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Kristin Lavransdatter: The Bridal Wreath

Sigrid Undset · *1920 (English 1923) · translated by Charles Archer and J. S. Scott (1923)*

When the lands of Ivar Gjesling the younger were divided after his death in 1306, the lands in Sil of Gudbrandsdal fell to his daughter Ragnfrid and her husband Lavrans Björgulfsön. They settle at Jörundgaard, and their daughter Kristin is the subject of the book. The hosted text is Archer and Scott's 1923 English, Project Gutenberg #67929, The Bridal Wreath only—the first volume of the trilogy, complete as a volume, honestly labeled.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

What is asked of a daughter of a good house in fourteenth-century Norway when her will and her love run against her father's honor, and how should a school read this volume without pretending the later books are here?

"WHEN the lands and goods of Ivar Gjesling the younger, of Sundbu, were divided after his death in 1306, his lands in Sil of Gudbrandsdal fell to his daughter Ragnfrid and her husband Lavrans Björgulfsön."

Book One, Jörundgaard, opening

The Bridal Wreath is volume 1 of Kristin Lavransdatter. It runs from Kristin's childhood at Jörundgaard through the garland of her betrothal and to a close that still belongs to Lavrans and Ragnfrid. Faith, honor, sin, and a stubborn love are already at work. Teach the medieval Christian world as Undset wrote it. Keep Archer and Scott's forms: Jörundgaard, Lavrans Björgulfsön, Kristin. Do not speak as if The Mistress of Husaby or The Cross were in this file.

KEY CHARACTERS

Kristin Lavransdatter
The daughter of Jörundgaard, whose will and love are the volume's center

Lavrans Björgulfsön
Her father, a good man of the Dale, whose honor is one of the book's measures, and who sits silent with his wife at the volume's close

Ragnfrid
Her mother, daughter of Ivar Gjesling, who shares the last stillness with Lavrans

Erlend Nikulaussön of Husaby
The man of Kristin's love, already present in this volume, whose later story belongs in books not hosted here

A HOUSE IN THE DALE, AND A LONG STILLNESS

> *"WHEN the lands and goods of Ivar Gjesling the younger, of Sundbu, were divided after his death in 1306, his lands in Sil of Gudbrandsdal fell to his daughter Ragnfrid and her husband Lavrans Björgulfsön."*
>
> Book One, Jörundgaard

> *"And so they sat on, motionless, speaking no word more."*
>
> Book Three, close of this volume

Grades 10–12
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01

The Lands in Sil, 1306

BOOK ONE, JÖRUNDGAARD, OPENING

The volume opens with a division of lands after a death. Ragnfrid and Lavrans come to Jörundgaard. A daughter, Kristin, will be born into that house, and the quiet of the manor is the book's first weather.

- The first sentence is exact, including "WHEN" in capitals, "Gudbrandsdal," and "Björgulfsön"
- "But when they had settled at Jörundgaard they lived for the most part just as quietly there"
- Keep the place-names as printed; do not modernize umlauts away
- This is a Christian household in medieval Norway, not a costume drama only

> *"WHEN the lands and goods of Ivar Gjesling the younger, of Sundbu, were divided after his death in 1306, his lands in Sil of Gudbrandsdal fell to his daughter Ragnfrid and her husband Lavrans Björgulfsön."*
>
> Book One, Jörundgaard

02

Kristin's Childhood

BOOK ONE, JÖRUNDGAARD

Kristin grows at Jörundgaard under Lavrans's love and under the faith of the house. The early chapters give the valley, the manor, and a child's first knowledge of fear, beauty, and the Church.

- Lavrans's goodness is one of the book's measures; later conflict will be measured against it
- The medieval parish, the feasts, and the travel belong to this life; take them as Undset wrote them
- Teach the child's world first; the later will is stronger if the house is first known
- Book One of this volume is titled Jörundgaard in the 1923 contents

03

The Garland

BOOK TWO, THE GARLAND

Kristin's will and her love for Erlend Nikulaussön of Husaby come into the open. The bridal wreath of the title is honor, promise, and a costly choice, not a decoration only.

- Erlend appears first as a name of a fitting, and then as a living temptation and love
- The book is frank about desire and about sin; teach with tact, for older students, and without prurience
- Lavrans's honor and Kristin's will are the tension of this movement
- Keep "Nikulaussön" and "Husaby" as printed

04

Lavrans and Ragnfrid, at the Volume's Close

BOOK THREE, LAVRANS BJÖRGULFSÖN, THE LAST PAGES OF THIS FILE

This volume does not end on a wedding feast only. It ends with Lavrans and Ragnfrid, after hard words, sitting motionless, speaking no word more. The later volumes are not here.

- Lavrans says, "Mayhap mould must needs be ground, my Ragnfrid, before the meat can grow."
- He snatches his hand away, then takes one of her hands, and bows his face upon it
- "And so they sat on, motionless, speaking no word more."
- Do not narrate The Mistress of Husaby or The Cross as if they were in this hosted file

> *"And so they sat on, motionless, speaking no word more."*
>
> Book Three, close of The Bridal Wreath

05

Volume I Only, Archer and Scott 1923

PG #67929

The hosted text is The Bridal Wreath, the first volume only, in the 1923 English of Charles Archer and J. S. Scott, complete as a volume. Later books of the trilogy are not in this file.

- Label the work honestly: volume 1 of Kristin Lavransdatter
- Keep Archer and Scott's forms: JÖRUNDGAARD, Lavrans Björgulfsön, Kristin, Erlend Nikulaussön
- The book is a Christian historical novel of medieval Norway, for older students
- A transcriber's note in the file says there is no section number 7 in Book III; that is a fact about this text, not a gap you need to invent story for

A Father's Honor · A Daughter's Will · Faith · Sin and Mercy · A Medieval House · A Costly Love

What to watch for as you read

GRADES 10–12

1. The volume opens: "WHEN the lands and goods of Ivar Gjesling the younger, of Sundbu, were divided after his death in 1306, his lands in Sil of Gudbrandsdal fell to his daughter Ragnfrid and her husband Lavrans Björgulfsön." Keep "WHEN," "Jörundgaard," and "Björgulfsön."
2. This is The Bridal Wreath only—volume 1 of Kristin Lavransdatter—in Archer and Scott's 1923 English, PG #67929. Do not teach later volumes as if they were in this file.
3. The volume ends with Lavrans and Ragnfrid sitting motionless, "speaking no word more."
4. The book is frank about desire and sin. Teach with tact, for older students, in the Christian world Undset wrote.
5. The three books inside this volume are Jörundgaard, The Garland, and Lavrans Björgulfsön.

Quotations are verbatim from the translated by Charles Archer and J. S. Scott (1923), Project Gutenberg #67929, the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/undset-the-bridal-wreath/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.