



Papa's Wife

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This novel follows the lives of a conservative, Swedish minister, Pontus Franzon, and his pretty young wife, Maria, through their years in a parsonage in Lapland, their eight children, and their journey to a new life in America.

Papa's Wife Details

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Author : Thyra Ferré Björn

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Diana says

I learned about the Franzon Family books as a result of my hobby. I enjoy tracing my family's history--especially the Swedish side of my family. As a result, I am constantly looking for books that will give me a glimpse of what life may have been like for my Swedish immigrant ancestors. "Papa's Wife" tells the story of Pastor Pontus Franzon, his young wife Maria, their large brood of children, and their lives in both Swedish Lapland and the United States. Even though my ancestors were not Swedish pastors, they were highly faith-driven, and this book made me feel as though I might have been peeking into their daily lives. While the book itself is fictionalized, I felt that many of the details were genuine. The book is not a difficult or indepth read, but it is very enjoyable; I loved every moment of it. I am sure I will revisit the Franzon family and their stories many times in the future.

Mary says

This is one of my all time favorite books. I tend to like memoirs in general and this is a lightly fictionalized version of the author's experiences growing up in a large Pastor's family in Sweden and immigrating to the United States in her teens.

Although the author is the oldest daughter, Button, in the story, she tells it from the point of view of her parents. It is a charming, early 20th century story of an old bachelor Pastor in Northern Sweden who is beguiled into marriage with a much younger woman who bears him eight children then convinces him to move to America so they can have the opportunity for a better education. It is a frankly sentimental but thoroughly heartwarming story of a family's loves, losses, hopes and dreams. Having read this many, many times over the years I feel as though I know the Franzon family and I am visiting old friends whenever I read it.

The sequel, Papa's Daughter, follows Button into adulthood and deals with more serious topics such as depression and marital difficulties. It is the grownup Button's unvarnished experiences as a wife and mother. But in spite of some weightier themes, her spirit of the wonder of life shines through and ultimately leaves the reader feeling as though they have made a lifelong friend.

Neither of these books are great literature, but they are written from the heart by a woman who was compelled to immortalize her remarkable family and their faith in God as they struggle to find their way in a world quite different than the one they left behind in Sweden.

Brenda says

I enjoy reading "vintage" novels occasionally. This book about a Swedish immigrant family was pleasant and a bit too sweet at times. I admit to feeling like a failure in the housekeeping department. What is it with Northern Europeans and house cleaning? The chapters on raising a large family struck me close to the heart - as a mother of 6 children I could relate to Maria, the mother of 8. Both of us had a second child that cried day and night for her first 5 months. Faith played a large part of the story, as the Papa in the title was a

preacher. Just a little bit too predictable at times, but I still liked it.

Ruth says

It's not all that well written but it's sweet and has a lovely way to show Swedish traditions of about century ago.

Quotes that caught my eye

...trouble is just luck turned inside out. (120)

How easy washday was in America, here, every Monday was washday. Every week, instead of twice a year as it was in Lapland. Of course, in Lapland she had not done all the work herself on those twice-a-year washings which consumed an entire week. Tant Renberg and Emma Erickson had helped. All the white clothes were boiled in lute and pounded vigorously with a klappträ on a board in the brook, until they were white as the mountain snow. Twelve dozen sheets and several times as many towels and pillowcases. Now she had only two dozen of each....

Why, in Sweden, no girl would have thought of getting married until she had twelve dozen sheets, pillowcases and towels, all marked in lovely embroidery with her own first initial and the second initial of her husband-to-be. But even more important were the bride-sheets. The bride-to-be worked almost a year on them. Every stitch by hand and delicately embroidered. With these she herself prepared the bridal bed. (124-25)

In Sweden everyone waited eagerly for the return of the cuckoo in the spring, for you could tell what the future had in store by the direction from which the call first came. Like that spring morning in Lapland so long ago, when she had walked up the road to the parsonage to apply for a job as Papa's maid. She had heard the cuckoo then for the first time that year, and her heart had stood still at the sound. She had stopped and listened, scarcely breathing until she realized that the call came from the west. Then she had known she would have the best year of her life....

And as she neared the parsonage, she realized how lucky she had been that the sound had not come from another direction. For had it come from the east, it would have meant she would need to be comforted before the year was up; or from the north, a heartbreaking disappointment. And the south meant death! (163-64)

Kiera Beddes says

Genre: sticking to your roots, Scandinavian immigration, big family life

Summary: Maria is a determined woman who wants to marry Pontus Franzon, the minister of the little church in Northern Sweden. Maria gets her way and becomes Papa's wife, along with 8 children. This is the trials and triumphs as the Franzon's grow up, move to America and start their own families.

Response: This book is really adorable. I had a bit of a time trying to get into it. Mama's (Maria) character was really off-putting to me at the beginning. I hate being manipulated and even though her heart was in the right place, she was constantly scheming to get her way. I felt so bad for Papa! He was like a loner caught in a storm. Before he even knows what is happening, he leaves bachelorhood behind, gets married, and suddenly has a huge family. I think I would have connected better with the story had I some experience

raising a family. A lot of the stories were about everyday growing experiences that as a parent, you have a different perspective on. I *did* love all the references to Scandinavian culture and traditions, even if it was Swedish. It was close enough.

Overall, sweet sentimental book about the love of a big family and growing up together.

Shirley says

Papa's Wife made me feel as though I were snuggling down into a huge overstuffed chair with a thick and warm comforter. I felt warm and safe whenever I opened the pages. It brought back the same feelings that I got while reading books as a kid.

The book was first published in 1955. It was checked out many times after our library acquired it in 1973. It hasn't been read much in recent years. I'm hoping that by displaying it in a prominent place and by recommending it that I'm able to get it into circulation again.

I don't know why our book supplier gave it an adult interest level. It is suitable for a much younger audience.

I'm looking forward to reading Papa's Daughter, the second in the series, which is also on our library shelves. I'll be looking for a copy of Mama's Way to complete the trilogy.

For me, this was definitely a five-star read.

Trace says

LOVED it. My favorite book of 2014 so far. Mama Franzon is such a wonderful inspiration and mentor.

Schuyler says

There are sweet orphan stories. Epic coming-of-age stories. Fantasy stories.

A simple, sweet family story can be hard to find.

This is a beautiful story of how one couple married, raised babies, and preached the Word. We need more of these.

Sonia Gomes says

I read Papa's wife, in my teens, and remember feeling quite disappointed.

At sixteen I wanted sizzling romance, something the M&B's were full of.

What was I doing with a story of a calm life full of small joys that consisted of washing days, making jam, polishing shoes.

Much later in life when realization dawned that Romance is much different from the sizzling M&B's and that washing, cooking and all the other mundane tasks can really be beautiful in fact everything that makes a good family life I realised what Romance actually is.
The book is heart warming for its simplicity and good values.

Miriam says

Not for me.

I have no idea what book I was thinking of when I ordered this, but I somehow imagined both plot and prose as something completely different, perhaps a sort of Scandinavian Elizabeth Bowen.

Instead it's a bit like a slightly more grown-up Cheaper by the Dozen. That's the closest parallel I can think of at the moment, anyway. Many people, I know, adore that book. I did not. Nor did I care for this one.

Like Cheaper, this is a slightly fictionalized but mostly true story of a family. If you think getting married at 20 to a Conservative, stingy, stern minister (of the sort of religion that is into public rebuke for the slightest sin and beating children to keep them virtuous) more than twice your age who really just wants a housekeeper and having eight children, in Lapland, would be a sweet life, than this is for you! Since to me it sounds like one of the most horrible possible lives imaginable that doesn't involve actual torture (which, those eight pregnancies...) so I'm not finishing it.

Just thought I'd blurb it since it doesn't seem widely read and maybe will find a fan here. It's by the daughter of the minister, and there are at least two more books if you enjoy it.

Zane Jones says

Awww. The first decent girl's book we've had this year for school, in my opinion. (All the other girl options were horrible. Sorry not sorry.) It was sweet and downright hilarious at times, although probably not one of my all-time favorites. I loved how well the characters were done - even though it had a large cast with lots of children, I didn't get them confused for the most part. Also, it felt very homey and sweet.

There were three things that kept it from getting a higher rating.

1. **It was written in a slightly odd format?** Kind of like, each chapter was a mini-story but they all arched together... It was strange, but it worked, mostly.
2. **Mama was a little forceful at times.** Sometimes it was funny, but sometimes it went a leetle overboard. Ehh, no thanks.
3. **THE ENDING. I AM NOT AMUSED OKAY.** (view spoiler) I wasn't really a fan. xP

Overall, a pretty cute story about a large family with lots of distinct characters and hilarious moments.
Actual rating: 3.75 stars.

Melissa says

This is a sweet and humorous book about a minister's family that moves from Sweden to America. It's somewhat old-fashioned, but a great read. The author indicates that this book is a semi-fictional autobiography of her family.

I love Maria Franzon's character - loving, energetic, and persuasive. I know that part may be fictional, but I aspire to have that kind of optimistic attitude with my own family.

This book made me very hungry. Maria is always making coffee bread, plättar, kanelbulle, and köttbullar. This book definitely inspired me to bake.

I remembered while reading that I read this book previously -- probably as a teen-ager. I didn't care for it then, but this time I really enjoyed it.

Alicia says

This sweet story of a Swedish family of 10 that immigrated to America reminded me of the books *Cheaper by the Dozen* and *The Story of the Trapp Family Singers*. Very fun read.

Here are 2 quotes found near the end of the book:

"Life was made up of joy and sorrow -- balanced measures of each -- so that you appreciated the joy more because of the dark hours. Like dark strands woven with threads of gold in a fine tapestry, but to which, at the time of weaving, you were too close to understand its values." (p. 297)

"But let us remember that life is very much like the climbing of a mountain. We must reach the heights before we can behold the view. And in like manner do we all see the world from different levels, for we have not all come the same journey. How, therefore, can we afford to judge each other? Consider first the distance you have climbed. Has he, whom you would judge, reached the same pinnacle of wisdom and faith? For in the fullness of God's promise, the higher we climb, the smaller become the things of earth -- doubts, envy, fear, selfishness. And the nearer your Heaven..." (p. 298)

Kathleen Eagle says

I met Thyra Bjorn when I was in high school in the mid 1960's. She spoke to my church youth group. I was enthralled, and I know that experience stuck with me, inspiring me to write. I loved *PAPA'S WIFE* when I read it as a teenager, but when I re-read it as a young mother it inspired me even more. One of the scenes I still think about often: late at night as Mama polishes the children's shoes she thinks about each child--and that child only--with each pair. Then she arranges them in a neat row, ready for the feet that will wear them to school the next day. It's one of the most beautiful motherhood images I've ever read.

Shantelle says

After reading probably over half of *Papa's Wife*, I decided I couldn't finish it. See, the more I read, the more it seemed to me that "Mama" is rather selfish, and prideful, and can't handle being told "no". She often acted more like a spoiled girl than a wife of a pastor & mother of eight! There were so many times that she pushed, and pleaded, and manipulated; putting aside her husband's (and sometimes children's) feelings and best interests, because, heaven forbid that anything get in the way of *her* dreams!

And Papa just seemed kind of reluctantly tolerant, dragged down, and not really the leader of his own home and family.

Furthermore, I don't like how they mentioned "God's will" and "God guiding them" when they really weren't asking His opinion at all, but just chasing blindly after their own ambitions or trying desperately to save their pride.

I'm sure others loved this book. But for me, it just started to rub me the wrong way. Maybe I'm getting impressions that the author didn't mean to bring across, but ... I just couldn't finish the book. Hopefully someone else will enjoy it when I bring it to trade at the bookstore.
