



## **Frail Blood**

*Jo Robertson*

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*Frail Blood* is a historical romantic thriller.

California, 1909. A woman straps a pistol to her ankle, walks to her lover's home, and shoots him. Her motive? After an affair of four months, he jilted her for another woman.

How would an attorney defend the woman in light of her outright confession? Would an all-male jury view her actions with repulsion or pity?

The climate of California in the early twentieth century when women couldn't vote and men held the real power, where immense wealth rested alongside poverty, held a paradox of contradictions.

The bare bones of this true California court case sparked the idea for the fictional story of Alma Bentley, attorney Malachi Rivers, and Emma Knight, the woman who helps him investigate the case.

When jaded lawyer Malachi Rivers engages newspaper editor Emma Knight to aid him in the case of Alma Bentley, he has no idea they'll eventually unmask a vile web of family deceit, wickedness, and treachery. Constantly putting herself in harm's way, the feckless Emma uncovers dark secrets that lie behind the wealthy facade of the Joseph Machado clan.

With her strong opinions, Emma tests Malachi's patience even while he's strongly attracted to her. She disagrees with every aspect of his trial strategy, but he defends his client the only way he can – by insisting that a woman, a naturally frail creature, is incapable of committing such a heinous crime.

Emma wants to experience true passion and detests the false notion that women are inferior to men in any way. Even while she confronts Malachi at every turn, she falls ridiculously in love with him.

Readers of historical fiction and mystery/suspense, as well as historical romance, will enjoy the elements at play in this slice of life, fictionalized story of California.

## **Frail Blood Details**

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Author : Jo Robertson

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## From Reader Review Frail Blood for online ebook

### Charlene Davis says

#### Very Spicey

The book was Spicer than I like them so I just skipped the sex scenes. But the story line is great. Set back when women didn't have the vote. Rich vs poor classes. Debauchery, a twist.

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### Desiree Boils says

I did not enjoy this book. After 20 pages I knew how the book would end, and I was right. I hate putting a book down and not finishing it, but I made myself read it until the very end. Emma claims to want to be treated like a modern woman, and not rely on a man, but she constantly wished that Malachi would save her, then argue that she didn't really need him. I had hoped it was more about Alma and what she went though, but she was maybe a second rate character...at that. I was disappointed from start to finish. The book picked up slightly towards the end and slightly peaked my interest slightly, but not enough to really like the book.

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### Mary Roya says

I am expecting more stories from the author. This story is based on an actual case. A Historical Romantic Thriller. I loved the strong willed heroine. The hero of the story really met his match with this lady.

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### Joanne says

Not a bad premise - but way too much predictable sex added needlessly. I wouldn't recommend this book.

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### Jean Perry says

#### Really boring

This book Reads like it was written by a 15 year old. It is so formulaic - man and woman meet, can't stand each other, fall into sex and they are in love. In between 3 people are killed.

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### Elizabeth says

3.5

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## **Darlene Williams says**

Frail Blood is loosely based on the murder trial of a young woman in Southern California, although the author states the characters and locales are solely products of her imagination.

Alma, a servant in the Machado household, is seduced by the youngest son, Joseph. A simple girl, Alma believes Joe loves her and will marry her after they become intimately involved. After she discovers Joe has discarded her for another woman, Alma is determined to make sure what Joseph did to her doesn't happen to another.

She straps on a pistol and confronts Joseph at the Machado house on an evening when she knows the family is out. She's not even sure why she brought the pistol, other than to maybe ensure Joseph listens to what she has to say.

As it turns out, she doesn't say anything but, rather, fires a single shot at Joseph. The last sight she sees is Joseph clutching his shoulder and falling. Overcome with fright and horror, she flees into the woods where she is later captured.

Malachi Rivers is Alma's defense attorney. A man with notorious past swirling around his relationship with his ex-wife and his abusive father, he resides in Placer Hills in the hopes of leading a quiet anonymous life.

Prosecution Attorney Charles Fulton, together with his band of protégés, is full of confidence his case against Alma is solid and she will hang for her crime.

Rivers and Fulton share a mutual dislike and actively antagonize each other at every opportunity.

Emma Knight is the new owner of the town's newspaper in partnership with her uncle. Emma scores a coup when Alma tells her she shot Joseph. Emma prints a damning article outlining Alma's confession. An article that makes Malachi's defence all the more difficult.

Malachi sends Emma a rather rude and condescending letter about a woman's place in the world and staying out of the realm of matters best left to men.

Emma is a fierce advocate for the equality between men and women and women's rights to independence. Her convictions are vexatious for her parents, who believe 6 months in Europe will bring Emma to her senses so she can be married off to a properly suitable gentleman. Emma is not enamoured by these plans or her parents' attempts to control her life.

After some persuasion from Emma's uncle, Malachi decides Emma is less detrimental to his case if she is actively involved in the defense. Up until now, she's only made a nuisance of herself in guise of a news reporter.

A professional agreement is made between Malachi and Emma that she will assist him with investigation of the murder. Despite butting heads on every issue regarding women's rights, a personal agreement quickly develops. A mutual desire for a more intimate relationship beckons.

Malachi balks at first. The last thing he wants is a committed relationship. He is scarred by his previous marriage. Emma is eager to explore the sensual side of life, believing she has as much right as a man to experience physical love. She leads Malachi to believe she is not unfamiliar with such matters when, in fact, she is a virgin.

Robertson's novel is billed as a "Historical Romance Thriller". "Romance" may be a bit of a misnomer as *Frail Blood* contains several detailed erotic scenes.

When it is revealed Joseph sustained 2 gunshot wounds, with the second a fatal shot through the heart, Malachi is still determined to defend his client on the basis she suffered an excess of feminine emotion when she shot Joseph.

Emma despises his tactics as an affront to equality and sets out to penetrate the mysterious Machado family. Her probing unveils a new definition of "dysfunctional family" and her life in danger.

Readers comfortable with erotic scenes will find *Frail Blood* an entertaining read. I do not recommend *Frail Blood* for readers sensitive to such content.

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### **Lindsay says**

Murder, romance, civil injustice, danger and a hidden family secret in early twentieth century California.

Alma Bentley was cast aside for another woman by the one man that made her feel beautiful and worthy of something more than a low bred legacy of poverty. One fateful night she straps a gun to her ankle and goes to confront Joe Machado, her Joe, and shoots him. No doubt she shot him, but is she the one that sent the fatal bullet through his chest? In a world where women have no power, her fate now lies in the hands of her attorney, Malachi Rivers and a jury of 12 men.

After Emma Knight, a privileged and educated newspaper journalist, publishes a damning article of confession from Alma, Malachi offers her a job working with him on the case to try and prevent her from doing any more damage to his case. Along the way Malachi and Emma fall in love while discovering and uncovering many secrets...secrets that might just change Alma's fate as well as their own.

*Frail Blood* is a very smart and well written book based loosely on a real court case. The story flips from Malachi to Emma's point of view throughout the book and offers us a look inside of what the life of a man and woman is in 1909. We also discover multiple secrets and taboo topics with a "twisted" ending! I would have loved if Roberston had given us a bit of a glimpse into the future of the characters at the end of the book, as I love a good HEA! It is described as a "historical thriller", but I would definitely add "romantic" to the beginning of that title. If you love a hot romance with a little history and intrigue, this is the book for you.

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<http://theindiebookshelf.blogspot.com...>

## **Shari Larsen says**

This is loosely based on a real murder trial that took place in California in 1909. Alma Bentley is on trial for the murder of her employer and lover, Joe Machado. Malachi Rivers is called upon to defend Alma, who is uneducated, naive, and clearly guilty. Newswoman Emma Knight is carefully following the trial, and Alma has also confided details about the murder to her. Emma and Malachi become partners to save Alma from herself, and as they investigate the crime, the two begin to fall for each other.

Amazon bills this as a "historical romance/ thriller"; I was disappointed though, that the story was so heavy on the romance (which was the "bodice ripping" style that I don't care for) and that there wasn't more to Alma's story. It did have some interesting twists and turns, but too much of the story was spent with Malachi constantly having to come to Emma's rescue after getting herself into unsafe situations.

Right now, this novel is only available an e-book.

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## **Bailey says**

Ah, so that's why this was free... I don't always put down a book never to pick it up again, but when I do you can be sure that it is a terrible book. Based on the description, I thought this was going to be an intriguing who-dunnit. It's based on a real court case from the turn of the last century for crying out loud! Instead, I found a hideous "romance" novel. And not one of those romances based on mutual respect and love. No, a romance novel based on trickery and lustng after his/her hot bod. Gah! What a disappointment!

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## **Scot says**

Okay, I like to read across a wide range of genres, and I teach classes sometimes that include the cultural analysis of romance fiction, so when I started to read this free book (it was promoted as "historical fiction") and realized there might be a romance subplot--or so I thought--I decided to persevere. I mean, I've read some combination historical/romance fiction that was actually quite compelling, making me care about the characters and making the earlier time and place come alive for me as I was pulled into the tale.

That didn't happen here. The author followed a rather basic outline for any churn-it-out formulaic romance tale (see the work on the power and use of such a formula written by Jan Radway in *Reading the Romance* thirty years ago). However, the behavior of the very shallow characters is generally not consistent, nor do logical prompts occur to trigger the erratic and sudden shifts of behavior from accepted upper middle class decorum in 1906 to ten or more pages in a row of hot man and women sex, graphically defined and exuberantly enjoyed, including lots of Anglo Saxon descriptions of body parts and exclamations by the multi-orgasming participants. I guess this is the sort of thing *Fifty Shades of Grey* hath wrought for contemporary mass market women's romance. I'm no prude--if you ladies enjoy this and it's what makes your reading meaningful, have at it, but the juxtaposition of pages and pages that could have been lifted from the *Penthouse Forum* with little spurts of plot advancement about a working class servant accused of murder in a secluded wealthy family home hiding lots of taboo secrets just didn't fit for me. I never really cared for the characters and it was easy to solve the mystery and predict how everything would go.

I read the book in part because I wanted to hear more about northern California in 1909 and it was touted as

"based on a true story." Historical, spelling, and logical inconsistencies also detracted from effectiveness. If you're going to set large parts of a story in Sacramento, learn the difference between capital and capitol. The great Woman Suffrage Parade in Washington occurred in 1913, so a character in 1909 shouldn't reflect on how it and subsequent forced feeding of American feminist hunger strikers influenced her. If a man in 1909 northern California already had a Picasso hanging in his living room (!) and the heroine recognized it because she had met and partied with Picasso when she herself had been in Paris (!!), don't you think the coincidence would at least come up in conversation? I guess they were just too busy getting it on and forgot. Ah, love. Finally, I think while it's very nice when everyone finds out one of the secondary characters is gay and it makes absolutely no difference to anyone but one bad guy we already hate, it just isn't realistic--like so much behavior here--for believable social interaction in 1909 California.

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### **Billie Copas says**

Fabulous book. Definitely a page-turner, and kept me guessing til the end. Very well written. Had a great time reading this, and I intend to see what else Jo Robertson has written. My only problem was the end.....I was hoping for a bit more detail on what happens next. But my imagination will suffice.

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### **Nae says**

So so ... it didn't start out too badly, and the actual plot line was interesting enough, but honestly, sometimes it felt like the author was being paid by just exactly how many 5-10 page sex scenes could be squashed into one book and still manage to toss a crumb trail of words to nudge the plot along now and then. It certainly helped me remember why I have never really been a fan of much of this genre. It just gets darned irritating to have to flip/scan through pages over and over to find the few points where the sex ends and the plot actually occurs.

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### **Catherine A Davis says**

#### **If stupidity drives you nuts, don't read this book. It was just awful.**

In my opinion, this book doesn't even deserve one star. There were many, many inconsistencies, and just downright stupidity. You might wonder why I bothered to finish the book. It was just such a train wreck, I had to stay on the tracks.

Spoiler alerts!

Heroine, Emma, is half owner of a newspaper, and is a reporter, with no actual experience. She professes to be an independent woman, however she is completely financially dependent on her parents and her uncle. Hero, Malachi, is an attorney who is representing an accused murderer, a woman named Alma. Emma is covering the case for her newspaper. Emma is woefully ignorant about the law, yet feels free to criticize and berate Malachi for both his handling of the case, and for his recommendation to have his client plead not guilty. Malachi is talked into hiring Emma to help him build his defense. The story falls further to pieces at this point.

1. Malachi tells Emma that women can expect to be sexually assaulted if they get the right to vote. Seriously,

he did!

2. Emma decides she wants Malachi for a lover. Okay, I have no problem with that. Their client had an illicit affair with the man she is accused of murdering. Emma condemns the client for her sexual behavior, yet apparently feels it is okay for herself to be involved in an illicit affair. Hypocritical much?

3. Things heat up. Emma attempts to seduce Malachi. When he resists, she convinces him that she is sexually experienced (when she's not) and that contraception is not a problem (when it is). Then, when he discovers the truth (after doing the deed, of course), she has the utter nerve to be angry at him. Why? Because he believed her lies. REALLY? He leaves angry, he had been up front in telling her that he did not intend to marry again. She is devastated because her first time was painful, it was awful, she was never going to have sex again. Yada, Yada, Yada.

4. Emma professes to be an advocate for helping women, yet she is remarkably unconcerned that her client is imprisoned in filthy conditions, is cold, and poorly fed. Yeah, she cares alright! At least Malachi got Alma an extra blanket.

5. After Emma is attacked, injured, and almost raped by two thugs (Malachi saves her, of course), she decides that sex is back on the table. Sure, that makes sense.....she had just had what I would assume would have been a traumatic experience, so it's only natural that she would want a repeat of the sexual act that had so worried her. Uh Huh, right? And as for Malachi, I guess he no longer worries about a pregnancy, or the impropriety of an affair. Huh.

6. During a discussion of the case Emma becomes angry at Malachi for debauching virgins. Once again, she is furious at him for giving her what she begged for. Seriously, all I could do was laugh at this point.

7. Emma once again demonstrates her supreme intelligence. Why doesn't Malachi recognize that she is ever so much smarter than he is? Malachi is worried for her safety, so he extracts her promise that she will be careful and do nothing that would put her at risk. But, as usual, she lied to him, she doesn't intend to keep her word. REALLY, should this surprise him at this point? She is convinced she has cracked the case so she goes to question and confront the alleged perpetrators. Zounds! She is imprisoned in the basement. Whatever will she do?

8. She's safe! Rescued by Malachi, of course. The true murderers have been exposed. And Alma? Free for the time being, she has decided to go to Sacramento to stay with her mother. And just why is that significant? Because according to Chapter 15, Alma's mother lives in town, on the docks. We found that out the night Emma was attacked.

Its finally over. Thank heavens.

I have never given a review this scathing before, and I hope I never will again.

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### **Helen says**

I really enjoyed this historical thriller set around 1909 great characters storyline and lots of suspense to go with th passion of a moder woman.

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