



Bracelet of Bones

Kevin Crossley-Holland

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It is 1036. Halfdan is a Viking mercenary who is determined to travel to Constantinople and become one of the Viking Guard serving Empress Zoe. He promises to take his daughter, but one morning Solveig wakes up to find him gone. Setting off in her own tiny boat, she is determined to make the journey from Norway to the breathtaking city. Her boat is washed up, but Solveig is undeterred. What awaits Solveig as she continues on her summer journey across the world? She finds passage with Viking traders, witnesses the immolation of a young slave girl and learns to fight. She sees the clashes between those who praise her Norse Gods and the new Christians. In this perilous and exciting world, a young girl alone could be quickly endangered or made a slave. Will Solveig live to see her father again, and if she survives, will she remain free? A glittering novel that explores friendship and betrayal, the father-daughter relationship, the clash of religions and the journey from childhood to adulthood.

Bracelet of Bones Details

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Author : Kevin Crossley-Holland

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From Reader Review Bracelet of Bones for online ebook

Alicia Huxtable says

A definite must read. This book had me hooked from chapter 1.

Solveig's father Halfdan, has left to follow a fellow warrior to Miklagard and left Solveig with her step mother and half brothers. But she wants to be with him.

So she follows him, by sea on a ship of Vikings. She develops friendships with some of them especially the captains slave girl who is pregnant with his child.

Loved this book!!

Barb Middleton says

Solveig is with her Viking father, Halfdan, in a valley in Trondheim, Norway, where he is telling her of his experience in the great the Battle of Stiklestad in 1030 when King Olaf died and Norway fell under Danish rule. Halfdan and another man saved King Olaf's son, Harald's life and promised to serve with him in the Varangian guard in Miklagard when he sent for him. The Varangian guard were personal bodyguards to the Byzantine emperors. Harald sends for Halfdan many years after the battle, and Halfdan tells his daughter that she can go with him to Miklagard only to secretly leave in the morning without her. Solveig does not get along with her verbally abusive stepmother and one stepbrother that seems to teeter on being violent. The other stepbrother is kind and she gets along with him. The thought of spending time without her father is unbearable and Solveig sets out on a journey from Trondheim to Miklagard, (Turkey) to find him. While the historical details are well-done, the plot is somewhat weak and the pacing suffers as a result.

Solveig takes a skiff to Kiev where she is helped by two traders to find a boat that is traveling close to Miklagard. She becomes a part of Red Ottar's crew where she makes friends with the English slave woman, Edith, and Torsten who met her father. She becomes friends with Vigot only to find a dark side to him. Their friendship never seemed authentic to me. Vigot comes across as a snake and when Solveig voices her regret at confronting him, it didn't seem real. Edith and Solveig's relationship is quite authentic and real.

spoiler

The theme of religion gets a bit messy because the author has Muslim, Christian, and Norse mythology competing with each other. Add in a healthy dose of superstition and it made it hard to determine motivations. Solveig believes in the old Norse gods and Christianity and her thoughts reflect more Christian beliefs. Bergdis devoutly believes in the old gods while Edith is a Christian. Mihran is Muslim. The other characters are a mishmash of beliefs. I did not understand why the crew turned back from the trade port when they were 11 days out due to superstitious beliefs. Even with the leader dead, I would have thought the lure of making that much money in trade would have overridden their fears. I also kept waiting for Bruni and Torsten to duke it out, but that never happens. Torsten has taken his brother's feud with Bruni, something that is historically true but in this story the two are not unreconciled. Usually payment is made or revenge sought. I thought Red Ottar might mitigate but it doesn't come about. Maybe this will happen in the sequel.

The plot doesn't have enough challenges in it as the character progresses. She suffers hardships, but conveniently finds someone (usually a man) to help her on her journey. She never has to do the seeking. Even Mihran happens to know all these kings and helps Solveig. She never earns her way except rowing a

boat and carving items out of different bones. As a result, she never comes alive for me. I wanted her to be more fierce and independent. Instead she is usually saved by a man. She does show gumption portaging and also when she stands up for Edith, but even then it is a man that saves Edith, not Solveig.

The Vikings believed in Fate which is represented in the Norse myths, but their views were far from fatalistic. Life was expected to be a struggle and they tried to rise above it with bravery, loyalty, and hospitality. The prophecy represents this Fate although it seemed to be the easy way to work in tension. I think prophecies are an overused writing technique. Solveig and the others use folk tales and Norse myths to keep their courage up or explain that which is unexplainable. This and the ancient Norse verse adds a richness to the story and setting.

The ending was a bit rushed. The themes of friendship and treachery, clash of religions, and father-daughter relationship lacked enough depth to draw me into the story. Perhaps the author was trying to do too much. I'm not sure. While I loved the historical detail, the story just fell flat. If you have not read this author before then I recommend his Arthur trilogy.

s. fay says

I didn't really enjoy this book I thought it took too long to actually get into the story but apart from that the basic plot was alright.

Leaf Reyes says

I bought this book at an outlet store for only \$2 and began reading it at the end of my semestral break.

I admit, I wasn't an avid fan of Viking tales. Even though this book promised action-packed adventures, it mostly just reflected the culture, beliefs, and general way of life during the Viking era. It's more of a relaxed getting-to-know-these-characters than a take-this-take-that-and-this-too.

It mainly focused on the actual journey of Solveig, a Viking girl as she pursues her father across the waters and the story also explores her personality development as she blossoms into age.

I wouldn't necessarily recommend this book unless you're a Viking fan, but honestly, it wasn't bad either. Just an okay read.

If you want to connect with me go follow and drop a dm on my new art account on Instagram: ethereala
Happy reading, lovelies!

Simoné says

This book is packed with adventure and life lessons! Beautiful.

Rusty's Ghost Engine (also known as..... Jinky Spring) says

UPDATE! Reread February 2018

This is what I first thought

Well I've gotta say I was expecting more. This book didn't live up to expectation and it wasn't nearly as exciting as it sounds.

In fact on saying that I'm not quite sure why I picked this up at the library. I'm not a huge fan of historical fiction and I can't stand realistic fiction (this book was realistic). I (usually) only choose a book if it has an element of fantasy or science fiction, this book had neither. So I don't know what made me choose this it just sort of stood out to me. But, my gosh I regretted this choice it was so boring!

So unless you're a HUGE fan of historical stories I recommend every one give this book a miss cause seriously hardly anything happens. I definitely will not be continuing this series.

My review after the second time around

<https://edwardsghostengine.wordpress....>

As I have said in other posts, this is a book I reread only last week. It's a slow-paced book that relies more on historical elements and atmosphere more than anything to move the story along, meaning it can be boring in parts.

I originally gave this book 2 stars as back in 2015 I thought the book was very boring with not a lot of wow factor (I had a kind of "Calling", which I do get from time to time, to give this series another chance especially when I saw my library had the second book too ?). While I still see not a lot of excitement in this story even now I've got to say I connected with the MC and the setting a lot better this time around than last time.

Firstly, the things I didn't like. I found that very little happened throughout this book and the ending was quite predictable. The passages when it was just plain travelling I felt could have been made more colourful as this is fiction after all. It just described Solveig in her everyday travels doing everyday things like helping on the boat, going to the market etc. Sure there were the odd unusual things like the "ghost ships" and the arrow storm. But these could have had more spice in them, instead they almost sounded like everyday events (despite the death of quite an important character).

Also the passages with the other lesser characters could have been developed more and given more depth, so I thought. Instead I feel we don't get to know them properly, neither them nor their relationship with Solveig. How did her friendships develop? And also I couldn't grasp the full dynamics between the characters.

On to the things I did like, I will admit in this book I could connect more with Solveig I don't know how but she felt more real this time around and it really did feel like she grew on her journey even if only a little.

I will also say I liked the historical descriptions and the clashes between the different religions more this time. Fair play the author has done his research and was apparently inspired by a name (Halfdan) scratched on a wall from long ago.... I also liked that despite there being many boring everyday parts, the book wasn't very long and was quite well written (in a very rich way) so it flowed nicely.

I will most certainly read on in the saga and I'm not sure really why I liked this better this time around more than last, maybe i just went in it with a better attitude? ?

Silea says

I took a Childrens' Lit course in college, and one of the first things the professor told us is that if we re-read the books we loved as a child, we'd hate them now. Little House on the Prairie was his favorite example, a series of books that young girls (at least used to) read and love, but going back as an adult, they're nearly impossible to get through. The focus is narrow, and very concrete. It's nearly an instruction manual at times.

Bracelet of Bones is in a similar vein. It's the story of Solveig's journey to find her father, but it stays very much grounded in the present, even when she's telling a story of her past or imagining her future. There's a lot of 'what', a little 'how', but almost no 'why'.

I suspect that kids will like this book, and parents can certainly read along, but it's not a book i'd recommend to an adult to read for their own entertainment.

Jane says

Something a little different about the Vikings: in the 11th century Solveig travels from Trondheim to Miklagard [Constantinople] to reunite with her father, Halfdan, who is there part of the Varangian Guard. She passes Ladoga, Kievan Rus, Black Sea, then her destination and reunion. The author must have researched thoroughly, but the story and characters fell flat. And how on earth could a young girl travel such a distance and in dangers--such as rapids on the Dnieper River--without some male figure hurting her? Her companions in the trading ship all treated her like a sister or daughter [depending on their age]. That was a bit hard to believe. The map tracing her journey was a gem! The author states that discovering in Aya Sofia the name "Halfdan" carved into a balustrade in Runic letters gave him the idea for the story.

Cindy says

Told in a very poetic narrative style which would be fine if I didn't prefer action. So I did like the story well enough to do my skimming/reading. It got much more interesting once she was on the voyage. So fascinating how wide spread the Vikings were in the world. Great details. (one woman is a slave/wife, human sacrifice suggested, accidents but not too gruesome on detail, a couple swear words like b---rd) for young teens and up

Leeanna says

This review originally appeared on my blog, Leeanna.me.

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From the summary, **BRACELET OF BONES** sounds awesome. After being left behind by her father, fourteen-year-old Solveig travels from Norway to Miklagard (Constantinople) by herself. For a girl who has never gone to the local market by herself, the prospect of such a journey is overwhelming, but Solveig loves her father and wants to be with him.

The author takes something that should be *super* exciting -- Solveig's journey -- and makes it super boring. **BRACELET OF BONES** is for grades 5 and up, but I can't see younger readers sticking with this book because there's just not a lot happening! My younger self might have finished it, but that's only because I've always had a thing about finishing books.

This book is the start of a series, which wasn't something I realized until I finished it and saw the preview for book two. So **BRACELET OF BONES** is the story of Solveig's journey from Norway to Miklagard, and only that journey. It's somewhat repetitive, and I just feel like nothing happened. Solveig took a boat ride. Solveig took another boat ride. Solveig took a third boat ride.

I think some of my apathy for the book was due to the writing style and Solveig herself. The writing is pretty simple, which is okay because it's a middle grade book and aimed towards younger readers. But I lost count of the "Solveig thought this" or "Solveig thought that" type of sentences, or the times she exclaimed or whispered or cried ... she never just *said* anything. Call me overly picky, but that sort of writing pulls me out of a story. And Solveig ... I never connected with her. I felt like I was watching the events of the book rather than being with her on her journey.

I wanted to like **BRACELET OF BONES**. I mean, Vikings? A Viking girl going on a grand adventure? That should be right up my alley. Unfortunately, this book just wasn't for me.

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Disclaimer: I received a copy of this book from the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

See more of my reviews:

Deniz says

I am not quite sure what's going on with me lately, but I keep on having completely wrong exceptions of books. The Bracelet of Bones is no exception. Although I did read the blurb before requested the ARC, for some reason I kinda had in the back of my mind that this was a fantasy. Ok, so admittedly knowing my memory for names is bad at best, I should have known that I wouldn't necessary connect the right name with the right blurb. But see books come with covers, so I remembered the pretty cover was a story about a girl from Norway, during Viking times. Which it is! Since it was quite clear from the beginning that this is what

The Bracelet of Bones is about, I was sure I am reading a fantasy book. When I was about a third in, I had the suspicion that I might be wrong and read the blurb. So long story short. This is not a fantasy but a historical novel.

It's an epic story about friendships, clash of religions, coming of age and fathers-and-daughters. The best part about this is definitely the way the story is told. Crossley-Holland knows how to tell an epic story. Though this isn't told over thousands of pages, no it's in a average sized book. Still in this relatively short span, Crossley-Holland brings across many subject and brings many thoughts to mind.

While this is a great journey, with many adventures, the novel is somewhat slow paced, not boring, but more reflective. So very much my kinda thing; I was enchanted by the prose and enjoyed the story, but mostly loved the thoughtful and subtle aspects of the novel.

The plot is interesting, but possibly my least favorite bit of the story. The entire way it was written, while I thoroughly enjoyed it, made this somewhat slow. Let me warn you this is not a sugar-glossed version of the past, no it's rather realistic. So it's not only not your HEA but be prepared for heartbreak and sorrow, but also for loss. The plot lets you quiver between despair and hope, which I guess is to a great credit to the writing of Crossley-Holland. But also no doubt due to the wonderful character building.

At the beginning of the book is an inventory of character names and who they were. It's several pages long and holds many unfamiliar names. Can you imagine how worried I was? See me, mrs. crapy-name-memory, staring at the list in utter despair? Well, though at time I had to concentrate on who was who, not once did I go back to check who I was dealing with. So yes, there are a rather big amount of characters all with not exactly familiar names, but the character building is so well done, I feel like I know them. I know who is who- and most importantly I connected with them. And yes, I said them, because I connected with every one of them. This is told from Solveigh's POV, but I got to know most of the characters, the left impressions on me, and though I saw them through Solveigh's eyes, I cared for them (even the slightly more unpleasant ones) and felt like I knew who they were.

The world building is absolutely amazing. I know quite a bit about ancient history. I also am quite clued up on the Norse gods and their mythology. And I have traveled through some of the area's this is set. So I was pleasantly surprised to find things, I didn't know. In fact after finishing the novel, I dashed to our library checking out dates, names of hero's and brushing up on my history of that time. Then I hit google. Honestly Crossley-Holland did an amazing job at bringing the time to life.

A beautiful book, that inspires thought, bring the past to life and is full of subtle wisdom.

Fiona says

This isn't as good as the others I have read by this author, but I still quite enjoyed it and patiently looking forward to the next one.

Bracelet of Bones is the first in what will be a trilogy.

It is about a journey via water from Norway through to Russia and then into Istanbul, Turkey. Only it was all different back then - Istanbul is known as Miklagard and a tribe called the Rus controlled the part of modern-day Russia where Kiev is found. There was the Byzantium empire and of course the Vikings. It is so different to our modern day understanding of Europe but it must be such an interesting time in history.

I know next to nothing about the Vikings, but I trust Crossley-Holland as a historical fiction author. He is a scholar in ancient languages I believe - and has translated many Anglo-Saxon poems and texts. He has also written a book *On Viking stories and Norse myths*. He has a clear love for history, a passion which comes across very easily in his novels.

I know a bit more about the Vikings now - but only a bit. I can't say I know much more about their religion or culture as much of this story takes place on a boat and it tells so much more about the melting pot of different people and cultures - none in any great detail. I am curious now to expand my knowledge which in the end is what books for - not always to teach you new things but to give you the curiosity to learn.

However, saying all that I did find this book slightly disappointing. It was enjoyable, but only that. Crossley-Holland poetic, fluid language I usually love felt a little annoying at times. The characters were forever gulping. Or the water was gulping or they were sucking in air between their teeth and blowing it out between their lips. How many times do they have to do this? Nothing much really happened and the characters were half-baked. Interesting, but half-baked.

Sloveig lacks the depth and lovability that Gatty had from *Gatty's Tale*. She didn't feel quite so real as the characters in his previous books.

The Seeing Stone, the first in the Arthur trilogy had so much life from the first book, whereas in *Bracelet of Stones* it feels like you're still waiting for the story to start.

The next one will be called *Scramasax* which is a type of knife or short sword that cropped up during this story once. A strange sounding word and a funny title for a book. I'll be looking forward to finding out what happens to Sloveig. I imagine the rest of the trilogy will follow the story of Harald Sigurdsson who later becomes the King of Norway and in 1066, invaded England.

Vee ?Under Mountain Books? says

I was expecting/hoping for this book to be a gripping tale of a young girl's journey from her home to Miklagard, with many dangers along the way, the sort of book that I would stay up late reading, wanting to find out if Sloveig managed to find her way to her father. What I did get was rather bland. There's plenty of dangers and Sloveig nearly dies at one point but something went wrong and I found myself bored at times. I think the problem was that with these sort of stories I usually expect many different characters (after all, she's travelling pretty far) but I got stuck with the same people nearly the whole way through and there seemed to be a lot of sitting around on a ship. It kind of reminded me of the latest POTC installment at times, only with a less interesting cast.

The Viking elements/world is pretty strong in this. My partner is heavily into Vikings so I know a little myself but still managed to learn some more from this book. I recently bought him Kevin's other book, *The Norse Myths*, which my OH enjoyed, so I can safely say the author knows what he's talking about when it comes to Vikings. I definitely recommend this if you're a Viking fan.

Sloveig's character is good but a little stereotypical. I like that she was willing to look after herself and took a lot of crap from people without letting it get her down but I think there was also a little too much of 'you're

young, you're female, you're useless'. I think some romance would have really helped here but there was none.

When I finally got to the end I was pretty excited. I was hoping that it would be an awesome Father - Daughter reunion but it was quite rushed and not what I was hoping for. I guess the Author wanted to leave some space for the next book but it would have been nice if he'd have given me something to make me want to read the next book.

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Heidi The Hippie Reader says

A young adult, coming-of-age Viking tale that attempts to examine the religious differences between the Norse religion and Christianity while taking the heroine on a cross country adventure.

I liked the characters. I liked the setting. I even liked the time period. *Bracelet of Bones* should have been a home run for me, but it just wasn't.

At first, I thought that the book was going to feature a struggle between pagan religions and Christians: *"Most of the families living along our fjord have been baptized," Asta retorted, "but they still worship Odin and the other gods as well."* The young priest shook his head. *"I will pray for you," he said, "and visit you again."* pg 25. But, he was never heard from again. At least, not in this title.

Then, I thought that this book was going to be primarily about Solveig's journey to find her father. That was closer to the truth: *"I've never felt so afraid. But I've never been so sure of what I have to do. Mother, my mother, my journey will either lead me to my father or lay me down like you."* pg 29. Her mother has been dead for a long time. Not a spoiler, that is explained in the first few pages of the book.

Solveig joins a few different groups of travelers on her way. Some of the characters are trustworthy, others are not, but none of them are very memorable.

My favorite parts were the storytelling moments of *Bracelet of Bones* and I wished that there were more of them: *"This girl lived on our fjord and she told a story about how the winter was so bitter that even the gods were famished and Skadi herself had to go ice-fishing and hunting. But she told it on the eve of the spring solstice. Her words stopped the sun from warming the earth!"* pg 191.

The quote that best encapsulates this story is: *"...you can sit at home by the fire and stir the stew-pot and nothing much will change, or you can say your prayers and step out and face what's unknown."* pg 275. I endeavor to step out that door and face the unknown every day. Some days I'm more successful than others.

Only recommended for those who enjoy tales about Vikings. Though it reached for thrilling heights, *Bracelet of Bones* feels to me like a book that chose to stay at home by the fire and stir the stew-pot.

Lisa Landreth says

Bracelet of Bones by Kevin Crossley-Holland is a YA (Young Adult) novel and falls in the category of historical fiction. The story is about Solveig who's a changeling and whose father, the only true parent she has, leaves on a mission to Constantinople without her. Solveig is heartbroken because her father promised to take her on the trip too. So, being the strong-willed person she is, she decides to follow after and meet up with him. Solveig hitches rides on different boats with a variety of unusual people and learns about their back stories and their lives.

I liked the fact that this story was about Vikings because there are very few of them geared toward the young reader. The ghost ship and the slave sacrifice was an exciting touch too. However, I just couldn't follow the storyline very well. It strayed too far from the main character's problem and created a jumbled mess with the crisscross of other problems the minor characters suffered. I would also have to agree with some of the people on here, I got bored with her traveling by ship the entire way. It just seemed like the same stuff over and over. I would have also liked a little more "staying with the era" feel. There's talk of a "skipper and pilot" on the boat and I just don't think they used those words back then, but I could be wrong.

I think Mr. Crossley-Holland is probably a good author, but I didn't care for this particular story. I might try his Arthur Trilogy on day to see if that's more my taste.
