



The Pearl in the Ice

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[Andrea Reece](#) [3]

Editor's Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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If you love mystery and adventure, proper adventure that is, in dangerous, far-away places, adventure tinged with magic and that requires the protagonist to show real courage and integrity, then Cathryn Constable is the author for you. Set in an other-world that closely resembles Europe in the tense years before the outbreak of World War One, **The Pearl in the Ice** tells the story of twelve year old Marina, who we first meet dangling ?from the branch of a London plane tree in the garden of her father?s house in Hampstead.? Marina?s father is a naval commander and about to set off for Cadiz while she ? to her horror ? is being sent to a Ladies? College where she will be taught things important to young women of her class. Marina?s invalid mother left when Marina was so small that she can hardly remember her.

In fact, Marina never makes it to her ladies? college: rather she jumps trains at the station and makes her way to Portsmouth, determined to plead with her father to let her join him in the navy instead. A chance encounter on the train with the dashing Miss Smith, a secretary at the Admiralty, convinces Marina that women can work for the navy and that parents aren?t always right, but arriving in Portsmouth there are surprises in store. Her father is not the commander of the *HMS Neptune* at all but the much smaller *Sea Witch*, and their destination is not Cadiz but the far North. Discovered stowing away, Marina is allowed to stay, and plays a part in a story of espionage and heroism, in which all sorts of people turn out to be not what they seem.

As they travel further into the freezing waters, Marina discovers more about herself and about her mother and now the story also becomes deliciously mysterious, calling on old sea stories of mermaids and undersea creatures. Constable carries this off with bravura, blending the real world and the magical together perfectly, and, after the devastation of the war, leaves Marina with the power and determination to create a new world, using a language she has plucked ?like pearls? from the drowned depths of the ancient sea. It?s a story to make young readers believe anything is possible, and all the better for that.

Read our [Q&A interview with Cathryn Constable](#) [4].

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