

Antiques, in a general way, are of little interest to me. They should be, given that my education was mainly in history, but for the most part, I do not find old artifacts in museums compelling. Perhaps, for that reason, I don't care much for most museums.

I think what really bothers me is that I see tools there that could just as well be used here at home. So, while I don't particularly like looking at all this old stuff, I would like to have some of these items to actually use. A good cream separator, for instance, would be a handy piece of equipment for us. We do have a little separator, but it takes much more hand cranking to get the cream that makes our year's supply of butter.

But, old household items, farm tools, etc. that are family "heirlooms" are another matter. I find them interesting and often useful. And, a few of the old items we have acquired do have some sentimental family value.

My niece and Runo share a birthday, though he is much older than she is. So, she came yesterday afternoon, and we had a meringue dessert with whipped cream and raspberries with our afternoon coffee. And, I used the cups that Runo's mother had given me long after we had moved here to the U.S. These cups and saucers—and a serving container and cream and sugar set—had been wedding gifts to Runo's grandparents from my father's cousin and family who lived just a mile or so from the newlyweds. Things like that do have value to me.

And, then, there is The Dish. I don't know where that even came from, but from somewhere in my mother's family it had migrated to her possession. Ever since I can remember, I wanted that dish. I loved that dish, even though my mother seldom used it.

There is no marking to indicate the company that had made this predominately square vegetable dish. There is a gold number, but no name. The dish is eight inches square—though with scalloped edges. It is white porcelain, china? Is there a difference? There are gold flowers and leaves that drape down from each rounded corner. And in the middle of each side, the gold line that drapes in a similar fashion encloses plain pink porcelain. The rest of the dish is white.

Except, of course, the real reason I formed such an attachment to this dish when I was little. The flat middle of the dish has a painted (by hand?) picture. In muted blue and green, a little elf with a pointed cap and a whip in his hand is on the back of

a huge grasshopper. The elf has lines on the grasshopper to steer, and they are traveling across a damp terrain of weeds, grass, and water.

For some reason, that elf on the back of the grasshopper caught my imagination. On the rare occasions—usually holidays—that brought The Dish to the table, I was very watchful, worried that someone would drop The Dish and break it. And, what if I don't make a safe trip back to the cupboard right now? I guess I will take a picture of The Dish. Just in case.