



Darcy and the Pirate's Story

Spring had arrived and the two young sisters would miss climbing their tree when it started to bud. During the winter, their old friend the fig tree, would bow to be pruned until only his strong arms were rigidly upheld and would hold them securely while they took their places on his broad shoulder. He became their willing companion on their impossible adventures.

Sometimes, the wind would whistle through his branches and other times he would encourage them to climb to the very end of his outstretched arms where they could look over all the world in their city of tract houses peeking into the lives of the adjacent backyards. One had a rectangular pool and another a Japanese garden with this quiet flowing water and lily pads. Still, another had a slender black dog with long legs and a mournful call when his humans were away.

It was spring, and they once again knew they only had one more chance to climb their tree before buds would be everywhere making it hard to climb until summer.

"I've got the bag," Dawn called as she followed her older sister to the back corner of the yard. Using the knobs left over from branches broken off long ago from the trunk of the gray tree, the girls climbed into their own private world.

"Here you go," she said pulling out a small chalkboard for each of them and the new box of chalk.

"Pirates, that is what I want to draw. You should have seen some of the pictures in the pirate chapter in our history book. I think...this is what I imagine a pirate to look like. Jackson Salvage, I'll call him. Yes, Sailor Jack for short."

"They lived on tropical islands, I'll bet. And they would be full of tropical trees and birds." Dawn started to draw one of her favorite subjects, birds.

Happily sitting on their favorite branches, the conversation turned to the empty spot on the next branch up. As they drew, as if by magic, a colorful bird appeared sitting on a high branch and the very pirate Darcy had drawn began to appear.

First his black boots materialized, dirty and scuffed that gathered the legs of his black pants just below his knees, and then his blousy white shirt cut in a low 'V' in the front tied at his waist with a wide black belt. The round, gold buckle had a big 'S' engraved on it and sat at the center of his big belly. His thick neck was just below his wide beard that was divided into 3 long braids.

The more Darcy drew, the more the pirate came to life.

A wide nose was bordered on either side by big cheeks sunburned over many years, under round brown eyes hidden by bushy eyebrows. The flat sailor's hat was navy-blue with a small black brim that the pirate wore off center shading only his left eye. Big ears held diamond earrings that glistened when the sun hit them just right.

As Dawn cooed to her new bird, her new colorful friend called back.

"Pipe down ye squawking menace," the pirate said looking over his head to the branch above. Looking at his outfit and nodded to Darcy. "Ye have done me well."

Dawn was not impressed.

"Why do you have to steal?" Dawn asked in an almost irritated voice.

"Ah, matie, know that there is always more to a story than what you first perceive," he said with a wink of his eye. He leaned in closer to the center of the tree and wrapped his massive arm around the center branch. "There must be a reason, and I have but a good one." He looked out of the tree in every direction before he continued. Pulling his pointer finger toward him to gather them both, they drew in to listen to what he had to say.

"Me father don't know I'm alive." His eyes got big and he seemed to turn into a kid telling them about his misfortune.

"That is no reason to steal," said Dawn drawing back and crossing her arms.

"Me mother died when I was born and I was raised by a mean man who took me to sea when I was only 5. It is the only life I know." Then the glint came back into his eyes. "And I am the best at it. All on the high seas know my name."

"I'm done with this conversation," Dawn said returning to her sketch and the bird above became more beautiful with every new detail.

Darcy looked at the pirate carefully. "How do you know who your dad is?"

"There is talk on the seas, and I listened. I needed to know who had visited my island the year I was born. Me Mom told of being married to a Swedish sailor, son of a King, in the woods when he visited and that he would return for her. She didn't know that they had created me that night and she died before she told anyone who he was. They gave me the last name of Salvage cuz I didn't belong anymore than the junk in a salvage yard. Maybe you know kids like me at school, you just don't know their story."

The arrogance and self-protective voice turned. "And I made something of myself, I did." He sat back and pounded his chest one time as if to put a period at the end of his sentence.

Dawn saw Mom on the back porch calling her, so she placed her board and chalk into the bag and climbed down the tree. "Coming," she called as she ran across the yard to the house. The beautiful bird disappeared with one last call after Dawn.

Alone with the pirate, Darcy thought of her simple little life. "I want to be important too," she said deep in thought. "I'm not brainy, or pretty, or leadership quality, so I create a place where things like this can happen."

"I just want to fit in somewhere," both the pirate and Darcy said at the same time and the big man faded from view.

"Dawn, I have it," she called dumping her own board into the bag and dropping it down to the ground. Darcy looked down and judged the distance to the ground and jumped out of the tree, landed on her feet with deeply bent knees, picked up the bag and started for the house.

"We should write a story! About a pirate and a king... a Swedish King...and gold..."

"That's an impossible adventure," Dawn said as she met her older sister at the back door.

"Right!" Darcy agreed.

The old fig tree seemed to smile and nod with the breeze as the two girls were swept away into a new adventure.