



Pippi Longstocking

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Chapter 1: Pippi Moves into Villa Villekulla

On the outskirts of a tiny little town was an old neglected garden. In the garden stood an old house, and in that house lived Pippi Longstocking. She was nine years old, and she lived there all alone. She had no mother or father, which was actually quite nice, because it meant that no one could tell her that she had to go bed just when she was having most fun. And no one could make her take cod liver oil when she would rather eat sweets.

Once upon a time Pippi did have a father whom she loved very much. And of course she once had a mother too, but that was so long ago that she couldn't remember her at all. Her mother died when Pippi was a tiny little baby, lying in her cot and crying so terribly that no one could stand to come near. Pippi thought that her mother was now up in heaven, peering down at her daughter through a hole. Pippi would often wave to her and say, 'Don't worry! I can always look after myself!'

But Pippi had not forgotten her father. He was a sea captain who sailed the great seas, and Pippi had sailed with him on his ship until one day a big storm blew him overboard and he disappeared. But Pippi was sure that one day he would come back. She didn't believe that he had drowned. She believed that he had washed ashore on an island that was inhabited by natives and that her father had become king of them all. He walked around wearing a gold crown on his head all day long.

'My mamma is an angel, and my pappa is king of the natives. Not all children have such fine parents, let me tell you,' Pippi used to say with delight. 'And as soon as my pappa builds himself a ship, he'll come back to get me, and then I'll be a native princess. Yippee, what fun that will be!'

Many years ago her father had bought the old house that stood in the garden. He had planned to live there with Pippi when he grew old and was no longer able to sail the seas. Then, unfortunately, he was blown overboard. While Pippi was waiting for him to come back, she headed straight home for Villa Villekulla. That was what the house was called. It stood there, all furnished and ready — just waiting for her to arrive.

One beautiful summer evening she said goodbye to all the sailors on her father's ship. They were very fond of Pippi, and Pippi was very fond of them.

'Goodbye, boys,' said Pippi, kissing each of them on the forehead, one after the other. 'Don't worry about me. I can always look after myself!'

Two things she took from the ship. A little monkey whose name was Mr Nilsson — he was a present from her father — and a big suitcase full of gold coins. The sailors stood at the railing with their eyes fixed on Pippi for as long as they could see her. She walked firmly away without looking back. Mr Nilsson sat on her shoulder, and she carried the suitcase in one hand.

'What an amazing child,' said one of the sailors, and he wiped a tear from his eye as Pippi disappeared in the distance.

He was right. Pippi was a quite amazing child. The most amazing thing about her was that she was so strong. She was so incredibly strong that there wasn't a policeman in the whole wide world who was as strong as she was. She could lift a whole horse if she wanted to. And she did. She had her own horse that she had bought with one of her many gold coins on the very same day when she arrived home at Villa Villekulla. She had always longed to have her own horse. He now lived on the porch. Whenever Pippi wanted to have her afternoon coffee, she would simply lift him down into the garden.

Next to Villa Villekulla was another garden with another house. In that house lived a father and a mother with their two sweet children, a boy and a girl. The boy's name was Tommy, and the girl's name was Annika. They were two very nice, well-mannered, and obedient children. Tommy never bit his fingernails, and he always did whatever his mother asked him to do. Annika never made a fuss if she wasn't allowed to have her own way, and she always looked so dainty in her crisply ironed little cotton dresses, which she was careful not to get dirty.

Tommy and Annika played very nicely together in their garden, but they had often wished for a playmate. While Pippi was still sailing the seas with her father, they would sometimes lean over the fence and say to each other, 'It's so sad that no one has ever moved into that house! Someone should live there, someone with children.'

On that beautiful summer evening when Pippi stepped through the front door of Villa Villekulla for the very first time, Tommy and Annika were not at home. They had gone to visit their grandmother for a week. That's why they had no idea that someone had moved into the house next door. On the first day after they came home, when they were standing at their front gate and looking out at the street, they still didn't know that a playmate was actually so close. As they stood there, wondering what to do and whether anything fun was going to happen that day, or whether it was going to be one of those boring days when they couldn't think of a thing to do — just at that moment the gate to Villa Villekulla opened and a little girl came out. She was the strangest girl that Tommy and Annika had ever seen. It was Pippi Longstocking, going out for her morning walk.

This is what she looked like:

Her hair was the colour of a carrot and it was plaited in two tight plaits that stuck straight out. Her nose was the shape of a very small potato, and it was completely covered with freckles. Under her nose was an exceptionally wide mouth with nice white teeth. Her dress was quite odd. Pippi had made it herself. It was supposed to have been blue, but there wasn't enough blue fabric, so Pippi decided to sew on little red patches here and there. On her long, thin legs she wore long stockings, one of them brown and the other black. And she wore black shoes that were exactly twice the length of her feet. Her father had bought those shoes for her in South America, big enough so she would have room to grow into them, and Pippi never wanted any others.

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