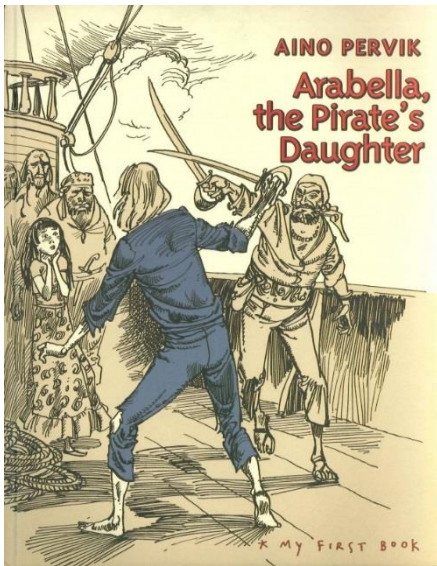


Arabella, the Pirate's Daughter



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Tänapäev 2015

First edition 1982

ISBN 9789985626788

Rights sold: 7 languages, including Czech, Finnish, and Latvian

Film: Arabella, the Pirate's Daughter, 1982

This is the story of Arabella: a little 9-year-old girl whose father is the famous pirate captain Daniel Trigger.

Daniel loves his daughter more than anything, but because of his work, Arabella lives in constant fear of losing her father. Pirates are brutal and greedy – their favourite occupation, apart from carousing in the tavern, is to admire the gold and jewels they have stolen, and to share the wealth that belonged to their

dead shipmates. When the shipwrecked wandering philosopher Hassan comes aboard their vessel, the pirates want to kill him straight away, but Arabella buys him for herself for the price of one very precious pearl. Hassan becomes the girl's friend and spiritual guide, helping her to resist evil.

Reading example

[pp 39–44]

Most Important to a Pirate

Arabella sat in her cabin, eating bananas she'd found in one of the boxes brought over from the brigantine. She knew very well what was happening on deck, but she didn't want to see the cruel look in her father's eyes.

When Arabella was smaller, she saw the pirate life as the only possible way of living and nothing about it troubled her. She didn't know any other way, and thought that was how it had to be; but the older she came to be the more complicated it became in her mind. She saw that the pirates were always full of unnatural fear, anxiety and anger. They were always boasting, but they were also afraid. Her father too, he was just like the others. It was as though something could snuff out their lives at any moment and, indeed, that is how it actually was. Navy vessels chasing them, other pirates goading them. A ship under attack could turn on them at any moment and any pirate could be slaughtered. It was grim.

What was done to them was terrible but what they did to others was even more terrible. Pirates had chosen to live by pirate law, but their victims had not. These people were not guilty of anything but still they were brutally attacked.

Samuel must be a dreadful person.

To Arabella, though, he was the dearest person in the world and the one to whom she was closest.

The cruel look in her father's eyes was what Arabella feared and hated the most. And the most horrific thought was that something could happen to him. But she also knew that he lived a savage and dangerous life.

Desperate, vengeful sounds came from the deck.

Hassan, who had been asleep on the sofa all this time, opened his eyes and sat up, startled. His dazed stare changed to a look of alertness.

"What's going on there?" he asked.

"The prisoners have been thrown overboard," Arabella sighed. "We seajacked a ship while you slept. Want a banana?"

Hassan sat quietly for a while, staring thoughtfully ahead.

"Uh-huh," he said. "Then it is truly a pirate ship."

He stood and looked down at the long silk gown that was wrapped around him. The yellow and green embroidered dragons stood out.

"I will put my clothes back on," he said.

"They're still damp," said Arabella.

"That does not matter," said Hassan. "This royal gown does not suit me."

Arabella peeled another banana.

"What were you doing with that yawl in the middle of the sea?" she asked.

"I wanted to travel to America," answered Hassan.

"Why?"

"Ah, how to explain it," he said thoughtfully. "See, I want to understand what is good and what is bad about men. To do that, I need to get to know many different people and to visit different nations. Only then can I begin to understand the variety of ways in which people live and think. I want to know if all men see goodness in the same way. If they do not, would that not lead to conflict? What is good to some might be bad to others. Is my explanation too complicated?"

Arabella looked wide-eyed at Hassan.

"Keep talking!" she ordered.

"There are many different kinds of people on Earth. I want to know if those who eat with their fingers may be similar to those who eat with forks. And would the shape and material of the fork not be an obstacle to their understanding of each other? I have noticed such a thing! That those who hold a fork in their left hand despise those who hold it in their right hand, and refuse to even listen to what they want to say. And there are those who eat food with two forks: they are the craziest of all because they despise the majority, seeing only themselves as good."

"Now you're confusing me," said Arabella. "I don't understand anything. What have forks got to do with it?"

"The forks are not important actually, in life only some people consider them to be important. Not only forks, of course, but the colour of the house they live in, the kind of clothes they wear, how they

greet each other, how much they talk to each other, and other kinds of nonsense. They think highly only of those who do those things the same way they do.”

“Hmm!” said Arabella. “How do you feel about the pirates? They don’t pay attention to things like that.”

“Indeed they do not,” Hassan frowned. “Can you tell me what is good in a pirate’s mind? What is the most important thing in the world to pirates?”

“Gold and gems.”

“But you gave a pearl me?”

“Well, yes,” said Arabella, baffled. “Gold and gems are boring.”

“What is the most important thing to you?”

“Father.”

“But to Father?”

“I don’t know,” sighed Arabella. “Father is a pirate.”

Arabella did not want to admit that this worried her too.

With her thoughts in turmoil, she said “Come and I’ll show where father has said you can sleep. You can’t stay here as you’d be next to father’s cabin and you’d hear too much. It could cost you your life.”

Arabella guided Hassan to a tiny cubbyhole in the depths of the ship, where a tall man could just about fit to sleep. To make Hassan more comfortable, they brought along an armful of soft blankets and pillows.

[pp 213–222]

The Gypsy Camp

The ride in the rickety gypsy carriage seemed to last for an eternity. After many long hours the carriage stopped, but the door remained closed. It stayed locked until morning.

Arabella did not sleep a wink. She just lay on the blanket-covered bed and stared into the darkness. The candle on the table had long since burnt out. She was in total blackness, as if in a sack. Arabella was not afraid of the dark; she knew that it was just the absence of light. But she still had one fear. She was afraid that something had happened to her father to keep him from making it to the gypsy carriage, which had been set ready for their escape. Now Arabella was escaping alone, but to where? And what would happen to her father without her protective gaze?

There was another possibility, but Arabella tried not to think about that.

Ironplait.

Could it be that Rosita was in the service of Ironplait?

Finally, light began to seep between the window shutters. Morning had arrived. She could hear sounds outside. But, still, a long time passed before the door opened and the rays of the sun penetrated the carriage. The sun was so bright that it blinded Arabella at first.

A deep and raspy woman's voice said, "Come out, darling!"

Arabella stepped to the door. On the ground in front of the carriage stood a fat, gypsy matriarch, colourfully dressed, with a pipe in her mouth. Her face was fleshy and wrinkled, and she squinted merrily at Arabella. Arabella noticed a campfire behind the woman. In the still morning air, the smoke rose almost straight up. Next to the fire two younger women were busy. One of them was tending a huge kettle that hung above the fire; the other was handing out food to two small children who were sitting on the ground in front of her. Farther away were two more gypsy carriages, behind which their horses were chewing grass, noses touching the ground.

Beside the horses stood a tall old man with grey curly hair; he wore a furry leather vest next to his bare skin. Next to the elderly man, bare-footed in the dewy grass, was a boy a little older than Arabella.

The gypsy madre beckoned Arabella closer to the campfire. With the handle of her pipe, she pointed to a pile of grey blankets and invited the girl to sit. The woman who had been giving food to the children now handed a bowl of rice and meat to Arabella.

The children wolfed the food down, their hands and faces covered in reddish sauce, their chests covered with grains of rice. Arabella liked them. She would have liked to play with them if only there had not been so much worry in her heart.

"Eat, eat," said the gypsy madre, as Arabella sat down, placed the bowl in her lap and stared sadly at the children.

"Where is my father?" asked Arabella.

"Don't worry, he'll come and get you in the evening," said the gypsy madre. "They'll tell your father where you are and then he'll come and take you away."

The old man and the boy came over to the fire, and another man appeared. They all sat by the fire and started to eat, discussing something vividly in their gypsy language.

Arabella's heart became much lighter when she heard that her father would come for her that evening. It would have been better if he'd come in the morning, but it seemed he couldn't get there any earlier.

Arabella started to eat. She noticed that the gypsy boy was observing her from a distance, but he didn't take a step towards her until she'd emptied her bowl. Then, with a bright smile on his dark face, he sat next to Arabella on the pile of blankets.

"What is your name?" he asked, pronouncing the words strangely in gypsy tones.

"Arabella."

"My name is Luka," said the boy. "And this is my grandmother." He inclined his head towards the madre, who was now sitting on a broken wooden box, sucking her pipe.

"And are they your mother and father?" asked Arabella, looking towards the gypsy man and woman.

“No, that’s my uncle,” said Luka. “My mother and father, and my sister, are far away. But your father will come for you tonight?”

“Yes,” said Arabella, but she still worried. Many things could happen to her father on the journey! The land was a dangerous place for Shot to be.

“Then you don’t need to worry. Why do you worry?” asked Luka. “This is a beautiful place!”

Arabella looked around. The camp had been established in a small green meadow. Here and there, wide-branched trees cast shadows on the dense grass. All around them were hills covered with forest. The ones closest to them were green, while the ones farther away had a bluish hue. The sky was clear and blue, and the morning sun was not yet too hot. The beautifully painted gypsy carriages by the fire felt homely and friendly. In a place like this, worry really should be a stranger!

“Are you afraid that something is happening to your father?” asked Luka.

“He might be killed,” said Arabella.

“Why are you talking about death!” said Luka fiercely. “A man must live! A man must be joyful about everything: a bright day and a dark night, a warm sun, cold rain, and strong wind. Come on, let’s go and swim; you’ll see how good you’ll feel in the water! Why are you moping?”

Luka stood up and grabbed Arabella by both hands.

“Well, stand up!” he called and pulled at Arabella. “Let’s go, there’s a very good lake here. You’ll see. I’m telling the truth!”

They rode horses in the shade of the trees. Behind the trees was the lake. On this side, the shore was gentle, on the other side a steep rocky cliff rose straight from the pale blue water.

“Come on,” said Luka. “This is a very good place to swim. You’ll see.”

At the edge of the lake, Luka threw his shirt off and ran in.

“Mmm, what beautiful warm water! What are you waiting for?” he called.

Arabella took her skirt and blouse off and stepped into the shallow water. White and pink pebbles gleamed through the clear water, and tiny fish flashed here and there.

Luka was already swimming; in the distance, only his coal-black mop of hair was visible.

“Come on!” he called. “Can’t you swim? Do you want me to teach you?”

Arabella did not need to be taught to swim. She waded a couple of steps deeper and then flung herself head first into the water. She swam quickly towards Luka. The boy, lying on his back in the water, waited for her.

“Well, you swim like a fish!” he said approvingly, when Arabella reached him. “But can you do this?”

Suddenly only Luka’s legs were visible, and then even they disappeared. Luka swam straight to the bottom. Arabella filled her lungs full of air and dove after him. Under the water everything gleamed with a bluish tinge, and the surface of the water seemed like a translucent and glittering ceiling.

After their swim, they sat by the lake in the sun to dry off. The fresh coolness of the morning had gone, and the day was already hot. The air above the water shimmered.

Luka told Arabella stories about what he had heard and lived through. But Arabella stayed silent and became more and more sombre.

“What are you thinking about?” asked Luka finally. “I can see you’re not listening to everything I say.”

“I’m thinking about death,” Arabella admitted.

“Oi, oi!” cried Luka. “You mustn’t think of death; you must forget all about it! When we’ve lived our lives, then death can come if it wants to. Let it come! If we’ve been happy all our lives then we won’t be afraid of it.”

He looked into Arabella’s sad eyes and smiled encouragingly.

“No, don’t mope!” he said. “Would you like me to give you a gift? I’ll give you a nice seashell necklace. I made it for my sister but she’s away with my mother and father. I’ll give it to you! Let’s go, it’s in the carriage.”

Luka took Arabella’s hand and they strolled back to the carriages.

“Wait!” said Luka.

He jumped into the carriage and came out within moments. In his hands, he held a long seashell necklace that was blue and white.

“It took me a very long time to collect the shells. They’re not all from here, but from where we went before. Well, my sister can wait a little. I’ll make her a new one. Anyway, she’s smaller than you. Let her grow! Wait, I’ll put it around your neck.”

Luka came over to Arabella and gently placed the necklace over her head; then he adjusted it on her neck until he was satisfied.

“It’ll go well with the red one you have already. Without white, the red does not seem that red at all. Now you’re as beautiful as a princess! Do you want me to bring you a mirror?”

Luka climbed back into the carriage and brought out a shard of mirror.

“Take it,” he said. “Then you can look at yourself when you want.”

Arabella’s face, reflected in the mirror, was so much more cheerful. The seashells that Luka had just hung around her neck had brought her more joy than any gold chain, string of pearls, or gemstone necklace. Never in her life had anybody given her something with such a joyful heart and been as happy about the gift as Luka was right then.

“See how beautiful you are!” said Luka, his big black eyes shining. “That’s enough looking at yourself! Now, let’s catch some fish!”

Translated by Külli Jacobson