

OSLO LITERARY AGENCY

Anne Karin Elstad



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Cover photo: Anne Karin Elstad, Aschehoug

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Aschehoug

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Photo: Aschehoug

2,5 million copies
sold worldwide

Anne Karin Elstad was born in Valsøyfjord in western Norway in 1938.

Beside her work as a teacher, Anne Karin was a member of the committee of the Norwegian Author's Union from 1983 to 1987, subsequently of Norsk Forfattersentrum, The Norwegian fiction writers' association.

"Elstad was to become Norway's most beloved author. After she made her debut in 1976 with *"The People at Innhaug"*, everything was turned upside down. For Anne Karin Elstad, for the family and for Norway's readers." writes author and biographer Hilde Hagerup.

The debut was followed by *Magret* (1977), *New Roots* (1979) and *Paths Meet* (1980). The series was immensely popular.

Both her historical and contemporary novels focus on women's lives at the point where tradition and independent choice intersect. They are realist in their form and have been translated into several languages.

Historical family chronicles

THE PEOPLE AT INNHAUG



Folket på Innhaug (1976), *Magret* (1977), *Nytt rotfeste* (1979), *Veiene møtes* (1980)
Aschehoug

In *The People at Innhaug*-series, Elstad tells the story of a mother and her daughter in the mid-1800s. Living in a small narrow-minded mountain village in Norway, the fact that the daughter is born outside of marriage makes them disdained and into outsiders.

With a detailed historical background, Elstad dramatise the life of a mother who gives up her social standing to protect her daughter. But above all this is the story of a young girl and her tragic encounter with love.

THE STORY OF JULIE

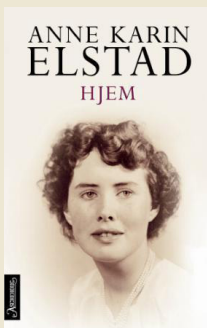
Julie (1993), *Som dine dager er* (1995), *Lenker* (1998), *Fri* (2000)
Aschehoug

A warm and touching story about Julie from a smallholding in the Northern West part of Norway. The story starts out in 1918, Julie is just at the beginning of adulthood. We follow her life after marriage at the farm Storvik. Life is characterized by everyday challenges and joy, but soon enough the war arrives bringing big consequences to the village and the family. Family life demands a lot from Julie, but at the age of 72 she finally gets the opportunity to follow her own dreams and wishes.



A novel of reminiscence

HOME



Hjem (2006)
Aschehoug

In *Home* we encounter Anne Karin for the first time as a four-year-old in the summer of 1942 at the Hestnes farm in the village of Valsøyfjord in western Norway. We follow her until the age of seventeen, vividly experiencing life on the farm and in the village.

Little Anne Karin is very attached to her siblings, parents and grandparents – perhaps particularly to her grandfather Nils who was a radical government politician for many years, but in his older days devotes his time to grandchildren, story-telling, and his beloved horses. A dramatic high point of the book is Anne Karin's portrayal of her mother's illness and subsequent death, and the consequences of this terrible loss for Anne Karin and her family. It is in this very setting Anne Karin Elstad has found much of the material for her novels. Her many readers can once again delight in her unmistakable style and her rich depictions of characters and their environment.

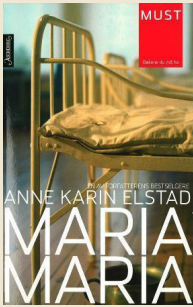
Contemporary novels

THE STORY OF LENA

Senere, Lena (1982), *Sitt eget liv* (1983)
Aschehoug

In these contemporary novels we follow Lena and Kjell from their days at University and further through their marriage filled with conflicts. They have three children and Lena is struggling with what she sees as a fake and unpleasant living. Burdened with guilt, she still manage to break out from the traditional life to form her own.

Later, Lena and *Her Own Life* describe women's liberation through the life of a modern female character.



MARIA, MARIA

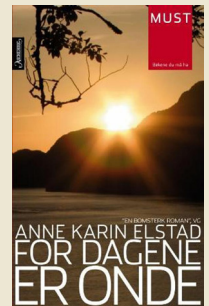
Maria, Maria (1982)
Aschehoug

Unexpectedly and suddenly, Maria suffers a stroke – after having taken oestrogen pills for a while, to help her through menopause. We follow her through the days of the first week; she can see, she can hear, but she cannot find the words. Gradually she starts sinking into herself. She relives long sequences from her childhood and youth. At the same time, she is fighting the anxiety and despondency.

BECAUSE THE DAYS ARE CRUEL

For dagene er onde (1985)
Aschehoug

This novel portrays Hildegunn, a middle aged woman who early on was a farmer's wife and mother. Her day consists of practical work, there is no time for other values. Robert, who has spent 50 years in America, comes back to the village where he grew up. Here, he is still the poor kid, like he was in his childhood. A relationship develops between the two. But suspicion and gossip flourishes in the village, spreading evil.



ALLODIUM

Odel (2003)
Aschehoug

Born in 1936, Tori is an only child and as such the heiress to the farm Lande. Her parents are deeply attached to the farm and have high hopes for their daughter. Tori, though, is a girl who knows her own mind, and the moment she meets Haldor Gislason she knows precisely what she wants.

The People at Innhaug

Anne Karin Elstad



Sample translation of the novel's opening
by Deborah Dawkin

The year is 1809.

Gjertrud, the mistress of Innhaug, sits on the front steps letting her thoughts wander. The May evening lies shimmering and smokey-blue over the mountain village. The farms hunch tar-brown and sunbaked on the gentle slopes down to the river that winds through the valley floor. The evening sky is still a pale red over the mountains in the west.

It has been a blessedly good spring. The May weather has been fine and mild, alternately rainy and sunny. A light drizzle over the last few days has hastened growth. Today brought bright sunshine, with the rich smell of black earth and sheer green. The new-sown arable fields stand out like black squares, framed by new-sprung birch and pasture. Pray God it lasts, and that He keep the village safe from the frost-nights. Famine and crop failure are no strangers up here. Here a mistress must learn how to mix her flour. Moss and bark must be snuck in with the grain, and even then it's never certain if there will be enough for the kitchen.

Answering the tithes to the church and authorities is another hardship. This has been worse than ever, the repercussions of the war are felt up here too. It was awful last year. The bailiff's men came and commandeered grain to provide food for the army.

They noticed its effects in these parts as the winter closed in. It was worst in the cotters' cottages where starvation was a daily guest. The children suffered most, and many a small coffin was driven to the cemetery that winter. Nor did the larger farms escape lightly. Here too, the flour was more bark than grain. But it is the taxes that are a scourge on the farm owners. Not everyone can pay their dues, and ancestral farms are occasionally lost as a result.

Folk mutter and talk of rebellion, but that's as far as it goes.

Every ounce of strength goes into this one thing; to get enough food. So, when absolute necessity knocks at the door, it is a desperate householder that takes from the seed-grain, from the sacred sanctum. Many a mistress and her husband have stood beside these precious barrels. Carefully they have scooped up the golden God-given seed, while their tears have dripped and left dark

stains over the rattling, living surface of the grain. A mistress prefers not to go alone to the bushel of seed-grain that first sad time. She wants her husband at her side. But whenever she goes thereafter, her feet feel as heavy as lead. She clasps her hands and asks the Heavenly Father to be merciful so they may have enough seed for the next harvest too.

Midway in the valley, where the river flows in a wide bend, lies Innhaug, one of the finest and best-kept farms in the village. The low, brown farmhouse buildings line the yard, the fields and meadows are new-sown and neatly tended. You can see that the master's household are energetic and skilled, no tools or clutter lie thrown about the place, and the buildings have not been allowed to fall into disrepair.

They have felt the lean year here too, but the master, Ole Bårdsson, is prudent and foresightful, and Gjertrud, the mistress keeps a firm hand on the stores and the workers. Both are held in affection by the folk here on the farm, never indulging in better fare than their workers. Innhaug is a good place to serve. Gjertrud and Ole were also forced to go to their barrels of seed-grain, but thanks be to God, there aren't many children on the farm. Their oldest son Bård and his wife Karen have one little boy, Ole, a year old this spring. Karen is heavy with child again, and Gjertrud makes sure that she and the boy get the best tidbits. But she is strict about the bark-bread for the rest of the household.

She managed to put some of their seed-grain aside, but not enough. As it happens the pastor follows the authorities' instructions to supplement the local grain-store from the parish's tithe grain. There's some Danish grain too, though barely any. The English intercept it at sea. About which they've heard awful rumours. From these grain-stores farm owners can buy some grain back as seed. Like others Ole had to do this, which was how they got enough seed to sow at Innhaug this year. He was one of the lucky ones. Many of the farmers up here had to go all the way to Trondheim in the hope of getting some from the grain-stores there. Some were helped, but many came home empty-handed.

Ole also bought a couple of barrels of seed-potatoes from the pastor. There's still an unwill-

lingness to grow potatoes here, but Ole has tried it, and got a generous return. Misfortune hit when his crop froze after being stored out in the *stabbur*. This year he will follow the pastor's advice and dig out a cellar west of the *stabbur*. He has made a start, with Bård's excellent help. At least the planting is all done now, and the signs are good for the year. Now it's just to put everything into the hands of the Almighty.

Yesterday Gjertrud stood in the yard, her gaze following Ole as he sowed the final patch of field. Solemnly he removed his cap and placed it on the verge. With head bowed he went out into the black soil. The grain floated out in a bright yellow fan from his hand, whilst the wooden tub rested safe and firm in the crook of his other arm. Like a warm stream, she felt how dear he was to her. They have three grownup children together, but she loves him as much as when they first tied the knot.

Gjertrud came from the Gjerde farmstead in Oppdal. Her paternal grandmother had married into Gjerde from Innhaug. Thus her father and Old-Bård were first cousins. A fact that was doubtless in Old-Bård's mind when he sent the young Ole to Gjerde as a farmhand one year. But no persuasion was required when it came to a wedding between Gjertrud and Ole. The two of them were instantly devoted. "If ye came from the lowliest cotter's hut, I'd 'ave taken ye," she remembers Ole saying. Gjertrud thanks God for making life so good for her. Coming to Innhaug was like coming home. Yet they had not escaped all misfortune and hard times. They had lost four children, so that only three were left to grow up. But whenever misfortune visited, they could go to one another to find courage and strength. She knows this isn't so for everyone. As when both their sons were called up to war last year. It was the Swedes again, and they had to go to the border near Røros. Karen, who had a new baby then, constantly went about with red eyes. Gjertrud barely felt any better, but was careful not to show it to the others on the farm. But in bed at night she shared her anxiety with Ole, and he held her tightly and gave her comfort and calm. It is said that she is the stronger of the two, but she knows it is he who gives her strength.

Both sons came home safely, having seen

almost nothing, they said, of any Swede. It was irksome to waste time on such nonsense. They sent Hans to Oppdal where he was given employment by her brother. Hans is twenty-two, and a fine strapping lad. He was glad of the chance to go away, despite being more home-loving than most. "I canna' stay here all my days like an old door-stop," he said. Now they're expecting him home very soon, and Gjertrud can feel that she's missed him.

It's good to sit here, feeling the sense of peace steal into her. The evening's work is done, and it is quiet in the yard and house. Ole crosses the yard with a scythe on his arm. She remembers that he'd mentioned something about some clumps of grass that were spoiling the verge of the new field. He's probably been on a quick trip to cut them back. He hangs the scythe on a hook near the barn door, everything must be in its place. Then she sees that he is bleeding from the palm of his hand. She leaps up. "Have ye hurt yourself, Ole?"

He sweeps her aside. "Do na' go upsettin' yerself. My scythe slipped and I got a small scratch. Just ye sit calmly a while, then we two shall go out and see the field."

She has to smile. He's always been proud like that. He goes in, and when he comes out again she sees that he's wrapped a rag round his hand. She neatens and secures the bandage, and together they set out toward the field. The evening is still light, and filled with the fragrance of tilled earth and spring, and slowly they make their rounds of the newly sown fields. A moment of solemn celebration.

They have done this each spring from the day they took over the farm. They stop at the last the last strip, bow their heads and clasp their hands. Slowly Ole recites the Our Father. A slight tremble in his voice when he comes to - give us this Day our Daily Bread.

Neither utters a word as they walk back to the house.

Ole makes his usual round of the stable. The last thing he does before settling for the night is to see to the horses, just as it's the first he does as soon as he's dressed in the morning. Gjertrud ensures that the outhouses and *stabbur* are securely locked, then tends to the fires in the cookhouse

and kitchen, and now all Innhaug's folk can allow themselves to rest.

Every night they recite the Our Father before going to bed, but on this night their celebratory moment out in the fields has followed them. Ole brings a candle into their chamber, places it on a little table, and he and Gjertrud take their places on either side. He has the home book of sermons, and slowly and clumsily he reads out an evening prayer:

"Oh Lord, I give myself unto You with Body and Soul on this coming Night. Let your Holy Angels gather about me, let Satan do nothing against me, Let me not be plagued by troubling Dreams nor wake in Terror. Let me rest in your lap like your child, so that when I sleep, I may sleep in the Lord, when I wake, I may wake in the Lord, and when I rise, I may rise in the Lord. Oh, God; Do not leave me or deny me your Help, restore me with your Comfort, be close in my Need. Where shall I flee, where shall I find Shelter and Protection from Satan's deceitful arrows, if not with You my God? Hide me beneath the Shadow of your Wings. God protect all who rule and counsel us, God bless our People and our Land, that we may all live with Joy and Peace in our Dwellings, bless our Sweat and Toil, our Bread and Sustenance, the Labours of our Hands. Lord protect us from a bloody Sword and a hasty Death, from the Perils of Hunger, from the wastes of fire and water and all other Evil. Oh, merciful God, Loving Father, guard my Spouse, my Children, my Kin and my Friends and all those who are dear to me this night from all evil and hardship and sorrow. Your Peace be upon us all, wherever we may be Watch over my House and Home like the Watchmen of Israel who neither sleep nor slumber, and ward off all Plagues and Misfortune. O Lord, Comfort all those who need your Comfort, Help all those who need your Help, Counsel all those who need your Counsel, and finally let your Mercy be known, and may your Strength lift those who stumble upon the Path. O Lord, hear my prayer and every Child of God who cries out to you, and let us never lack your Help in our Need. The day is now over, and no Evil has befallen me, so I thank you for all that is Good, and I ask you, as a Child asks his dear Father, do not forsake me, nor wander far from me, and if Hardship

should come, Lord, you who are my Salvation, hasten to help me, and at the last, when Death is at hand, grant me a Blessed departure from this World through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever, Amen."

"Amen," says Gjertrud quietly.

Silent and filled with peace they go to bed.

Gjertrud lies awake for a while. She can hear Ole is asleep from his steady breathing. He always sleeps so blessedly quickly and deeply. Whereas she lets her mind wander for a while before she drifts off. She has so many people to consider. No doubt Bård and Karen assume they'll be taking over the farm soon. But Ole and she are still healthy and in their prime. Hans and Oline are unmarried dependants, although Hans has been talking about a girl over in Oppdal. That is her wish; that he should find a wife in her home-village. Oline who is now nineteen summers old is marriageable too, but she and Ole haven't given it any real thought yet. Oline has grown seriously beautiful. They say Knut Ås has an eye for her. Yes, these children of hers are all growing up. But she wants to wait until Oline is married before passing the storehouse keys to her daughter-in-law. Karen is capable, but a rather caustic and difficult individual. She doesn't seem to like Oline. Is it because Oline is more beautiful than her? Ah well, poor thing, she'll soon have her second child, and she's barely finished nursing the first. It can't be easy.

Gjertrud smiles in the dark as she thinks about Oline. She's so beautiful, gentle and amiable, but stubborn too when she wants. Like her father Ole, and his sister Magret, who rattles about here on the farm. Magret was kicked by a horse when she was a girl, and has a terrible limp. So she never wanted to go out with the other youngsters, and remained here a spinster. She's like a sister more than anything, and a great help. She and Gjertrud have been known to clash on occasion, but things always work out; she's a delight and an asset, Aunt Magret.

Bufersdag is fast approaching, the day when they will drive the cows up to the summer meadows and *seter*, and it is Magret who rules up there. No doubt Oline will join her again this year,

it does the child good. May God be their protection and guide.

The sun does not have to travel high in the East before the Innhaug household begins to stir. Gjertrud wakes to find Ole up and fully dressed.

"God bless this day," he says, already heading out.

"God bless this day, husband."

Gjertrud shivers a little as she steps onto the cold floor. The nights are still chilly, but they have escaped the frost, thanks be to God. As always Gjertrud is first in the kitchen. She rakes through the ashes in the hearth, adds a few kindling sticks, kneels down and blows until the embers catch light and flare up. She adds some small logs and ensures they take proper fire. Then she goes to wake the other womenfolk. The maids sleep in the loft close to the staircase. There are three of them here at Innhaug this year. Further inside the loft are Magret and Oline. Magret is already dressed, but Oline is difficult to rouse. Her mother has to shake her and nag her before she throws off her bedclothes. The maids are used to obeying their mistress and come shivering out of their beds. Gjertrud and the house-maid set the long table with food. Soured milk in a large wooden dish, a crock of cold potatoes, a couple of flatbreads and a platter of salt herring.

Magret and Oline and the two maids who help with the cows go to the table first. They clap their hands, mumble Jesus's name, and after taking a quick bite go out to the cowshed.

Ugh, Oline is lethargic and tired. Food doesn't taste good this early in the day. Nor is she too keen on these early morning duties in the cowshed. But her mother is strict, so she must do as she's told. She must force down a little food, or she'll be nauseous from the powerful morning stench of the cowshed.

The maids have to clean behind the cows. At the end of the manure gutter is a hatch on the wall. They have to ease the muck out through this. Not light work, but nonetheless regarded as women's work. Oline goes up on the shelf and sweeps some cuttings and hay into a tub. She scatters this behind the cows, instantly making the shed feel more pleasant. The fodder is less impressive. There's little to give to the cows now, last year's

leaves, straw and moss. Those in most need, get a warm drink mixed with bits of silage, the final leftovers scraped together.

Magret grieves over these scrawny cows. They'll soon be taken up to the *seter*, even though the rough grasslands are still sparse. A good thing it's a relatively early spring, so they won't have to slaughter any of the herd. It's worse on many other farms in the village. Magret seethe when she thinks about the old wives round here. Many are so pigheadedly vain that they insist on keeping bigger herds than they have feed for. On some farms the cows are so scrawny and weak that they have to be propped up and dragged from the cowshed in the spring. They totter about the meadows for days before their legs can carry them properly. And they can easily succumb to illness when they're so frail.

Smaller livestock manage better over winter. Their feed can be supplemented with branches of alder and aspen, the bark of which they can gnaw. It's gone well with the sheep this year. They've been out for a few weeks already, and only a couple of lambs have been lost. The goats are out too, and their kids are adept now at nibbling the grass and new shoots on smaller shrubs. But for now, until they get the cows up to the *seter*, the sheep and goats must be chased home to the farm each evening. A local girl and boy have their hands full with herding them during the day. The lambs and kids haven't the wits to look after themselves yet, and there are plenty of foxes around the farm this year. If a lamb or kid gambles off from its mother, they'll be quick to move in.

Oline and Magret ensure the cows get their feed. The maids have to carry water in from the troughs in the yard. It takes time for them all to have their share, so the milking can start, the most pleasurable task. The maids go to the goatshed, where twenty goats need milking. Magret and Oline milk the cows. There are twelve cows here in their stalls. However miserable things are, the milk is always plentiful. Most of the cows are spring-born, and they will go up to the mountains. The two or three that were autumn-born will stay as home-cows. They always offer up a splash so there's fresh milk for the folk here at home over the summer.

Oline enjoys work in the cowshed when she's finally on her milking stool. It's good to sit like that, with your forehead against the cow's warm flank, letting your thoughts wander, while the milk goes in warm streams down into the pail. It's good to be human then.

In the stable Ole has finished his morning's work. He has fed and groomed the horses. There are two horses on the farm, one large brown gelding and a chestnut stallion with a flaxen mane. The horses are fine and well kept, and a vital asset. Without horses they would be helpless, which is why Ole prefers to look after them himself. The flaxen-maned chestnut is a superlative stallion, and it's not always easy to handle. Ole, or at a push Bård or Tolleiv Plassen, the oldest of the young farmhands, have best control of it. It's docile with Ole, but Bård and Tolleiv have to show it who's master occasionally. The brown gelding is gentle and good-natured, and can safely be left in a woman's charge, though it's big and strong. Most of the farms round here keep stallions and large geldings. If horses meet wild animals in the open countryside, they can only hold their own if they're big and strong. Mares and foals are a lot of trouble, and have to be looked after all the time. Only a couple of farms have breeding dams, and Ole's flaxen-maned stallion has many fine offspring up here in the valley.

With the early morning cowshed duties done, the maids help the young shepherds chase the sheep and goats out onto the rough grazing.

Indoors the rest of the farm folk are gathered around the long table. At the end is Ole, with Gjertrud and Bård next to him. Karen has come in to join the table too. She has Little-Ola on her lap, soaks flatbread in a bowl of milk and gives it to him. Karen is due to give birth this summer, so she gets to stay in bed a little later in the morning. She's so delicate when she's carrying, although last time she went into labour, it went so fast they barely knew what was happening before the boy arrived. Pray God it goes as easily this time. Magret is the most skilled at the birthing-bed, but she is likely to be up at the *seter* when this baby arrives. Well, the other womenfolk will have to get by. Karen sits in the loom room for most of the day now. The little boy who plays at her skirts doesn't give her much peace, and she doesn't get much done.

Which *certainly* can't be said of everyone.

They sit around the table in customary silence. When everybody's finished, Ole gives thanks for the food in Jesus' name. Then he tells them what he wants done that day. The sowing may be finished, but now the tools and equipment must be checked over and repaired. Finally he and Bård agree to take the cows up to the *seter* the next day.

"Thanks be, from both me 'n' the cows," sighs Magret.

Soon everyone is at work, indoors and out.

Life flows steadily and calmly on as May approaches its end. Karen sits in the loom room for most of the day. Now and then she takes Little-Ola out with her to toddle about the yard. He's still not able to take many steps, and spends much of the time falling over. But it's fun to romp about outside. He takes a nap in middle of the day, then she gets the peace to sit at the loom, and the peace to think. She knows how lucky she is, as the future mistress of Innhaug. She was the envy of many on the day she walked up the aisle with Bård. He is well-built and good-looking, like the rest of the Innhaug family. And warm and sociable like them too, but without the obstinate streak Oline and Hans possess. He prefers a quiet life himself, and knows how to pacify Karen when she gets sharp-tongued now and then. The fact is, he wasn't the man she wanted most, and she probably hasn't always been the wife she should be. Yet she sometimes feels a genuine warmth for him. He often pops into the loom room to see her and the boy. Little-Ola giggles with delight as his father waltzes around the floor with him. Then she wants to take them both in her arms. She feels an intense and grateful love for this child, is grateful that he survived the winter, and is sure she'll come to feel a grateful love towards the man who is his father too.

She feels safe with Bård. Without him she would feel like a stranger here on the farm. She had time enough to notice this when he was called out against the Swedes this spring. Had he stayed then, she would have seen it as a curse.

The open, lightheartedness of Oline, and the calm strength of the other two women on the farm, terrify her.

Nonetheless, she has had good days here with Bård. But she's had difficulties getting used to the marital bed with him. He is so boorish, takes her whenever he wants. She no longer protests, however tired or worn out she is. He is, of course, entitled to this as a man. But she has a notion that this should be something for her as well. If only he could show her a little tenderness. She knows it's unfair of her to think like this, for she never doubts that he loves her. She sees how his eyes smoulder when he looks at her. And she too can feel hot and desirous, but it can never be as she wants. He lies in bed waiting eagerly as she gets undressed.

"Hurry Karen, I am mad for ye."

She should probably be thankful for this, but she just feels extinguished each time. Then he takes her roughly and quickly, as always. Afterwards he is pleased and satisfied, and sleeps next to her, sweaty and warm.

Meanwhile, she lies awake with a disturbing frost inside her, aching with emptiness and disappointment. If only she could talk to him about it. But she can't talk to a man about such things, and wouldn't know what to say to make him understand.

She knows it's bad to think it; but it's almost a relief that she's so far gone with child. He can't touch her in that way any longer. But Bård is young and has strong feelings. She can see what a torment it is for him to avoid her in bed. Then sometimes he begs her to help him. At first she didn't understand what he meant. Stuttering, he tried to explain to her how menfolk can feel, and she did what he asked of her. She can still feel the nausea and terror she felt then. It seems worse than anything she has ever done. She has forced herself a few times to satisfy him like this, but her insides have screamed with distaste. She felt the revulsion go through her in warm waves, making her sweat and feel as though she was being choked. Afterwards he held her tight to him, and mumbled a shy goodnight before he fell heavily asleep. And she lay on the extreme wooden ledge of the bed, her whole body stiff and tense, heart pounding, and feeling so desperate that all she wanted was to hide. Escape the sweaty body besi-

de her, as though he were a monster.

Last time it happened she cracked. When he was done, he said:

"Thank ye Karen for being so kind to me."

Unable to take more, she began to cry. She cried and cried, thrashed about until he became very frightened. In the end he rocked her in his arms until she calmed down.

"I did na' think it was so bad for ye," he said sadly. "It shall ne'er happen again."

He turned his back and said good night.

Then she lay there and cried until there were no more tears left, and she felt she could never rise again. She cried for Bård, and she cried for herself.

It is a heavy burden to bear. And there's nobody she can talk to about such things. Guilt and despair eat away at her. And she knows that the guilt is hers too. She plays an act when she lies together with Bård. Pray God, he's not noticed. He's too good, and besides she's always tried to make it nice for him. That's what helped keep her spirits up. Now she promises herself that she will try and try again. She has seen a glimpse of the little boy in Bård, and it has touched her. But what he's asked of her lately, no, she can't bring herself to do that.

The greatest sin is what she does when she lies awake beside Bård. She conjures up the image of *him*, of the man she'd have preferred. Knut, the son from the other of the Ås farms where she grew up. He's a couple of years older than her, and from when she was small and the kids from the Ås-farms played and larked about together, she hung around him. When they grew up, and there were dances in the summer or at gatherings, he probably didn't dance any more with her than the others. That was just something she believed because she wanted to believe it.

He was always so jokey and lighthearted, was Knut.

"Now I shall dance with the beautiful-Karen," he might say, sweeping her along with him. Nobody else called her that, and Karen hoped they'd be a couple, though he never said anything.

Then her father began talking about Innhaug's eldest son. Karen knew Bård. He was well-built and good-looking, and the girls cast

longing looks at him. But Karen only had eyes for Knut whenever the young folk met up. Now that her father kept mentioning him, it struck her that Bård had danced with her rather a lot. She told her father that there was no rush, she was only eighteen summers old. She hoped that Knut would stop fooling around one day, and that she could be his beautiful-Karen for real.

But it wasn't to be. Her blood still rises when she thinks of the wedding of Mons, Knut's eldest brother. Oline Innhaug had just turned sixteen, old enough to join in the dance. Knut saw only her. Danced with her so much folk began to talk. And to Karen, he didn't offer a single dance. Oline, who had grown unbelievably beautiful, radiated towards Knut with happiness at being included in the grownups' game. Karen could see she was driving Knut wild. And when he drew Oline after him behind a low wall in the barn, Karen crept after them.

"So beautiful ye are, Oline, ye drive me wild," she heard Knut say.

Then she heard Oline's rippling laughter. "Are ye mad, Knut."

Karen just managed to hide herself behind a cart standing there, before Oline slipped out with Knut trotting after her.

Red spots danced before Karen's eyes.

"Bård," she thought to herself. "Save me, Bård."

Then she threw herself out into the dance with Bård, demonstratively skittish. Locked her arms about him in the round-dance, and laughed up at him. She saw how happy this made him, red blotches spread over his neck and jowls, and his eyes smouldered dark towards her.

Ole Innhaug and her father were standing together in the doorway, watching the dance unfold. She could see they were nodding and looked pleased.

The loom stops. Karen is back at the dance in the Ås barn. She puts her head in her hands and relives the whole thing. - Later that night Bård tries to pull her after him into a dark corner of the barn, and she doesn't resist. He settles into a pile of hay and draws her down towards him. Tentatively he caresses her neck. She sneaks up close to him and he kisses her, harder when he sees she is willing. He lies over her there in the

hay barn, and she lets him go as far as is possible without her shaming herself completely. She knows has driven him far enough when she hears his heavy breathing, and hears him mumble again and again:

"I am wild for ye, Karen."

She feels his body hard against hers and grows scared.

"Nay. Control yourself Bård. We canna' yet."

He gets up, his breath quaking.

"Ye must know I want ye, Karen?"

"And happen it shall be, Bård."

For a long time he stands there holding her tight. Then they brush the bits of straw off each other, and sneak out. Both aware that they must cool down before they go in to the others.

This is all your fault Knut, she thinks.

But as she dances with Bård that night, she feels herself burn up whenever she remembers his hard body against hers, and now it is she who flushes red as she stares up at him. Later she looks away whenever Knut dances past with Oline. She could have spared herself the trouble. Knut sees nobody but the daughter of Innhaug this evening.

Before Karen goes home, she sees with relief that Oline sits in the carriage with all the other folk from Innhaug when they drive off home.

As she drifts asleep, two faces flicker before her, Bård and Knut, and she moans in her slumbers.

Karen sighs. It's a *lifetime* since this happened, or so it feels now. Bård was not slow in coming with a witness to ask for her hand, and a festive beer and wedding followed. On her wedding day she forced herself to push away any thought of Knut, and she was proud to have got such a strapping husband as Bård.

It was when things turned out as they did in the matrimonial bed, that she began to conjure up the image of Knut at night. Like a criminal she lies there and excites herself and makes herself burn for another, while her husband sleeps at her side.

At times she dreams of Knut, dreams of lying shamefully together with him, and she can be woken by something happening to her body, it's as though she might burst. Then she cries in despair about this unknown something, and be-

cause it can never happen when she lies together with Bård.

She can lie awake for hours afterwards, while her guilt lies over her like an incubus. She knows very well that this is a deadly sin. She is committing "adultery in her heart". The commandments whirr about in her head, and she goes cold with terror. Had these thoughts been beyond her control, the sin would not be so great. But she conjures the image of Knut wilfully. The sin is so great that it opens an abyss. And it is a double sin that she doesn't try to give more of herself to *him* with whom she is bound before God and man. All this is wearing her down.

When morning comes, the night feels like an unreality. As Bård smiles at her with: "God bless this day."

And as Little-Ola prattles away and wants his cuddles. She is as ashamed as a dog.

Sometimes she feels that pride and anger at being rejected are perhaps to blame here, and if she is honest with herself, she knows Bård is much more a man than Knut.

She must hold out, and deep inside she knows that the day she gives way to Bård, they might just be happy together. But there's a long way to go, so it seems.

And then there is Oline, for whom she harbours such bitterness. She knows that Oline looked forward to having a sister-in-law of a similar age to herself, and must find it hard to understand why Karen is so churlish and cold. Gjertrud assumes it's because Karen has been with child for most of her time on the farm. Let them go on thinking that.

She sincerely hopes that Oline and Knut won't get together, that would be hard for her to endure. She feels she can be friends with Oline, but to have Knut in the family, that would be too much. She knows he's been sneaking around here on Saturday nights, but Oline shares a loft space with Magret in the main house, and she hasn't yet nagged to sleep in the outhouse loft. So maybe she isn't that keen on him.

Karen knows that she must come to her senses. She is fond of Bård in her way, and soon they will have two children together. She must battle through this, and show willing to please him when she gets her health back after the birth

of this forthcoming child.

All this is so wearing for Karen, together with feeling poorly with the baby she's carrying, that she gets ill-tempered and difficult. Which is why she is happiest here in the loom room, pleased not to have to go up with the other womenfolk. Gjertrud and the others show her such kindness, that she feels even worse. And Oline is a constant reminder of the man she wants to be rid of. That's why she's so pleased that Oline will go up to the *seter*. She must use the summer well, and try to be nicer to Oline when she returns to the farm this autumn.

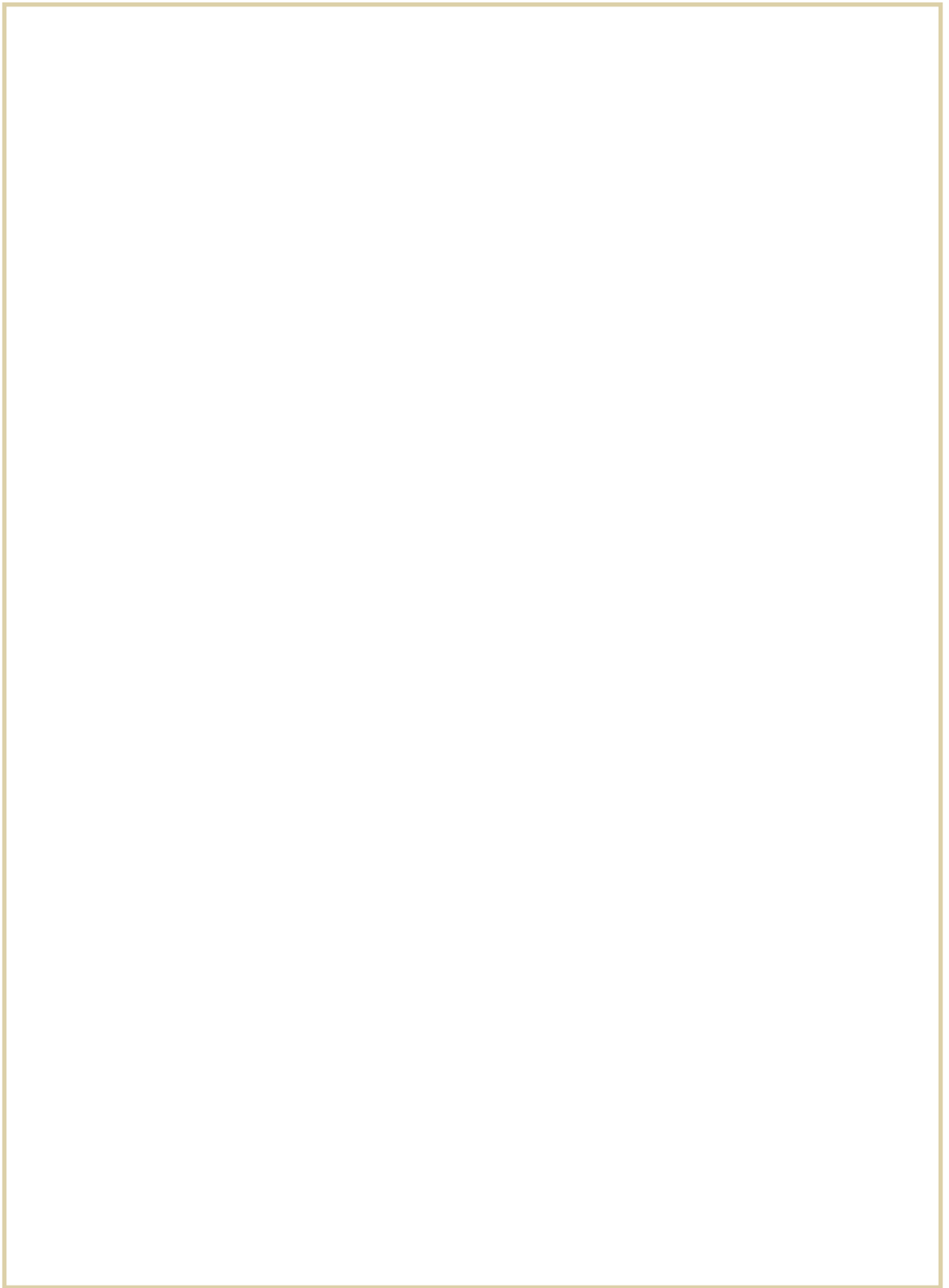
Bård is not altogether happy these days either. He can't forget the way Karen cried here the other night. He has clearly behaved like an oaf and scared her off. And he feels ashamed. But he knows that wives help their husbands like this. He fails to see how it can be that bad. He felt a bit awkward and shy afterwards, but was so grateful and happy. Then she behaved as though he'd tried to kill her. Surely it was better than if he'd slept with the maids? He knows of many men who find their way to the maids' loft when their wives are with child, and the torment gets too much.

Truth is, no one could make him wild like Karen. She may not be a great beauty, but she has a trim little body. Her red-gold hair lies in bubbly curls over her brow. She has a sprinkling of freckles on her nose, and her eyes are bright blue, with thick dark lashes. For him she is the most beautiful woman imaginable. And now he has scared her away. He is hurt and angry with her and himself. He knows that womenfolk are difficult when they're with child, but it's *certainly* not easy to be a man either.

Sometimes he wakes up at night and feels her soft hair on his face, smells her fragrance, and is filled with such desire for her that it's like a torture. And now to make matters worse, she has made him feel ashamed too.

"Oh hell." He kicks at a tuft of grass. "And hell again."

Thus they each have their own thoughts and sorrows, but they shall soon have other things to think about, all of them.



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