

INCIDENTS IN SWEDENBORG'S LIFE

Three Sketches for Children by Eunice N. Howard

Sketch I: The Queen's Secret

Characters: Swedenborg
Queen Louisa Ulrica of Sweden
Lady-in-Waiting
Others

Scene I: Court Reception.

The Queen is seated in center, with others flanking her.

(Swedenborg enters from the right.)

Lady-in-Waiting: Your Majesty, this is Baron Swedenborg.

Swedenborg (bowing): Good afternoon, your Majesty.

Queen (acknowledging): I have wanted to meet you, Baron, for I am told you do something very unusual. Now, what is it? Oh yes! You are the one who says he has visited heaven, aren't you?

Swedenborg: I am, your Majesty. The Lord has opened my spiritual eyes so that I can see into heaven. I have seen many wonderful things there, and have spoken with spirits and angels.

Queen: I have never heard of such a thing! You must be very clever! Tell me, Baron, how do you do it?

Swedenborg: I do not do it, your Majesty. It is the Lord who does it. He prepared me for it for many years.

Queen: Why has the Lord done this?

Swedenborg: He has done it that I may learn the truth about heaven and hell, and write it down for men to read.

Queen: Are you writing a book about it now?

Swedenborg: I have written several books and there will be others, if the Lord wills. Some make known the real truth that is in the Word of God, which people of this day do not understand, nor even know about. Others tell of angels and spirits, all of whom once lived as men on earth.

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Queen (surprised): Indeed! Have you ever seen or spoken to anyone in the spiritual world whom you had known when he lived on earth?

Swedenborg: I have been permitted to do that several times your Majesty,

Queen: Has my late brother, the Prince Royal of Russia, been one of those you have met in the spiritual world?

Swedenborg: No, your Majesty.

Queen: Do you think you could find him and speak with him?

Swedenborg: Only if the Lord permits.

Queen (smiling): Well, if you are given permission to meet him, will you give him my greetings? (Pause) Give him also this secret message (Beckons to S. and whispers to him.)

Swedenborg: I will surely do so, your Majesty, if I am permitted to speak with him.
(Bows and leaves.)

Queen (gaily to ladies-in-waiting): Well, that was an amusing experience, was it not? Imagine anyone saying he has seen the wonders of heaven! And so calmly, as if it were true!

Scene II: The Queen's sitting room, several days later.

Lady-in-Waiting: Excuse me, your Majesty. Baron Swedenborg wishes to see you.

Queen: Who is Baron Swedenborg? Is it important?

Lady-in-Waiting: He is the man your Majesty asked to take a secret message to...

Queen (interrupting): Oh yes! Now I remember. I wonder why he wants to see me? Bring him in.

(Lady-in-waiting goes to call S., and brings him to the Queen.)

Swedenborg (bowing): Good evening, your Majesty. The Lord has permitted me to talk to your brother in the spiritual world, and to give him your message.

Queen: Yes, yes; go on! (Anxiously) Do you have a message for me?

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Swedenborg: I have, your Majesty. He thanks you for your greetings, and sends his apologies for not having answered your last letter. He also gave me a private message for you.

(The Queen motions her companions to move away, and for S. to draw closer. S. whispers something to her, which causes the Queen to appear startled, then very agitated, and then to fall back in her chair as in a faint. S. draws back a step or two; lady-in-waiting hastily comes to attend Queen.)

Queen (reviving, breathlessly says): Oh, Baron! Now I know you have seen my brother! No one but God and he knew my secret! You are indeed a wonderful man. How can I thank you?

Swedenborg: Do not thank me, your Majesty, but the Lord.

INCIDENTS IN SWEDENBORG'S LIFE**Sketch II: The Lost Receipt**

Characters: Swedenborg
Madame Harteville, widow of the Dutch Ambassador
Croon, a goldsmith
Maid, and others

Scene I: Mme. Harteville's parlor.

Mme. Harteville is seated, drinking tea.

(Maid enters with Croon.)

Maid: Madam, this is Mr. Croon who wishes to speak with you.

Mme. H: What do you wish to say to me, Mr. Croon?

Croon: Madam, some time before your noble husband died, he had me make that silver tea service you are using.

Mme.H: I remember very well when he gave it to me. It was a birthday present. It is well designed, and very beautiful. I shall be glad to recommend your work, Mr. Croon.

Croon: It is on another matter that I have come, Madam. Your husband died before he paid for the service, and I have come to ask you for the money.

Mme. H: But I can't believe it! My husband was always prompt in paying his debts. I am sure he must have paid you.

Croon: Do you have the receipt?

Mme. H: I don't remember seeing it, but I am sure it must be among his papers if you gave him one.

Croon: If the money was paid there will be a receipt. But if there is no receipt, Madam, you will have to pay me what is owed, or else I shall have to take back the service.

Mme. H: I understand, Mr. Croon. Will you come back next week. I shall have to have time to look for the receipt, and if I can't find it to decide what to do.

Croon: Very well, Madam. (Bows and goes out.)

(Mme. Harteville thoughtfully rises, and goes out.)

INCIDENTS IN SWEDENBORG'S LIFE**Scene II: Mme. Harteville's parlor, later in the day.**

(Mme. Harteville and maid enter together.)

Mme. H: I can't find that wretched receipt: And I am sure I've looked everywhere. I know the money has been paid! What shall I do!

Maid (hesitantly): Ma'am, I hear there is a man called Swedenborg who can talk with those who have died. Perhaps he could find out from the master where the receipt is.

Mme. H: I really don't believe anyone can talk to spirits and angels Perhaps it is possible. I know Baron Swedenborg is in town, now. (With decision) I will write to him at once to come to see me. Get me my quill and letter paper

(Maid goes out.)

Scene III: Same as before, the next day.

(Maid ushers in Swedenborg.)

Mme. H: Mr. Swedenborg How kind of you to come. I hate to bother you with my problem, but I am in real trouble.

Swedenborg: I am sorry to hear it, Madam. What is your trouble?

Mme. H: The goldsmith who made this beautiful tea service is threatening to take it back if I don't pay for it, I am positive my late husband paid for it before he died, but though I have searched most carefully I cannot find the receipt.

Swedenborg: But how can I help you?

Mme. H: People say that you can see people in the other world and talk to them. If this is so, Baron, would it be possible for you to ask my husband where he put the receipt?

Swedenborg: If the Lord allows me to do this for you, Madam, I shall be happy to do it.

Scene IV: Same as before, several days later.

(Maid enters followed by Swedenborg.)

Maid (to Mme. H.): Mr. Swedenborg is here, Madam.

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Mme. H. (moving toward Swedenborg): Baron, I am glad to see you! Did you find out anything?

Swedenborg: Yes, Madam. I have spoken to your husband, and have good news for you. He paid for the silver service before he died, and has a receipt. It is in a secret compartment in his desk drawer. You will find it if you pull out the drawer and press down on the board at the back of it.

Mme. H.: I shall look for it at once! (To a friend) Please come with me. (They go out and return a short time later; Mme. Harteville holds the receipt in her hand, and goes up to Swedenborg.)

Mme. H.: Mr. Swedenborg, how can I thank you for doing such a wonderful thing for me! You are indeed a great man!

Swedenborg: It is not I, but the Lord, who is great. I am but His servant. You should thank Him.

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Sketch III: The Stockholm Fire

Characters: Swedenborg
William Castel, a merchant of Gothenburg
2 Guests

Scene I: Living room in Mr. Castel's home.

Castel: It is a great pleasure to have you with us, Mr. Swedenborg. Did you have a pleasant journey from England?

Swedenborg: Very pleasant, though tiring. It is a great distance, you know.

Castel: I know it indeed. I have made the journey myself.

1st Guest: Traveling distances is tiring, but it is much better and faster than it used to be.

Castel: The post-riders are certainly making better speeds these days. Last year it took them at least three days to ride from here to Stockholm; but just last week a messenger was able to do it in only two days!

Swedenborg: Let me see, it is about 300 miles from here to Stockholm, isn't it? That's really amazing!

1st Guest: Tell us, Baron, what has been happening in... (sees Swedenborg become suddenly agitated) Why, Sir, are you ill? What has happened?

Swedenborg (hand to head): Excuse me, but I have a feeling all is not well at home, I must step out for some fresh air. Will you excuse me? (Swedenborg leaves room hurriedly.)

Castel: I cannot imagine what has happened to the Baron. He seemed all right a moment ago.

2nd Guest: I hear he has visions in which he talks with spirits and angels. Perhaps he is going to have one now, and that is why he seemed so disturbed and pale.

Castel: I have never heard of such a thing! It can't be possible!

1st Guest: I think it is only that the Baron is tired out from his journey, and needs food and rest.

Castel: That must be it. I'll go and see. (Starts toward door, just as Swedenborg enters) Come to my bedroom, Sir, and lie down. I shall send for some wine and food for you.

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Swedenborg: Please forgive me. I am perfectly well, but I have received some bad news from the spirits.

Castel & Guests: What do you mean, Sir? What is it, Baron? Please tell us.

Swedenborg: (pacing up and down, evidently worried) They say a very dangerous fire has just broken out in Stockholm, and is spreading very fast. I am anxious for my dear friends there, for they are in danger. Excuse me. I must go out again. (Goes out.)

Castel: What a strange thing to say. How can he know that a fire has just started in Stockholm?! Why, it takes two days for the fastest messenger to reach here!

2nd Guest: I told you he is well known for being able to talk with spirits, and to learn things from them.

Castel: I don't believe it!

(Swedenborg re-enters room.)

Swedenborg: Friends, the news is very bad. (Pacing up and down) There is a strong wind blowing, and the fire is growing larger. Many houses are completely destroyed, and many people have lost everything. My own home is in the path of the flames. I do hope they can bring it under control soon.

Castel: Mr. Swedenborg, how can you know this? Perhaps you are just having a bad dream.

Swedenborg: I have been permitted to speak with spirits and angels in the other world for some time now. They have told me of this fire. There is no question about it. It is the worst in the history of Stockholm. Please excuse me again. (Goes out.)

Scene II: The same, an hour or two later.

Swedenborg (entering): Ah, good news at last! The wind has changed, and the fire is under control! Its spread was stopped just three doors from my home! What a relief!

1st Guest: That is good news. I must say you do look better.

Castel: Well, I believe dinner is ready. If you are better now, Mr. Swedenborg, will you join us?

Swedenborg: Ah, that is good. I am indeed ready for one of your fine meals.

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**Scene III: A street corner in Gothenburg, two days later.
Castel and 2nd Guest meet.**

2nd Guest: Did you hear the news? A royal courier has just arrived at the Governor's with news of a great fire in Stockholm, which took place two days ago.

Castel: Was there really a fire? What a coincidence!

2nd Guest: It is no coincidence, my friend. The story the courier tells is exactly the same in every detail as the one Baron Swedenborg told us at your home at the very time it was happening. There is no doubt but that spirits told him about it as he said.

Castel: How wonderful!