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SYNOPSIS

CHAPTER I.—Introducing "So Big" (Dirk DeJong) in his infancy. And his mother, Selina DeJong, daughter of Simeon Peake, gambler and gentleman of fortune. Her life, to young womanhood in Chicago in 1888, has been unconventional, somewhat seamy, but 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 Selina, nineteen years old and practically destitute, becomes a school-teacher.

CHAPTER II—Selina secures a posi-tion as teacher at the High Prairie school, in the outskirts of Chicago, living at the home of a truck farmer, Klaas Pool. In Roelf, twelve years old, son of Klaas, Selina perceives a kindred spirit, a lover of beauty, like herself.

CHAPTER III.—The monotonous life of a country school-teacher at that time, is Belina's, brightened somewhat by the companionship of the sensitive, artistic boy Roelf.

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

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

Chapter VI

They were married the following May, just two months later. Selina was at once bewildered and calm; rebellious and content. Overlaying these emotions was something like grim amusement. Beneath them, something like fright. She moved with a strange air of fatality. It was as if she were being drawn inexorably, against her will, her judgment, her plans, into something sweet and terrible. When with Pervus she was elated, gay, voluble. He talked little; looked at her dumbly, worshipingly.

There were days when the feeling of unreality possessed her. She, a truck farmer's wife, living in High Prairie the rest of her days! Why, no! No! Was this the great adventure that her father had always spoken of? She. who was going to be a happy wayfarer down the path of life-any one of a dozen things. This High Prairie winter was to have been only an episode. Not her life! She looked at Maartje. Oh, she'd never be like that. That was stupid, unnecessary. Pink and blue dresses in the house, for her. Frills on the window curtains. Flowers in bowls.

Some of the pangs and terrors with which most prospective brides are assailed she confided to Mrs. Pool while that active lady was slamming about the kitchen.

"Did you ever feel scared and-and sort of-scared when you thought about marry, Mrs. Pool?"

Maartje Pool's hands were in a great batch of bread dough which she pummeled and slapped and kneaded vigorously. She shook out a hanceful of flour on the baking board while she held the dough mass in the other hand, then plumped it down and again began to knead, both hands doubled into

She laughed a short little laugh. "I ran away.'

"You did! You mean you really ran -but why? Didn't you lo-like Klaas?"

Maartje Pool kneaded briskly, the color high in her cheeks, what with the vigorous pummeling and rolling. and something else that made her look strangely young for the moment-girlish, almost. "Sure I liked him. I liked

"But you ran away?" "Not far. I came back. Nobody ever knew I ran, even. But I ran. I

"Why did you come back?" Maartje elucidated her philosophy without being in the least aware that It could be called by any such highsounding name. "You can't run away far enough. Except you stop living you can't run away from life."

The girlish look had fled. She was world-old. Her strong arms ceased their pounding and thumping for a moment. On the steps outside Klaas and Jakob were scanning the weekly reports preparatory to going into the city ate that afternoon.

Selina had the difficult task of winning Roelf to her all over again. He was lile a trusting little animal, who, wounded by the hand he has trusted.

is shy of it. Still, he could not withstand her long. Together they dug and planted flower beds in Pervus' dingy front yard. It was too late for tulips now. Pervus had brought her some seeds from town. They ranged all the way from poppies to asters; from purple iris to merning glories. The last named were to form the backporch vine, of course, because they grew quickly. Selina, city-bred, was ignorant of varieties, but insisted she vanted an old-fashioned gardenarigolds, pinks, mignonette, phlox.

she and Roelf dug, spaded, planted. Her trousseau was of the scantiest. household was already Pervus' equipped with such linens as they would need. The question of a wedding gown troubled her until Maartje suggested that she be married in the old Dutch wedding dress that lay in

the bride's chest in Selina's bedroom. "A real Dutch bride," Maartje said. "Your man will think that is fine." Pervus was delighted. Selina basked in his love like a kitten in the sun. She was, after all, a very lonely little bride with only two photographs on the shelf in her bedroom to give her courage and counsel. The old Dutch wedding gown was many inches too large for her. The skirt-band overlapped her slim waist; her slender little bosom did not fill out the generous width of the bodice; but the effect of the whole was amazingly quaint as well as pathetic.

They were married at the Pools'. Klaas and Maartje had insisted on furnishing the wedding supper-ham, chickens, sausages, cakes, pickles, beer. The Reverend Dekker married them, and all through the ceremony Selina chided herself because she could not keep her mind on his words in the fascination of watching his short, stubby beard as it waggled with every motion of his jaw. Pervus looked stiff, solemn and uncomfortable in his wedding blacks-not at all the handsome giant of the everyday corduroys and blue shirt. In the midst of the ceremony Selina bad her moment of panic when she actually saw herself running shricking from this company, this man, this house, down the road, on, on toward-toward what? The feeling was so strong that she was surprised to find herself still standing there in the Dutch wedding gown answering "I do" in the proper place.

After the wedding they straight to DeJong's house. In May the vegetable farmer cannot neglect his garden even for a day. The house had been made ready for them.

Throughout the supper Selina had had thoughts which were so foolish and detached as almost to alarm her. "Now I am married. I am Mrs. Pervus DeJong. That's a pretty name. It would look quite distinguished on a calling card, very spidery and fine:

"MRS. PERVUS DE JONG

At Home Fridays."

She recalled this later, grim) s, when she was Mrs. Pervus DeJong, at home not only Fridays, but Saturdays, Sundays, Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

They drove down the road to De Jong's place. Selina thought, "Now I am driving home with my husband. I feel his shoulder against mine. I wish he would talk. I wish he would say something. Still, I am not frightened."

Pervus' market wagon was standing in the yard, shafts down. He should have gone to market today; would certainly have to go tomorrow, starting early in the afternoon so as to get a good stand in the Haymarket. By the light of his lantern the wagon seemed to Selina to be a symbol. She had often seen it before, but now that it was to be a part of her life-this the DeJong market wagon and she Mrs. DeJong-she saw clearly what a crazy, disreputable and poverty-proclaiming old vehicle it was, in contrast with the neat strong wagon in Klaas Pool's yard, smart with green paint and red lettering that announced, "Klaas Pool, Garden Produce." With the two sleek farm horses the turnout looked as prosperous and comfortable as Klaas himself.

Pervus swung ber down from the seat of the buggy, his hand about her waist, and held her so for a moment, close. Selina said: "You must have that wagon painted, Pervus. And the seat-springs fixed and the sideboard

He stared. "Wagon!"

Yes. It looks a sight." The house was tidy enough, but none too clean. Pervus lighted the lamps. There was a fire in the kitchen stove. It made the house seem stuffy on this mild May night. Selina thought that

her own little bedroom at the Pools', no longer hers, must be deliciously cool and still with the breeze fanning fresh from the west. Pervus was putting the horse into the barn. The bedroom was off the sitting room. The window was shut. This last year had taught Selina to prepare the night before for next morning's rising, so as to lose the least possible time. She did this now, unconsciously. She brushed her hair, laid out temorrow's garments, put on her high-necked, long-sleeved night gown and got into this strange bed, She heard Pervus DeJong shut the kitchen door; the latch clicked, the ock turned. Heavy quick footsteps cross the bare kitchen floor. This man was coming into her room. You can't run far enough," Maartle Pool had said. "Except you stop liv-

ing you can't run away from life.' Next morning it was dark when he awakened her at four. She started up with a little cry and sat up, straining her ears, her eyes. "Is that you, father?" She was little Selina Peake again, and Simeon Peake had come in, gay, debonair, from a night's gaming.

Pervus DeJong was already padding about the room in stocking feet. "What -what time is it? What's the matter, father? Why are you up? Haven't you gone to bed. . . . Then she renembered. Pervus DeJong laughed and came

I've got to do, and all today's. Breakfast, little Lina, breakfast. You are a farmer's wife now." Dirk DeJong was born in the bed-

toward her. "Get up, little lazy bones.

It's after four. All yesterday's work



Farm Work Grand! Farm Work le Slave Work."

was because Pervus brought them the food that made them so. Something of this she tried to convey to Pervus. He only stared, his blue eyes wide and unresponsive.

"Farm work grand! Farm work is slave work. Yesterday, from the load of carrots in town I didn't make to bring you the goods for the

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teenth day of March, of a bewildered, somewhat resentful, but deeply interested mother; and a proud, foolish, and vainglorious father whose air of achievement, considering the really slight part he had played in the long, tedious, and racking business, was disproportionate. The name Dirk had sounded to Selina like something tall, straight, and slim. Pervus had chosen It had been his grandfather's

Sometimes, during those months, ter in High Prairie-that winter of their wagons in preparation for the the lcy bedroom, the chill black next day's selling. The early comer drum, the schoolhouse fire, the chil- got the advantageous stand. There plains, the Pool pork-and it seemed a lovely dream; a time of ease, of freedom, of careless happiness.

Pervus DeJong loved his pretty young wife, and she him. But young love thrives on color, warmth, beauty. It becomes prosaic and inarticulate when forced to begin its day at four in the morning by reaching blindly, dazedly, for limp and obscure garments dangling from bedpost or chair, and to end that day at nine, numb and sodden with weariness, after seventeen hours of physical labor.

It was a wet summer. Pervus' choice tomato plants, so carefully set out in the hope of a dry season, became draggled gray specters in a waste of mire. Of fruit the field bere one tomato the size of a marble.

For the rest, the crops were moderately successful on the DeJong place. But the work necessary to make this so was heartbreaking. Selina had known, during her winter at the Pools', that Klaas, Roelf, and old Jakob worked early and late, but her months there had encompassed what is really the truck farmer's leisure period. She had arrived in November. She had married in May. From May until October it was necessary to tend the fields with a concentration amounting to fury. Selina had never dreamed that human beings toiled like that for sustenance. Toil was a thing she had never encountered until coming to High Prairie. Now she saw her husband wrenching a living out of the earth by sheer muscle, sweat, and pain. During June, July, August, and September the good black prairie soil for miles around was teeming, a hothed of plenty. There was born in Selina at this time a feeling for the land that she was never to lose. Perhaps the child within her had something to do with this. She was aware of a feeling of kinship with the earth; an illusion of splendor, of fulfillment.

As cabbages had been cabbages, and no more, to Klaas Pool, so, to Pervus, these carrots, beets, onions, turnips. and radishes were just so much produce, to be planted, tended, gathered, marketed. But to Selina, during that summer, they became a vital part in the vast mechanism of a living world. Pervus, earth, sun, rain, all elemental adventure, that he never quite underforces that labored to produce the rood for millions of humans. She thought had a mingled feeling of uneasiness of Chicago's children. If they had red and pride cheeks, clear eyes, nimble brains it

child so when it comes you should have clothes for it. It's better I feed them to the live stock."

Pervus drove into the Chicago mar-

Ket every other day. During July and August he sometimes did not have his clothes off for a week. Together he and Jan Steen would load the wagon with the day's garnering. At four he would start on the tedious trip into town. The historic old Haymarket on West Randolph street had become the stand for market gardeners for miles Selina would look back on her first win- around Chicago. Here they stationed was no regular allotment of space. Pervus tried to reach the Haymarket by nine at night. Often bad roads made a detour necessary and he was late. That usually meant bad business next day. The men, for the most part, slept on their wagons, curled up on the wagon seat or stretched out on the sacks. Their horses were stabled and fed in near-by sheds, with more actual comfort than the men themselves. One could get a room for twenty-five cents in one of the ramshackle rooming houses that faced the street. But the rooms were small, stuffy, none too clean; the beds little more comfortable than the wagons. Besides, twenty-five cents! You got twenty-five cents for half a barrel of tomatoes. You got twenty-five cents for a sack of potatoes. Onlone brought seventy-five cents a sack. Cabbages went a hundred heads for two dollars, and they were five-pound heads. If you drove home with ten dollars in your pocket it represented a profit of exactly zero. The sum must go above that. No; one did not pay out twentyfive cents for the mere privilege of

sleeping in a bed. One June day, a month or more after their marriage, Selina drove into Chicago with Pervus, an incongruous little figure in her bride's finery perched on the seat of the vegetable wagon piled high with early garden stuff. It was, in a way, their wedding trip, for Selina had not been away from the farm since her marriage.

As they jogged along now she revealed magnificent plans that had been forming in her imagination during the past four weeks. It had not taken her four weeks-or days-to discover that this great broad-shouldered man she had married was a kindly creature. tender and good, but lacking any vestige of initiative, of spirit. She marveled, sometimes, at the memory of his boldness in bidding for her lunch box that evening of the raffle. It seemed incredible now, though he frequently referred to it, wagging his head doggishly and grinning the broadly complacent grin of the conquering male. But he was, after all, a dull fellow, and there was in Selina a dash of fire, of wholesome wickedness, of stood. For her flashes of flame he

In the manner of all young brides.

Selina started bravely out to make her husband over. He was handsome, strong, gentle; slow, conservative, moose. She would make him keen, daring, successful, buoyant. Now, bumpsketched some of her plans in large dashing strokes. "Pervus, we must paint the house in October, before the frost sets in, and

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after the summer work is over. Then that west sixteen. We'll drain it."
"Yeh, drain," Pervus muttered. "It's

clay land. Drain and you have got yet clay. Hard clay soil." Selina had the answer to that. "I

know it. You've got to use tile drainage. And-wait a minute-humus. I know what humus is. It's decayed vegetables. There's always a pile by the side of the barn; and you've been using it on the quick land. All the west sixteen isn't clay. Part of it's muckland. All it needs is draining and manure. With potash, too, and

phosphoric acid." Pervus laughed a great hearty laugh that Selina found surprisingly infuriating. "Well, well! School teacher is a farmer now, huh? I bet even Widow Paarlenberg don't know as much as my little farmer about"-he exploded again-fabout this, now, potash and—what kind of acid? Tell me. little Lina, from where did you learn all this about truck farming?"

"Out of a book," Selina said, airdost sent to Chicago for it." "A book! A book!" He slapped his knee. "A vegetable farmer out of a book."

"Why not! The man who wrote it knows more about vegetable farming than anybody in all High Prairie. "He knows about new ways. You're running the farm just the way your father ran it."

"What was good enough for my father is good enough for me."

"It isn't!" cried Selina, "It isn't! The book says clay loam is all right for cabbages, peas, and beans. It tells you how. It tells you how!" She was like a frantic little fly darting and pricking him on to accelerate the stolid duggishness of his slow plodding gait.

Pervus stared straight ahead down the road between his horse's ears much as Klass Pool had done so maddeningly on Selina's first ride on the Halsted road. "Fine talk. Fine talk." 'It isn't talk. It's plans. You've got to plan."

"Fine talk. Fine talk." "Oh!" Selina beat her knee with an

mpotent fist It was the nearest they had ever

ome to quarreling. It would seem that Pervus had the best of the argument, for when two years had passed the west sixteen was still a boggy clay mass, and unprolific; and the old house stared out shabby and paintless, at the dense willows by the roadside.

They slept that night in one of the twenty-five-cent rooming houses. Rather, Pervus slept. The woman lay awake, wept a little, perhaps. But in the morning Pervus might have noted (if he had been a men given to noting) hat the fine jaw-line was set as determinedly as ever with an angle that spelled inevitably paint, drainage, humus, potash, phosphoric acid, and a borse team.

She rose before four with Pervus, glad to be out of the stuffy little room with its spotted and scaly green wall paper, its rickety bed and chair. They had a cup of coffee and a slice of bread in the eating house on the first floor. Selina waited while he tended the horse. It was scarcely dawn when the trading began. Selina, watching it from the wagon seat, thought that this was a ridiculously haphazard and perilous method of distributing the food for whose fruition Pervus had toiled with aching back and tired arms. But she sald nothing.

She kept, perforce, to the house that first year, and the second. Pervus declared that his woman should never work in the fields as did many of the High Prairie wives and daughters. Selina learned much that first year, and the second, but she said little. She kept the house in order-rough work, and endless-and she managed, miraculously, to keep herself looking fresh and neat. She understood now Maartje Pool's drab garments, harassed face, heavily swift feet, never at rest. The idea of flowers in bowls was abandoned by July. Had it not been for Roelf's faithful fending, the flower

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(Continued on page 6)

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