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(Continued)

Selina had been married almost three years when there came to her a letter from Julie Hempel, now married. The letter had been sent to the Klaas Pool farm and Jozina had brought it to her. Seated on her kitchen steps in her calico dress she read it.

"Darling Selina :-"I thought it was so queer that you didn't answer my letter, and now I know that you must have thought it queer that I did not answer yours. I found your letter to me, written long ago, when I was going over mother's things last week. It was the letter you must have written when I was in Kansas City. Mother had never given

it to me. "Mamma died three weeks ago. Last week I was going over her things-a trying task, you may imagine-and there were your two letters addressed to me. She had never destroyed them. Poor mamma

"Well, dear Selina, I suppose you don't even know that I am married. 1 married Michael Arnold of Kansas City. The Arnolds were in the packing business there, you know. Michael has gone into business with pa here in Chicago and I suppose you have heard of pa's success. Just all of a sudden he began to make a great deal of money after he left the butcher business and went into the yards-the stock yards, you know. Poor mamma was so happy these last few years, and had everything that was beautiful. I have two children-Eugene and

"I am getting to be quite a society person. You would laugh to see me. I am on the ladies' entertainment committee of the World's fair. We are supposed to entertain all the visiting blg bugs-that is the lady bugs. There! How is that for a joke?

"I suppose you know about the Infanta Eulalle. Of Spain, you know. And what she did about the Potter. Palmer ball. . .

Selina, the letter in her workstained hand, looked up and across the fields and away to where the prairie met the sky and closed in on her; her world. The Infanta Eulalie of Spain. She went back to the letter.

"Well, she came to Chicago for the fair and Mrs. Potter Palmer was to give a huge reception and ball for her. Mrs. P. is head of the whole committee, you know, and I must say she looks queenly with her white hair so beautifully dressed and her diamond dog-collar and her black velvet and all. Well, at the very last minute the Infanta refused to attend the ball because she had just heard that Mrs. P. was an innkeeper's wife. Imagine! The Palmer house, of course."

Selina, holding the letter in her hand, imagined.

It was in the third year of Selina's marriage that she first went into the



She Would Take Dirk With Her Into the Fields, Placing Him on a Heap of Empty Sacks in the Shade.

fields to work. Pervus had protested miserably, though the vegetables were spoiling in the ground.

Selina had regained health and vigor after two years of wretchedness. She felt steel-strong and even hopeful again, sure sign of physical well-being. Long before now she had realized tha this time must inevitably come. S. she answered briskly, "Nonsense, Per vus. Working in the field's no harde than washing or ironing or scrubbing or standing over a hot stove in August Women's work! Housework's the hardest work in the world. That's why men won't do it.'

She would often take the boy Dir with her into the fields, placing his on a heap of empty sacks in the shad He invariably crawled off this low! throne to dig and burrow in the warr

black dirt. He even made as though to help his mother, pulling at the rooted things with futile fingers, and sitting back with a bump when a shallow root did unexpectedly yield to his tug-

"Look! He's a farmer already," Pervus would say.

So two years went-three years-

four. In the fourth year of Selina's marriage she suffered the loss of her one woman friend in High Prairie. Maartje Pool died in childbirth, as was so often the case in this region where a Gampish midwife acted as obstretri-The child, too, had not lived. Death had not been kind to Maartje Pool. It had brought neither peace nor youth to her face, as it often does. Selina, looking down at the strangely still figure that had been so active, so bustling, realized that for the first time in the years she bad known her she was seeing Maartje Pool at rest. - It seemed incredible that she could lie there, the infant in her arms, while the house was filled with people and there were chairs to be handed, space to be cleared, food to be cooked and served. Sitting there with the other High Prairie women Selina had a hideous feeling that Maartje would suddenly rise up and take things in charge; rub and scratch with capable fingers the spatters of dried mud on Klaas Pool's black trousers (he had been in the yard to see to the horses); quiet the loud wailing of Geertje and Jozina; pass her gnarled hand over Roelf's wide-staring eyes, wipe the film of dust from the parlor table that had never known a speck during her

"You can't run far enough," Maartje had said. "Except you stop living you can't run away from life."

Well, she had run far enough this

Roelf was sixteen now, Geertje twelve, Jozina eleven. What would this household do now, Selina wondered, without the woman who had been so faithful a slave to it? Who would keep the pigtails-no longer giggling-in clean ginghams and de cent square-toed shoes? Who, when Klass broke out in rumbling Dutch wrath against what he termed Roelf's 'dumb" ways, would say, "Og, Pool, leave the boy alone once. He does nothing." Who would keep Klaas himself in order; cook his meals, wash his clothes, iron his shirts, take a pride in the great ruddy childlike giant?

Klaas answered these questions just nine months later by marrying the Widow Paarlenberg, High Prairie was rocked with surprise. For months this marriage was the talk of the district. So insatiable was High Prairie's curiosity that every scrap of news was swallowed at a gulp. When the word went round of Roelf's flight from the farm, no one knew where, it served only as sauce to the great

dish of gossip. Selina had known. Pervus was away at the market when Roelf had knocked at the farmhouse door one night at eight, had turned the knob and entered, as usual. But there was nothing of the usual about his appearance. He wore his best suit-his first suit of store clothes, bought at the time of his mother's funeral. It never had fitted him; now it was grotesquely small for him. He had shot up amazingly in the last eight or nine months. Yet there was nothing of the ridiculous about him as he stood there before her now, tall, lean, dark. He put down his cheap yellow suitcase.

"I am going away. I couldn't stay."

She nodded. "Where?" "Away. Chicago maybe." He was terribly moved, so he made his tone "They came home last night. casual. I have got some books that belong to you." He made as though to open the

sultcase. "No, no! Keep them."

"Well, Roelf."

"Good-by." "Good-by, Roelf." She took the boy's dark head in her two hands and, standing on tiptoe, kissed him. He turned "Wait a minute. Wait a minute." She had a few dollars-in quarters, dimes, half dollars-perhaps ten dollars in all-hidden away in a conister on the shelf. She reached for

it. But when she came back with the

box in her hand he was gone.

'And wait three years for a crop!" "Yes, but then we'd have it And

a plantation's good for ten years, once it's started. I've been reading up on it. The new way is to plant asparagus in Dirk was eight; Little Sobig DeJong. rows, the way you would rhubarb or n a suit made of bean-sacking sewed corn. Plant six feet apart, and four

acres anyway."

He was not even sufficiently interested to be amused. "Yeh, four acres where? In the clay land, maybe." He dld laugh then, if the short bitter sound he made could be construed as indicating mirth. "Out of a book." was vastly proud. The rusty iron "In the clay land," Selina urged,

ove had been dethroned by a central erisply. "And out of a book. That eater. Dirk went to school from Ocwest sixteen isn't bringing you anyober until June. Pervus protested hat this was foolish. The boy could thing, so what difference does it make if I am wrong! Let me put my own e of great help in the fields from the money into it, I've thought it all out, eginning of April to the first of No-Pervus. Please. We'll underdrain the ember, but Selina fought savagely clay soil. Just five or six acres, to start. We'll manure it heavily-as much as we can afford-and then for "Well, he will be pretty soon. Time two years we'll plant potatoes there. We'll put in our asparagus plants the third spring-one-year-old seedlings. I'll promise to keep it weeded-Dirk ing to fight it when the time should and I. He'll be a big boy by that time. come. Her Sobig a truck farmer, a Let me try it, Pervus. Let me try."

In the end she had her way, partly because Pervus was too occupied with his own endless work to oppose her: and partly because he was, in his undemonstrative way, still in love with his vivacious, nimble-witted, highspirited wife, though to her frantic goadings and proddings he was as phlegmatically oblivious as an elephant

to a pin prick. Though she worked as hard as any woman in High Prairle, had as little. dressed as badly, he still regarded her as a luxury; an exquisite toy which, in a moment of madness, he had taken

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Chapter VII

ogether by his mother. A brown blond

boy with mosquito bites on his legs

and his legs never still. Nothing of the

dreamer about this lad. The one-room

schoolhouse of Selina's day had been

replaced by a two-story brick struc-

ture, very fine, of which High Prairie

or his schooling, and won.

"Sobig isn't a truck farmer."

was fifteen I was running our place."

Verbally Selina did not combat this.

But within her every force was gather-

slave to the soil, bent by it, beaten by

it, blasted by it, so that he, in time,

like the other men of High Prairie,

would take on the very look of the

rocks and earth among which they

Dirk, at eight, was a none too hand-

some child, considering his father and

mother-or his father and mother as

they had been. It was not until he

was seventeen or eighteen that he was

to metamorphose suddenly into a

graceful and aristocratic youngster

with an fidefinable look about him of

distinction and actual elegance.

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ng thirty. The work rode her as it had ridden Maartje Pool. In the De-Jong yard there was always a dado of washing. Faded overalls, a shirt, socks, a boy's drawers grotesquely patched and mended, towels of rough sacking. She, too, rose at four, snatched up shapeless garments, invested herself with them, seized her great coll of fine cloudy hair, twisted it into a utilitarian knob and skewered it with a hairpin from which the varnish had long departed, leaving it a dull gray; thrust her silm feet into sliapeless shoes, dabbed her face with cold water, hurried to the kitchen stove. The work was always at her heels, its breath hot in pain. He drove the weary miles to on her neck.

Seeing her thus one would have thought that the Selina Peake of the wine-red cashmere, the fun-loving disposition, the high-spirited courage, had departed forever. But these things green stuff protected by canvas, but still persisted. For that matter, even Pervus wet before ever he climbed into the wine-red cashmere clung to existence. So hopefasty old-fashioned now as to be almost picturesque, it hung in Selina's closet like a rose memory. Sometimes when she came upon it in an orgy of cleaning she would pass her rough hands over its soft folds and by that magic process Mrs. Pervus DeJong vanished in a pouf and in her place was the girl Selina Peake perched a-tiptoe on a soap box in Adam Ooms' hall while all High Prairie, open-mouthed, looked on as the impecunious Pervus DeJong threw ten hard-earned dollars at her feet.

It would be gratifying to be able to record that in these eight or nine years Selina had been able to work wonders on the DeJong farm; that the house glittered, the crops thrived richly, the barn housed sleek cattle. But it could not be truthfully said. True, she had achieved some changes, but at the cost of terrific effort. A less indomitable woman would have sunk into apathy years before. The house bad a coat of paint-lead-gray, because it was cheapest. There were two horses-the second a broken-down old mare, blind in one eye, that they had picked up for five dollars after it had been turned out to pasture for future sale as horse carcass. A month of rest and pasturage restored the mare to usefulness. Selina had made the bargain, and Pervus had scolded her roundly for it. Now he drove the mare to market, saw that she pulled more sturdly than the other horse, but had never retracted. It was no quality of meanness in him. Pervus merely was like that.

But the west sixteen! That had een Selina's most heroic achievement. Her plan, spoken of to Pervus in the first month of her marriage, had taken years to mature; even now was but a partial triumph. She had even descended to nagging.

"Why don't we put in asparagus?" "Asparagus!" considered something of a luxury, and rarely included in the Bigh Prairie truck farmer's products.

for himself. "Little Lina"-tolerantly, Selina was a farm woman now, near- fondly. You would have thought that he spoiled her, pampered her. Per-

haps he even thought he did. That was Pervus. Thrifty, like his kind, but unlike them in shrewdness. Penny wise, pound foolish; a characteristic that brought him his death. September, usually a succession of golden days and hazy opalescent evenings on the Illinois prairie land, was disastrously cold and rainy that year. Pervus' great frame was racked by rheumatism. He was forty now, and over, still of magnificent physique, so that to see him suffering gave Selina the pangs of pity that one has at sight of the very strong or the very weak market three times a week, for September was the last big month of the truck farmer's season. Selina would watch him drive off down the road in the creaking old market wagon, the the seat. There never seemed to be enough waterproof canvas for both.

"Pervus, take it off those sacks and put it over your shoulders." "That's them white globe onions

The last of 'em. I can get a fancy price for them, but not if they're all

wetted down." "Don't sleep on the wagon tonight, Pervus. Sleep in. Be sure. It saves

in the end. You know the last time you were laid up for a week." "It'll clear. Breaking now over there

in the west." The clouds did break late in the afternoon; the false sun came out hot and bright. Pervus slept out in the Haymarket, for the night was close and humid. At midnight the lake wind sprang up, cold and treacherous, and with it came the rain again. Pervus was drenched by morning, chilled, thoroughly miserable. A hot cup of coffee at four and another at ten when the rush of trading was over stimulated him but little. When he reached home it was mid-afternoon. Selina put him to bed against his half-hearted protests. Banked him with hot water jars, a hot iron wrapped in flannel at his feet. But later came fever instead of the expected relief of perspiration. Ill though he was, he looked more ruddy and hale than most men in health; but suddenly Selina, startled, saw black lines like gashes etched under

cheeks. In a day when pneumonia was known as lung fever and in a locality that advised closed windows and hot air as a remedy, Pervus' battle was lost before the doctor's hooded buggy was seen standing in the yard for long hours through the night. Toward morning the doctor had Jan Steen stable the horse. It was a sultry night, with flashes of heat lightning in

his eyes, about his mouth, in his

the west. "I should think if you opened the windows," Selina said to the old High Prairie doctor over and over, emboldened by terror, "It would help him to breathe. He-he's breathing so-he's

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He-He's Breathing So-" She Could Not Bring Herself to Say, "So Ter-

breathing so-" She could not bring "so terribly." The herself to say, sound of the words wrung her as did the sound of his terrible breathing.

Perhaps the most polgnant and touching feature of the days that folowed was not the sight of this stricken giant, lying majestic and aloof in his unwonted black; nor of the boy Dirk, nystified but elated, too, with the unaccustomed stir and excitement; nor of the shabby little farm that seemed to shrink and dwindle into further insignificance beneath the sudden pubicity turned upon it. No; it was the ight of Selina, widowed, but having no ime for decent tears. The farm was here; it must be tended. Illness, leath, sorrow-the garden must be ended, the vegetables pulled, hauled to market, sold. Upon the garden deended the boy's future, and hers.

For the first few days following the uneral one or another of the neighporing farmers drove the DeJong team to market, aided the blundering Jan in the fields. But each had his hands full with his own farm work. On the lifth day Jan Steen had to take the garden truck to Chicago, though not without many misgivings on Selina's part, all of which were realized when he returned late next day with half the load still on his wagon and a sum of money representing exactly zero in

profits. Selina was standing in the kitchen doorway, Jan in the yard with the team. She turned her face toward the fields. An observant person (Jan Steen was not one of these) would have noted the singularly determined and clear-cut jaw line of this drably calicoed farm woman.

"I'll go myself Monday." Jan stared. "Go? Go where, Mon-

day?" "To market."

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

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

"This woman does." Selina 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 "Size them," Sellna ordered, as they started to bunch radishes, beets,

(Continued on page 6)

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