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"I'm Here to Sell the Vegetables I Helped Raise. Get Out of My Way, You!" here to sell the vegetables I helped raise and I'm going to do it. Get out of my way, you!"

Selina, 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. Selina 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—!" She stopped. "Like my what?" "We'll go now, son. There's cold meat for your supper, Jan, and potatoes 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. Selina 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!" Selina 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 Selina 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 Selina DeJong, driving up the Halsted road toward the city instead of sitting, black-robed, in the farm parlor while High Prairie came to condoile. In Selina, 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's just 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 wornout 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, chrysoprase 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 room window. There a woman's calicoed figure standing in the doorway. Mrs. Vander Sijde on the porch, fanning her flushed face with her apron; Cornelia Snip 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 Selina waved, bowed, called. "How d'you do, Mrs. Vander Sijde!" 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, Miss DeJong!" staring with china-blue eyes at her load. "Yes, I am, Mr. Boomsma." "That ain't work for a woman, Miss DeJong. You better stay home and let the men folks go." Selina'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 Selina. 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 on. 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 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? 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. . . ."

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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 Selina 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, bearing 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 Selina had urged them on tonight. Halfway down the block Selina 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 Selina drew the whip out of its socket and clipped sharply her surprised nags. 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 Selina, 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 Selina, 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. Selina'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

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Dirk to warin and revivify them. They would eat the sandwiches left from the night before. As Selina 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. Selina 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 Miss 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, Miss 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 Selina's face he knew then. "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 reg'lar with the load, do you? That ain't for womers." "There's no one to do it for me, except Jan. And he's worse than nobody. 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 Selina DeJong. It wasn't used to buying of women, but to selling to them. Selina had taken the covers off her vegetables. They were revealed crisp, fresh, colorful. But Selina 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 Selina 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

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