



## BOOK CLUB KIT

*Bring 11th-century England to life.*

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 Patricia Bracewell, Author

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*Praise for*  
**PATRICIA BRACEWELL**

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“Richly textured, set approximately one century later than Bernard Cornwell’s popular Saxon Tales, Emma’s **intriguing and historically authentic saga** will appeal to a similar audience.

—*Booklist*, on *The Price of Blood*

“Battles, treacherous plots, and desperation are multiplied in this tense novel. The reader sympathizes with the fiery and compassionate Emma as she fights off both external enemies who approach England’s shores and ones who scheme from within. **Historical fiction fans looking for a new noble heroine will embrace this excellent saga.**” —*Library Journal*, on *The Price of Blood*

“Bracewell’s portrayal of Emma... is **a real tour de force. A five star debut!**” —*Historical Novels Review*

“Author Patricia Bracewell’s words have a life of their own in *Shadow on the Crown*, making for **a stunning, well-researched, historical fiction debut**” —*The Deseret News*

“Bracewell delivers a **highly entertaining** addition to the historical fiction genre.” —*Publisher’s Weekly*

“The familiar themes of political rivalry, court scandal, and disputed lineage so often explored in historical fiction get **a new cast of schemers and scoundrels** set in a less familiar but no less dramatic period of English history. Readers of historical sagas and romances will embrace this rich narrative.”

—*Library Journal*

“**What a great book!** A fascinating, little-known period of history, a tense, exciting story, and characters who spring as naturally from their own time as mushrooms from the forest floor.”

—Diana Gabaldon, author of the *Outlander* series

“Who could have known that the court of Aethelred the Unready was as full of intrigue, passion, and danger as anything in Tudor times? A well-wrought journey back to those little known times, **this novel entertains while it educates.**” —Margaret George, author of *Elizabeth I: A Novel*

“**A stellar achievement.**” —Adrienne McDonnell, author of *The Doctor and The Diva*

“A woman whose spirit will not be vanquished, Emma of Normandy **will live in your heart long after you finish the last page.**” —Ella March Chase, author of *Three Maids for a Crown*

“From the moment I picked up the book it captivated me, calling me back and back again until **I abandoned everything to finish it in a breathless rush. Brava!**”

—Emma Champion, author of *The King’s Mistress*

“*Shadow on the Crown* drew me in from the first page and held me in its grip . . . **a vivid and compelling tale.**” —Gillian Bagwell, author of *The September Queen*

# AT THE PARTY

*Serve*

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## FRUIT FLAN

(recipe from the author!)

Serves 6

Ingredients:

Crust:

½ cup butter

⅓ cup sugar

1 cup all-purpose flour

Filling:

3 pears (Bartlett or Bosc)

2 apples

4 oz cream cheese

½ cup sugar

2 eggs

¾ cup milk

½ tsp pure vanilla extract

½ tsp cinnamon

¼ cup sliced almonds

Method:

1. For the shortbread base, cream butter and sugar together until light. Beat in flour. Pat into the bottom and up the sides of a 10" pie dish.
2. Peel, halve and core pears and apples. Slice. Place in crust, piling the fruit slightly higher in the center.
- 3 Cream cheese until smooth. Beat in sugar. Add eggs one at a time, beating mixture smooth after each addition. Add milk and vanilla. Pour over fruit. Sprinkle with cinnamon and almonds.
4. Place in a preheated 425° oven and bake 10 minutes. Reduce heat to 350° and bake 35 to 40 minutes or longer until custard is set in the center. Delicious warm or cold.

*Serve warm with hot Earl Gray tea, or small glasses of Meade!*

# AT THE PARTY

## *Play*

*(songs picked by the author!)*

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- The entire soundtrack from the movie *Tristan & Isolde*  
(music by Anne Dudley)
- Celtic Patrick Ball's "Celtic Harp" *(because Emma played the harp,  
& harp music would have been a constant in 11th c—PB)*

## DID YOU KNOW?

*Patricia Bracewell offers little known facts about the Anglo-Saxons she learned during her research for Shadow on the Crown and The Price of Blood.*

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- The first public schools in England were founded by Alfred the Great in the 9th c.
- Laws against stealing beehives were strict because they were so valuable. The wax was used for candles, the honey for sweetener and mead, and the bees pollinated a farmer's crops.
- Trial By Ordeal was usually a hand plunged into boiling water; if it healed easily you were innocent.
- The 1st contemporaneous royal portrait of an English king was of Æthelstan in 953.
- Alfred the Great's stepmother was also his brother's wife. (Work it out.)
- The sons of a king – æthelings - were not allowed to marry until their father died. This did not prevent them from forming attachments and siring children.
- The palace of Rohan in Tolkien's LOTR is called Meduseld, from the Old English word for mead hall.
- The 1st Anglo-Saxon king to unify England & make it stick was Edgar in 961.
- An Anglo-Saxon palace was more like a compound: a great hall surrounded by many buildings.
- 10th century Lady of the Mercians, Æthelflaed, led campaigns against Viking invaders.
- Musical instruments included flutes & pipes elegantly carved of wood or the bones of birds.
- The earliest Anglo-Saxons built in wood, but the royal hall at Winchester from the time of King Alfred on was built of stone.
- The St. Brice's Day Massacre of Danes ordered by King Æthelred II in 1002 may have spawned years of Viking payback. It was a bad decision.
- The 1st royal bride to be anointed queen of England was the mother of King Æthelred II in 973. Her name was Ælfthryth. The 2nd bride to be anointed queen was Emma of Normandy, who married Æthelred in 1002.

- In 1008 King Æthelred built a massive fleet to protect England from Viking attacks. In 1009 the fleet was destroyed by fire & storm, and the Viking raids that followed were worse than ever before.
- The concept of 'trial by jury' dates to the Anglo-Saxons.
- A good 10th c leech (doctor) could set & bandage a broken skull.
- The original 5 Boroughs were not in New York City. They were in an area of northern England that, in the 11th century, was a kind of Viking republic. It included the shires of Lincoln, Stamford, Derby, Nottingham, and Leicester.
- Anglo-Saxon earthen banks at Wareham were so large that in 1940 they were used as anti-tank ditches.
- The 10th c. organ in Winchester's Old Minster needed 70 men to operate it.
- Queens displayed their husband's wealth & power by wearing gold & gems: royal spectacle.

## *A conversation with* **PATRICIA BRACEWELL**

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### **1. What can you tell us about the title *The Price of Blood*? How did you decide on it?**

I plucked ‘the price of blood’ from a chilling reference to King Æthelred written by 12th century chronicler William of Malmesbury in his *History of the English Kings*: He was hounded by the shade of his brother, demanding terribly the price of blood. The chronicler goes on to describe the relentless Viking attacks on England, and Æthelred’s fruitless efforts to resist, all due to the unpunished murder of Æthelred’s brother. This is a good summary of what happens in my book. So I have William of Malmesbury to thank, not just for the title of my novel, but also for the ghost that continues to haunt the king.

### **2. Of all the English queens, what about the lesser-known Emma of Normandy attracted you to her story?**

There were two things about Emma that intrigued me. First, her marriages to two different kings of England who were mortal enemies. How, I asked myself, did a woman negotiate those relationships? The physical and emotional impact of her marriages must have been huge and, certainly from a novelist’s point of view, well worth exploring. The second thing that intrigued me about Emma was that in mid-life she commissioned a book that recorded key historical events as she remembered them. That this was done by a woman in the 11th century struck me as pretty remarkable, and it’s an indication of just how politically savvy Emma was.

### **3. What challenges did you encounter in researching the life of Emma of Normandy?**

Researching Emma’s life during the years 1006 to 1012, the years covered by this book, was next to impossible because there is almost no record of her at all. Her name appears on a few charters, indicating that she was at court beside the king on those occasions. One charter in 1012 is a grant of land from the king to Emma, and so historians conjecture that she gave birth to a son at about that time. But where was she the rest of the time and what was she doing? Because there was no other direct reference to Emma, all I could do was bury myself in the history of those years and make some conjectures of my own based on what I was able to learn about a queen’s duties and Emma’s later career.

### **4. You offer a vivid account of the time period. What research did you do to make sure the story was authentic?**

Sometimes there was what I think of as ‘boots on the ground’ research. For example, I made a trip to the Viking Ship Museum at Roskilde, Denmark where I saw the ancient bones of Viking ships; modern, full scale recreations; and tiny models of Viking fleets. That visit answered a number of questions for me including, when I saw models with tents rigged up mid-ship, where a queen might shelter during a voyage. There was also painstaking research into chronicles and historical minutiae.

For example, an 1134 inventory of the treasures of Ely abbey listed precious textiles donated by Queen Emma including a blood-red altar cloth. So in my novel, when Edward went to Ely for schooling, Emma sent a red altar cloth with him. It's a minor detail and probably no reader will mark it, but I know that the altar cloth was real. Frequently the vagueness of historical records forced me to invent. For instance, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle claimed that the Danes attacked London several times in 1009, and that the Londoners always repelled them. But there was no description of what, exactly, happened when the Danes attacked. I had to make it up based on my imagination and what I could learn of the military tactics of the time. More research!

5. There has been recent resurgence in the popularity of Vikings with the History Channel's show "Vikings". Do you watch the show? What do you think of its appeal?

I'm a big fan of *Vikings*. I had great fun blogging about the second season and I'm looking forward to the next one. My interest in the show was strong right from the start, but I liked it even more when the Anglo-Saxon King Ecbert came on the scene in Season Two. I'm impressed with the way writer Michael Hirst contrasts the Christian Anglo-Saxon world with the pagan Viking world. I think the show's appeal lies in its strong characters, both male and female. It doesn't hurt that along with the bloody action and adventure there's a fine script, top notch actors, and some incredible sets and costuming.

6. Emma and Elgiva are two very different women, but there are also clear similarities in the obstacles they must overcome. Was that intentional?

The obstacles they face are inherent in the history and in the society in which they find themselves, so yes, the similarities are intentional. One of the central themes in the novel is how women of that time attained and wielded power. Whether you were a queen or a commoner, your access to power was through a man – a husband, a brother, a father, a son, a powerful ally. Both Emma and Elgiva have to forge alliances in order to tap into the lines of power.

7. How do you think your novel speaks to today's reader?

I think today's readers can relate to many of the themes that run through the book: marriage, family bonds, loyalty, honesty. The book also explores the use and abuse of power, and that is something that echoes through every age right down to the present day. In particular, the value of information – who has it? Who controls it? – will, I suspect, strike a familiar chord.

8. When you're not writing, how do you spend your time?

When I'm not writing I'm frequently researching the next book or up to my ears in social media. I like to connect with readers. But I also make time for tennis, the gym, the theater, travel, or just taking walks through my neighborhood.

9. What advice would you offer aspiring writers?

Write about what excites you, and never be satisfied with anything but your best work. Be persistent, but be patient. If you're a writer, you're in it for the long haul. There are no shortcuts to success.

10. What are you working on now?

The third book in my trilogy about Emma is rattling around in my head. I have several new research books on my desk to read as well as half a dozen books that I want to re-read. I'm trying to get a firm grasp on the history so I can discover the story I want to tell.

11. Who would be in your ideal book club?

I would invite some of my favorite novelists: Kate Atkinson, Sebastian Barry, Bernard Cornwell, Sarah Dunant, Diana Gabaldon, Nicola Griffith, Robert Low and Louise Penney. Then, for comic relief and to bring us back to reality, I'd bring in Bill Bryson. And then I would be in too much fan girl awe to say a single word.