



Glen Fjord

by
Margarethe von Glehn Luther

Glen Fored

A fairy tale

by

Margarethe von Glehn Luther

A LarJan Production
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania
2009



Introduction

By Janet E. Luther, June 2009

The following will help explain some of the references in Margaret Luther's story "Glen Foerd" written in September, 1970, which weaves fact with her own special kind of fantasy.



Margaret (nee von Glehn 1909-2001) and Fred (1907-1992) Luther lived at Glen Foerd in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, from 1970 to 1978, first in the Cottage during the time this story was written, then in a part of the servant's quarters in the mansion, and finally, for a short period, in the Gate

House. Fred was hired through his contacts in the Lutheran

Church as gardener for Mrs. Tonner, who was, by then, a very old lady. (Yes, apparently Mrs. Tonner did play the organ on the staircase, “Home Sweet Home” being her favorite piece. And there were indeed Pinkerton guards at the mansion.)

After Mrs. Tonner’s death in 1972, Fred was kept on as caretaker by the Lutheran Church. It was his joy to restore the old gardens, particularly the ancient trellised rose garden and to unearth the old tennis court and the tower, which we loved to explore. Margaret made flower arrangements for dinners that the Lutheran Church arranged, led tours of the mansion, and catalogued Mrs. Tonner’s extensive collection of prints.

The Luthers were Baltic Germans, whose families had lived in Estonia for generations, and, while their English was excellent, the story shows delightful Germanisms. In 1939, during World War II they were forced to leave their homeland, fleeing first to what is now Gdansk, Poland, then to Flensburg in northern Germany, and eventually immigrating to Marietta, OH, in 1955 along with their two sons, Lars and Holger. Holger and his wife Nancy live in Topsfield Massachusetts. Lars and I had five children; when the Luthers moved to Glen Foerd these children were ages 2, 4, 6 and two 8-year-olds. They loved visiting their

grandparents, whom they called Mutti and Vă (pronounced “Fay”), at Glen Foerd and playing in the gardens, especially climbing in the tangle of three or four enormous weeping trees which used to grow near the Cottage.



Margaret was a talented artist in all media, and particularly skilled in silhouette work (called Scherenschnitte in German) as well as a gifted storyteller with connections in Denmark; hence the references to “Nisseemor” (Elf mother) and “Nissefar” (Elf father). Silas McCallister in the story was purely Margaret’s invention, although there was a historic figure named Charles Macalester who had, in fact, built Glen Foerd in 1850.

There was a statue near the rose trellis garden, which may actually have been called “The Blind Girl”. But Mutti and Vä christened her Euridice – spelled Euridike in German. In the Greek legend Euridice was beloved by Orpheus who played sweet songs to her on his lyre.



After she died on their wedding day Orpheus followed her to the underworld; eventually his sweet music persuaded Hades to let her go on condition that Orpheus not look at his bride before they reached the land of the living. But Orpheus could not wait and his brief glance returned her to the world of the dead. Mutti and Vä felt that the statue represented Euridice listening for the sound of Orpheus’s lyre.

There were also three statues in the large pool, which was so badly damaged, that Vä could never get it to hold water, although he did fill the smaller pool (and even added goldfish, which, unfortunately, died when he absentmindedly applied insect spray to the surrounding foliage). There was a rumor that a

passage (now-sealed) once actually existed from the small gardener's shed in the rose garden down to the river and that it had been a part of the underground railroad for ex-slaves.

The dog called Lord Grey in the story was inspired by the statue at the top of the steps leading down to the river. Mutti and Vä had, at the time the story was written, two cats, Semarimis and Nessie and a huge, lovable part-collie dog called Pansie. Mrs. Bonham (who had given Mutti "White Shoulders" perfume) was a friend of Mutti's from Marietta, Ohio. In the seventies a lady named Mrs. Rafferty owned a small antique shop just a block from Glen Foerd where Mutti often went to buy "blackies", silver dishes, black with tarnish, that she would lovingly polish until they sparkled.

The underground "crypt" in the story is behind the Cottage, a large empty hole covered by a huge cracked slab. Of course, at one point, we all went down inside just to see it, but Vä was always worried that the grandchildren would somehow come to grief and was careful to see that it was securely covered.

Mutti would love knowing that others are also enjoying her story!



Left: Molly, Chris,
Paula, Katy and
Erik in 1971

Right: Chris,
Erik, Kirsten,
Paula and
Molly (with
“Lord Grey”)
at Glen Foerd
in 2008





Glen Foerd

One evening I was sitting on the porch to watch the young moon rise behind the tall spruces when suddenly I felt a cold breeze coming from the direction of the Tower. I looked around and saw a white cloud or fog emerge from underneath the roof. It floated toward our house over the nursery garden and stopped at the base of the staircase. There it started to concentrate, whirl, and twist, and slowly the shape of a tall man formed. There was no doubt; it was a ghost. I was so scared that I was ice cold and trembled so that my teeth were rattling. The ghost opened the door and began to ascend the steps. There was no noise. I could not move; I was frozen with horror. As the ghost reached the landing he took off his large hat with the trailing feather, bowed low to me,



and said, “Good evening, fair lady. Don’t be afraid. I am your devoted servant.” His voice was hollow and seemed to come from everywhere.

“Good evening, Sir,” I muttered, still shaking all over.

“My name is Silas McCallister and I have come to win your friendship as you are living now on my property.”



“Your property? Are you then the Silas McCallister who is resting in his family vault right behind our laundry kitchen?”

“Yes, my fair lady, but I have left that dreary place and live again in my tower to finish my work. I am writing the story of my adventures, when I was the captain of the “Sea-Serpent”. Once, long ago, when I was sailing to the Indies, a buccaneer seized my ship and forced me on pain of death to sail his ship over the various oceans. Thirty years we traveled over the seven seas, and had the most incredible adventures ever experienced by man. My book would make Marco Polo and Sinbad the Sailor look like kindergarten stories. I cannot rest until I have given to posterity this unique book.”

“I would like to read that book,” I said, warming up and gaining confidence.

“I would be glad to dedicate it to you, my fair lady,” said Silas and bowed low again.

“Thank you,” I said, wondering about his old-fashioned politeness.

“Tonight, my fair lady, I would be so audacious to ask you a great favor.”

“What can I do for you?”

“I am about to woo a fair maiden, a princess of a far away country, an island of beauty and wonders. When I was still young and sailing a tea clipper to the Indies a storm blew me to the coast of that island. I saw her dance in the moonlight and I could not help but catch her and bring her here to my place to marry her. Well, she did not like the idea and my sister, Miss Martha, was mad at me. “What kind of a trish-trash are you bringing home, Silas!” she used to say. “You owe it to our name to marry one of the fine girls of the eligible families here in town. Take her out of the house immediately.” The princess Aminta cried and my sister spit and nagged – finally I shut the princess up in the rose-house to make her think things over and to get her away from Martha’s

wrath. Then I had to sail again. When I came home, I found out that Aminta had made friends with all my gardeners and the hired men on my property and that they had dug a tunnel underneath the rose-house to help her escape. I fired them all and had the tunnel closed. As I had to go again, I gave Martha the keys to the house and told her if she would let princess Aminta escape I would shoot her. Martha growled, but obeyed. At this journey I was seized by the buccaneers. When I came home after thirty or more years, Martha told me that the princess had died. Martha had not become softer during these years; she kept nagging at me because of marrying a society girl. So I built the Tower and moved into the upper room to see the ships sail by and write my extraordinary story.

Well, Martha died and I put her into the family vault, where my parents and grandparents are resting. Finally as I remember it, I got sick and everything went dark for a long time; I do not know how long. As I woke up from my long sleep, I found myself in a very dark place. A little bit of light only trickled through a crack overhead. Suddenly I remembered my unfinished book. "I have to get out of here," I thought. I got up and tried to lift the slab overhead. It yielded. Just as I was stepping out, Martha

woke up. "Silas, Silas," she yelled. "You are supposed to rest now. Come back immediately." But I jumped out in a hurry and slammed the slab shut so that it broke.

"Oh, that's why it is broken I wondered how that had happened."

"Sometimes at night she is still yelling; people think probably that the cats are fighting."

"I thought so too; why, then it is your sister."

"Yes, madam, she won't leave me alone. Well, I went back into my Tower. My studio was pretty much gone, but I still can write and watch those strange boats of nowadays. I don't like them; they are noisy and ugly. But still, they are boats."

"And now you want to marry your princess?"

"Yes, my gracious lady, I very much want to. But during all these years I could not see her because of my disreputable condition. My hair is not brushed, I have not shaved, and my moustaches and beard are all messed up. Mirror and toilet articles have been robbed as have almost all of my belongings. Fortunately, the burglars were not interested in my book. I have watched you, my gracious lady, and your gallant husband, and I

noticed that you are fine and worthy people. So I came to show you my friendship and to ask you a great favor.”

“What can we do for you? We shall be glad to help you as much as we can.”

“Would you have the great kindness to let me use your bathroom? I need badly to wash, shave, and brush my hair.”

“With the greatest pleasure,” I said, thinking that I shall clean up later with Dutch Cleanser and Chlorox. “Would you like a bath too?”

“No, thank you, but I would appreciate some perfume. We were not used to spoil our skins with water and what you call soap.”

I led the way to the bathroom, showed him around, and got my big flask of “White Shoulders” Mrs. Bonham had given me.

I went back on the porch marveling about that strange happening. After an hour Silas came back. He surely



did look better now. His hair fell in waves onto his shoulders; his long moustaches were nearly trimmed and drooping down in an arch. His beard, being a spot only on his chin, was very long and curly. It reached down to his broad belt with the golden buckle. Though he was grayish fog only, I could now discern some colors. His coat was bluish, richly embroidered with gold. His trousers were red with a wide golden bordure at the seam. He wore a white lace collar and a bejeweled brooch on his large hat. The trailing ostrich feather glowed a soft red. He was a handsome man, tall and well built.

“I am unable to put my feelings of gratitude into proper words, my fair lady. If there is anything I could do for you, I would be the happiest man,” he said.

“If you win the beautiful princess, I would love to get an invitation to your wedding party.”

“It would be the greatest honor to me if you, my fair lady, and Mr. Luther would be my guests. Would you like to come with me to the rose-house and meet Princess Aminta?”

“I surely would love to see her.”

So we walked over to the rose-house. A horrible scream rent the calmness of the night.

“Ach, those cats are fighting again. Semiramis always attacks Nessie.”

“No, Madam, that is Martha yelling with fury. She has sensed that I want to see my princess. But do not be afraid; she cannot get out. I put a heavy stone on her coffin.” He grinned with satisfaction.

Silas was quite perturbed that the doors were not locked. “Maybe she is gone,” he said and looked inside the house.

“Aminta, my love-bird, come out,” he cooed.

Silence.

“Aminta – ”

“Look,” I said, and pointed to the roof. There, out of the pigeon house, came a bony ghastly hand with fingers like claws.



The hand waved and a screechy voice said:

“Here I am. Look how beautiful I am after your dear sister let me starve to death. But I

scratched her face with my last bit of energy. That wicked witch. Oh, I am hungry, so hungry . . .”

“Come out, Miss Aminta. I shall get you something to eat.”

“I come – ”

A white shape appeared behind the fertilizer sacks and came floating out of the door. Silas stepped back in horror and gazed. An old shriveled witch with bony limbs, a pointed eagle nose and protruding chin stood before him. Her clothes were in rags and were hanging around her like a too-big bag. Her back was bent and she looked at him cross-eyed.

“You are not my Aminta, you are an evil witch pretending to be my lovely princess,” muttered Silas, appalled, and warded her off with his hands. “You are not Aminta.”

“Yes, I am. Yes, I am,” giggled the old woman, “That’s what your dear sister made out of me.”

“I’ll get you something to eat and some other clothes to wear. Yours are covered with dust and cobwebs. What would you like to eat?”

“Anything, anything, my dear lady,” she screeched, “Anything, I am so hungry.

Martha kept screaming and yowling, but I tried not to be afraid of her. I went home to get a sandwich and a glass of milk.

I placed the food and drink before her.

“Oh, I can’t eat it. I am not a privileged ghost like Silas, who is supposed to write a famous book. I can’t lift the glass nor pick up the sandwich.”

“I’ll feed you,” I said though I felt terrified.

She managed to gulp some milk and munch some bread and liverwurst.

“That’s good,” she said between two bites. “That’s good. I feel better now. Thank you.

When she had finished, she looked at me and said, “Would you help me to cast off the spell that witch Martha put on me and help me to be young and pretty again?”

“If I can do it I would love to, but I don’t know how,” I said.

“I’ll teach you, my precious, I’ll teach you. Now pay attention and don’t miss one word. All right?”

“Let me get a notebook and a pencil. I shall write up everything you say.” I ran back home again and heard Martha howl and yell.

“Now listen,” said Aminta. “First you will select a completely white clean sheet. When the moon is full, you will spread the sheet over me and sprinkle a brew over me. I shall give you the recipe for it. And while you sprinkle me you will recite:

Abra-ca-dabra
Abra-ca-dabra
Abra-ca-dabra
Dreimal schwarzer Kater.
Bei den Schwänzen aller Teufelchen,
Bei des Teufels Huf und Horn,
Bei seiner Grossmutter langer, warzenreicher Nase,
Sei schön und jung.
Be young and pretty again.
Abra-ca-dabra.

“That is German,” I said, “Do you know what that means?”

“I don’t, and I don’t care. Just recite it and do as I told you and everything will be fine. Now the recipe:

3 peppercorns
3 cloves
3 red nightshade berries
1 teaspoon salt
1 dash cinnamon
1 dash nutmeg
1 dash chili powder
1 rotten egg, well beaten
1 good-sized onion, minced

3 garlic cloves, minced
1 finger of an old leather glove, cut into strips
3 cobwebs
3 thimbles full of dust from the cellar
3 drops of blood from your finger wearing your wedding
ring
the tail of one mouse
3 tablespoons of castor oil
water

Sauté all these ingredients in the castor oil. Put into a deep pot and pour boiling water over it, about 3 cups. Bring to a rolling boil, then simmer for 3 hours. Strain and chill the brew. That is all.”

“How shall I get a tail of a mouse since Semiramis never lets anyone touch her mice?”

“That’s your business,” said Aminta, shrugging her skinny shoulders. “Did you bring some clothes?”

“Yes, I did.” I gave her my yellow knit, which is very light.

“You will have to help me out of my old clothes and into the new one,” she said. “Remember that I am not a privileged ghost. I cannot do things myself. Let’s go inside the house. Silas is not supposed to watch me.”

We went inside. I clenched my teeth and tried to tear her clothes down, but I had nothing but humid air in my hand.

“Hold on, hold on,” said Aminta and wiggled and writhed until she was free of them. There was nothing left of her but a skeleton. I shivered.

“Now put on my new dress,” she commanded.

I dropped it on top of her and tried to be very gentle. But the weight brought her down. There was nothing but a little mist underneath the yellow dress, lying on the floor.

“It’s all right. I shall manage,” she said weakly. “And now, go home, both of you, and don’t come back until the moon is full and you have made the brew. Don’t forget that the sheet has to be immaculate. Be gone now.”

I did not think that she was very friendly or polite. I left rather taken aback. Silas tried to excuse her, “She was just embarrassed, poor thing. Forget it, please, my gracious lady. Everything will be different when the spell is broken.”

We went back home and Silas thanked me in the politest way. He took his hat off, bowed low and wished all blessings on me.

Next day I went over all my sheets to find an immaculate one. That was not easy as I have used Oil-O-Sol so much against muscle cramps. That stuff leaves yellow spots, which no soap can remove. Finally I found one but it had a hole. I mended it very carefully and put it on a special place. The tail of the mouse was much more difficult. It took me several days to coax Semiramis to drop her dead mouse that I could cut off the tail. Finally I did it by scaring her with horrible noises. Everything else was easy – but the smell – I nearly swooned. After the brew was cooked, with the ventilator going all the time and the door wide open, I still had to throw out the pot; I could not wash it clean any more.

The moon was full and I waited for Silas with my jar of chilled brew. At ten minutes to twelve he came and was radiant with anticipation. As we came to the rose-house, Aminta was waiting for us standing in the moonlight. She looked even more horrible than before. When my watch was twelve, I threw the sheet over her and started reciting the charm and sprinkled the stinking mess over the whole business. Aminta did not budge underneath the sheet. There was deep silence. We did not move either, but stared at the sheet. It was lying motionless in the moonlight covered with dark spots from the brew and stinking.

“I shall never get that cleaned up any more, nor shall I get out the smell; I shall have to bury it,” I thought.

Just then something black and hairy with a long tail came crawling out from underneath the sheet, stretched its hairy limbs, unfolded some batwings, and flew away in the direction of the family vault. After a little while Martha gave a blood-curdling shriek – the spell had returned to her. Slowly Aminta rose to her feet. How would she look? She threw off her cover. Yes, there she was, young and beautiful. All three of us broke into laughter of relief. Silas took her into his arms and kissed her.

“After three days we shall have our wedding and everybody will be invited, everybody, everybody,” shouted Aminta and started dancing with joy. She danced away in the direction of the river. Silas followed her, and I let them go to enjoy each other alone.

After two days the mailman brought us a big letter with decorations on the envelope, beautifully lettered, and written in an old-fashioned way. Mr. and Mrs. Fred M. Luther, Esquire. Who wrote this way nowadays? On the back of the envelope there was a red seal with a magnificent coat of arms. Who could that be? Well, it was the wedding invitation to be held in the basement of the mansion where the big wine barrel was. What should we wear? That was the big question. Vä should wear a

frock-coat with a white vest and I a fancy dress. We did not have things like that. Suddenly, I discovered a note on the foot of the invitation card: Come as you are and be comfortable. That was a relief. In the evening I walked over to the rose-house to meet my friends and thank them for the invitation, but they were not there. Instead I heard sobbing and crying coming from the direction of the pond and also splashing of water, giggling and shouting. What was that? I ran to investigate. The fountains were on, who knew how to get them going? Nobody knew it on the whole place. We had asked everybody. To my great amazement I saw the bronze boys throwing water at each other, shouting and laughing. The girl in the middle caught the water in her glass bowl and every once in a while she emptied it on the head of one of the boys just to tease them. In return the boys turned the jet of water on her, but she just laughed. They were so noisy, that I was afraid they would wake up Mrs. Tonner. In one corner of the pond Erydike was standing with her hands before her face and sobbing her heart out. How did she get here and why was she crying? I walked over to her corner and asked gently, "what are you doing here and what is wrong with you?"

“I am trying to wash off the green mold from my face, my arms and legs and to wash my shirt, but I can’t get it off. Tomorrow is the wedding. How can I go dirty and moldy to a party of that kind? And I want so badly to go. Please, please help me.”

I ran home to get soap, Dutch Cleanser, Chlorox, and a brush. I worked and worked and worked, but I could not get it off. The mold had grown into her skin.

“I shall get some oil paint and paint you over,” I said.

“Oh, no,” said Eurydike, “It would ruin my marble. It is marble from Carrara. That cannot be painted.”

“Don’t you know that the Greeks always painted their statues in vivid colors? You would be much more stylish than being just plain white marble.”

“Is that so?”

“Yes, my dear, they did not know that in former times.”

“Well, then go ahead and



paint me up. Please, blue eyes, golden hairs, real gold, of course, and a flowery shirt.”

“Tomorrow morning first thing: painting of Eurydike,” I said. Eurydike evidently wanted to say something, but started coughing and writhing, holding her tummy.

“What’s wrong? Are you sick?”

“I feel awful,” said Eurydike, between coughs. “I have a belly ache and I feel nauseated. As I was washing my face I swallowed a frog. I don’t know how that happened. But the frog is wiggling and that makes me sick.”

“A little Pepto Bismol will help you, I am sure.” I ran home to get it. As she is not very tall I gave her only two teaspoons. Suddenly the frog jumped out of her mouth. Evidently he did not like the taste of Pepto Bismol.

“Now you will be all right very soon. Go back now on your pedestal and relax.” I escorted her back and helped her climb on her perch.

“Thank you so much,” she mumbled and fell asleep right away. She was exhausted, poor thing.

Meanwhile the shouting and laughing got louder and louder in the pond. I went back to tell them to be quiet.

“We are just frolicking because of tomorrow. We are invited too,” said the girl.

“What are the boys going to wear? They cannot possibly come in their trunks.”

“Come as you are, said the letter of invitation,” said one of the boys, “so everything is all right.”

“Stop that racket how because of the old lady and tell me your names.”

“Jim is to my right hand and Jeff to my left hand,” said the girl, “and my name is Jill.” They were all panting by now.

“Tell me, what shall we give?” said Jill. “We can’t come without a gift.”

“I shall give them my bathing trunks,” said Jim, and Jeff laughed, “I shall give a frog or a water bug, ha, ha, ha.”

“Do as you please,” I said. “Maybe they will like it.”

“I shall catch some hot sunshine for them. That will dry them up. Being all the time so humid, they might develop rheumatism. I think that this is a good gift,” said Jill. “I can pack a good amount of it into my bowl.” They all laughed and started their horseplay again.

“If you don’t stop it right now I shall pour some gasoline into your pond and light a match. That will melt you down. You hear me?”

At this very moment the young Pinkerton guard came running, pistol in hand. He focused his flashlight on the pond. Everybody stood motionless as usual. The fountains had died down.



“Did you see some kids around, Mrs. Luther?” asked the guardsman.

“Well, I chased them out,” I said. “They are gone now. Thank you.”

“Something strange is happening,” he said, looking very grave. “Today the mailman brought a big letter and the address read: To Nissemor and Nissefar of Glen Foerd. The old lady was so upset about it that she has been calling all the post offices in all of Philadelphia. She ended up calling the president of the mail company in New York. But she did not find out who that might be. It is very strange.”

“I know who that is,” I said, “but it is too late to explain to you the whole issue. It is a lengthy story. I shall tell you another time. But don’t worry; it is all right, perfectly all right. Good night now; it is late. See you.”

As I turned on the light in the dining room, a big letter was lying on the floor, similar to that I had gotten. It read: Nisse Hans Andersen, Cottage, Glen Foerd.

“What do you say,” I thought, “so we have a little Nisse in the house. That is nice and good to know. Take your letter, little Hans Andersen,” I sang out, “I shall see you tomorrow evening.”

I put the letter on the table and went to bed.

I got up very early in the morning of the wedding day to paint up Eurydike. I sprayed her hair golden, painted her eyes forget-me-not blue and put a pattern on her dress of poppies, cornflowers, daisies, buttercups, and forget-me-nots, some Queen Anne’s Lace too to blur the vivid colors in some places. Eurydike was radiant with joy.

“My wedding present is ready too,” she said. “It is some genuine dust from Rome where I come from, as you know. I found some in one of my dress’s folds. I put it into a pill box that I found here lying around. Maybe you could paint a flower on it.”

I painted a little daisy on it and discarded the prescription in it. I could hardly discover the precious dust, but that was as well.

“See you tonight, Eurydike,” I said and hurried home. Just as I was putting my paints away the doorbell chimed. It was Nisseemor, tiny but chubby and plump, with her little red cap fashioned in the Dutch way with its corners turned up.

“Please, Margaret, can you help me? I need a cookbook. I decided to cook the wedding meal as my present. But then it came to my mind that ghosts are probably on a certain diet. Do you have a book how to cook for ghosts?”

“I am sorry, I don’t have anything on that subject, but maybe I could slip over to the Antique Shop and look among the old books. Maybe I find something.”

“Please do that. May I wait until you are back here? You cannot call me because our old lady is watching her telephone closely.”

“Of course you may. Make yourself comfortable. I shall be back soon.”



I knew where the books were kept and started looking them over. The friendly lady told me that she had some more in the basement. So we went there too because I had not found anything I could use. She showed me an old box with quite a number of very old, dusty books. I went through the whole box until my hands were black with dirt and dust. The last book I picked up seemed promising. The title read: "The witch's cookbook with an appendix of special brews and concoctions of great potency." I ran over the contents. There it was: how to entertain ghosts, page 213. Eagerly I started reading:

"Ghosts have delicate bodies of vapor and ectoplasm. Therefore, you don't serve substantial meals. Keep it in the form of a series of appetizers. But use lots of spices and fragrances because some of them are content to enjoy the various smells only. The unicorn for instance, feeds on the perfume of roses only. Here are some suggestions: the recipes are following.

Main dishes

Roasted roaches in saffron sauce

Spider chili with linseeds

Fly ragout with milkweed and red nightshadow berries (very good)

Grasshopper legs fried in dishwashing soap

Mosquitoes cooked in vitriolic acid with garlic
Dinosaur teeth (from the Museum) soaked 3 hours in
sulfuric acid with matured onions (very elegant)
Sauteed centipedes, castor oil, with spices and mulch baked
in old cowhorns (suggestion for spices: vanilla, cinnamon,
pepper, salt, and oregano)
Bread: Bread made of river mud and coal dust, served with
fresh pitch
Variety of cooked fish tails and fins served with matured
eggs
Caviar from snail's eggs
Soup from man-o-wars and algae
Leipziger Allerlei from snakeskins and weeds

Salads

Poison ivy leaves in gasoline (may be lit when served)
Rubber tree leaf hunks in petroleum
Worms in aspic
Minced newspapers in mayonnaise and mustard (should not
be missed)

Sweets

Lichen, nettles, thistles, all glazed in sugar
Compote of fox grapes cooked in India ink
Toadstool ice cream
Beverages
Chlorox (with the roasts)
Ammonia (with fish)
Hydrogen peroxide (with dessert)
Methyl alcohol with coffee (of course, Monkey-coffee)

Wedding Cake

Attic dust
Snake eggs
Saccharin
Chips of crayons
Decorated with lather from shaving lotion

I made sure that all the recipes were sufficiently described, paid, and hurried home. I found Nissemor in the kitchen busy baking a cake.

“Have you started already?” I asked.

“That’s not for the wedding. I made it for you as a thank you. It is a genuine Danish Nisse-cake,” she added proudly.

“Here is your book. You will find all you need on page 213. Good luck to you. But I must confess that we shall not be able to eat such a menu. It is too strange.”

“I shall make some sweet rice with raisins anyway for Nissefar and me, so I just shall make some more to share with you two. But now I shall hurry home to start cooking. Thanks a million.”

I was contemplating the smells, which would fill the wedding hall and how to guard against them. But all of a sudden a thought flashed through my mind. We had no wedding present. What should we give? Jewelry? I had noticed that Aminta had no jewels. She probably had given them to the gardener and the hired men to entice them to dig her tunnel. But we could not afford any rubies nor diamonds, and, of course, it would be too heavy for her to wear metals and stones. But, of course, I could make their silhouettes. There would not be any photographer to take their wedding pictures. I could make them out of white paper and put phosphor on top. Then they would glow in the dark. Mounted on velvet paper they might look very unusual. Vä came in.

“I think I shall give them a bottle of cognac so that they get away from drinking ammonia or Chlorox or heaven knows what. They will like it, I am sure.” He dressed and went downtown to get it.



Suddenly Pansie barked ferociously. I ran downstairs to see what was going on. A big grey dog was standing in the open door. The

dog opened its mouth, but instead of a big bark it talked with an almost human voice:

“Good evening, Mrs. Luther. I am Lord Grey; you know the dog which stands watching this place before the mansion. I have a message for you. You had better take Pansie and me along this evening. Mischief is planned by the fairy of the weeds, a vicious old woman and her naughty sons. I know everything that is going on in this place. I heard them plotting against you and Mr. Luther. If you would take us along we surely would teach them a lesson.”

Pansie seemed to have understood now too, because she wagged her tail and went to greet Lord Grey. “Thank you very much, Lord Grey,” I said. “I appreciate your kindness and loyalty more than I can tell you. Certainly I shall take you two along. We leave at about eleven thirty. Can you come here and join us?”

“Yes, Madam. I’ll be here. But now I have to return to my duties.”

Nissefar came around the corner and waved to me.

“Here is the program for tonight. It will be a solemn affair. At eleven thirty we will all go in procession to the tree-house for the ceremony. After the congratulations we will return the other way round, passing the rose-house and walking along the river.

Dinner will be served as soon as we are back in the basement. I have written place cards so that there will be no confusion about where to sit. And you, Mr. Luther, will you please address the young couple with an oration and bring up the toast?"

"Gee," said Vä, "I hate to talk in public, but I shall be glad to toast them." Vä had just returned with his bottle of cognac.

"You are certainly disappointing me," said Nissefar. "Then I shall have to do it. Okay then, I'll see you at eleven thirty." He walked off and I could see that he was offended, even angry.

At about ten thirty we started to get ready.

"I am not going to wear my usual clothes at such an occasion. I shall wear my rose-colored nightie, which is the most elegant garment I have. You know, the one Lars gave me for my birthday."

Vä laughed and said, "Then I should wear my pajamas? And put on my slippers?"

"Why not?" I said. "All these fairies and pixies are going to wear their colorful costumes. How would you look then in your dark grey suit? Like a scarecrow, I suppose. Put on the blue silk pajamas Nancy gave you and I shall sew some gold trimmings on

it. There is just enough time left to do it. You will look like an ambassador from the Virgin Islands.

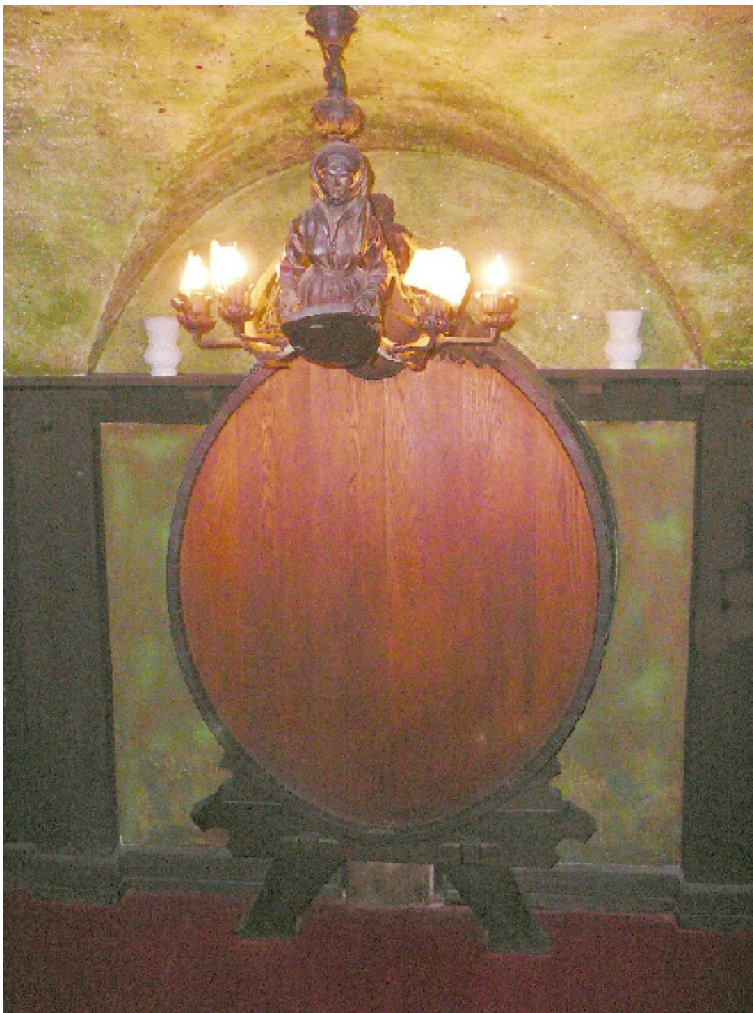
I did not wait for further replies but sat to work. Vä looked grand and very stylish. I put on my pretty nightie, golden slippers and slipped a rose into my hair. Now we were ready. Lord Grey was barking already at the door.

“Good that you come, Lord Grey,” I said and patted his head. He wagged his tail, sniffed Pansie over, and we four set out for the mansion.



The Wedding

The big hall looked lovely. It was lit by candles only and decorated with dark green conifer branches. In the dim light the



huge barrel looked even more enormous than usual, almost threatening, but very impressive. A big crowd was milling around. It was the funniest crowd I had ever seen, most colorful and different in sizes. There were fairies, bejeweled and glittering in

various pastel colored dresses, pixies in all shades of greens, little gnomes in different earth colors, Nisser with their red caps, and other folks, I had

first to find out who they were. As we descended the steps, Lord Grey settled on one side of the upper step and told Pansie to sit on the other side. That way they had a good look at what was going on.

Euridike waved to us and laughed happily, her golden hair shining in the soft light. Our Nisse, Hans Andersen, shook hands with us and we talked with him in the friendliest way. He introduced us to the Doktor, Nissefar's eldest son. He held his degree from Penn State University and wore the University's robe, but his red Nisse cap of course. He was in charge of the book collections in the mansion, as well as the picture galleries.

"I am very busy," he said. "I have constantly to chase away termites, silverfish, book lice, and other bugs. Besides, the dusting is a tremendous job. I try to keep order among the books, but, alas, they are constantly mixed up. It is a chore."

Nissefar's second son wore a frock coat and a conductor's baton. He was called Maestro, had studied music, and was in charge of the pianos and the big golden organ.

“I can’t get a man to tune the instruments,” he complained. I have not the physical strength to tighten the wires and the



pianos are woefully off-key. Besides, Mrs. Tonner always plays “Home, Sweet Home” on the organ and I am sick and tired of hearing that only. If we could have a good concert one day I would be a happy Nisse again.”

“Maybe when the Church takes over you will get it,” I said.

He heaved a sigh and introduced me to the Gardener. He was a worried looking old man, a ghost, who probably was living in the Gatehouse. He carried a watering can and refused to put it down as the Maestro suggested.

“It is so dry that I have to water my trees and plants wherever I go. The poor things are so thirsty.” He, too, shook

hands with us and said to Vä how much he appreciated his work in the garden.

“We shall work together and later on live together. I am looking forward to having some company. The winter nights are long and lonely,” he said, spilling some water on the floor.



A tall, stout ghost came sailing along. He wore a uniform with the coat-of-arms of the Foerderer family embroidered on his left side.

“Hello, Fred,” he said. “I am George, the coachman. Glad to meet you. Take all those darned machines out of the garage. They are frightening my horses and are bumping into my carriages and coaches. Besides we all can’t stand the smell of gasoline. We like good old horse manure. Will you? In return, you and



Margaret may ride with me and my best horses in the finest carriage wherever you want to go. Wouldn’t that be fun?” He

stretched out a big, hairy paw.

“And this is Larry, the groom,” he added. “Come, Larry, say hello, you louse.”

Larry was a skinny youngster of about 16 or 17, cross-eyed and rather dirty. He hadn't even washed for the party. We did not shake hands with him.

George continued talking about the golden days when he was riding the carriages with four white horses to church with the family. Grand days, they had been. But now, pooh, these old stinky cars, noisy and ugly. He would have talked forever if we had not walked off to greet other folks.



We bowed to the rose fairies in pink silks with golden crowns, the rhododendron and azalea fairies, and many other flowers. They were simply beautiful and I wondered if these lovely beings would dine on roaches and spiders and drink Chlorox or ammonia. The tree fairies were handsome young boys in brown and green velvets and silks in medieval style. They all smiled at Vă and thanked him for having freed them from the deadly weeds and creepers. Their voices rang like crystal bells. We were enchanted.

The Rose Fairy gave Vă a kiss and asked him to walk with her at the procession. He gladly agreed and from then on the fairy stayed with us.

Suddenly a horrible looking fat old woman pushed her way towards us. She had a bony face with a vicious expression. From her mottled dress seeds of all kinds were constantly dropping or flying away. It was the weed fairy.

“Here he is, boys, our deadly enemy,” she croaked. “Come and get him.” A host of nasty little devils came running from everywhere, the fairies of thistles, burrs, creepers, poison ivy, and hundreds of other weeds. They carried pointed thorns, ropes with nooses, squirted poison from little flasks, and hurled bunches of roots covered with fire ants and wasps. The good fairies fled in horror. It would have ended badly for us if, in this moment, Lord Grey and Pansie, had not come down the steps like missiles. Lord Grey seized the fat weed fairy mother and Pansie overran the little devils. Lord Grey helped after he had finished the vulgar old woman. In five minutes there was nothing left of them but a bundle of weeds. The old Gardener had produced a spray can from his pocket and had sprayed Raid against the murderous insects. Now they, too, were gone.

All of a sudden there was a wild applause. Everybody rejoiced that the weeds were dead and the dogs and the Gardener were embraced and praised. Finally the fairies formed a circle around the Gardener, the dogs, and us, and danced, singing our praise.

At this moment a large door opened and, led by Nissefar, Silas McCallister and his princess made their entrance. Nissefar carried a big red book with golden print on it. He wore a midnight blue uniform with the embroidered coat-of-arms. On his red cap was a badge. He looked very solemn.

“He is going to perform the ceremony at the tree-house,” the rose fairy whispered to us.

I wondered what kind of a book that was, knowing that the Nisser could not read the Bible. As they passed towards the staircase to start the procession I got a glimpse of the title: *Alice in Wonderland*. So he had chosen the book as a decoration only.

The rose fairy took Vä's hand and followed the young couple. The Fairy of the Japanese Maple reached for my hand (I love these trees especially) and the rest of them followed in an endless tail.

The tree-house was lit by fireflies who had agreed to cooperate. It looked lovely.

We all formed a circle around the young couple and Nissefar. He lifted the book high and asked:

“Silas McCallister, are you promising to love this here Princess Aminta until Doomsday?”

“Yes, Sir, I will,” said Silas.

“Princess Aminta, are you promising to love this here Captain Silas McCallister and serve and obey him until Doomsday?”

The “Yes, Sir” of Aminta was drowned in terrific howls and shrieks. The cats, I thought. I left Semiramis outside.

“Martha,” whispered Silas so that I could hear it.

“She can’t get out,” I said to myself.

“I solemnly declare you man and wife,” said Nissefar. “I am the oldest in the place and as such my word was weight.”

He lowered the book and stepped aside.

“Kiss each other,” he commanded.

As they kissed everybody applauded. So they could kiss a little more. Nissefar started with the congratulations and we all followed. As we marched back, all the fireflies flew overhead

forming a glittering cloud. Lord Grey walked on the right side of the procession and Pansie on the left so nothing bad could happen to us. Everybody had started talking, and it was quite a noise going on so that I was afraid that the Pinkerton Guards might hear us or even Mrs. Tonner. Fortunately, the young guardsman was so plunged in studying how to write novels that he did not hear us, and Mrs. Tonner was sound asleep. As we passed the pond the fountains were on and glittered in the moonlight. It was a splendid sight.

“I did not see Jill, Jim, and Jeff,” I said. “They did not come after all.”

At this moment the boys came out of the bushes shouting, where they had hidden. To my horror they were naked, just as they used to be. Jill came dancing along carrying her glass bowl filled with sunshine to dry them up, as she had planned. She placed the bowl at the feet of the young couple, congratulated them, and explained her gift. The boys came too, Jeff with a gold fish and Jim with a silver fish.

“For good luck,” they said. They placed them into the glass bowl where they dried up immediately and turned into gold and silver. They all had flutes made of reeds and started playing

sweet tunes. Like a band they marched before the young couple, and with the music playing we rejoined the hall.

Meanwhile Nisseemor had set the tables with costly chinaware and silver; crystal glasses sparkled in the candlelight and flower arrangements perfumed the air. Nisseemor had her own orchestra consisting of hundreds of cicadas and katydids highlighted by several hooting and shrieking owls. The noise was terrific. Nisseemor looked lovely with her apple cheeks, blue sparkling eyes and friendly smiles for everybody. On one wall was a long table carrying hundreds of little dishes and decanters.

“Dear guests,” announced Nisseemor, “please help yourselves to the wedding meal. On each place card is a number so you know when to walk up and serve yourselves. Silas and Aminta, will you please take the lead.”

As we were the guests of honor, our turn was right after Nissefar. I shuddered, thinking of the menu. But Nisseemor pointed to a big bowl with the steaming sweet rice and smiled.

The fairies got honey each from their flowers and the rest enjoyed the ghost menu.

When everybody was seated Nissefar poured the beverages. Vä gave him the bottle of cognac to present to Silas.

“Do it yourself, Fred,” said Nissefar. “It is anyway time for the gifts.”

So Vä walked to Silas and gave him the bottle with French cognac and asked him to try it. Silas hollered with joy.

“I have not had that famous drink since centuries,” he said, “Thanks a million. That makes for me the celebration.”

Nissefar gave him a stern look, but did not say anything. He nudged Vä:

“You say the toast now,” and gave him a glass of old port wine. That’s probably from Mrs. Tonner’s famous wine cellar, I thought.

“We all wish you happiness forever, and good health, and success with your famous book. Let us lift our glasses and ring them together in your honor.”

Everybody got up to toast Silas and Aminta.

At this moment a horrible, blood-curdling voice came from the staircase:

“Silas, Silas, how did you dare to get married to that trashy woman. Come back with me immediately and go to sleep like a good Christian. Otherwise, I shall get you, you rascal, you good-for-nothing, you . . .”

Martha came walking down the steps. She was all in a greenish glow from wrath and hatred. Her sparse hair was standing on end, her long shroud was trailing behind her. She had no eyes anymore; there were but black holes and she shook her bony fists, ready to let them crash down on the heads of Silas and Aminta. How had she escaped? Her wrath must have given her the strength of a boxer. Everybody sat motionless with horror and fear. Silas gaped with his mouth open and poor Aminta cried. Pansie had evidently fled. Lord Grey stood there, his hair raised and growling, but he did not dare to touch her, or he could not.

“Come Jim, let’s put an end to that show,” said Jeff. The two boys dashed towards here, each of them took one arm, and they turned her around. They lifted her onto Jeff’s shoulder, Jim held her tight, and they carried her out. Martha screamed so that the house was shaking. But the boys did not let go of her. They dumped her into the forty-foot-deep well, there among the lilies-of-the-valley and the phloxes. With a last scream, she disappeared.

“Let’s get some concrete from the garage and close that hole forever,” said Jim. “You stay here to watch her. I shall get everything that’s necessary.” And do they did.

When they came back after an hour's work, all the guests were still frightened. Nobody dared to eat or talk. Aminta sobbed occasionally, and Silas tried to comfort her, but a poor job he did. Nissefar and Nissemor were pale and trembled. The Doktor growled something about superstitions and the Maestro cursed in Italian. We were silent, as we could not reassure them. Martha could not do us any harm as we were living humans, but she surely could do horrible things to the others. We could not get her out either, as she would have dissolved into a fog if we would have touched her, and slipped out.

“Everything is o.k., girls and boys,” said Jim. “No need to be afraid anymore. We drowned her in the old well and put a thick layer of concrete on top. She will never howl again. They sat down for a good drink because the work had made them thirsty.

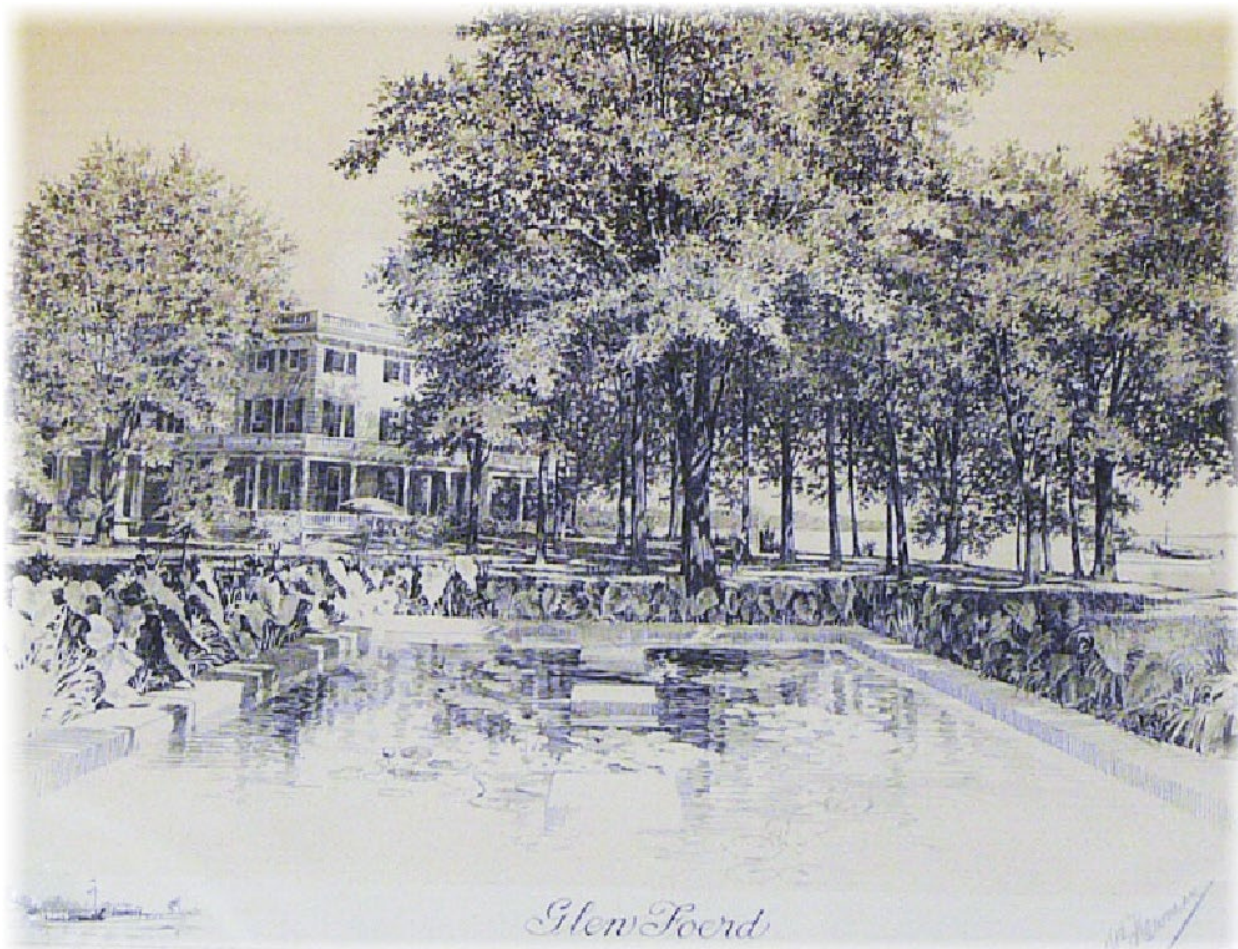
Now everybody came to life again, everybody shouted, and talked and thanked Jeff and Jim. Nissefar brought up a toast in their honor. We finished the meal and Nissefar ordered the tables to be carried out to make room for the dance.

While they were working I asked permission to make their portraits, and they agreed with pleasure.

When everything was cleared out the music started to play a waltz, and the dance began. I have danced that night as I never have danced in my life. My shoes went to pieces – you may look at them in my closet; they are completely worn to pieces. I wish you all could have been there; it was a magnificent party.

Written by Margaret Luther

September, 1970



List of Illustrations

Cover – Margaret’s pastel of the Delaware River as seen from Glen Foerd; calligraphy title script excerpted from a plaque she had made

Introduction

p. 1 – Margaret and Fred c. 1975

p. 3 – Margaret cutting a silhouette in the Cottage at Glen Foerd

p. 4 – Margaret drawing a silhouette on the porch of the Cottage

p. 6 – Margaret’s original audience: in 1971 and in 2008

Fred’s wood inlay of the moon behind willow branches

The Story

p. 1 – The Tower

p. 2 – The historical Charles Macalester who built Glen Foerd in 1850

p. 6 – The Cottage where Margaret lived when she wrote this story

p. 8 – The Rose-House

- p. 17 – The statue which Margaret called Euridike
- p. 20 – A playing piece, the Pinkerton Guard, from the game “Glen Foerd” which Fred cut out of wood and Margaret designed and painted
- p. 22 – A doll which Margaret had dressed as a Nisseomor, holding a spoon which Fred made, as she stirs rice pudding
- p. 26 – Fred and Margaret’s dog, Pansie
- p. 29 – The statue which Margaret called Lord Grey
- p. 30 – The barrel in the basement
- p. 32 – The organ on the stairs of the mansion
- p. 33 - A playing piece, the Gardener, from the game “Glen Foerd” which Fred cut out of wood and Margaret designed and painted
- p. 33 – The old horse stable
- p. 34 – Detail over the main door of the old horse stable
- p. 43 – An old print of the mansion