

# Till We Meet Again Short Guide

## Till We Meet Again by Judith Krantz

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# Characters

Eve Coudert de Lancel, Delphine de Lancel Sadowski, and Marie-Frederique de Lancel Longbridge Hampton are typical Judith Krantz heroines. Spectacularly beautiful and talented, larger than life, each in her own way rejects her background of affluence and privilege, overcomes social, financial, or physical obstacles, and achieves a position of power as part of an extremely glamorous lifestyle. In short, the de Lancel women live every woman's romantic fantasy, and at age thirteen, Freddy's daughter Annie, who manifests the same daring and independence of spirit, seems poised to repeat the family pattern.

Interestingly, Krantz's less important female characters, though sometimes foolish or weak, rarely seem to be truly evil; villainy appears the almost exclusive province of dissolute male characters, and the novel's one deceitful woman, Marquise de Saint-Fraycourt, could be said to have been corrupted by her husband. Insofar as they affect the plot, the minor female characters provide support for the heroines. Each of the de Lancel women has one close woman friend whose actions change the course of her life. In Paris, Eve meets Vivianne de Biron, a retired music hall performer who comes to her rescue at a desperate moment, arranging her audition at the Olympia Theater and initially managing her career.

In Los Angeles, Margie Hall introduces Delphine to the older men who take the two of them to gambling establishments; and, although Margie actually proves to be the more conventional of the two, eliminating her influence is Paul's reason for sending his daughter to stay with her grandmother in Champagne.

Through the Honorable Jane Longbridge of Longbridge Grange, her roommate in the Air Transport Auxiliary, Freddy meets her first husband, Jane's brother Antony. Later, Jane's assertion that Jock Hampton has always been in love with Freddy is the catalyst for their reunion and subsequent marriage. Judith Krantz's significant male characters are unfailingly handsome and accomplished, and most also occupy positions of wealth or prestige. Invariably they are passionate and skillful lovers, but the degree of their concern for the feelings of their sexual partners is one reliable indicator of their nobility.

The shallowness and superficiality of Alain Marais are shown when he copies Harry Fragson's music hall act, and when he anticipates Eve's sexual initiation almost exclusively in terms of his own pleasure. Likewise, Bruno de Lancel, the novel's villain, is interested only in his own gratification; so it is not surprising when he betrays his family and his country for personal gain. As a young boy he prefers sex with older women who are more easily manipulated, and even his one great passion for Marie de Rochefoucauld is actually an obsession to possess one whom he cannot easily control.

In contrast, Krantz's heroes immediately fall overwhelmingly and unselfishly in love. Vicomte Paul-Sebastian de Lancel loves Eve from the first moment he sees her in the bombed-out farmhouse, though his behavior at that time does not even suggest his love. As soon as World War I ends, however, he returns to Paris and proposes



marriage. Likewise, Jock Hampton falls in love with Freddy when she lifts her wedding veil and he sees her face for the first time, but he is too honorable to declare his love until he believes she has had time to recover from her divorce.

Armand Sadowski too eventually acknowledges that he has loved Delphine since their first interview, but — recognizing her need to be the pursuer in a romantic relationship — he initially feigns indifference. Even in the cases of Antony Longbridge and Terence McGuire, who cannot match the force of Freddy's personality, their immediate and overwhelming attraction to her indicates the sincerity of their passion, and each is to some degree unselfish in choosing to leave Freddy.

Also characteristic of Krantz's heroes is their need for adventure and their dedication to a cause; in fact, they are warriors first and lovers second. For example, not only does Paul de Lancel delay his courtship of Eve until he has completed his wartime duties, but at the beginning of the war, he feels obligated to enlist for military service even though his young wife, Laure de SaintFraycourt, is pregnant. Her death in childbirth moves him to postpone all other such commitments until the war's end; his enlistment is also the cause of lifelong hostility on the part of his son and his former in-laws. Armand Sadowski shows similar qualities of patriotism, choosing to remain in France and join first the French army and later the Resistance. Tony Longbridge and Jock Hampton are aces of the Eagle Squadron in World War II, while thirst for adventure leads Terence McGuire to volunteer for heroic service in Canadian units of the RAF, as a pilot in World War I and as an instructor in World War II.



## Social Concerns/Themes

Till We Meet Again spans the period of the two world wars, and the issues surrounding the wars are a major thematic concern. Krantz portrays the folly of diplomats, as their maneuvering plunges Europe into a conflict that destroys the Edwardian world. As the singer Maddy, Eve Coudert also sees the monotony, futility, and horror of war, while entertaining the troops.

At the outset of World War II, Delphine illustrates the naivete and pride of the French, refusing to acknowledge the menace of Hitler or the vulnerability of the Maginot Line. Bruno, Paul's son by his first marriage, displays a covert anti-Semitism and the greed of the speculating bankers. Although cynically aware that Chamberlain's concessions are dooming Europe to another great war, Bruno half-admires Hitler, and to gain money and status, he collaborates with the Nazis.

Like all of Judith Krantz's novels, Till We Meet Again offers a web of romantic alliances, but this novel is also a social history of the twentieth century. A major subject is the increasing importance of air travel. Early in the novel, Eve Coudert enjoys the diversion of a thrilling ride in a hot air balloon; a generation later her daughter Freddy becomes a stunt pilot for the movies; but, in both cases, air travel is considered a form of entertainment. A few years later, however, the airplane proves its military value in World War II; it soon also demonstrates its worth in transporting goods and, eventually, people.

Also important in the novel is the role of an established social order.

Tradition can be a stabilizing force when, as in the case of Paul de Lancel, it leads an individual to increase his knowledge, preserve his land, and improve the lot of his employees; but an insistence upon tradition for its own sake destroys the character of Paul's son Bruno. In short, tradition must involve honor and loyalty to the highest principles; when it becomes haughty and autocratic, an aristocracy deserves only destruction.

A prime example of changing conventions is society's attitude toward show business and entertainers. When Eve Coudert runs away from her upper middle class home in Dijon and appears as a singer in a Paris music hall, she is immediately considered *declassé* by both the French aristocracy and her own social class; by marrying her, Paul de Lancel temporarily alienates his family and permanently damages his diplomatic career. When he is assigned to Los Angeles, however, he discovers his wife's career is accepted and admired there, and when his daughter, Delphine de Lancel, becomes a star of the French cinema, she is much in demand socially.

Another social issue is the increasing sexual openness of women. Accepting the Edwardian code of behavior, the Couderts equate a young woman's innocence with ignorance; thus, Eve — who is not permitted to go out without a chaperone — is easily seduced by the itinerant actor, Alain Marais. Even though Marais is her only lover before she meets Paul, society considers Eve a tramp. Later, in Los Angeles, the under-age



Delphine drinks and smokes with the older men she dates, but she remains a virgin; her first lover is Nico Ambert, the director who discovers her and makes her a star. Unlike Eve, who genuinely cared for Marais, Delphine does not fall in love until she meets Armand Sadowski, the director she eventually marries. In contrast, Eve's younger daughter, Freddy (Marie-Frederique), at seventeen, falls in love with her flight instructor, a man twice her age, and rebelliously leaves home to live with him. When she meets Tony Longbridge, she is attracted to him and immediately goes to bed with him. The situation is similar with David Weitz, the neurosurgeon who treats her after her plane crash.

Eve and her daughters have differing views of women's role in society. Eve is ambitious for recognition as a singer, but she sacrifices her career to become Paul's wife. Until Delphine meets Armand Sadowski, she considers men only a means of achieving the degree of sexual arousal that makes her an appealing actress. She devotes herself to pleasing Armand, however, and when he returns from the concentration camp at the end of the war, she becomes first his nurse, then his wife, and eventually the mother of his children. Yet she does not abandon her career as an actress; instead she continues to enjoy the adulation of French moviegoers.

Freddy is even less conventional. In high school she persuades the school authorities to allow her to take a course in shop instead of home economics; she secretly works to pay for flying lessons, hitchhiking to get to the airfield; and she refuses to attend college. After she leaves home, Freddy becomes a movie stunt pilot in order to buy the equipment she needs to compete in air races, and during World War II, she is a member of the Air Transport Auxiliary in Britain, ferrying new fighter planes from the factories to the air bases.

At the war's end, Freddy is bored with her role as the wife of a British squire; and, seeing the logic in Jock Hampton's dream of establishing an air freight company, she talks her husband into moving to California and beginning an air transport company, Eagles, named for his old squadron. Freddy is the partner who combines aggressive marketing, business logic, and feminine wiles to sign the first customers, and when the business appears to falter, she keeps it afloat by securing financing and management expertise from her former stunt boss, Swede Castelli. Her take-charge attitude eventually causes the breakup of her marriage to Tony Longbridge, but for Jock Hampton it is one of her most attractive qualities and the basis for a marriage of true equals.

Overall, the lives of Eve and her daughters illustrate the importance of independence and determination. Each of these women sets goals from which she refuses to be deterred. As a young girl, Eve challenges the Edwardian social code when she sneaks out to take a daring hot air balloon ride, and she thoroughly enjoys the sense of freedom that comes with flying. Later, similarly intrigued by the touring music hall show and infatuated with its star, she defies convention to attend the show, rendezvous secretly with the star, and follow him to Paris. The scandal of appearing in a music hall does not dissuade her from a career as Maddy, the celebrated singer, but she shows equal courage when she marries Paul and confronts the disapproval of his family and friends.



Eve bequeaths her love of show business to her daughter Delphine, for whom marriage does not preclude a movie career. Until she meets Armand, Delphine's only love is the motion picture camera, and she will not permit the initial opposition of her family to stand in the way of her becoming a cinema star. In Freddy, Eve's taste for the freedom of flying is intensified. Like Eve, Freddy faces some disapproval, however, from those who believe her independence is justified only by the exigencies of wartime; nevertheless, she appears also to have inherited management skills which Eve has no occasion to use until Paul's death forces her to assume management of the family vineyards.

## Techniques

In *Till We Meet Again*, as in the earlier Krantz novels, the primary appeal is the fast-moving, romantic plot. With cinematic style, Krantz shifts from one subplot to the next, maintaining the flow of this complexly plotted novel.

Famous for her detailed descriptions, she provides abundant sensory details, which enable the reader to visualize the clothes, landscapes, furnishings, and other surroundings, and thus to experience vicariously the adventures of the central characters. By focusing upon the sexual awakenings of the young women and by presenting the moments of sexual intimacy as they are contemplated by the participants, Krantz also increases the subtlety with which the passion is handled and reinforces the overall tone of romance.

Sometimes criticized for plot manipulation in which her characters meet famous people of the era, Krantz introduces relatively few well known people in this novel, and those who are present serve to establish the main characters against a specific background of time and place. The reader has no sense of obvious authorial contrivance.



# Adaptations

Till We Meet Again was adapted as a CBS miniseries directed by Charles Jarrott, and produced by Steve Krantz (Judith's husband) and Keith Richardson.

## Related Titles

While there is a kinship among all Krantz novels in terms of plot and characters, *Till We Meet Again* shows most similarity to *Princess Daisy* (1979) and *Mistral's Daughter* (1982). Freddy's business success is reminiscent of Daisy Valensky's, and Delphine's relationship with her manipulative halfbrother Bruno approximates Daisy's relationship with Ram. In fact, Bruno strongly resembles Ram in the charm and physical attractiveness which initially conceal his ruthlessness and his need to control women, especially his sister. Likewise, the three generations of de Lancel women — Eve, her daughters Delphine and Freddy, and Freddy's daughter Annie — parallel Maggy, Teddy, and Fauve of *Mistral's Daughter*. Also present in both novels are the background issues of anti-Semitism, German occupation, and the French Resistance.

# Copyright Information

## Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults

Editor - Kirk H. Beetz, Ph.D.

Library of Congress  
Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults

Includes bibliographical references.

Summary: A multi-volume compilation of analytical essays on and study activities for fiction, nonfiction, and biographies written for young adults.

Includes a short biography for the author of each analyzed work.

1. Young adults—Books and reading. 2. Young adult literature—History and criticism. 3.

Young adult literature—Bio-bibliography. 4. Biography—Bio-bibliography.

[1. Literature—History and criticism. 2. Literature—Bio-bibliography]

I. Beetz, Kirk H., 1952

Z1037.A1G85 1994 028.1'62 94-18048 ISBN 0-933833-32-6

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Printed in the United States of America First Printing, November 1994