

There was a young man who married a flea. Who can account for love? She was a lively little thing, but not much of a conversationalist. If you asked what he saw in her, he'd crack a grin and say, "She keeps me hopping in bed."

Mixed marriages are tricky. The young man's mother cried when she met the bride-to-be. His father scowled, and drank too much. His kid brother bolted through the back door and wasn't seen again until morning. Only his little sister was at all supportive and, alas, the flea didn't even notice.

But the wedding went off as scheduled. The groom's family and friends sat to one side of the aisle, and the bride's to the other. At the reception afterwards, they didn't mingle. And that was that. Eventually, everyone came to accept the marriage as a fait accompli.

A funny thing happened, though. Once married, the flea-wife came to take up a smaller and smaller part of her husband's life. He stopped talking about her at work. On the way home, he would drop by the bar with friends, without phoning to let her know he'd be late. He started going out at night alone.

The flea had never had much of a personality. Now she seemed to shrink in upon herself. She grew quieter. She grew smaller. By slow degrees, everyone lost track of her entirely.

The young man came to Sunday dinner with his folks one day, and he brought a date. She was a bottle-blond human woman who wore too much makeup and said she was a dancer.

"What about your wife?" the young man's little sister asked angrily. "Whatever became of her? Where is she now?"

The young man scratched himself and shrugged. "Search me," he said.