



Kulla-Gulla

Martha Sandwall-Bergström

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Gulla kommer till det fattiga Kullatorpet för att arbeta som hjälpehjon. Där lever paret Karlberg med sina fem barn och den föräldralösa Gulla blir genast satt på tunga sysslor. Även om hon måste arbeta hårt, trivs hon på torpet. Nu känns det som om hon hade fått ett hem och barnen är glada i den viljestarka flickan.

En dag blir torparfrun sjuk och måste föras till sjukhuset i stan. Hon vägrar blankt att ge sig av innan Gulla har lovat henne att ta hand om barnen tills hon kommer tillbaka. Gullas ansvar blir allt tyngre och när vintern kommer blir det svårt att hålla svälten borta.

Kulla-Gulla Details

Date : Published 1996 by Bonnier Carlsen (first published 1946)

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Author : Martha Sandwall-Bergström

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From Reader Review Kulla-Gulla for online ebook

ms bookjunkie says

Very realistic (if simplistic) description of an orphan girl's life in the Swedish countryside in the early 1900s. I assume it's pretty similar to what life was like in Finland then.

(What I don't understand is why I never ever ran into these books growing up? *boggled* I would've gobbled them up in no time!)

Shannon says

The story of the orphan Anna, as she is now 12 and her help at Bloom Farm is no longer needed so she now moves to the croft farmers at High Hill. Her situation here is not as it was at Bloom Farm but she bears everything with her characteristic willingness to make the best of the situation.

She is a great example of generosity and kindness.

Her story continues in Anna Keeps Her Promise

Hanna says

In Praise of Kulla Gulla and author Martha Sandwall-Bergström

I loved the "Kulla-Gulla" series as a young girl. That's an understatement. I passionately wanted to be like her.

This 1940s series contains everything from poverty and starvation to pretty dresses, faith, politics and love.

Synopsis: At the turn of last century, Gulla was raised in rural orphanage in Southern Sweden. At nine, she is considered old enough to work and is let go from the orphanage. She stays first at a farm where all the girls are named for flowers, and then with a peasant family, working as their maid. The food and roof over her head, is her pay.

Everyone who meets her loves Gulla because of her kind and considerate personality, her humility and faith. In that respect, the series is very character building for a young reader. You can't help but want to emulate Gulla's behaviour.

When the mother of the peasant family dies of TB, Gulla becomes a sort of stepmother and housekeeper in the household. The father is an alcoholic and prone to domestic violence. Gulla with her patience can handle him.

Then things take a completely unexpected new turn when **the lord of the local manor begins to suspect that Gulla is his long lost granddaughter** who was thought to have perished in a shipwreck.

After overcoming countless obstacles and never abandoning her promise to the dying peasant wife to look after her children, Gulla eventually takes her rightful place at the manor as the granddaughter of the squire. Everyone in the county is shocked that the girl they had looked down on and pitied is now the most envied little girl in the county. For Gulla, it's a culture shock.

But Gullas manners and way of speaking is not quite right for her new position, so she is sent to finishing school where she has more adventures. However, she doesn't forget her old friends, like the wise old pagan man who lived like a hermit deep in the forest, or the people at the alms house. She can't enjoy her comfortable life while others are suffering, and ends up running something of a charity program from the manor.

As she enters her late teens, expectations are that Gulla will marry somebody from a similar privileged background. However Gulla finds the men she is introduced to shallow. She hasn't forgotten the hardships of her early life.

When a socialist agitator arrives in the county to rally the peasants towards revolution and against oppression and exploitation by the squire, Gulla is taken in by the undeniable fairness his message. She falls in love for the first time. Now she is torn. Should she join Tomas in fighting the underlying causes for the gruesome experiences of her early life? Or continue to enjoy the privileged life and stay loyal to her beloved grandfather. **She has a tough choice to make.**

I believe there are something like 7 books in the series.

The poverty and suffering described in the book really affected me and countless others who read the book. People back then actually walked barefoot in the snow because they didn't have shoes, like the book described. They suffered from malnourishment and horrible diseases just like in the book. The political system was tremendously unfair, just like Gulla discovers. Some people escaped to the big cities as industrialisation started. They were equally exploited there. Others emigrated to America - themes that are explored in the book.

When I read the book there were still people alive who just about remembered such desperate times. My great grandfather who was dead, had actually been a squire in the same region of the country. The politics are realistic and explain why social democracy dominated in Sweden for almost a century. Such a cruel heartless society could not be allowed to continue.

Gulla's transformation from naive but honest faith in God to a more action-oriented faith, that eventually lead her to take an ideological stand, inspired me. No doubt Gulla's ideological transformation also reflects of the views of the author.

This series is acknowledged to have affected several generations of Swedish women and is a little gem. I think it was translated to German, Polish, Russian, English(?) and of course the other Scandinavian languages. (+Italian, see Lorelai's comment below!)

In some of the foreign editions the name "Anna" is used for Gulla (which was a nickname for "Gunilla").

Favourite memorable moments :

- The baptism of Sofia Katarina - nobody had thought of a name;
- When Gulla as a maid tried on her mother's frock in the attic of the Manor and is discovered by Mamsell;
- When Gulla was was nursed back to health by the hermit after Karlberg and Regina plotted to kill her.
- When Gulla teaches Irene a lesson at the finishing school.

—When Gulla finally dumps Ivan for Tomas.

Some covers of Kulla-Gulla books, and a key scene from the 1985 TV series

Mohammed says

An acclaimed first book in an very famous series of so called books for girls. I liked the literary use of the old Swedish language. Gulla herself was too much of vintage "Disney princess " I prefer less angelic heroine like Pippi.

Hanna Dahl says

en veldig bra bok som beskriver livet rundt 1900 på en god måte er ikke helt sikker på årstall for det eneste vi får vite om året i hele serien er er saftflaske fra 1903.

dette er en bok min mor leste for meg når jeg var liten og som jeg senere har lest tre fire ganger, fordi den er lettest og fin. Vi leste den på norsk, men jeg har lyst til å lese den på svensk. fordi det oftest er noe som går tapt i oversettelsen. dette er første bok men det er skrevet en bok som foregår tidligere #0. Boka fungerer som stand alone, men er best i serie for sluttene er ganske åpne.
