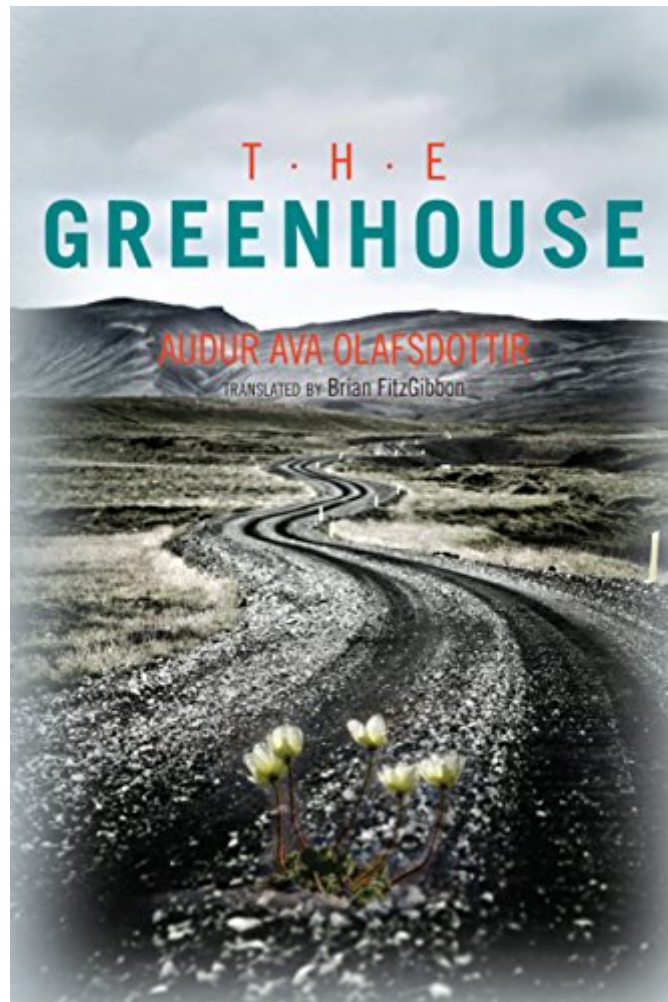


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# The Greenhouse



## Synopsis

For Lobbi, the tragic passing of his mother proves to be a profound catalyst. Their shared love of tending rare roses in her greenhouse inspires him to leave his studies behind and travel to a remote village monastery to restore its once fabulous gardens. While transforming the garden under the watchful eye of a cinephile monk, he is surprised by a visit from Anna, a friend of a friend with whom he shared a fateful moment in his mother's greenhouse, and the daughter they together conceived that night. In caring for both the garden and the little girl, Lobbi slowly begins to assume the varied and complex roles of a man: fatherhood with a deep relationship with his child, cooking, nurturing, and remaining also a son, brother, lover, and a gardener. A story about the heartfelt search for beauty in life, *The Greenhouse* is a touching reminder of our ability to turn the small things in everyday life into the extraordinary.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Now that it's finally available in English, beautifully translated by Brian FitzGibbon, I got the chance to read *The Greenhouse*. It's a truly remarkable novel, and its widespread acclaim as the 2010 book

of the year was well-deserved. On the surface it is a first-person narrative that tells the coming of age story of Arnþór (or "Lobbi"), a 22 year old from Iceland who goes on a journey to find himself. He is a thoughtful boy who studies in the family greenhouse "to be able to read close to the plants" and who thinks about what it might mean to "spend one's entire childhood waiting for a single tree to grow". His journey takes him from Iceland, which he sees as dominated by moss, tussocks and swamps, to a cliff-top monastery in an intentionally unnamed country that provides a stark contrast to his homeland. We hear him think through his bodily longings, what it means to be a man, fatherhood, faith, death, and our connections with the planet and the plants around us. And beneath all of this there is the question of how we relate to people, and how those relationships make us whole. There is the ever-present memory of Arnþór's mother and the unforgettable final conversation that he had with her, as well as his evolving closeness to his daughter, Flóra. Olafsdóttir makes liberal use of symbolism, and most significantly there is the precious Rosa Candida, the violet-red, thorn-less, eight-petaled rose. Richness also comes from Olafsdóttir's beautifully drawn minor characters. She captures monastic life wonderfully; in the absence of sustained contact with a broader community the small details of daily routines and of relationships mean so much to the monks. The villagers also are simple yet colorful.

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