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(Continued from last week.)

SYNOPSIS

CHAPTER I—Introducing "So Big" (Dirk DeJong) in his infancy. And his mother, Selma DeJong, daughter of Simeon Peake, gambler and gentleman of fortune. Her life, to young womanhood in Chicago in 1888, has been uneventful, but her life is generally enjoyable. At school her chum is Julie Hempel, daughter of August Hempel, butcher. Simeon is killed in a quarrel that is not his own, and Selma, nineteen years old and practically destitute, becomes a school-teacher.

CHAPTER II—Selma secures a position as teacher at the High Prairie school, in the outskirts of Chicago. Living at the home of a truck farmer, Klaas Pool. In Roelof, twelve years old, son of Klaas, Selma perceives a kindred spirit, a lover of beauty, like herself.

CHAPTER III—The monotonous life of a country school-teacher at that time, in Selma's, brightens somewhat by the companionship of the sensitive, artistic boy Roelof.

CHAPTER IV—Selma hears gossip concerning the affection of the "Widow Paalenberg," rich and good-looking, for Pervus DeJong, poor truck farmer, who is insensible to the widow's attractions. For a community "social" Selma prepares a lunch basket, faintly, but not of ample proportions, which is "auctioned," according to custom, the smallest of the lunch box excites derision, and a scheme of fun the bidding becomes spirited, DeJong finally securing it for \$10, a ridiculously high price. Over their lunch basket, which Selma and DeJong share together, the school-teacher arranges to instruct the good-natured farmer, whose education has been neglected.

CHAPTER V—Proximity, in their positions of "teacher" and "pupil," and Selma's loneliness in her uncivilized surroundings, lead to mutual affection. Pervus DeJong wins Selma's consent to be his wife.

CHAPTER VI—Selma becomes Mrs. DeJong, a "farmer's wife," with all the hardships unavoidable at that time. Dirk is born. Selma, of Vermont stock, businesslike and shrewd, has plans for building up the farm, which are ridiculed by her husband. Martje Pool, Klaas's wife, dies, and after the requisite interval Klaas marries the "Widow Paalenberg." The boy Roelof, sixteen years old now, leaves his home, to make his way to France and study, his ambition being to become a sculptor.

At this seeming pleasant Jan Steen smiled uncertainly, shrugged his shoulders, and was off to the barn. She was always saying things that didn't make sense. His horror and unbelief were shared by the rest of High Prairie when on Monday Selma literally took the reins in her own slim wicker-carved hands.

"To market!" argued Jan as excitedly as his plegmatic nature would permit. "A woman she don't go to market. A woman—"

"This woman does." Selma had risen at three in the morning. Not only that, she had got Jan up, grumbling. Dirk had joined them in the fields at five. Together the three of them had pulled and bunched a wagon load. "Size them," Sell ordered, as they started to bunch radishes, beets, turnips, carrots. "And don't leave them loose like that. Tie them tight at the heads, like this. Twice around with the string, and through. Make bouquets of them, not bunches. And we're going to scrub them."

Selma, scrubbing the carrots vigorously under the pump, thought they emerged from their unaccustomed bath looking like clustered spears of pure gold. Jan, by now, was sullen with bewilderment. He refused to believe that she actually intended to carry out her plan. A woman—a High Prairie farmer's wife—driving to market like a man! Alone at night in the market place—or at best in one of the cheap rooming houses! By Sunday somehow, mysteriously, the news had filtered through the district. A fine state of things, and she a widow of a week! High Prairie called at the DeJong farm on Sunday afternoon and was told that the widow was over in the west sixteen, poking about with the boy Dirk at her heels.

By Monday afternoon the parlor curtains of every High Prairie farmhouse that faced the Halsted road were agitated as though by a brisk wind between the hours of three and five, when the market wagons were to be seen moving toward Chicago.

Selma, having loaded the wagon in the yard, surveyed it with more sparkle in her eye than High Prairie would have approved in a widow of little more than a week. They had picked and bunched only the best of the late crop. Selma stepped back and regarded the riot of crimson and green, of white and gold and purple.

"Aren't they beautiful! Dirk, aren't they beautiful!"

Dirk, capering in his excitement at the prospect of the trip before him, shook his head impatiently.

"I don't know what you mean. Let's go, mother. Aren't we going now? You said as soon as the load was on."

"Oh, Sobig, you're just exactly like your—"

"Like my what?"

"We'll go now, son. There's cold meat for your supper, Jan, and pota-

atoes all sliced for frying and half an apple pie left from noon. You ought to get in the rest of the squash and pumpkins by evening. Maybe I can sell the lot instead of taking them in by the load. I'll see a commission man. Take less, if I have to."

She had dressed the boy in his homemade suit cut down from one of his father's. He wore a wide-brimmed straw hat which he hated. Selma herself, in a full-skirted black-stuff dress, mounted the wagon agilely, took up the reins, looked down at the boy seated beside her, clucked to the horses. Jan Steen gave vent to a final outraged bellow.

"Never in my life did I hear of such a thing!"

Selma turned the horses' heads toward the city. "You'd be surprised, Jan, to know of all the things you're going to hear of some day that you've never heard of before." Still, when twenty years had passed and the Ford, the phonograph, the radio, and the rural mail delivery had dumped the world at Jan's plodding feet he liked to tell of that momentous day when Selma DeJong had driven off to market like a man with a wagon load of hand-scrubbed garden truck and the boy Dirk perched beside her on the seat.

If, then, you had been traveling the Halsted road, you would have seen a decrepit wagon, vegetable laden, driven by a too-thin woman, sallow, bright-eyed, in a shapeless black dress, a battered black felt hat that looked like a man's old "fedora" and probably was. On the seat beside her you would have seen a farm boy of nine or thereabouts—a brown freckle-faced lad in a comically home-made suit of clothes and a straw hat with a broken and flopping brim which he was forever jerking off only to have it set firmly on again by the woman who seemed to fear the effects of the hot afternoon sun on his close-cropped head.

At their feet was the dog Pom, a mongrel whose tail bore no relation to his head, whose ill-assorted legs appeared wholly at variance with his sturdy barrel of a body. He dozed now, for it had been his duty to watch the wagon load at night, while Pervus slept.

A shabby enough little outfit, but magnificent, too. Here was Selma DeJong, driving up the Halsted road toward the city instead of sitting, black-robed, in the farm parlor while High Prairie came to condole. In Selma, as they jogged along the hot dusty way, there welled up a feeling very like elation. More than ten years ago she had driven with Klaas Pool up that same road for the first time, and in spite of the recent tragedy of her father's death, her youth, her loneliness, the terrifying thought of the new home to which she was going, a stranger among strangers, she had been conscious of a warm little thrill of elation, of excitement—of adventure! That was it. "The whole thing of it was a grand adventure," her father, Simeon Peake, had said. And now the sensations of that day were repeating themselves. Now, as then, she took stock. Youth was gone, but she had health, courage; a boy of nine; twenty-five acres of worn-out farm land; dwelling and outhouses in a bad state of repair; and a gay adventuresome spirit that was never to die, though it led her into curious places and she often found, at the end, only a trackless waste from which she had to retrace her steps painfully. But always, to her, red and green cabbages were to be jade and burgundy, chrysoprane and porphyry. Life has no weapons against a woman like that.

Down the hot dusty country road. She was serious enough now. The cost of the funeral to be paid. The doctor's bill. Jan's wages. All the expenses, large and small, of the poor little farm holding.

On down the road. Here a head at a front window. There a woman's calicoed figure standing in the doorway. Mrs. Vander Sljide on the porch, fanning her flushed face with her apron; Cornelia Sljip in the yard pretending to tie up the drooping stalks of the golden glow and eyeing the approaching team with the avid gossip's gaze. To these Selma waved, bowed, called.

"How d'you do, Mrs. Vander Sljide!"

A prim reply to this salutation. Disapproval writ large on the farm-wife's flushed face.

"Hello, Cornelia!"

A pretended start, notable for its bad acting. "Oh, is it you, Mrs. DeJong! Sun's in my eyes. I couldn't think it was you like that."

Women's eyes, hostile, cold, peering. Five o'clock. Six. The boy climbed over the wheel, filled a tin pail with water at a farmhouse well. They ate and drank as they rode along, for there was no time to lose.

The boy had started out bravely enough in the heat of the day, sitting up very straight beside his mother, calling to the horses, shrieking and waving his arms at chickens that flew squawking across the road. Now he began to droop.

"Sleepy, Sobig?"

"No. Should say not." His lids were heavy. She wrapped the old black fascinator about him. In the twilight the dust gleamed white on weeds, and brush, and grass. The far-off mellow sonance of a cowbell. Horses' hoofs clapping up behind them, a wagon passing in a cloud of dust, a curious backward glance, or a greeting exchanged.

One of the Ooms boys, or Jakob Boomsma. "You're never going to market, Mis' DeJong!" staring with china-blue eyes at her load.

"Yes, I am, Mr. Boomsma."

"That ain't work for a woman, Mis' DeJong. You better stay home and let the men folks go."

Selma's men folks looked up at her—one with the asking eyes of a child, one with the trusting eyes of a dog. "My men folks are going," answered Selma. But then, they had always thought her a little queer, so it didn't matter much.

She urged the horses on, refusing to confess to herself her dread of the destination which they were approaching. Lights now, in the houses along the way, and those houses closer together. The boy slept. Night had come.

The figure of the woman drooped a little now as the old wagon creaked on toward Chicago. A very small figure in the black dress and a shawl over her shoulders. She had taken off her old black felt hat. The breeze ruffled her hair that was fine and soft, and it made a little halo about the white face that gleamed almost luminously in the darkness as she turned it up toward the sky.

"I'll sleep out with Sobig in the wagon. It won't hurt either of us. It will be warm in town, there in the Haymarket. Twenty-five cents—maybe fifty for the two of us, in the rooming house. Fifty cents just to sleep. It takes hours of work in the fields to make fifty cents."

She drove along in the dark, a dowdy farm woman in shapeless garments; just a bundle on the rickety seat of a decrepit truck wagon. The lights of the city came nearer. She was thinking clearly, if disconnectedly, without bitterness, without reproach.

"My father was wrong. He said that life was a great adventure—a fine show. He said the more things that happen to you the richer you are, even if they're not pleasant things. That's living, he said. No matter what happens to you, good or bad, it's just so much—what was that word he used?—so much—oh, yes—velvet. Just so much velvet. Well, it isn't true. He had brains, and charm, and knowledge and he died in a gambling house, shot while looking on at someone else who was to have been killed. . . . Now we're on the cobblestones. Will Dirk wake up? My little So Big. . . . No, he's asleep. Asleep on a pile of potato sacks because his mother thought that life was a grand adventure—a fine show—and that you took it as it came. A lie! I've taken it as it came and made the best of it. That isn't the way. You take the best, and make the most of it. . . . Thirty-fifth street, that was. Another hour and a half to reach the Haymarket. . . . I'm not afraid. After all, you just sell your vegetables for what you can get. . . . Well, it's going to be different with him. I mustn't call him Sobig any more. He doesn't like it. Dirk. That's a fine name. Dirk DeJong. . . . No drifting along for him. I'll see that he starts with a plan, and follows it. He'll have every chance. Every chance. Too late for me, now, but he'll be different. . . . Twenty-second street. . . . Twelfth. . . . Look at all the people! . . . I'm enjoying this. No use denying it. I'm enjoying this. Just as I enjoyed driving along with Klaas Pool that evening, years and years ago. Scared, but enjoying it. Perhaps I oughtn't to be—but that's hypocritical and sneaking. Why not, if I really do enjoy it! I'll wake him. . . . Dirk! Dirk, we're almost there. Look at all the people, and the lights. We're almost there."

The boy awoke, raised himself from his bed of sacking, looked about, blinked, sank back again and curled into a ball. "Don't want to see the lights. . . . people. . . ."

He was asleep again. Selma guided the horses skillfully through the downtown streets. They were within two blocks of the Haymarket, on Randolph street.

"Dirk! Come, now. Come up here with mother." Grumbling, he climbed to the seat, yawned, smacked his lips, rubbed his knuckles into his eyes.

Soon he was awake, and looking about him interestedly. They turned into the Haymarket. The wagons were streaming in from the German truck farms that lay to the north of Chicago as well as from the Dutch farms that lay to the southwest, whence Selma came. Fruits and vegetables—tons of it—acres of it—piled in the wagons that blocked the historic square. Through this little section, and South Water street that lay to the east, passed all the verdant growing things that fed Chicago's millions. Something of this came to Selma as she maneuvered her way through the throng. She felt a little thrill of significance, of achievement. She knew the spot she wanted for her own. It was just across the way from Chris Spanknoebel's restaurant, rooming house, and saloon. Chris knew her; had known Pervus for years and his father before him; would be kind to her and the boy in case of need.

Dirk was wide awake now; eager,

excited. He called to the horses; stood up in the wagon; but clung closer to her as they found themselves in the thick of the melee.

"Here's a good place, mother. Here! There's a dog on that wagon like Pom."

Pom, hearing his name, stood up, looked into the boy's face, quivered, wagged a nervous tail, barked sharply. "Down, Pom! Quiet, Pom!" She did not want to attract attention to herself and the boy. It was still early. She had made excellent time. Pervus had often slept in snatches as he drove into town and the horses had lagged, but Selma had urged them on tonight. Halfway down the block Selma espied the place she wanted. From the opposite direction came a truck farmer's cart obviously making for the same stand. For the first time that night Selma drew the whip out of its socket and clipped sharply her surprised nag's. With a start and a shuffle they broke into an awkward lope. Ten seconds too late the German farmer perceived her intention, whipped up his own tired team, arrived at the spot just as Selma, blocking the way, prepared to back into the vacant space.

"Heh, get out of there you—" he roared; then, for the first time, perceived in the dim light of the street that his rival was a woman. He faltered, stared open-mouthed, tried other tactics. "You can't go in there, missus."

"Oh, yes, I can." She backed her team dexterously.

"Yes, we can!" shouted Dirk in an attitude of fierce belligerence.

"Where's your man?" demanded the defeated driver, glaring.

"Here," replied Selma; put her hand on Dirk's head.

The other, preparing to drive on, received this with incredulity. He assumed the existence of a husband in the neighborhood—at Chris Spanknoebel's probably, or talking prices with a friend at another wagon when he should be here attending to his own. In the absence of this, her natural protector, he relieved his disgruntled feelings as he gathered up the reins. "Woman ain't got no business here in Haymarket, anyway. Better you're home night time in your kitchen where you belong."

This admonition, so glibly mouthed by so many people in the past few days, now was uttered once too often. Selma's nerves snapped.

"Don't talk to me like that, you great stupid! What good does it do a woman to stay home in her kitchen if she's going to starve there, and her boy with her! Staying home in my kitchen won't earn me any money. I'm

She did sleep, miraculously. As she lay there, the child in her arms, asleep, peace came to the haggard face, relaxed the tired limbs. Much like another woman who had lain in the straw with her child in her arms almost two thousand years before.

Chapter VIII

It would be enchanting to be able to record that Selma, next day, had phenomenal success, disposing of her carefully bunched wares to great advantage, driving smartly off up Halsted street toward High Prairie with a goodly profit jingling in her scuffed leather purse. The truth is that she had a day so devastating, so catastrophic, as would have discouraged most men and certainly any woman less desperate and determined.

She had awakened, not to daylight, but to the three o'clock blackness. The street was already astray. Selma brushed her skirt to rid it of the clinging hay, tidied herself as best she could. Leaving Dirk still asleep, she called Pom from beneath the wagon to act as sentinel at the dashboard, and crossed the street to Chris Spanknoebel's. She knew Chris, and he her. He would let her wash at the faucet at the rear of the eating house. She would buy hot coffee for herself and Dirk to warm and revivify them. They would eat the sandwiches left from the night before.

As Selma entered the long room there was something heartening, reassuring about Chris' clean white apron, his ruddy color. From the kitchen at the rear came the sounds of sizzling and frying, and the gracious scent of coffee and of frying pork and potatoes.

Selma approached Chris. His round face loomed out through the smoke like the sun in a fog. "Well, how goes it all the while?" Then he recognized her. "Um Gottes!—why, it's Mis' DeJong!" He wiped his great hand on a convenient towel, extended it in sympathy to the widow. "I heard," he said, "I heard." His inarticulateness made his words doubly effective.

"I've come in with the load, Mr. Spanknoebel. The boy and I. He's still asleep in the wagon. May I bring him over here to clean him up a little before breakfast?"

"Sure! Sure!" A sudden suspicion struck him. "You ain't slept in the wagon, Mis' DeJong! Um Gottes!"

"Yes, it wasn't bad. The boy slept the night through. I slept, too, quite a little."

"Why you didn't come here? Why—" At the look in Selma's face he knew that. "For nothing you and the boy could sleep here."

"I knew that! That's why."

"Don't talk dumb, Mrs. DeJong. Half the time the rooms is vacant. You and the boy chust as well—twenty cents, then, and pay me when you got it. But anyway you don't come in regular with the load, do you? That ain't for women."

"There's no one to do it for me, except Jan. And he's worse than no-body. Just through September and October. After that, maybe—" Her voice trailed off. It is hard to be hopeful at three in the morning, before breakfast.

She went to the little wash room at the rear, felt better immediately she had washed vigorously, combed her hair. She returned to the wagon to find a panic-stricken Dirk sure of nothing but that he had been deserted by his mother. Fifteen minutes later the two were seated at a table on which was spread what Chris Spanknoebel considered an adequate breakfast. A heartening enough beginning for the day, and a deceptive.

The Haymarket buyers did not want to purchase its vegetables from Selma DeJong. It wasn't used to buying of women, but to selling to them.

Selma had taken the covers off her vegetables. They were revealed crisp, fresh, colorful. But Selma knew they must be sold now, quickly. When the leaves began to wilt, when the edges of the cauliflower heads curled ever so slightly, turned brown and limp, their value decreased by half, even though the heads themselves remained white and firm.

Down the street came the buyers—little black-eyed swarthy men; plump, short-sleeved, greasy men; shrewd, tobacco-chewing men in overalls. Stolid red Dutch faces, sunburned. Lean, dark foreign faces. Shouting, clatter, turmoil.

The day broke warm. The sun rose red. It would be a humid September day such as frequently came in the autumn to this lake region. Garden stuff would have to move quickly this morning. Afternoon would find it worthless.

The peddlers looked at her bunched bouquets, glanced at her, passed her by. It was not unkindness that prompted them, but a certain shyness, a fear of the unaccustomed. Her wares were tempting but they passed her by with the instinct that the ignorant have against that which is unusual.

By nine o'clock trading began to fall off. In a panic Selma realized that the sales she had made amounted to little more than two dollars. If she stayed there until noon she might double that, but no more. In desperation she harnessed the horses, threaded her way out of the swarming street, and made for South Water street farther east. Here were the commission houses. She knew that Pervus had sometimes left his entire load with an established dealer here, to be sold on commission. She remembered the name—Talcott—though she did not know the exact location.

(Continued next week.)

FARM NOTES.

—Out of the 202,250 farms in Pennsylvania 8,255 are owned by women.

—Keep the calves growing. They are the future herd. Size, vigor, and early maturity will thus be realized and profits in dairying increased.

—Do not hold the broilers too long. The supply is now increasing and the price consequently decreasing. Additional weight is put on, therefore, at great expense.

—Pennsylvania's horse supply is gradually decreasing, both in quality and quantity. Why not plan to have a few well bred foals next year? They will be needed.

—Weeds killed when they are small never worry any farmer. It is those which escape early cultivation that require greater effort for eradication or eventually bear seed for the weed crops of following years. "Spare no Weed" should be the farmer's slogan.

—Spray early and late to control the aphid on ornamentals. Use nicotine or oil sprays. Also try to burn all the tent caterpillar masses to be found on the place. A torch for this use can be made with a burlap bag dipped in oil and tied to a long pole.

—Have you put a red ring around June 18 on the calendar? It deserves such a mark because it is Farmers' Field day at The Pennsylvania State College. It is a red letter day for Keystone farmers. Judging contests, sales, demonstrations, games, picnics, and many other events will make it a real day for all.

—Seven-tenths of one per cent., or 3,632 horses, in Pennsylvania are pure bred; 5.3 per cent., or 81,290, of the cattle pure bred; 3.1 per cent., or 15,781 sheep pure bred, and 2.9 per cent., or 34,775 swine pure bred. On a percentage basis, Pennsylvania is excelled in pure bred live stock only by New York and the New England States.

—Farmers in Pennsylvania are buying more high grade fertilizer each year, according to the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture which registers the brands and issues licenses for fertilizer sold in the State. The registrations received and accepted for 1925 by the Bureau of Foods and Chemistry have numbered to date 835 different brands covered by 96 licenses. The tendency for 1925 is in favor of an increasing proportion of sales of high grade mixed fertilizers over the low grade brand, states James W. Kellogg, chief chemist. Reports from fertilizer dealers covering the amount of fertilizer sold in 1924, while incomplete for the total year, show likewise that approximately 60 per cent. more of the high grade brands of mixed fertilizer was sold during the year than low grade ones.

—This is the best time of the year to look for the tent caterpillar which later feeds heavily upon the foliage of shade trees, according to entomologists in the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture.

Last year this insect was especially prevalent in southeastern Pennsylvania. These egg masses are usually found on wild cherry and apple though they may often be found on many other plants. They are recognized as a mass of eggs thickly set together around a limb about the diameter of a lead pencil. The masses should be cut off and burned, otherwise each mass will produce about 300 caterpillars in March or April. Every egg mass destroyed greatly decreases the number of caterpillars which will later feed on the foliage of shade trees, and make their characteristic "tents."

Further information can be secured by writing the Department of Agriculture and asking for bulletin No. 120 which gives an interesting discussion of this insect.

—Frost is a condensation of moisture on plants in the shape of minute ice crystals. A clear, still night is apt to be frosty, but frost may be prevented by winds, which stir up the air and prevent it forming in layers. Clouds act as a blanket to the layers of air just above the earth and retain the heat.

Anything that will serve as a blanket to assist the earth and plants to hold the heat they have absorbed during the day will tend to prevent frost. This blanket may be water vapor, a heavy cloud of smoke or coverings of straw, boards, earth, etc.

Orchards are frequently treated to smudges, created by using bags of manure. The manure is tightly packed into bags and these distributed through the orchard so as to be ready for use if needed. When frost threatens kerosene is poured on the bag and it is set on fire. It will burn slowly, giving off a dense smoke and adding moisture to the air, which will assist in forming an effective blanket.

—Too many varieties of wheat, lack of uniformity in milling, and the consequent preference of bakers for a western milled flour, are the principal handicaps that the Pennsylvania wheat grower must overcome when he puts his wheat on the market, according to the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture.

After making an investigation of the method in which wheat grown on Pennsylvania farms has been marketed during the past three years, George A. Stuart, in charge of the grain standardization work of the Bureau of Markets, believes that the production of this essential crop will not return maximum profits to the Pennsylvania producer until certain conditions, characteristic of the present marketing system, are corrected.

These are the principal marketing factors that now operate against the wheat grower's interests:

First—Farmers are growing too many different varieties of wheat to give uniform results in milling.

Second—Millers are not paying a premium for quality and are not buying by grade nor storing by grade; consequently, they are not milling a uniform flour.

Third—Because uniform flour is not being milled, bakers turn away from the flour made from Pennsylvania grown wheat and purchase their supplies from the large mills in the Middle West.

Fourth—Since bakers do not use the Pennsylvania milled flour, this flour must find a market in the export trade or be shipped to other States.

—Get the Watchman if you want the local news.



"I'm Here to Sell the Vegetables I Helped Raise. Get Out of My Way, You!"