

BOOK EIGHT



THE CIRCLE OF  
CERIDWEN SAGA

# FOR ME FATE WOVE THIS

OCTAVIA RANDOLPH



# *List of Characters*

**Hrald**, son of Ælfwyn and Sidroc, Jarl of the Danish keep of Four Stones in Lindisse

**Asberg**, uncle to Hrald, brother-in-law to Ælfwyn, in command at the fortress of Turcesig

**Jari**, a warrior of Four Stones, chief body-guard to Hrald

**Haward**, a young Danish war-chief

**Dagmar**, a young woman of the Danes

**Inkera**, a young woman of the Danes

**Siggerith**, a child, daughter of the late Thorfast, killed by Hrald

**Ælfwyn**, mother to Ashild and Hrald, widowed of Yrling; marriage dissolved with Sidroc

**Burginde**, companion and nurse to Ælfwyn

**Ashild**, daughter of Ælfwyn and the late Yrling, Hrald's older half-sister

**Ealhswith**, daughter to Ælfwyn

**Kjeld**, a body-guard to Hrald

**Sigewif**, Abbess of Oundle

**Bova**, consecrated nun and brewster at Oundle

**Æthelthryth**, sister to Ælfwyn, wed to Asberg

**Bork**, an orphan boy, taken in by Hrald

**Wilgot**, the priest of Four Stones

**Styrbjörn**, second in command at Turcesig

**Onund**, a warrior, formerly of Four Stones

**Ceric**, son of Ceridwen and Gyric, grandson of Godwulf of Kilton

**Worr**, the horse-thegn of Kilton, pledged man of Ceric

**Eadward**, Prince of Wessex, son of Ælfred

**Ælfred**, King of Wessex

**Raedwulf**, Bailiff of Defenas in Wessex

**Modwynn**, Lady of Kilton, widow of Godwulf

**Edgyth**, Lady of Kilton, widow of Godwin, mother by adoption to Edwin

**Edwin**, Ceric's younger brother, Lord of Kilton in Wessex

**Eorconbeald**, Captain of Edwin's body-guard, and **Alwin**, his second

**Cadmar**, a warrior-monk of Kilton

**Dunnere**, the priest of Kilton

**Begu**, a woman of Kilton

**Aszur**, ship master and captain

**Rannveig**, a brewster on Gotland, mother of Tindr

**Ceridwen**, Mistress of the hall Tyrsborg on the island of Gotland, wife to Sidroc

**Sidroc the Dane**, formerly Jarl of South Lindisse

**Eirian** and **Yrling**, twin children of Ceridwen and Sidroc; **Rodiaud**, their little sister

**Tindr**, a bow hunter, and **Šeará**, his Sámi wife

**Juoksa**, their son, and **Jaské**, their daughter



# *For Me Fate Wove This Maps*



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THE YEAR 893



# *The Wheel of the Year*

Candlemas - 2 February

St Gregory's Day - 12 March

St Cuthbert's Day - The Spring Equinox, about 21 March

St Elgiva's Day - 18 May

High Summer or Mid-Summer Day - 24 June

Sts Peter and Paul - 29 June

Hlafmesse (Lammas) - 1 August

St Mary's Day - 15 August

St Matthews' Day - The Fall Equinox, about 21 September

All Saints - 1 November

The month of Blót - November; the time of Offering

Martinmas (St Martin's) - 11 November

Yuletide - 25 December to Twelfthnight - 6 January

Winter's Nights - the Norse end of the year rituals, ruled by women, marked by feasting and ceremony

# *Anglo-Saxon Place Names, with Modern Equivalents*

Æscesdun = Ashdown

Æthelinga = Athelney

Apulder = Appledore

Basingas = Basing

Beamfleot = Benfleet

Beardan = Bardney

Bearruescir = Berkshire

Bryeg = Bridgenorth

Buttingtun = Buttington

Caeginesham = Keynsham

Cippenham = Chippenham

Cirenceaster = Cirencester

Colneceastre = Colchester

Cruland = Croyland

Defenas = Devon

Englafeld = Englefield

Ethandun = Edington

Exanceaster = Exeter

Fearnhamme = Farnham

Fullanham = Fulham

Geornaham = Irnham

Glastunburh = Glastonbury

Hamtunscir = Hampshire

Headleage = Hadleigh

Hreopedun = Repton

Iglea = Leigh upon Mendip

Jorvik (Danish name for Eoforwic) = York

Legaceaster = Chester

Limenemutha = Lymington in Hampshire

Lindisse = Lindsey

Lundenwic = London

Meredune = Marton

Meresig = Mersea

Middeltun = Milton

Readingas = Reading

River Lyge = River Lea

Sceafteburh = Shaftesbury

Snotingham = Nottingham

Sumorsaet = Somerset

Swanawic = Swanage

Turcesig = Torksey

Wedmor = Wedmore

Welingaford = Wallingford

Witanceaster (where the Witan, the King's advisors, met) = Winchester

Frankland = France

Haithabu = Hedeby

Norse Place Names:

Aros = Aarhus, Denmark

Laaland = the island of Lolland, Denmark

Land of the Svear = Sweden



# *Glossary of Terms*

**Asgard:** Heavenly realm of the Gods.

**brewster:** the female form of brewer (and, interestingly enough, the female form of baker is baxter... so many common names are rooted in professions and trades...).

**browis:** a cereal-based stew, often made with fowl or pork.

**chaff:** the husks of grain after being separated from the usable kernel.

**ceorl:** (“churl”) a free man ranking directly below a thegn, able to bear arms, own property, and improve his rank.

**cottar:** free agricultural worker; in later eras, a peasant.

**cresset:** stone, bronze, or iron lamp fitted with a wick that burnt oil.

**drekar:** “dragon boat,” a war-ship of the Danes.

**ealdorman:** a nobleman with jurisdiction over given lands; the rank was generally appointed by the King and not necessarily inherited from generation to generation. The modern derivative *alderman* in no way conveys the esteem and power of the Anglo-Saxon term.

**fulltrúi:** the Norse deity patron that one felt called to dedicate oneself to.

**fylgja:** a Norse guardian spirit, always female, unique to each family.

**fyrð:** the massed forces of Wessex, comprising thegns – professional soldiers – and ceorls, trained freemen.

**hack silver:** broken silver jewellery, coils of unworked silver bars, fragments of cast ingots and other silver parceled out by weight alone during trade.

**hamingja:** the Norse “luck-spirit” which each person is born with.

**leech-book:** compilation of healing recipes and practices for the treatment of human and animal illness and injury. Such books were a compendium of healing herbs and spiritual and magical practices. The *Leech Book of Bald*, recorded during Ælfred’s reign by a monk named Bald, is a famed, and extant, example.

**morgen-gyfu:** literally, “morning-gift”; a gift given by a husband to his new wife the first morning they awake together.

**rauk:** the striking sea- and wind-formed limestone towers on the coast of Gotland.

**seax:** the angle-bladed dagger which gave its name to the Saxons; all freemen carried one.

**scop:** (“shope”) a poet, saga-teller, or bard, responsible not only for entertainment but seen as a collective cultural historian. A talented scop would be greatly valued by his lord and receive land, gold and silver jewellery, costly clothing and other riches as his reward.

**shingle beach:** a pebbly, rather than sandy, beach.

**skeggox:** steel battle-axe favoured by the Danes.

**skirrets:** a sweet root vegetable similar to carrots, but cream-coloured, and having several fingers on each plant.

**skogkatt:** “forest cat”; the ancestor of the modern Norwegian Forest Cat, known for its large size, climbing ability, and thick and water-shedding coat.

**strakes:** overlapping wooden planks, running horizontally, making up a ship’s hull.

**symbol:** a ceremonial high occasion for the Angle-Saxons, marked by the giving of gifts, making of oaths, swearing of fidelity, and (of course) drinking ale.

**thegn:** (“thane”) a freeborn warrior-retainer of a lord; thegns were housed, fed and armed in exchange for complete fidelity to their sworn lord. Booty won in battle by a thegn was generally offered to their lord, and in return the lord was expected to bestow handsome gifts of arms, horses, arm-rings, and so on to his best champions.

**Tyr:** the God of war, law, and justice. He voluntarily forfeited his sword-hand to allow the Gods to deceive, and bind, the gigantic wolf Fenrir.

**Tyr-hand:** in this Saga, any left-handed person, named so in honour of Tyr’s sacrifice.

**Urd:** the youngest of the three Norse Norns, determiners of men’s destinies. Urd makes decision as to one’s calling and station in life.

**wadmal:** the Norse name for the coarse and durable woven woollen fabric that was a chief export in the Viking age.

**wergild:** Literally, man-gold; the amount of money each man’s life was valued at. The Laws of Æthelbert, a 7th century King of Kent, for example, valued the life of a nobleman at 300 shillings (equivalent to 300 oxen), and a ceorl was valued at 100 shillings. By Ælfred’s time (reigned 871-899) a nobleman was held at 1200 shillings and a ceorl at 200.

# *Notes to For Me Fate Wove This*

## Chapter the First: A King's Daughter

St Edmund. Once patron saint of England (later superseded by St George), he is also patron saint of Kings, and interestingly enough for our times, of pandemics. The King of East Anglia was only twenty-eight years old when he was killed, 20<sup>th</sup> November in the year 870 (possibly 869). The town of Bury St Edmunds in Suffolk is named for him; and his remains may still reside somewhere on the grounds of the ruined abbey. Shortly after his death his legend began to grow, and eventually coinage was issued in East Anglia with the inscription "O holy king Edmund." The earliest of these may have in fact been struck by Danish King Guthrum, more evidence of Guthrum's own cultural assimilation. The massive Cuerdale Hoard (over 8,600 items, housed at the British Museum) unearthed in Lancashire in 1840 contained 1800 of these coins citing Edmund, evidence of how widespread their minting must have been. Edmund's cult grew following the *Life of St Edmund* compiled by the French monk, Abbo, a distinguished intellectual who went on to become Abbot of Fleury. Abbo wrote of Edmund's death and subsequent miracles more than one hundred years after the young King's murder, when in residence at the monastery of Ramsey during 985-987. Abbo was inspired perhaps by his memory of meeting an elderly warrior at the court of King Æthelstan (King Ælfred's grandson). The man had served as personal retainer (possibly even bearer of his war-banner, I like to think) to Edmund, and been with him on the day of his capture. In the Middle Ages the Shrine of St Edmund at Bury St Edmunds became one of the most famous and wealthiest of all pilgrimage places in England, with magnificent gifts presented in honour of the martyr. It was utterly pillaged and destroyed in 1539 during the Protestant Reformation, and the monks driven away. The abbey fell into ruins. Edmund's life continues to inspire, and some believe his holy prayer still protects the town named for him. It is a pity he is no longer regarded as the patron saint of England, for Edmund not only died a kingly death, but is wholly English, unlike the Cappadocian-Palestinian George. Edmund's feast day recalls the day of his death, November 20th.

## Chapter the Second: The Riches of Oundle

*Judith*. The Old Testament tale of the heroic Judith has been preserved in Old English in a single, precious manuscript, known as Cotton Vitellius A xv. This unique manuscript, housed today in the British Museum, also contains our only copy of the epic *Beowulf*. Thus we find in a single folio a tale of two heroes, one female, one male, risking their lives to protect their people. It makes sense that in an age when physical daring was greatly valued, Judith's courage would be highly appealing to women of all classes.

## Chapter the Eleventh: Ever Deeper

Ælfred's doubled forts along the River Lyge – the River Lea – was a good example of his tactical thinking. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for 895 records "...Then the following autumn the king encamped in the neighbourhood of the fortress while the corn was being reaped, so that the Danish men could not keep them back from the reaping. One day the king rode up along the river and looked to see where the river could be blocked, so that they would not be able to bring out their ships. This they proceeded to do: they made two forts on the two sides

of the river, but when they had just begun that operation and had encamped thereby, the [Danish] host saw they could not bring out their ships. Thereupon they abandoned them and went across country...”

As we saw in Book Seven, *Wildswept*, in the capture of Haesten’s wife, the *Chronicle* goes on to once again mention the wives of the invaders: “... The Danish men had placed their women in safety in East Anglia before they went out from that fort...” (G. N. Garmonsway translation, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, J.M. Dent & Sons, LTD)

## Chapter the Eighteenth: To Gotland

Haesten. This famed Viking leader who wreaked so much havoc in Frankland and Angle-land vanishes from the annals of history after 894. No further mention is made of him in *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* nor any other surviving record. He was already old when he landed at Middeltun (Milton in Kent) fronting eighty ships in 892, and it is possible the rigours of his final campaign – in which he harried Wessex and Anglia and yet was ultimately unable to wrest control of either – finally took its toll.

Jephthah’s daughter. From the Old Testament *Book Of Judges*. “And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances; and she was his only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter. And it came to pass that when he saw her, he rent his clothes, and said, Alas my daughter! Thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back.”



# *Acknowledgements*

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*The Circle of Ceridwen Saga:*

[Sidroc the Dane: A Circle of Ceridwen Saga Story](#)

[The Circle of Ceridwen: Book One](#)

[Ceridwen of Kilton: Book Two](#)

[The Claiming: Book Three](#)

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[Tindr: Book Five](#)

[Silver Hammer, Golden Cross: Book Six](#)

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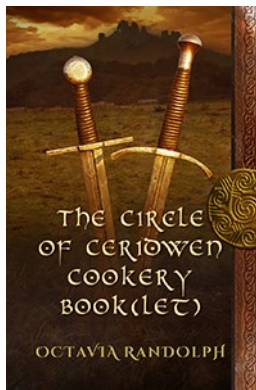
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## *About the Author*

Octavia Randolph has long been fascinated with the development, dominance, and decline of the Anglo-Saxon peoples. The path of her research has included disciplines as varied as the study of Anglo-Saxon and Norse runes, and learning to spin with a drop spindle. Her interests have led to extensive on-site research in England, Denmark, Sweden, and Gotland. In addition to the Circle Saga, she is the author of the novella [\*The Tale of Melkorka\*](#), taken from the Icelandic Sagas; the novella [\*Ride\*](#), a retelling of the story of Lady Godiva, first published in Narrative Magazine; and [\*Light, Descending\*](#), a biographical novel about the great John Ruskin. She has been awarded Artistic Fellowships at the Ingmar Bergman Estate on Fårö, Sweden; MacDowell Colony; Ledig House International; and Byrdcliffe.

She answers all fan mail and loves to stay in touch with her readers. Join her mailing list and read more on Anglo-Saxon and Viking life at [www.octavia.net](http://www.octavia.net). Follow her on Facebook at Octavia Randolph Author, and for exclusive access and content join the spirited members of The Circle of Ceridwen Saga Discussion and Idea Group on Facebook.