

Something Special for Christmas

Hagemeyer Generations - Chapter Eleven

by Stanley Hagemeyer © 2020

The light was fading fast on this early December day, and nearing darkness at 5:00 PM. Returning to the house after his evening chores, Siebe had a coating of fresh snow on his hat, his coat and his handlebar mustache, too. But he didn't seem to mind. It was Monday December 3, 1907 and he had other things on his mind besides the weather.

After stamping off his boots and shedding his coat, he remarked to Bauwina, "The snow is coming down pretty steady now, but I don't think it's going to be too bad. I read in the *Minnesota Farmer* that December was not expected to be too snowy this year."

Bauwina was skeptical. "Oh, how would they know anyway. Somebody probably wrote that back in October. They just want you to think they are smart and know how to predict weather two months in advance. I think it's a waste of paper when they print that."

"Ja, it could be wrong. But I read the same thing in the *Volkszeitung* last week. They seem to agree."

Bauwina let it go, thinking, *I guess it shouldn't bother me so much that Siebe has such ideas. He's always reading something to help him learn whatever might help us make this farm a success. I am pleased about that.* But she couldn't let go of her annoyance just yet. She parried, "Well, I suppose if you read enough of that stuff, you'll know how to predict the weather yourself after a while." They often had this kind of disagreement over things that didn't really matter, as many couples do while waiting for life to get better.

Picking up her favorite alternative she continued, "I think you could better read something to yourself from my *Prädicht Buak* once in a while." Her book of German sermons was a precious resource to her and she was more likely to be reading it than any newspaper.

"Oh, ja, I can do that, but I like it better when we read those sermons together. On those Sundays when we don't get into Clara City for the church service I enjoy us doing the reading of those sermons to each other."

"Ja, but I am always the one who has to bring it up. You never do. It's always up to me."

"I know, *Liebchen*, but you know I always agree to read with you. It's just not the first thing on my mind." He knew he was always

farming, in his mind, even when they were cooped up during a winter snow storm. That finished the discussion for now.

After their light supper, they stayed sitting in the room which served as both kitchen and living room, lit by the kerosine lamp hanging from a hook over the table. Bauwina was entertaining Henry, who was beginning to get tired and cranky. "I'm going to go settle *Heintje* down and if he doesn't go to sleep right away, I'll give him a little nursing. That usually makes him relax." She disappeared with him through the doorway to the bedroom which was closed by a curtain instead of a swinging door.

Siebe was trying to teach Carl, now five years old, the basics of the game of checkers. But Carl soon tired of hearing about rules. He got down and sat on the little stool which was his own height and played, pretending to be a farmer with his little stuffed horse.

When she returned from putting Henry to bed, Siebe was fidgeting with some papers he had taken out of the metal box that accompanied them from Iowa. It was not really much of a strong box, but it was embossed metal and had a rudimentary lock on it. They kept whatever papers they had that seemed important in that box.

"So I wonder what you're so busy with those papers? I thought you were playing with Carlie. Looks like you've got your mind on finding a piece of lost gold." She tried to joke about it, but she questioned why he was so engrossed in that instead of his son.

"Well, I just got out something important, our savings account statement. And I will bet you don't remember what I told you last summer about something that could happen this December."

Now she was irritated again. "All right, so I don't remember. What is goin' through your head? You look like you've just got a fresh cigar." It seemed to her that he always enjoyed teasing her about whether she remembered some business about the farm or weather predictions, or something he had read about. He talked about a lot things she didn't really try to remember.

"Well, my dear, we are going into Clara City in a couple days, if the weather permits, and we will go to the bank."

"Don't tease me. Why would we go to the bank?"

"All right, *Liebchen*, you did forget. What we are going to do is to pay off the rest of the Street's mortgage we took over, and the McLarty Land Company will issue us our own deed, with our name on it, to own the farm! That's why I am happy. Aren't you happy, too?"

Now her heart took a small leap. Slightly embarrassed, she let out something of a prayer, “Oh my dear Lord, yes, Siebe, I am happy! I did forget you said we could do it after the fall payment was made. So now we are in the clear?”

Siebe tipped his head slightly. “Well, we are clear of that old mortgage. But we will still have a small mortgage with the McLarty company. What’s really exciting is that our name is going to be on the deed.”

Bauwina’s celebration came back down. “So what do you mean? We’re still not really owning the farm? How much is that ‘small’ mortgage you are talking about?”

“It is only \$2,500 dollars. And it is between us and the McLarty Land Company. It is a mortgage on *our* farm. Doesn’t that sound good to you?”

“Not so good. That is still a lot of money. I thought we would be farther along by now. That’s more than our farm can produce in several years, and what if we have a crop failure, what then?”

“*Liebchen*, . . .” Siebe tried to interrupt, but her voice rose in a discomfiting pitch.

“Sometimes I think we should have stayed in Iowa. You had a good job helping on the big Olson farm and we were making some good crops on that forty acres you rented.”

Just then Carlie captured their attention, as he started banging his play horse on the floor. They both responded at the same time, with “Carlie!” Bauwina took the lead, “What is going on? You’re going to break your nice horsey.”

“Horsie was doing bad. He wouldn’t stand up!” the little boy defended, but he knew it was a weak excuse. He put his head down and went back to gently pick up his play horse.

By now it was Siebe’s turn to be diminished. “I thought we could celebrate because we have already paid off \$6,000 of what the farm cost us. And this is in only four crop years. Those Street people didn’t know how to farm, so they gave up and let us take over their mortgage. We only paid them \$500 to take it over. We are real farmers. And we know how to make a go of it!”

His damaged enthusiasm was breaking down her resistance. She told herself, *I should have known. He’s been yearning for this day to come.* “Oh Siebe, ja, we can celebrate. I’m sorry I was too short with you. We can go together and get that new mortgage if that’s the right thing to do. What did you say about the snow this week?”

“Ja, well, the *Farmers’ Almanac* says the first week of December is going to turn mild. That’s why I think we can take the whole family into town Wednesday. If we can leave the little ones over at Frances’ for an hour or so, then we can both go to the bank and put our names on the new mortgage. Mr. McLarty himself will come over there and first we write a check to pay off that old mortgage. Then Otto Dahleen who works there at the bank will witness our signatures on the new one. He’s what they call a ‘notary public’.”

Now Bauwina looked at him with that smile he loved so much. She was proud that Siebe knew all about these business matters, and deep down she knew she could trust his judgment. “Well, then this is going to be a real special Christmas, isn’t it!”

Siebe glowed back at her with his own smile of satisfaction. They were on the way to owning their own farm this Christmas.

END OF CHAPTER ELEVEN

Addendum

December 1907 was important for Siebe and Bauwina when the mortgage deed was registered with the Chippewa County Register of Deeds, finally deeding the farm into Siebe’s name. It shows that \$2,500 was the amount of the new mortgage, (*\$35,500 in 2019 values*). While I don’t have a copy of the actual mortgage they signed, the “deed record” shows their new mortgage was filed December 5, 1907. However, that document also indicates the deed was actually signed and notarized already on October 10, 1907. In light of the confusing dates, I decided that using the December date made it a better story.

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