A Brief Affair
Inez Schneider Whitney
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By Inez Schneider Whitney

Papa's mother died in 1906 when I was three months old. My German grandpa was grief-stricken. He missed her companionship and her good cooking. Her daughter, my Aunt Gussie, was fifteen. She had been spoiled and waited on by Grandma; so because of no fault of her own, she was of little help.

A few years passed. One day Grandpa saw a notice under "Personals" in CAPPER'S WEEKLY. A widow about his age wanted to re-marry. Her name was Mrs. Foderal, and she lived in Kansas.

The notice sparked Grandpa's interest. He wrote a letter to her, and soon there was a lively correspondence in progress. Mrs. Foderal said that she wouldn't object to living in Oklahoma, although it had been a state only three years. In fact, she thought it might be very interesting. After a few months of correspondence, she agreed to travel by train from Kansas City for a week's visit.

Although I was only four at the time, I remember the air of excitement. We lived less than a mile from Grandpa and Aunt Gussie, and they were often at our house. Pootsie (the family's pet name for Grandpa) bought a new suit, a white shirt, and a red tie. He spent much time polishing his buggy and the horse harness.

At last the day of Mrs. Foderal's arrival came. Pootsie stopped by our house and was complimented on his fine appearance. "I must go now," he said. "I want to be there when the train pulls in." With a crack of the whip, he was off and soon disappeared down the road in a cloud of dust. Plans had been made for them to stop at our house for dinner—the noon-time meal—on the way back. On the farm it was dinner and supper—not lunch and dinner.

Papa decided to stay in from the field to help welcome the guest. He and Mama were hoping the visit might blossom into a marriage. It would relieve them of some of the responsibility they felt for him and Aunt Gussie. Everyone, including the hired hand, eagerly awaited the return of the happy couple.

"There they come," Aunt Gussie said. They drove into the yard. Grandpa pulled the buggy up short. His facial expression was grim. "Mrs. Foderal, you can get out," he said shortly.

She looked surprised but stood up and started to climb down from the buggy. Papa rushed over and grasped her hand to steady her as she stepped down.

"I'm Mr. Schneider's son," he said, and introduced her to the others. Then Mama took her into the house.

Papa went with Grandpa to the barn to help him unharness the horse.

"Pa, where's your manners? Why didn't you help the lady out of the buggy?"

"Ach, Eddie, I vill have nothing to do with her. She can stay at your house until time for her to go home."

"What do you mean? She came at your invitation. You couldn't wait for her to get here. Why have you changed your mind?"

"She looks like a scarecrow. How skinny she is. A puff of wind could blow her away."

"I wouldn't call her skinny. A very nice-looking lady, I'd say."

"Now, Eddie, you know we Germans like fat cows, fat pigs, and fat horses. And we like fat women, too. No beanpoles for us. I do not want her in my house. She might never leave."

The week passed slowly. Pootsie would have nothing to do with Mrs. Foderal. It was up to Mama and Papa to keep her entertained and show her the countryside. The day she was to leave, Grandpa was not to be found anywhere. Mama bade her goodbye, and Papa took her to Custer to put her on the train.

That afternoon, Grandpa and Aunt Gussie came down for supper. Aunt Gussie pulled me over to one side and whispered, "Go say to Pootsie, 'Do you love Mrs. Foderal?'"

Like any four-year-old, I obeyed. Trotting over to Grandpa, I asked, "Pootsie, do you love Mrs. Foderal?"

"Ach, honey! How can you say such a thing?"

He never looked at any woman again. This definitely ended his quest for romance.

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