

DUST

RIC-RAC



Saturday was always a day of anticipation after all the work was done and everyone was cleaned up with their best clothes on. Dad would load the cream and eggs into the car to take to market in town for sale at the produce. From the proceeds R.E. and I would receive a quarter each, enough money for us to go to the picture show 10¢, a coke 5¢, and a sack of tobacco 6¢, and four wrappers of bubble gum. After the picture show we would go out to our Grandparents farm for the night, then on Sunday morning we would all go to church together where Dad would pick us up to go home after church concluding our reward for the week's work.

Lately, Dad and Mother had taken up square dancing on Saturday nights, which they both seemed to enjoy a great deal. Of course Mother had to have a new square dance dress, cotton print. Oh, a church dress would never do, so from her egg money she purchased the brightest red material she could find, then for a week or two, she spent every spare minute at her mother's old treadle sewing machine making a dress like no one could afford to buy. Full skirt, yellow ric-rac all over, wide red belt, then to top it all off Dad bought her some new red dancing shoes and a purse she had wanted for Mother's Day. Now she was ready to make a proper entry onto the square dance floor.

The big Saturday had finally arrived, R.E. and I helped Dad finish the last of the chores while Mother dressed up for her big dance. When she stepped out of her bedroom holding her skirt in one hand and purse in the other, she spun on one foot with a big smile behind bright red lipstick.

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Her face framed with raven black hair and dark eyes sparkling as bright as snow crystals in the sunlight.

"Well! Let's get this show on the road." Dad said, with a big smile.

I looked at R.E. He was looking at me. BOY! I had seen caterpillar worms turn into butterflies, I had even seen Cinderella at the movies, but I had never seen anything like this. Dad was going to the dance with a very beautiful and strange woman, at least I had never seen her before.

Dad approached the car opening the passenger door of the old Ford. With a swing of his hat and a deep bow "Madam, your limousine" as Mother stepped in, setting down with a pull of her very full red skirt.

R.E. and I set in the back seat dazzled by Mother's display of radiance while Dad went around to slide under the steering wheel pulling the door shut behind him, then leaned forward he turned on the switch and pushed the starter button. Just as the engine came to life, Dad looked up and turned the switch off.

Frank, what's the matter?

That old spotted sow hog has tore a hole in the lot fence and is out again. Boys we'll have to drive her back in and mend the fence before we leave or that crazy old sow will leave the country before we come back.

Everyone unloaded from the car and walked down the slope to the hog lot to mend the fence and drive the old sow back where she belonged.

After about thirty minutes of nailing boards, tying wires, and throwing bricks, rocks, and whatever we could find into the hole in the ground that she had rutted out, R.E. and I started trying to help Dad drive the sow back through the lot gate, but every time we drove her up to the gate she would turn around and run the other way. After the third time of that, Mother hung her new red purse on a fence post, saying, "Frank! I would think you and those two boys could at least drive one sow hog through a gate that is eight foot wide."

Marvell, we'll get her in, just give us a little time!

You have had a little time. Now let's put her in so we can go to the dance.

R.E., Dad, and I, crowded the hog up next to the pasture fence while Mother walked behind holding her skirt wide on both sides driving the hog along toward the open gate.

Frank, she's just about there, when I crowd her into the lot you close the gate and you boys don't let her turn to the side.

Whatever you say Marvell, you're the driver.

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Just then the hog turned around seeing daylight under Mother's dress. She made a run for it with her head close to the ground she went between Mother's legs catching her snout in the hem of Mother's new dance dress jerking Mother backward and causing her to sit upright on top of the hog's back. The impact of the reverse direction was so great that one red shoe was left setting right where Mother had been standing. By now the hog was blinded by the dress, frightened, and running across the calf lot with Mother riding her backward, hollering, "woe, woE, wOE, WOE!" The other red shoe went flying up into the air as the hog ran blindly for her life, squealing every time one of her feet hit the ground. Mother's dress tail was fanning dust into the air like a Texas duster and R.E. was running after them hollering, "Mother, Mother". Dad was waving his arms in the air shouting, "Jump! Marvell Jump!" I was just standing there astonished at how well Cinderella could ride a crazed hog, and backward at that!

About fifty yards away the hog made a sharp turn to the right causing Mother to roll off onto the ground, about half way between was one lonesome looking little red dancing shoe.

"Dad she Jumped!" I said. He didn't reply. He just stood there looking as if there was an impending disaster.

Looking back at the sight on the other side of the calf lot was a very frightened and excited hog backed into the corner trying to figure out what had happened to her. Not far away, R.E. was trying to help Mother stand up from where she had landed in the only spot on the farm where there was a mud hole caused by the stock tank overflow.

Once standing again, Mother turned around with hair in her face, mascara smeared down one eye, lipstick on her chin, and a torn, muddy dress. She stood with torn hose in the middle of the mud hole, both hands on her hips looking at nothing in particular.

(Poor Dad, his beautiful butterfly had just reverted to a mad, muddy, woolly worm, one to whom you never mentioned her ability as a hog herder.)

Mother walked across the lot picking up her shoes and putting them on as she went, then stomping toward the house, limping on one shoe with a heel and the other without. I started to laugh when I felt Dad's hand grab my shoulder with such grip that I thought it would separate the joint. Looking up at him, his blue eyes filled with humor, horror, and anxiety. He just stood there watching her limping toward the house. When she went around the corner of the house Dad said, "If she comes out with her shotgun, you boys run for your lives, because there won't be one living thing on this farm by sundown."

Mother was a very kind and loveable person, but sometimes she had little tolerance for home spun humor, and no tolerance for spotted hogs.

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