen’s cavalry sliced black

silhouettes against the iron gray clouds. Chills raked down Golde's skin as she watched, though the breeze brushing her pale hair blew with the warmth of spring.

"Hunwald?" she called. "Hunwald!"

She heard no response from the swineherd: only the thunder of Alfric's men galloping closer. Then, over the cacophony of thudding hooves, grunting pigs, and barking dogs, she heard a child yelling.

"Mother!"

She turned just as his little hands struck her skirt, pulling and tugging. She looked down at his big blue eyes, unable to be mad at him even though she wished that right now, he would simply disappear. "Eadric, find Hunwald and tell him to put up the pigs."

"I'll do it myself."

Golde shook her head helplessly at the boisterous seven-year-old. Only yesterday, one of the hogs had flattened him in the mud and nearly crushed his chest. Already, he seemed to have forgotten the incident. His thick yellow curls lashed against his face in a visage of defiance. "No," said his mother, "you'll *help* him, and then you'll feed the pigs yourself while Hunwald joins me inside. Can you do that?"

"I suppose." As if noticing them for the first time, Eadric stared at the war-horses riding closer. Even in the fading sunlight, the chainmail and weaponry of the riders glinted brightly. "What's this?" The little boy sounded more exasperated than afraid.

"Off with you!" She kicked his departing rump with too much force to be playful. Sometimes she wondered whether she had sheltered the little boy too successfully from the horrors of the world he lived in. He seemed oblivious to pain and danger.

All too soon, the riding men reached her, flinging dirt onto her dress as they reined their horses to a sudden stop. Despite their intimidating approach, there must have been only a dozen of them, most of them wounded and weary. Foam bubbled from their horses' mouths and salt whitened their flanks. She squinted disapprovingly as she searched the score of dismounting men for the one she knew to lead them.

He was not a hard man to find. He had a head of such thick, golden curls that he could have been a second sun rising from the east as he pulled off his helm. He wore a blue mantle, though now it was stained with filth and blood, and a tunic of crushed diamond twills in flax covered his mail. It was a garment any outlaw would risk his life to obtain, so Golde thought he was a fool to wear it. He jangled from the weight of his weapons and jewelry as he blundered towards her.

"Oh, Golde!" he cried.

Before she could stop him, he fell against her and wrapped her in an embrace. He probably intended it as an embrace, at least, but it felt more like he simply threw his weight against her and expected her to hold him up.

"I'm done for—disgraced—humiliated—finished!" He clutched her fiercely, his whole frame trembling.

"You're ... pathetic!" She put her hands against his chest and pushed him back with all her might. He staggered, sapphire gaze splintered by fury and sorrow. She noted with some amusement that he had tried to grow a beard, though it was more of a vague yellow haze over his mouth and chin.

"You—you—you dare touch me like that? You miserable wench, I am an *ealdorman*!"

"Not for long, by the sounds of it. And in any case, I've touched you in worse ways than that, Lord Alfric."

Even in their wearied and frantic state, some of the men chuckled. Alfric looked around uncertainly, unable to smile himself. Behind her own defiant expression, Golde gulped. Alfric was almost always a nervous wreck, but she had never seen him so anxious as this.

The skies growled above them, darkening with a fresh billow of gray clouds.

"Won't you invite us in?" said Alfric miserably.

Golde could only shake her head in disbelief at the man who was a proud ealdorman one moment and a cowering victim the next. "I have room for you at my table," she said, "but not the others. I'm afraid they'll have to shelter in the barn."

"With the pigs?" one man complained.

"Or you can stay outside in the rain, if you'd like." Her blue eyes flashed at Alfric. "Follow me."

The ealdorman nodded to his men. "Go on then, you spoiled sods—you've seen worse!"

And so with great reluctance, Golde led Alfric, the tentative ealdorman of Mercia, into her humble home.

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She lived in a simple shack, certainly no grander than the average churl's, but she had never thought of it as impoverished until Alfric entered and curled his lip with disgust. She noticed the poor state of the floorboards, dank with the smell of the salted foods they'd been storing all winter in the sunken pit below. She realized that the lodge seemed

smaller inside than it looked outside, crowded by three meager cots, a rickety table, and an ashy brazier. The shutters over the windows squeaked as the wind battered against them.

With a weary huff, Alfric sank onto a stool next to the table. "Ale," he said.

Biting back her anger, she rummaged through their stores for a canister of ale. They did not have much left, and saved it for special occasions, but she supposed this occasion was as special as any. She grabbed a cup made of alder wood to pour it in, though she was certain he was accustomed to smooth dishes gilt with precious metals. This frugality, at least, seemed to miss his attention; blindly he upturned the goblet and drank deeply, smashing it back down with a sigh.

"Oh Golde," he said, blue gaze fading into empty space. "The horrors I've seen!"

She withheld her judgment as she went to stir the pottage over the brazier. "You may tell me of them, if you wish."

"They would give you nightmares."

She gritted her teeth and waited, certain he would describe them, anyway. Outside, the rain began to fall with a gentle whisper. The sound of Hunwald's horn echoed through the watery curtain, calling the pigs to his side. She hoped little Eadric would stay in the barn and do as he was told. If Alfric were to see him ...

"My fleet and I were in the River Thames, next to Lundenburg." Alfric's voice was soft, delicate. She paused mid-stir to listen to hear him over the purring rainfall. "So were the Danes." He shuddered.

A soft mist drifted in through the shutters, lifting bumps along Golde's skin. She resumed stirring, her ears alert.

"You should have seen their vessels in the river. At twilight, the prows of their ships looked like a horde of demons. There were dragons, and bulls, ravens ... their eyes seemed to pierce the darkness and find me no matter where I hid, peering out over the black water."

She wondered if he knew how ridiculous he sounded. Apparently not. "Were you not put in command of all King Ethelred's fleet?" she asked.

He did not respond, his mind too far-gone in his grisly memories to hear her. Either that, or he was too unwilling to admit the extent of his failure. "King Ethelred wanted our fleet to catch them by surprise. He thought we would corner them in a port and take the advantage. An advantage over the Vikings!" He cackled. "Foolishness. King Ethelred is a fool, just as the monks foretold at his coronation."

“Alfric!” Her heart fluttered. In truth she agreed with him, but she had never heard a man of his station insult the king so openly. Of course, this man was Alfric: a man that the king had already exiled once for treachery, but afterwards forgiven. Surely enough, Ethelred was a fool.

Her discomfort only seemed to encourage him. “An idiot,” he snarled, “who would have led us all to our deaths. I was not going to let it happen, Golde. I knew we would not win over the Vikings, but I was not going to let myself be a lamb led to the slaughter.”

She gripped the hot bowl beneath her, her blood already boiling. “What did you do?”

“I did what I had to do. I escaped.” His knuckles turned white as he gripped his empty goblet. “More ale, woman.”

Her hands trembled as she poured more into his cup. Then the door swung open and Hunwald stepped in, kicking water from his boots.

He was an older man, weathered and tainted as if by a permanent layer of filth from the nature of his trade. Nevertheless he had gentle blue eyes, and his face was unassuming even as he looked upon their suspicious visitor. He nodded humbly. “My lord, I am Hunwald, a swineherd,” he said. “What ... event ... should I thank ... for the honor of your ... presence?” Golde winced at the swineherd’s awkwardness.

Alfric looked from Hunwald, to Golde, and back again. “Are you two man and wife?” he asked.

Hunwald opened his mouth to reply, but Golde interrupted him. “That is none of your concern.”

Alfric stared at her in horror a moment, then burst into laughter. “God help you, Hunwald! This wench is spoiled goods. I hope you know that!”

Despite herself, Golde flushed with shame and embarrassment. Normally, she was not embarrassed by such things. Long ago, she had surrendered the sanctity of her body to obtain security for herself in the protection of such men as Alfric—whatever his protection may be worth. For a long time she had possessed no wealth nor station: to warm a rich man’s bed at night was a means of gaining food and shelter. But when she bore her son Eadric, she nearly died in the process. For this reason she had stayed from Hunwald’s bed despite all of his kindness, despite his good heart and selflessness. God knew he deserved any pleasures her body could give him more than the nobleman sitting on their stool, yet she had withheld them. That Alfric would bring it up this way filled her with a sensation more vile than any she had felt before.

Unable to stop herself, she reached out and slapped Alfric across the face.

His head hung sideways a moment, suspended as a red wave spread up his cheek. His mouth remained opened, gaping, as at last his eyes twisted to look at her. They gleamed like the points of two blades.

He stood up. She stepped back, but he reached out and gripped her wrist, tightly enough to leave a bruise.

He had never been a particularly violent man, preferring to avoid conflict whenever possible. But he sometimes behaved differently around the few people he perceived as weaker than himself. Without a doubt, that was how he saw Golde. She peered up at him, narrowing her own pale eyes, challenging him.

“Why did you come here, Alfric?” she hissed.

“For food and drink, and anything else I may want.” His hot fingers tightened on the bones of her forearms, and she winced.

Despite all she knew of Alfric, there was a danger in his gaze now that she did not recognize, like a starving wolf spotting the only lamb in a flock that was weak enough to catch. Even so, she did not know what he would have done next, and perhaps never would; for at that moment, Eadric stepped inside.

He stood in the doorway, blond curls long and dripping, small woolen tunic matted to his skin. He stared up in shock at the looming figure of the wealthy ealdorman, sparkling with his diamond-crusted tunic and hanging swordbelt. Even more fascinating to the little boy, perhaps, was the intensity with which Alfric stared back at him.

The lord released Golde suddenly. “Who is this?”

“He, uh ... he is Eadric.” Golde rubbed her sore arms.

“Eadric.” Alfric stepped forward, leather boots squeaking. He grabbed a wet curl of Eadric’s hair in his fingertips, so like his own, and twirled it. Then he pulled away. “Hm.” He jutted up his chin as he turned towards Golde. “Let’s eat, then.”

“Shut the door, Eadric, for God’s sake,” cried Golde.

Eadric obeyed, though by now a wet ring of rainwater lay round the threshold. As he joined everyone at the table, he grinned. “I fed everyone in the barn,” he said.

“Everyone?” said Golde as she spooned out the soup. “The pigs, you mean?”

“Everyone—all of them!”

Alfric looked at the boy curiously. “Even my men?”

Eadric nodded, eyes twinkling. "Yes, lord. I gave them acorns, beech-nuts, and grains—just like the pigs!"

Golde went pale with embarrassment, but to her shock, Alfric released a chiming laugh. "Serves them right! Pigs, indeed! Good job, Eadric. That is your name, isn't it?"

"Yes, lord, and yours?"

Golde clenched her teeth angrily. The boy could be so impertinent! But the ealdorman just smiled. "Alfric. Alfric Alfhereson. And you're the son of ...?"

Eadric shrugged his little wet shoulders. "I don't know!"

Golde set down the bowl with a resounding thump, her stomach churning. "Eat up before it gets cold," she commanded them, even though she had lost her own appetite. Then she hurried off to fetch the bread.

When at last they were all seated and eating, a terrible silence fell over them. Eadric began kicking his legs under the table. The temporary glimmer of light in Alfric's eyes faded once more. His mouth drooped with a frown and his jaws bulged as he chewed angrily at his stale bread.

"Eadric, be still!" hissed Golde.

Alfric looked at Eadric again, and this time a strange look fell over his face.

"I think I might stay here awhile," he declared.

The maid nearly choked on her first bite of bread. "What?" She lifted her own cup of ale and drank desperately. "You're joking, right?"

"Absolutely not. I'll stay here with you, and little Eadric—" he tossed the boy a wink—"along with ... " He frowned at Hunwald. "Whatever your name is."

"Alfric—that's ridiculous! I don't understand. You have manors to live in, and a fyrd to command, and reeves and stewards to supervise ... " Her mouth went on flapping a moment before her thoughts could catch up. "You ... you do still *have* all those things, don't you?"

He picked up his bowl, though there was still a decent amount of pot-tage left, and flung it against the wall. Everyone stared in horror as the broth dripped down the planks. Even Alfric gazed at his own mess as if it saddened him, his rage spent in his meaningless tantrum.

Golde stood up, chest heaving with anger. "Step outside, Alfric."

He lifted an eyebrow at her. "What was that?"

"You're not an ealdorman anymore, are you? You didn't just 'escape' from the Danes, did you? Whatever you did was far worse than that. *Wasn't* it?" He looked away from her, face burning. "Get out of this

house, Alfric, or God help me I will get on my horse, ride to the king, and tell him your whereabouts myself." This was a bluff, of course, for she did not even have a horse to ride upon. But she did not think Alfric would realize that.

Her suspicions must have been correct, for Alfric rose so suddenly that his stool flew out from under him. He was frightened now—it did not take much to frighten him. His eyes flicked to Eadric, who simply watched this spectacle with unassuming awe.

"You think King Ethelred will protect you from the Vikings?" Alfric's voice trembled with passion as he looked from one of them to the next. "He won't. He can't. I helped the Danes because they will rule eventually, anyway; and I'd rather it not be over my own dead body!"

Golde could hardly contain her horror. So, he had not only run away; he had "helped" the Danes! Had he given them Ethelred's plans? Had he supported them with his own fleet? She was not sure she wanted to know. In truth, she hardly even cared about the war; what she cared about was the safety of her own home, and Alfric standing here now as traitor to the Anglo-Saxons poised too great a danger. If he stayed here much longer he would bring the king's rage upon them all. She stormed around the table and grabbed Alfric's tunic. "Out!"

He stumbled as she dragged him through the doorway, then cried out and sputtered as the rain splashed his face. She slammed the door behind them and blocked it with her small but sturdy frame.

He looked miserable, rivers of rain running down his face as he stared at her. Nevertheless, mischief flared momentarily from behind his golden lashes, and his expression reminded her of one Eadric often wore. "Ethelred will forgive me eventually, Golde dearest. I'll talk some sense into him again."

She shook her head in disbelief. "How could he forgive you? You helped the enemy."

She could not see his tears through the rain, but she sensed they were there. He stared up at the veiled moon. "I did. I gave them Ethelred's plans. I told them everything."

"Stop, Alfric I don't want to know—!"

"I took my ships and went with them." He took in a heaving breath. "We all would have died otherwise. It was the only way ..." Helpless, she waited for him to go on. She saw that he could no longer hold it in. "That's what I thought, Golde. I really did. But then the rest of Ethelred's fleet pursued us, and he ... he took ... he took one of my ships ..." He sobbed openly. Golde did not know whether to feel sorry for him, or

furious. "He slaughtered everyone on board. And then his ships went after the Danes anyway, and the battle ... oh God." He bowed his head and shook violently. "I escaped my ship, with these men ... but they took my ship, and some of my men were on board ... and now they're dead."

She was surprised to find tears pricking her own eyes. Of course, Alfric had been a fool to act as he had. And yet perhaps he had truly wanted to save his men's lives—on that she preferred to give him the benefit of doubt—and despite everything, he had failed. "Alfric, you shouldn't be here. Not only are you endangering me, but you are leaving your true family to the king's mercy. Get back to your own family. Protect them. Go somewhere safe. But you'll solve nothing hiding here, cramming the last of your loyal men in a pig-sty. Stay in the barn until morning, if you must, but I want you gone before the cock's crow."

He scowled at that. "You'll regret casting me out when I'm in the king's favor again, wench."

"So be it. Until that time comes, farewell, Alfric."

There was nothing else to say, so she went back inside and bolted the door. She remained leaning against it a moment, trembling.

"Mother?"

Reluctantly, Golde turned to meet her son's gaze. To her surprise, he looked angry.

"Why did you send him away?" demanded Eadric. "I liked him!"

"Because he's dangerous."

"No he isn't! I could tell!"

Golde sighed wearily and sank down onto a stool, dripping everywhere. Her heart ached as she watched Hunwald clean the table without question or complaint. He was such a good man. He did not deserve the trouble she brought to his doorstep. "Alfric is dangerous in an unusual way, my boy," she said. "Better just to forget about him."

"I don't want to." Eadric crossed his arms. "I want to go with him."

"You *what*?"

Eadric set his mouth stubbornly.

"Absolutely not, Eadric! I left him in the first place to keep you far from his wily ways."

His stern expression cracked somewhat, giving way to puzzlement. "What do you mean, 'left' him?"

Golde looked away, suddenly feeling a painful ache in her head. She had lived openly with Alfric once, running to his side whenever he tired of his wife. Those days had been strange for her, and were probably as

close she would ever come to living a courtly life. She had met a few important nobles and wealthy thegns of Mercia during her stays in the manor. They all knew she was little better than a whore, and most of them had used her as such, but she was surprised by the inclusion they gave her compared to most women. She wondered whether her shamelessness and openness in her way of life gave her an unusual status in their eyes. When King Ethelred sacked Rochester and cast out Alfric the first time, she had run to Hunwald for shelter, still wearing a soft linen dress decked with beads and embroidery. The swineherd had taken her for some sort of noblewoman and she had let him believe it. He had not asked any questions when her belly swelled and she gave birth to what was obviously a bastard. She nearly died that day, and he could have let her, giving himself two less mouths to feed. Instead he sent for a midwife to help bring Eadric into the world.

She had dreaded the day she would have to explain any of her past to Eadric. She wanted to go on living as if it had never happened. She had let him assume, to whatever extent he could understand the situation, that Hunwald was his father—although he clearly doubted this, and had said as much to Alfric. She had even let him believe that she and Hunwald were husband and wife, though she never stated as much. How could she explain the complexities of her situation to a boy like Eadric? She had been close to another man before leaving the ealdorman's manor, as well: a wealthy swineherd named Wulfric, who was something of Alfric's friend. How could she tell Eadric with any dignity that she did not even know which one was his father?

Unfortunately, Eadric was too smart for his own good. He watched Golde's face closely. "Tell me, Mother! Could we go with Alfric, too? Could I live with Algar?"

Algar was Alfric's legitimate son, only a little older than Eadric. The two boys had encountered each other a few times while Alfric was away and enjoyed playing together. For a moment Golde wanted to explain everything to Eadric, but found she could not. Her shoulders sagged with the weight of the burden she was unwilling to release.

"I want to wear nice tunics like Algar, and cloaks with pretty brooches, and when I'm older, a swordbelt." Eadric was getting carried away with these notions, and she could see in his eyes that he would keep dreaming if she let him.

"Stop it, Eadric. The cost for those things is very dear, and it is better to forget them. Forget Lord Alfric, forget about Algar, and silly brooches! Go to bed, and don't say another word about them."

She hoped she had given the right advice, but she feared she had not as Eadric scowled fiercely and stormed off to his cot. He kicked off his boots, but nothing else, before plopping down on the hard surface and turning away from her.

Her heart was heavy as she joined Hunwald in silence at the table. Together, they tried to clean up the mess Alfric had left behind.

At last they all laid down in the dark and were blanketed by a heavy silence. She wished they could all go to sleep that night and wake up to a morning like any other, but she already knew they would not. She listened to the sound of her own fast breathing, unable to go to sleep no matter how desperately she wished to.

She looked over at Hunwald's form, turned away in the darkness, and wondered if he truly slept. She wondered whether he saw her presence here as a burden, or whether he had enjoyed the company, despite its limitations. She wondered if he considered himself a happy man, or merely content, or if he ever paused to question his lot in life at all.

Then she looked at her son, his pale curls strewn in the moonlight. She watched his small shape rise and fall, and realized that when it came to Eadric, she did not have to wonder. She knew suddenly, without a doubt, that Eadric would never be as content as Hunwald living a simple life among pigs. He was too smart, proud, and ambitious. He would always want more for himself, she suspected, and part of that was her own fault. She believed, herself, that people were not given a set lot in life: they forged their own paths, whether they realized it or not. Perhaps she had been wrong to cut him off so sharply when he spoke of living a life like Alfric's. The notion that Eadric might ever be in a position similar to Alfric's simply terrified her.

She got up and crawled to Eadric's side. She lay a gentle hand on his head, though he did not stir. Whether he heard her or not, she didn't know; and even if he had been awake, she spoke so softly that her words might not have been audible.

"Eadric," she whispered, "I want you to know something. I think you can achieve anything in this life that you set your mind to, no matter how impossible it may seem. I believe you can eventually have all those things you dream of, if you truly want them. Most of those things are simply not worth the trouble. All of this fighting and bloodshed ... what is it for? It is foolishness." She sighed, thinking that she was beginning to sound like a fool, herself. "I suppose all I am trying to say is: be careful what you wish for. Pick your battles wisely. Enjoy what you have and take what you can reach ... and all will be well."

She thought that her words made very little sense, especially to a sleeping seven-year-old boy, but she knew she said them more for her own sake than his. Feeling a little better, she leaned down and kissed his forehead. After that, she finally slept.

But she woke up much too late. The cock had already crowed. Now the farm was too quiet. Alfric and his men were gone.

And so was Eadric.

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The pigs had scattered over the hills. She found Hunwald in the barn, the dog whining at his side. He was bleeding from the stomach.

She yelled with dismay as she lifted him up and cradled him in her arms. She rocked him gently, but her mind seemed to spin in circles. "Hunwald? Hunwald!" As she settled him in her lap, more blood spilled from the stab-wound in his stomach. Her eyes widened with horror, too shocked to blink even as tears flooded her vision and nearly blinded her. "Hunwald!"

She practically screamed this time, and at last he stirred. His eyes were even grayer than usual, devoid of life and energy. They seemed unable to focus as he stared into her face.

"I'm so sorry, Hunwald." Her voice shook with sobs. "Who did this to you?"

"One of ... Lord Alfric's men." Golde could not believe Hunwald would bother to call Alfric "lord" after what had been done to him. But such was Hunwald's nature. "Eadric ... he did not see it happen. Don't worry."

She clutched him tighter against her. "Where is Eadric?"

"He went ... with them. He wanted to go, but I tried to stop him ... anyway. That's why they ..." He glanced down at his wound and groaned.

"Oh, Hunwald ... you never deserved any of this. I am so sorry."

"Please, look after ... look after the pigs."

It was silly for a dying request, she thought. But she could not smile. "After I find Eadric, I ... I'll try."

It was a promise she was not sure she could keep, but hoped she would, anyway. Her arms shook as she considered abandoning him. She had to go after Eadric. But she could not leave Hunwald to die here, slowly and painfully, while elvish sprites festered his wounds and he writhed in lonely agony until his death. Then his dead body would be fodder for the first hungry animal to come along. No, she could not let that happen.

She braced her legs, and heaved up with a great groan of effort. He sagged against her with a trembling grip. "What ... are you ... ?"

"Save your breath," she growled through her teeth. "I'm taking you to a church."

Hunwald did not own a horse, but she found a cart capable of holding his weight. She strapped on good boots and took some of his coins. She left the rest behind, hiding them under a firm floorboard, hoping this would give her the motivation to return and fulfill her foolish promise.

Then she left Hunwald's farm, sadly certain that she would never return. She took Hunwald to the nearest monastery and left him with the monks. She leaned over him and brushed her lips against his, so lightly that afterwards she wondered whether they had ever touched at all. In any case, it was much too late for such sentiments. Her life with him was over, and so too was the hope of any true relationship they could have had together. She had lived in a dream, she realized: a dream in which she was not a whore, and Eadric was not a bastard, and one of his possible fathers was not the most treacherous Saxon in Engla-lond.

She resolved that if she found Eadric—and she told herself she would—their lives would change for the better. She did not yet know how.

But she would think of something.

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RELEASE DATES

One Lost Tale of Mercia will release every other Tuesday until October 5, the release of the full story of Eadric Streona and his greatest opponent, the Golden Cross. For more news and updates, visit www.jaydenwoods.com.

The First Lost Tale: **Golde the Mother** (released May 18)

The Second Lost Tale: **Ethelred the King** (released June 1)

The Third Lost Tale: **Aydith the Aetheling** (released June 15)

The Fourth Lost Tale: **Athelward the Historian** (released June 29)

The Fifth Lost Tale: **Alfgifu the Orphan** (*released July 13*)

The Sixth Lost Tale: **Hastings the Hearth Companion** (July 27)

The Seventh Lost Tale: **Hildred the Maid** (August 10)

The Eighth Lost Tale: **Canute the Viking** (August 24)

The Ninth Lost Tale: **Runa the Wife** (September 7)

The Tenth Lost Tale: **Edmund the Aetheling** (September 21)

****OCTOBER 5th: Eadric the Grasper** releases in the U.S. on Amazon

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Cover art for "Eadric the Grasper" by Del Melchionda

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles, as compiled by various monks until the year 1140, were my primary sources of information. So, too, was the Chronicle of Florence of Worcester, and the Chronicles of the Kings of England as written by William of Malmesbury. Without the devotion of these men to chronicle the chaotic events of their time, so little of the Dark Ages would be known. For a complete list of sources, or to tell me what you think of my work, please visit my blog at www.talesofmercia.wordpress.com.

From the same author on Feedbacks

The Second Lost Tale of Mercia: Ethelred the King (2010)

This haunting short story illustrates the scandalous circumstances surrounding King Ethelred's rise to power at the age of eleven, and reveals why the entire reign of so-called "Ethelred the Unready" seems to have been cursed.

"The Lost Tales of Mercia" are a series of ten short stories set in England near the end of the Viking Age. They can be read in any order. Though fictional, they are heavily researched and feature many real historical figures as described in the ancient texts of the "Anglo-Saxon Chronicles." They are intended to portray what might have and could have happened. These quick reads will entertain and educate at the same time.

The Third Lost Tale of Mercia: Aydith the Aetheling (2010)

Aydith's story is that of a young aetheling who, despite her royal blood, can get no one to listen to her willful opinions. With the encouragement of a kind hearth companion named Hastings, perhaps she will find another way to help her ill-fated country.

"The Lost Tales of Mercia" are ten short stories set in England near the end of the Viking Age. They can be read in any order. Though fictional, they are heavily researched and feature many real historical figures as described in the ancient texts of the "Anglo-Saxon Chronicles." They are intended as a creative interpretation of what might have and could have happened.

The Fourth Lost Tale of Mercia: Athelward the Historian (2010)

Lord Athelward, an ealdorman who also wants to write history, finds his peace of mind disturbed when a strange woman named Golde and her young son Eadric show up on his doorstep with a ridiculous proposal.

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The Fifth Lost Tale of Mercia: Alfgifu the Orphan (2010)

In the wildest Lost Tale yet, we jump to the year 1014. Alfgifu of Northampton joins forces with Canute, the new and young king of the Vikings. Alfgifu believes that her father was murdered in cold blood by Ealdorman Eadric Streona. How far will she go to obtain her revenge?

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The Sixth Lost Tale of Mercia: Hastings the Hearth Companion (2010)

A royal hearth companion named Hastings fights on the front lines of battle for duty and the Golden Cross, but he entertains unrealistic notions of how his mistress, Aetheling Aydith, might reward him.

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The Seventh Lost Tale of Mercia: Hildred the Maid (2010)

In 1005 A.D., a terrible famine strikes Engla-lond. When a poor young woman named Hildred grows desperate enough to break the law for her survival, a rising thegn named Eadric takes her fate in his hands.

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The Eighth Lost Tale of Mercia: Canute the Viking (2010)

As a teenager, Canute struggles to find his place among a fortress of Jomsvikings and the differing religions surrounding them. An

unexpected relationship with another Jomsviking, forbidden by the Christians, may force him to choose a side.

"The Lost Tales of Mercia" are ten short stories set in the Viking Age. They can be read in any order. Though fictional, they are heavily researched and feature many real historical figures as described in the ancient texts of the "Anglo-Saxon Chronicles." They are intended as a creative interpretation of what might have and could have happened.

The Ninth Lost Tale of Mercia: Runa the Wife (2010)

Runa expects to live her entire life isolated in the woods until she meets Thorkell the Tall. She tries to conform to society through a traditional marriage, but at a very high cost to them both.

"The Lost Tales of Mercia" are ten short stories set in the Viking Age. They can be read in any order. Though fictional, they are heavily researched and feature many real historical figures as described in the ancient texts of the "Anglo-Saxon Chronicles." They are intended as a creative interpretation of what might have and could have happened.

The Tenth Lost Tale of Mercia: Edmund the Aetheling (2010)

In the tenth and final Lost Tale, young prince Edmund suspects a plot against his father's life. He turns to his siblings, Aydith and Aethelstan, for help, but King Ethelred heeds none of them. Will they ever find someone they can trust?

"The Lost Tales of Mercia" are ten short stories set in England near the end of the Viking Age. They can be read in any order. Though fictional, they are heavily researched and feature many real historical figures as described in the ancient texts of the "Anglo-Saxon Chronicles." They are intended as a creative interpretation of what might have and could have happened.

Ashes of Dearen: Book 1 (2011)

A red-eyed assassin, an unready princess, a sadistic politician, and an adulterous queen all desire the secret behind a magical dust known as safra. Saffra is said to bring happiness, but these characters' desperate attempts to obtain it will cost them all dearly. Their salacious and violent deeds bring three great nations to the brink of warfare. And little do they know, their scrambling efforts are

being carefully watched by a much greater power: the gods behind the beguiling drug that ensnares them all.

Lost Tales of Mercia (2012)

All ten Lost Tales of Mercia set in Anglo-Saxon England can now be read in a single ebook.

A mother defies an ealdorman for the sake of her son. A boy becomes king at eleven years of age through the scandalous death of his brother. A young girl takes desperate measures to manipulate the king's court. An eccentric noble gives a young swineherd a priceless gift in the form of education. An orphaned woman joins the Viking prince to pursue her revenge...

These are only the first five stories of the ten Lost Tales of Mercia. They introduce the characters who will fight, love, and betray each other until the rightful king takes the throne of Engla-lond. These stories serve as a complement to the novel, "Eadric the Grasper."



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