

Going To Be a Tough Fall
Hagemeyer Generations - Chapter Eight
by Stanley Hagemeyer © 2020

Siebe looked excited as he ate his breakfast of fried potatoes and sausage. Bauwina wondered what could be so stimulating on what was to be a hot and humid August day. It was August 1906, and she was in her seventh month of pregnancy, and was not enjoying the hot summer days. Work never let up. The garden called for her attention almost every day. Carl, now four years old, didn't do well without her supervision. She didn't feel very enthusiastic. "Well, what's going on here today? You look like something good is happening. I can't imagine what that is."

He looked up at her, stopped his chewing, swallowed, and replied, "I was thinking how good that mare your Dad gave us is looking. She's going to produce a good piece of horse flesh next spring." He smiled briefly, and then began to wonder why this did not thrill her the way it did him.

"Well, I know you had her bred in May. But I don't know what's so wonderful about that." She briefly considered the irritating thought that he seemed more excited about a horse having a foal than he was about their own baby due in mid-October. Then she remembered the April day she had told him, and how excited he was. He had glowed with pride and satisfaction. She knew her moods seemed more fragile than usual, so she stuffed away her budding resentment. It was not a faithful attitude.

Siebe gave her skeptical gaze some thought, and then said, "I am just picturing that stallion over at Veit's that we got her bred by. He looks like a Percheron, even though Augie says it's not a pure bred. I'm picturing we might have a good draft horse like him."

"Well, I suppose that's something to be excited about. But you aren't going to see it until early next spring."

"Ya, but I can dream. What I was thinking was this. You know I talked to August Niemeir first about his stallion breeding her, but he wanted so much money 'cause he has a pure bred Percheron. I think Veit's big boy was just as good and it only cost me four dollars for his services."

"That's sounds like a lot of money to me. I still don't see why it's so wonderful."

“Oh, honey, look! If I can get a couple good foals out of that mare with a good line like this one from the Veits, we can start selling a horse every couple years. And there’s good money in a fine young horse.”

Bauwina finally caught on. “Oh, so you’re looking down the road a few years and seeing dollar signs, right? I just hope you don’t count your chickens before they hatch.” Even though she knew she was right, in the next moment she regretted pouring cold water on his optimistic heart.

“Ya, well, I know it’s going to be a while, but things are going good for us, and I’m keeping my eyes open for ways to bring in some extra money. We’ve got to look ahead to building a new barn and the other buildings, and that’s not going to happen without good crops and smart farming. Breeding horses would help.”

Now Bauwina felt more satisfied. She was proud of him because he seemed to always be thinking ahead and planning a good future. She was so busy with the chores and housework that her mind only stayed close to this summer’s crop in the garden, not anything a year from now. It made her happy when Siebe helped her look farther ahead.

It seemed that each year since they moved had held an unexpected event that reminded them of life’s uncertainties. In 1904, Siebe’s father had been sick for a couple months and then died in August. Then last year, her own father, Heinrich Sonius, had died in April, when he was only 51 years old. These things dampened her enthusiasm, but on the other hand, that might be why she appreciated Siebe’s optimism so much, too. She hoped that this year held only happy surprises, like a healthy baby in October.

Summer had gone fast, and the weather was favorable, so the oats was cut and threshed by the third week of July and the wheat two weeks later. It was September 10, a warm fall day. Siebe came into the kitchen about noon, looking like he had already worked a full day. “I was out walking through the corn field. There’s something bad going on. Some ears have a worm they call the corn borer. I hope it’s

not spread too far. Hot weather tends to bring out more of those rotten worms.”

Bauwina looked at her husband. She seldom saw him looking like this. He appeared a bit desperate, not like himself. It appeared he knew nothing he could do about this problem. “Maybe it’s just that one spot in the field, Siebe. Did you go through the whole field?”

“No, I didn’t walk the whole field, but I opened a dozen ears and four of them had a worm in them. So far they haven’t done too much damage, but they are eatin’ our corn up. Even a small loss like that will be missed. We need as much as we can get for the hogs and the cattle. I was hoping to sell a few bushels this year. Now I might need to store the whole crop and not sell any.”

Bauwina changed the subject, since it looked like this was a problem they could not fix. “When the baby comes, I’m going to be lying-in for a while when you are probably out picking corn in October. I am planning to have my cousin Frances come and stay a couple weeks. She’s a good cook and I trust her judgment about when to send for the midwife. Is that alright with you? Her kids are old enough to take care of their house by themselves.”

Now Bauwina’s planning for the big event this fall brightened Siebe. “Oh, for sure, *liebchen*, I want you to take it easy from now on through whenever the baby comes and after. You know I don’t know much about this business. I’m a lot handier helping a cow that is calving, or a mare when she is foaling.”

Somehow these comparisons irritated Bauwina again. “Oh, ya, you know all about those things. And I can tell you, it is different when a woman is in labor!”

Her ferocious response made Siebe feel befuddled. When she gave birth to Carl in Iowa, her mother came over, and there was help all around. He stayed at a distance, and it all seemed to go smoothly, as far as he knew. “I know it is different. I’m just trying to say what I know. I guess I’m finding out more of what I don’t know.”

They stared at each other a few seconds. Then Siebe offered, “My dear, if there’s something else we need to do to get ready, just tell me. Don’t worry about the corn. God will give us enough. I’ll be in the field pickin’ it by middle October. It could take me a couple weeks to

get that whole 30 acres done. Maybe I should hire some extra help so I can be home more, and not be so busy. What do you say?"

Bauwina felt her heart settling. Siebe was really concerned. And she was being too sensitive. "No, Siebe, you need to pick all your corn. You like doin' that and you are good at it. I'll ask Frances if there's somebody else she knows who is really good with women's things and could come over to spell her when she needs to go home a day or two. She knows people. And I remember that Friedrich girl told me last month at church that she could come for a week to do some cooking and take care of little Carl."

"She did say she would like about two dollars a week, but her mother overheard her and shushed her. She told her not to talk about money like that at church. But she is seventeen years old and she could be a great help. I think we'll do just fine."

A few moments of silence passed as they finished breakfast together. A refreshing breeze came through the open window, and seemed to beckon Bauwina to lift her eyes to the view. She gazed over the pasture, then beyond to the fields of green hay and the amber stubble left where the fine wheat crop was already harvested. True, the corn crop was going to smaller, but overall, life had a warm color to it.

She began to feel a sense of gratitude that they had made so many new friends since moving to Minnesota. Siebe loved her. Their family was growing. Maybe this fall season would not be too tough, after all.

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