

SO BIG

(By EDNA FERBER)

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(Continued)

Dirk could laugh at that picture. But he protested, too. "But there's no native architecture, so what's to be done? You wouldn't call those smoke-blackened old stone and brick piles with their iron fences and their conservatories and cupolas and gingerbread exactly native, would you?"

"No," Selina admitted, "but those Italian villas and French chateaux in north Chicago suburbs are a good deal like a lace evening gown in the Arizona desert. It wouldn't keep you cool in the daytime, and it wouldn't be warm enough at night. I suppose a native architecture is evolved from building for the local climate and the needs of the community, keeping beauty in mind as you go. We don't need turrets and towers any more than we need draw-bridges and moats. It's all right to keep them, I suppose, where they grew up, in a country where the feudal system meant that any day your next-door neighbor might take it into his head to call his gang around him and sneak up to steal your wife and tapestries and gold drinking cups."

Dirk was interested and amused. Talks with his mother were likely to affect him thus. "What's your idea of a real Chicago house, mother?"

Selina answered quickly, as if she had thought often about it; as if she would have liked just such a dwelling on the site of the old DeJong farmhouse in which they now were seated so comfortably. "Well, it would need big porches for the hot days and nights so's to catch the prevailing southwest winds from the prairies in the summer—a porch that would be swung clear around to the east, too—or a terrace or another porch east so that if the precious old lake breeze should come up just when you think you're dying of the heat, as it sometimes does, you could catch that, too. It ought to be built—the house, I mean—rather squarish and tight and solid against our cold winters and northeasters. Then sleeping porches, of course. There's a grand American institution for you! England may have its afternoon tea on the terrace, and Spain may have its patio, and France its courtyard, and Italy its pergola, vine-covered; but America's got the sleeping porch—the screened-in open-air sleeping porch, and I shouldn't wonder if the man who first thought of that would get precedence, on Judgment day, over the man who invented the airplane, the talking machine, and the telephone. After all, he had nothing in mind but the health of the human race." After which the grand period Selina grinned at Dirk, and Dirk grinned at Selina and the two giggled together there by the fireplace, companionably.

"Mother, you're simply wonderful!—only your native Chicago dwelling seems to be mostly porch."

Selina waved such carping criticism away with a careless hand. "Oh, well, any house that has enough porches, and two or three bathrooms and at least eight closets can be lived in comfortably, no matter what else it has or hasn't got."

Next day they were more serious. The eastern college and the architectural career seemed to be settled things. Selina was content, happy. Dirk was troubled about the expense. He spoke of it at breakfast next morning (Dirk's breakfast; his mother had had hers hours before and now as he drank his coffee, was sitting with him a moment and glancing at the paper that had come in the rural mail delivery). She had been out in the fields overseeing the transplanting of young tomato seedlings from hotbed to field. She wore an old gray sweater buttoned up tight, for the air was still sharp. On her head was a battered black felt soft hat (an old one of Dirk's) much like the one she had worn to the Haymarket that day ten years ago.

"I've been thinking," he began, "the expense—"

"Pigs'll do it," Selina said, calmly. "I've been wanting to put them in for three or four years, it's August Hempel's idea. Hogs, I should have said."

He echoed, "Hogs!" rather faintly. "High-bred hogs. They're worth their weight in silver this minute, and will be for years to come. I won't go in for them extensively. Just enough to make an architect out of Mr. Dirk DeJong." Then, at the expression in his face: "Don't look so pained, son. There's nothing revolting about a hog—he's a handsome, impressive-looking animal, the hog, when he isn't treated like one."

He looked dejected. "I'd rather not go to school on hogs."

She took off the felt hat and tossed it over to the old couch by the window; smoothed her hair back with the flat of her palm. You saw that the soft dark hair was liberally sprinkled with gray now, but the eyes were bright and clear as ever.

"You know, Sobig, this is what they call a paying farm—as vegetable farms go. We're out of debt, the land's in good shape, the crop promises well if we don't have another rainy cold spring like last year's. I'm having a grand time. When I see the asparagus plantation actually yielding, that I planted ten years ago, I'm as happy as if I'd stumbled on a gold mine. I think, sometimes, of the way your father objected to my planting the first one. April, like this, in the country, with everything coming up green and new in the rich black loam—I can't tell you. And when I know that it goes to market as food—the best kind of food, that keeps people's bodies clean and clear and flexible and strong! I like to think of babies' mothers saying: 'Now eat your spinach, every scrap, or you can't have any dessert! . . . Carrots make your eyes bright. . . . Finish your potato. Potatoes make you strong!'"

Selina laughed, flushed a little. "Yes, but how about hogs? Do you feel that way about hogs?"

"Certainly," said Selina, briskly. She pushed toward him a little blue-and-white platter that lay on the white cloth near her elbow. "Have a bit more bacon, Dirk. One of these nice curly silvers that are so crisp."

"I've finished my breakfast, Mother." He rose.

The following autumn saw him a student of architecture at Cornell. He worked hard, studied even during his vacation.

He would come home to the heat and humidity of the Illinois summers and spend hours each day in his own room that he had fitted up with a long work-table and a drawing board. His T-square was at hand; two triangles—a 45 and a 60; his compass; a pair of dividers. Selina sometimes stood behind him watching him as he carefully worked on the tracing paper. His contempt for the local architecture was now complete. Especially did he hold forth on the subject of the apartment houses that were mushrooming on every street in Chicago from Hyde Park on the south to Evanston on the north. Chicago was very elegant in speaking of these; never called them "flats"; always apartments. In front of each of these (there were usually six to a building) was stuck a little glass-enclosed cubicle known as a sun-parlor. In these (sometimes you heard them spoken of, grandly, as solariums) Chicago dwellers took refuge from the leaden skies, the heavy lake atmosphere, the gray mist and fog and smoke that so frequently swathed the city in gloom. They were done in yellow or rose tresses. Silk lampshades glowed therein, and flower-laden boxes. In these frank little boxes Chicago read its paper, sewed, played bridge, even ate its breakfast. It never pulled down the shades.

"Terrible!" Dirk fumed. "Not only are they hideous in themselves, stuck on the front of those houses like three pairs of spectacles; but the lack of decent privacy! They do everything but bathe in 'em. Have they ever

heard the advice given people who live in glass houses?"

By his junior year he was talking in a large way about the Beaux Arts. But Selina did not laugh at this. "Perhaps," she thought, "Who can tell! After a year or two in an office here, why not another year of study in Paris if he needs it."

Though it was her busiest time on the farm Selina went to Ithaca for his graduation in 1913. He was twenty-two and, she was calmly sure, the best-looking man in his class. Undenably he was a figure to please the eye; tall, well-built, as his father had been, and blond, too, like his father, except for his eyes. These were brown—not so dark as Selina's, but with some of the soft liquid quality of her glance. They strengthened his face, somehow; gave him an ardent look of which he was not conscious. Women, feeling the ardor of that dark glance turned upon them, were likely to credit him with feelings toward themselves of which he was quite innocent. They did not know that the glance and its effect were mere matters of pigmentation and eye-conformation. Then, too, the gaze of a man who talks little is always more effective than that of one who is loquacious.

Selina, in her black silk dress, and her plain black hat, and her sensible shoes, was rather a quaint little figure among all those vivacious, bevoiled, and beribboned mammas. But a distinctive little figure, too. Dirk need not be ashamed of her. She eyed the rather paunchy, prosperous, middle-aged fathers and thought, with a pang, how much handsomer Pervus would have been than any of these, if only he could have lived to see this day. Then, involuntarily, she wondered if this day would ever have occurred, had Pervus lived. Chided herself for thinking thus.

When he returned to Chicago, Dirk went into the office of Hollis & Sprague, architects. But his work there was little more than that of draughtsman, and his weekly stipend could hardly be dignified by the term of salary. But he had large ideas about architecture and he found expression for his suppressed feelings on his week-ends spent with Selina at the farm.

"Baroque" was the word with which he dismissed the new Beachside hotel, north. He said the new Lincoln park bandstand looked like an igloo. He said that the city council ought to

"I'll have to marry money," she declared. "Now that they've finished calling poor grandpa a beef-baron and taken I don't know how many millions away from him, we're practically on the streets."

"You look it!" from Dirk; and there was bitterness beneath his light tone.

"Well, it's true. All this silly muck-raking in the past ten years or more. Poor father! Of course, granddad was purty rough, let me tell you. I read some of the accounts of that last indictment—the 1910 one—and I must say I gathered that dear old Aug made Jesse James look like a philanthropist. I should think, at his age, he'd be a little scared. After all, when you're over seventy you're likely to have some doubts and fears about punishment in the next world. But not a grand old pirate like grandfather. He'll sack and burn and plunder until he goes down with the ship. And it looks to me as if the old boat had a pretty strong list to starboard right now. Father says himself that unless a war breaks, or something, which isn't at all likely, the packing industry is going to spring a leak."

"Elaborate figure of speech," murmured Eugene. The four of them—Paula, Dirk, Eugene and Selina—were sitting on the wide screened porch that Selina had built at the southwest corner of the house. Paula was, of course, in the couch-swing. Occasionally she touched one slim languid foot to the floor and gave indolent impetus to the couch.

"It is, rather, isn't it? Might as well finish it then. Darling Aug's been the grand old captain right through the village. Dad's never been more than a pretty bum second mate. And as for you, Gene my love, cabin boy would be, y'understand me, big." Eugene had gone into the business a year before.

"What can you expect," retorted Eugene, "of a lad that hates salt pork? And every other kind of pig meat?" He despised the yards and all that went with it.

Selina got up and walked to the end of the porch. "There's Adam coming in with the last load for the day. He'll be driving into town now. Cornelius started an hour ago." She went down the steps on her way to oversee the loading of Adam Eras' wagon. At the bottom of the steps she turned. "Why can't you two stay to supper? You can quarrel com-

fortably right through the meal and drive home in the cool of the evening."

"I'll stay," said Paula, "thanks. If you'll have all kinds of vegetables, cooked and uncooked. And let me go out into the fields and pick 'em myself like Maud Muller or Marie Antoinette or any of those make-believe rustic gals."

In her French-heeled slippers and her filmy silk stockings she went out into the rich black furrows of the fields, Dirk carrying the basket.

"Asparagus," she ordered first. Then, "But where is it? Is that it?"

"You dig for it, idiot," said Dirk, stooping, and taking from his basket the queerly curved sharp knife or spud used for cutting the asparagus shoots. "Cut the shoots three or four inches below the surface."

"Oh, let me do it!" She was down on her slick knees in the dirt, ruined a goodly patch of the fine, tender shoots, gave it up and sat watching Dirk's expert manipulation of the knife. "Let's have radishes, and corn, and tomatoes and lettuce and peas and artichokes and—"

"Artichokes grow in California, not Illinois."

He was more than usually uncommunicative, and noticeably moody.

Paula remarked it. "Why the Othello brow?"

"You didn't mean that rot, did you? about marrying a rich man. You were joking, weren't you?"

"I wasn't. I'd hate being poor, or even just moderately rich. I'm used to money—loads of it. I'm twenty-four. And I'm looking around."

He kicked an innocent beet-top with his boot. "You like me better than any man you know."

"Of course I do. Just my luck."

"Well, then?"

"Well, then, let's take these wiggles in."

She made a pretense of lifting the heavy basket. Dirk snatched it roughly out of her hand so that she gave a little cry and looked ruefully down at the red mark on her palm. He caught her by the shoulder—even shook her a little. "Look here, Paula. Do you mean to tell me you'd marry a man simply because he happened to

have a lot of money?"

"Perhaps not simply because he had a lot of money. But it certainly would be a factor, among other things."

Six months later Paula Arnold was married to Theodore A. Storm, a man of fifty, a friend of her father's, head of so many companies, stockholder in so many banks, director of so many corporations that even old Aug Hempel seemed a recluse from business in comparison. She never called him Teddy. No one ever did. Theodore Storm was a large man—not exactly stout, perhaps, but flabby. His inches saved him from grossness. He had a large white serious face, fine thick dark hair, graying at the temples. Within three years Paula had two children, a boy and a girl. "There! That's done," she said. Her marriage was a great mistake and she knew it. For the war, coming in 1914, a few months after her wedding, sent the Hempel-Arnold interests sky-rocketing. Millions of pounds of American beef and pork were shipped to Europe. In two years the Hempel fortune was greater than it ever had been. Paula was up to her eyes in relief work for Bleeding Belgium.

Dirk had not seen her in months. She telephoned him unexpectedly one Friday afternoon in his office at Hollis & Sprague's.

"Come out and spend Saturday and Sunday with us, won't you? We're running away to the country this afternoon. I'm so sick of Bleeding Belgium, you can't imagine. I'm sending the children out this morning. I can't get away so early. I'll call for you in the roadster this afternoon at four and drive you out myself."

"I don't think I—"

"I'll call for you at four. I'll be at the curb. Don't keep me waiting, will you?"

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that was absurdly thick-fingered in its fur-lined glove.

"It's cold driving. Button up tight. Where'll we stop for your bag?"

He climbed into the seat beside her. Her manipulation of the wheel was witchcraft. The roadster slid in and out of traffic like a fluid thing, an enamel stream, silent as a swift current in a river. When his house was reached, "I'm coming up," she said. "I suppose you haven't any tea?"

"Gosh, no! What do you think I am! A young man in an English novel!"

"Now, don't be provincial and Chicagoish, Dirk." They climbed the three flights of stairs. She looked about. Her glance was not disapproving. "This isn't so bad. Who did it? She did! Very nice. But of course you ought to have your own smart little apartment, with a Jap to do you up. To do that for you, for example."

"Yes," grimly. He was packing his bag—not throwing clothes into it, but folding them deftly, neatly, as the son of a wise mother packs. "My salary'd just about keep him in white linen house-coats."

"I'm going to send you some things for your room, Dirk."

"For God's sake don't!"

"Why not?"

"Two kinds of women in the world. I learned that at college. Those who send men things for their rooms and those that don't."

"You're very rude."

"You asked me. There! I'm all set." He snapped the lock of his bag. "I'm sorry I can't give you anything. I haven't a thing. Not even a glass of wine and a—what is it they say in books?—oh, yeh—a biscuit."

In the roadster again Paula maintained a fierce and steady speed for the remainder of the drive.

"We call the place Stormwood," Paula told him. "And nobody outside the dear family knows how fitting that is. Don't scowl. I'm not going to tell you my marital woes. And don't you say I asked for it. . . . How's the job?"

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order the Potter Palmer mansion destroyed as a blot on the landscape, and waxed profane on the subject of the east face of the Public Library building, downtown.

"Never mind," Selina assured him, happily. "It was all thrown up so hastily. Remember that just yesterday, or the day before, Chicago was an Indian fort, with tepees where towers are now, and mud wallows in place of asphalt. Beauty needs time to perfect it. Perhaps we've been waiting all these years for just such youngsters as you. And maybe some day I'll be driving down Michigan Boulevard with a distinguished visitor—Roelf Pool, perhaps. Why not? Let's say Roelf Pool, the famous sculptor. And he'll say, 'Who designed that building—the one that is so strong and yet so light? So gay and graceful and yet so reticent?' And I'll say, 'Oh, that! That's one of the earlier efforts of my son, Dirk DeJong.'"

But Dirk pulled at his pipe moodily; shook his head. "Oh, you don't know, mother. It's so d-d slow. First thing you know I'll be thirty. And what am I! An office boy—or little more than that—at Hollis!"

During his university years Dirk had seen much of the Arnolds, Eugene and Paula, but it sometimes seemed to Selina that he avoided these meetings—these parties and week-ends. She was content that this should be so, for she guessed that the matter of money held him back. She thought it was well that he should realize the difference now. Eugene had his own car—one of five in the Arnold garage. Paula, too, had hers. Her fascination for Dirk was strong. Selina knew that, too. In the last year or two he had talked very little of Paula and that, Selina knew, meant that he was hard hit.

Sometimes Paula and Eugene drove out to the farm. Eugene would appear in rakish cap, loose London knickers, queer brogans with an English look about them, a carefully careless looseness about the hang and fit of his jacket. Paula did not affect sports clothes for herself. She was not the type, she said. Slim, dark, vivacious, she wore slinky clothes—crepes, chiffons. Her eyes were languorous, lovely. She worshiped luxury and

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Chapter XII

In town Dirk lived in a large front room and alcove on the third floor of a handsome old-fashioned three-story-and-basement house. He used the front room as a living room, the alcove as a bedroom. He and Selina had furnished it together, discarding all of the room's original belongings except the bed, a table, and one fat comfortable faded old armchair whose brocade surface hinted a past grandeur. When he had got his books ranged in open shelves along one wall, soft-shaded lamps on table and desk, the place looked more than livable; lived in. During the process of furnishing Selina got into the way of coming into town for a day or two to prowling the auction rooms and the second-hand stores. She had a genius for this sort of thing; hated the spick-and-span varnish and veneer of the new furniture to be got in the regular way.

She enjoyed these rare trips into town; made a holiday of them. Dirk would take her to the theater and she would sit entranced. Strangely enough, considering the lack of what the world calls romance and adventure in her life, she did not like the motion pictures. "All the difference in the world," she would say, "between the movies and the thrill I get out of a play at the theater. My, yes! Like fooling with paper dolls when you could be playing with a real live baby."

The day was marvelously mild for March in Chicago. Spring, usually so coy in this region, had flung herself at them head first. As the massive revolving door of Dirk's office building fanned him into the street he saw Paula in her long low sporting roadster at the curb. She was dressed in black. All feminine fashionable and middle-class Chicago was dressed in black. All feminine fashionable and middle-class America was dressed in black. Two years of war had robbed Paris of its husbands, brothers, sons. All Paris walked in black. America, untouched, guily borrowed the smart habiliments of mourning and now Michigan boulevard and Fifth avenue walked demurely in the gloom of crepe and chiffon; black hats, black gloves, black slippers. Only black was "good" this year.

Paula smiled up at him, patted the leather seat beside her with one hand



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