

I Lieddi Sámeccus

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I Lieddi Sámeccus is the title of the short story
that gives its name to the collection.

It means: **I Flower of Saamiland.**

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I Liedđi Sáme cus

I was born on the last day of May in the year 1879, outside the city of Cologne. Our master had me christened Margarethe, but I'm only Margarethe when we're in the company of strangers. When I and my mother and my aunt are on our own, I'm Liedđi. For my mother and my aunt, Liedđi trips off the tongue a lot easier than the hard-sounding Margarethe, which doesn't even mean anything. Among ourselves, we speak my mother and aunt's native-tongue, which is, of course, also my native-tongue, though on a daily basis, we end up speaking German, in which my mother and aunt are not so fluent. I don't want to be a Margarethe, but I have to answer if I'm addressed by that name. Liedđi, Liedđi's what I am, but these people can't pronounce that.

My mother's real name is Juljá and aunt's Ruoná, But these people call my mother Judith and my aunt Ruut. Our surname is Herman, after our master. He's the man we belong to, into whose service we were given by a man named Jacob, who had first abducted my mother and my aunt and brought them here by force.

It was a bright summer night and the two of them were on their own in the big tent – my father was out ear-marking reindeer calves together with two of my uncles and the hired hand. Jacob and his band of men tied my mother's and my aunt's hands behind their back and forced them into the boat, which took them away forever from their place of birth. Nineteen years ago. I came here to Germany in my mother's belly.

Now that I've reached the age of 18, I've decided to use my own name, Lieddi, and when I write something for my teacher, "Munk" Benedict, I give my surname as SámeCUS. Lieddi SámeCUS shall be my real and proper name. This name I shall have as long as I live, and with this name, I shall tell of my mother and my aunt.

My Mother, My Aunt, and Saamiland

My Mother and my aunt's homeland is Saamiland. Saamiland is a long way from here, far away to the north,

and the language that is spoken there is Saami. My mother and my aunt call themselves Saami and say that I too am a Saami, even though I wasn't born in Saamiland. My mother was pregnant when she was brought here. My father remained behind in the lands of the Rástegáisá-highlands, in the mountains, within sight of the wide, glittering river. It's there where my mother and aunt are from. It was there that they lived until Jacob came, the tall, white man who smuggled them away with him. That's how my mother described it. She would sniff back a sob as she told me, and then she would look at me and say, that I am so much like my father that her heart even now, melts from longing.

It's so difficult to write. I'd like to write in the language of my mother and aunt, but I don't know how to render it on the page, even though it is my mother-tongue. My mother and my aunt have instructed me to write in Saami. They say that it's my duty, since I can write and they can only write very badly in German. So that future generations will be able to know about them and about me. I'm trying to write in Saami, and that's why I'm putting these marks here by the side, as they most probably form part of the Saami language.

Mother and aunt pray every day, that the man, Jacob, who promised to take them home again two months

later, will come for them one day. But nineteen years have passed and still nobody has come to fetch them.

How am I going to be able to do this, write in my own mother tongue, in Saami? I've had to rely on my mother and aunt, to get their help in inventing some sort of system of marks. I don't know if any future reader will be able to understand these squiggles of mine.

Is there an alphabet in Saamiland? You would think so, since so many peoples in this world have written down all the sounds and thus been able to understand eachother.

To those up there in Saamiland, who don't know the way in which years are reckoned, I can tell them that the year nought was when Jesus Christ was born into this world, nearly 1900 years ago. My mother and my aunt know Jesus Christ, and so do I. They take us to church every Sunday, and morning and evening, we say our prayers.

Mother and aunt say that soon we must leave Germany and try to reach Saamiland, within sight of Rástegáisá. They say that there will come a terrible time, when all people who are different will be done away with. I don't know, but if they leave, then I leave too. I shall leave, though I don't know, and cannot

even imagine, what it's like there in Saamiland: life, the seasons, time.

In Church

It can be fun to visit the church, because of the pretty pictures all over the windows and walls, the big bright lights, the high ceiling, the organ that sounds like a choir of angels and the people singing so beautifully. But when I'm there, I'm always terribly troubled, and when I'm sitting in the last row with mother, aunt and "Munk" Benedict, I feel the fear and hate of the congregation. It's something I don't want to feel, but there is a reason for it. That the first time we came here, the whole congregation turned towards the door to stare at us. We had tried to come in quietly, but someone had said that soucerers from the north were coming into their house of God. People started to mumble and shake their heads, and some spat in our direction. The church warden came down the aisle and started to hustle us out the door. He had a stick in his hand and was threatening to hit us with it if we didn't get out, and quickly at that. He lifted up his Bible and started barking passages of scripture at "Munk" Benedict. He wanted to know who had given him permission to bring soucerers into the house of God.

Benedict became angry, jumped to his feet and raised his own Bible. A tremendous din ensued. Everybody was shouting and screaming that bringing soucerers here was out of the question.

We would probably have died there and then had not the bishop, on that very same day, been present in church. He appeared at the altar like an angel, and when he lifted up his arms, everyone fell silent.

Since that day, nobody has tried to prevent us from entering the church, though we always feel the hateful glances of the congregation burning our backs when we walk past. Some of them can be heard saying prayers, while drawing back from us in fear, afraid of being smitten with our soucery.

I've started to wonder, do I really have some infectious soucerer disease, some foreign body, some revolting black worm? If so, then I would throw it in their know it all fa ces. I'd throw it just as they were coming out of church, with their faces all red and an unsuspecting look in their eyes. Yes, just at that moment ...

No, I can't even think such a thought, let alone write it down, but I'm writing using Saami marks, because I know full well that nobody in this country or in this land can speak Saami and so will never be able to read what I've written. The only thing they can do is say that I have

written using the devil's letters, and since I've done such a thing, I must be a soucerer. What will happen to me then, I don't know. I must be careful.

I've sewn a small pigskin bag, where I put my writings. I hide the bag in the rafters above the trough in the pigsty. I always look to check if anybody's watching me. My mother and my aunt know, I've told them, in case something goes wrong and I'm found out and accused of soucery.

But surely not now ...?

I don't know.

You never know what might happen. My mother and my aunt couldn't know that they would be abducted and brought here. They wanted to live their lives forever within sight of Rástegáisá, but they ended up becoming pig-feeders and the test subjects of those horrible scientists.

“Munk” Benedict

For a long time, I believed that everything should be as it was. I believed, that once arrived and living here in the developed world, we would manage, that everything was good, and I never really paid any attention to mother and aunt's tears. How could I have done, since they didn't

start telling me anything until I was twelve years old, and they wouldn't have told me anything then either if "Munk" Benedict hadn't come into our lives. He changed my mother and my aunt, and he changed me too. He opened a hidden door and pushed us through it into a wide, open and very visible world. He taught us that the world wasn't just the one in which we live. He tore the curtain in two, revealing what was behind, and said: "You are also human beings, not just some retarded creatures." It is due to him that I haven't become a guinea-pig for those horrible scientists who hurt mother and aunt until they cry.

We found "Munk" Benedict by accident. It was a strange occurrence, so strange that I still scarcely believe it.

I must have been about seven years old, when I literally ran into him on the road, It could well have been that it was "Munk" Benedict himself who caused the accident.