

## Chapter Twenty

*What else transpired before, during and after the wedding*

I permitted Erasmus to behave towards his future wife no longer as my servant, but rather as one who is his own master; but I commanded him what he must needs do and not do; namely to rent for Esther and her child a room of their own, in which Josanna too was obliged to make do, and to provide them in it with all necessities and then to secretly look for a trustworthy cleric who would be fit to completely instruct the two future Christians in what they still did not know about the Christian religion, following that to baptize them both, together with the child, in the presence of sufficient witnesses, and finally to join him together with Esther in wedlock. No sooner commanded than done. I was happy that at one strike I had made three Jewesses into Christians: but because this path was not possible, I indeed feared that I might get slight rewards from it, and Esther seemed to me to be a hundred times more beautiful than ever, for which reason I was then sorely tempted not to do good Erasmus any further service; but if I did not wish to be a real arch-rogué, if I did not wish to vex to death the budding future Christians and ruin again everything I had directed toward a happy conclusion, then I must needs leave it as it was. I believe too that because of this abstemiousness alone, which mortified me mightily, I was vouchsafed the favor of God again and came to mend my ways.

Meanwhile I received a report that Eliezar was secretly having his daughter inquired after and was offering to give a great deal of money to him who would tell him anything about her; now because money is wont to bring about everything one wishes at will, I

deemed it as fair as it was necessary that I take care of those whom I had put in danger and pondered on means to secretly make the inquiries distasteful to Eliezar.

Just at the time there had arrived in the city a company of English comedians that wished to journey home from there and were only waiting for a good wind to sail over. From them I borrowed a frightful devil's costume: it had a pair of ox horns, a pair of glassy, very fiery eyes, as large as chicken eggs, a pair of ears like a cropped horse, an eagle's beak instead of a nose, a maw like Cerberus himself, a goat's beard, griffen's claws instead of hands and cloven cow's hoofs instead of toes. One was able to spit terrible fire out of it if he wished, and one looked so terrible in it that he might have fallen ill or even died at the sight of it. In this I clothed myself one day and went invisibly to Eliezar's bedchamber, wherein I waited till he had laid down to sleep and his servant, who had undressed him, had left him again. The whole night a wax taper was burning in the room, and when it seemed to me that Eliezar was about to fall into a slumber, I permitted him to see me, stepped to the bed and said in a horrible voice; "Eliezar, if you do not leave off inquiring after your daughter, I shall tear you to pieces! You old fool, will you not grant her rest? Look you, she is in the paradise of her Elias, nursing the young messiah; beware, therefore, that you no longer make so bold as to draw him away from his mother's breast, so that I not be dispatched a second time to whip your neck!" I should have had no need to depart whilst leaving behind a stench I made, which I did do anyway, for Eliezar was so fearful and frightened that he shot his bed so full that I near might have fallen into a faint; and even though I made myself invisible for his very eyes, I nevertheless wandered around back and forth, now visible, now invisible, in the house, in which I knew every nook and cranny, making a terrible racket and bursting open locks on the doors, which, however, I did not close again as I had done when I

fetches away his daughter. This I carried on so long till I came out onto the lane and finally went home to my lodgings again nice and quietly.

Esther and Josanna were zealous, *interim*, in comprehending and embracing the tenets of Christianity which they still lacked and which they nevertheless must needs know, and the priest, in his diligence and honest spiritual zeal, did his very utmost, so that soon he notified me and Erasmus that they were sufficiently at ease and instructed to be baptized, wherefore we invited to this festivity some of our best friends whom we needs must have as godparents and witnesses of the holy baptism as well as at the wedding ceremony. Esther and Josanna kept their former names but nevertheless took in addition to them the name Mary; his young daughter however was named Eugenia—I know not why this name pleased Esther. The following day the two budding young married folk also had themselves married by the priest's hand; then I was now obliged to witness with pain with what charming amiability Mary Esther treated her Erasmus, and it was all the more difficult and painful to bear this because I imagined that all the loving glances and friendly pleasantries which Esther bestowed on Erasmus were more properly due me than him, since I was more deserving of them from her than he was. Indeed, 'tis impossible to believe how sour it was for me to watch this marriage which I myself, after all, had arranged with such great effort and danger; but this I believe: if it had not yet proceeded so far, I should nevermore have permitted it to proceed that far, for I felt much more grievous pain and pangs of love for this Maria Esther than I ever had suffered before I touched her several times. However, I was obliged to force myself to conceal as best I might my indescribable suffering, torment and anguish for having let this pretty bird flee and go into another's cage and account myself to blame for it. This marriage was kept so secret that not a soul in the house, much less Eliezar and

the Jews, became aware of it. And after it was over, I paid Erasmus, in the presence of his Mary Esther and Mary Josanna the \$10,000 ducats in cash, and did not conceal from them the fact that these had been stolen from Eliezar's treasure for this purpose, because it was his duty to provide his daughter with a dowry commensurate with his wealth, which he would not have done, however, were he to have known that she had embraced the Christian faith; and because the afore-mentioned bride had also taken with her from her father's house a considerable sum in gold pieces, pearls, and jewels, the result was that both she and her bridegroom had brought together a considerable fortune; since I had, over and beyond the 10,000 ducats, a few hundred left which had been Eliezar's, I presented them to Mary Josanna, because I was convinced that she had truly earned them with her loyalty and that she had been the main reason why Mary Esther had come to the Christian religion; but I gave them on the condition that she not leave the newlyweds but rather that she should remain with them till they provided for her elsewhere.

At that time there were rumors in all of Europe that the king of France would really make war on the state of Holland; therefore I dispatched quickly what wares I still had in supply and put my affairs everywhere in order; in which business Erasmus, who knew all about them, was faithfully of help to me. But look you; scarcely were we finished when I received a letter from my cousin, the apothecary, that my wife had gone the way of all flesh. *O mirum!* Who was more distressed? I? Not, to be sure, that my wife had died, but because the letter had taken a full three weeks to reach me; for had it arrived on time, Mary Esther should never have got Erasmus as a husband. But of what help was that? It was done, he had good fortune, and so he led the bride to the altar. But I—if I was full of whims and crotchets before because of my love for Mary Esther, which had not only flamed up anew again but had doubled, now I was, as it were, quite out of

my senses. Erasmus, whom I had shortly before provided with the most beautiful woman in the world and had made a wealthy happy man, I now wished were dead. I cursed at the same time his fortune, my misfortune and finally became so enraged and unbearable that very nearly no one was able to abide with me anymore, or get along with me either. Finally something, I know not what, but doubtless no good spirit, gave me the idea that I should sacrifice Erasmus and make Mary Esther herself mine once more. O cruel godlessness! I do believe I should have without any doubt ventured in the end to do it, if God had not protected His own, and if at the beginning of my temptation it had not seemed to me a stale meal to wed a woman who by virtue of my scheming had been slept with by another man, which for a time held my cruelty in check; and faithful God, who, as I said, protects his own, meanwhile opened Erasmus' eyes so that he was able to read my raging melancholy in my really peevish face and was able to surmise where this state of mind might come from and what I might have in mind, because it was no secret to him that my wife was dead; for which reason he absconded one night with his Mary Esther, their child, Mary Josanna, and all his fortune, and sailed away with some folk who were taking flight with much goods to Hamburg, which idea God without doubt put into his head through the voice of his guardian angel. From there he went to Danzig and from there to Lübeck, but whither from there I have since been unable to find out; and so I was left behind at the gates of most extreme despair.

