

PART. IV -Buttered Side Down

In "A Bush League Hero" from "Buttered Side Down," Edna Ferber tells the story of Ivy Keller, a recent homecomer from a select school for young ladies, who soon finds herself infatuated with Rudie Schlachweiler, a local baseball pitcher. Ivy's transformation from an uninterested homebody into a devout baseball fan serves as the backdrop for a tale that explores themes of hero worship, young love, and the eventual confrontation with reality.

Rudie Schlachweiler, lauded in his small town both for his pitching abilities and his appealing looks, captures Ivy's heart. Their romance is woven through the seasons of baseball, with Ivy's passion for the game, and particularly for Rudie, deepening as the summer progresses. Despite her initial lack of interest, Ivy soon cannot imagine her life without the excitement of the baseball games or the presence of Rudie. Her days soon revolve entirely around the sport and her burgeoning relationship with him.

However, the relationship is viewed with skepticism by Ivy's parents, particularly her father, who sees a baseball player as an unsuitable match for his daughter. This skepticism is rooted in the social standing of athletes within their community and the transient, insecure nature of a career in sports. Ivy's father forces her to agree to a break from Rudie, insisting that if their feelings are genuine, they will withstand a separation.

The climax of the story occurs when Ivy and her father visit Rudie in Slatersville, Ohio, expecting him to be pursuing a prominent baseball career. Instead, they find him working in a shoe store, his aspirations of playing in the major leagues apparently abandoned. This confrontation with reality forces Ivy to reevaluate her feelings and the nature of her attraction to Rudie. Despite her initial heartbreak, she realizes that her love for Rudie was more about the thrill of baseball and the excitement of being in love than about Rudie himself as a person.

Six months later, with the insight of time and distance, Ivy acknowledges that Rudie's pitching was indeed flawed and that her infatuation was perhaps misguided. The story concludes with her casting aside her romantic notions in favor of a more pragmatic outlook on life and love.

Ferber uses the backdrop of baseball to explore the nature of small-town life, the dynamics of father-daughter relationships, and the journey from youthful idealism to mature understanding. "A Bush League Hero" is not just a story about baseball; it is a coming-of-age tale that mirrors the bittersweet realities of growing up and the sobering truths that often accompany our most cherished dreams.