

A Pearl in the Sands

by

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**Scenes from the life of Margaret Fell
(1614 – 1702)**

**First performances:
Swarthmoor Hall, Ulverston, Cumbria, August 2008**

A play for three characters:

Margaret Fell, wife of Thomas Fell and later of George Fox with whom she worked to establish Quakerism;

Thomas Fell, judge of the Lancaster circuit;

George Fox, preacher.

(The Quaker Friends and the 'CONSTABLES' will be played by members of the audience.)

The years: 1652 – 1701

The place: Swarthmoor Hall, Ulverston, Cumbria

Extract from:

Scene 1: My father's house

THOMAS: *[off]* Where is my wife? My wife, I say.

My wife may well explain herself. Now where is she?

[THOMAS storms out into the garden to meet MARGARET.]

Lampitt and Sawrey tell me that the whole house be bewitched!

MARGARET: Bewitched? Then we shall all be hanged on Pendle Hill!

THOMAS: I am greatly offended, Margaret. To be met halfway across the sands by my priest tattling tales about my wife and some uninvited rabble-rouser!

MARGARET: Our guest is invited now. And he has indeed roused *me*: yet no rabble that I can see.

THOMAS: You will not make light of this, Margaret. ... And where is everyone? No girlish carolling, no children squabbling on my return? It's unnerving.

MARGARET: Then he must have dumbfounded us all too! ... Thomas, I too was taken aback. I arrived home from walking abroad to find him ensconced in our parlour! The children, even the servants, entranced. He minded me not at all, did not even remove his hat ...

THOMAS: And you took the rude scoundrel in?

MARGARET: Rather, he failed to budge.

THOMAS: Something of a miracle boy, Lampitt says: defied our tides and survived!

MARGARET: Aye, he failed to drown on the way here; that alone, you may tell Mr Lampitt, does not make him Christ-like ...

THOMAS: But they say you be beneath his sway, seduced. I will not have it under my roof, Margaret ...

MARGARET: Thomas! He has travelled far. He heard much abroad of our famously hospitable home. Where you and I give ears and hearts – together or alone. You so often return to strange horses in our stable ...

THOMAS: Lampitt says that the villain has persuaded my wife against her faith. Against her own flock. That, in the wink of an eye, she has switched allegiance ...

MARGARET: Your priest, Thomas, is full of fear and has much affrighted thee.

THOMAS: Lampitt - and Judge Sawrey - say they feel no longer welcome here.

MARGARET: You know well and for how long I have deplored Lampitt and Sawrey.

THOMAS: Margaret, look at me. Who is this man? Who turns the face of my wife?

MARGARET: He is a mere preacher, dearest. He has been four years ministering in the Midlands and Yorkshire. He asks the right to speak from the Lord in the steeple houses, but for this he has suffered imprisonment in Nottingham and Derby, been heaved down steps at York Minster and - ...

THOMAS: Lay persons do not speak in the steeple houses, even in Cromwell's new England. ... And they say that, flouting my reputation, you yourself called out in the church.

MARGARET: Thomas, I could not help myself. And long have you known I am no silent vessel. When rapped, I too give off sound.