

# Unexpected Visitors

## *Hagemeyer Generations - Chapter Four*

by Stanley Hagemeyer © 2019

Bauwina, looking out the south window of their kitchen, smiled with satisfaction to see their little tomato plants in the garden plot a few yards away. They had small blossoms on them, the promise of fresh tomatoes next month. The early spring sun had got the rest of the garden off to a good beginning as well. She had started the plants from seed at the window inside where she now stood. Yesterday she spent most of the day weeding the garden. The kale was looking good and she was especially pleased that the second batch of ground cherries [husk tomatoes] was doing well, too. The first set she put out had withered in the late frost in mid April.

It was May 31, 1903. Siebe had planted twenty acres of oats around the first of April. By the middle of that month the land was tilled and ready for the other grain. He had planted the wheat and Timothy hay, but he waited for any threat of frost to pass before putting his expensive seed corn into the ground. Today he was ready.

While finishing his morning tea at the kitchen table, Siebe was watching Bauwina look out the window. “How soon do you think we’ll get some of those ground cherries you planted?” he said with a hopeful grin. He knew it was way too early, but liked to hear her talk about the garden.

Bauwina turned, head cocked a little as she checked his game. “You know yourself we aren’t going to taste anything for a few weeks yet, you silly poop.” She was getting used to his way of provoking with a question for which the answer was obvious to both of them. Their season of hard work was starting and they were both excited by the prospect of the results they yearned for.

The morning chores were already done and they were off to an early start. “I’m finally going to go out and start planting the corn,” he declared with a confidence that hid conflicted feelings. The seed turned out to be more expensive than he expected. He had cautiously calculated a safe planting date to avoid the threat of frost. This particular corn variety was supposed to mature in 105 days, which would be the first week of September if the weather were favorable. “I think it will take me at least two days to plant, maybe three, so you won’t see much of me today.”

“Well, dinner will be ready whenever you get here. You still need to take time to eat.” She knew he was eager to get started, but dinner in the middle of the day never varied.

“Oh, ya, I’ll be here for dinner. But I’m going kind of slow at first because I want those rows along the south fence line to be nice and straight and get the field started right. I’ll walk the horses back at noon, too, so they get a little feed and a good drink the same as I do. And it’s a long walk from that south field.”

---

Just as she expected, he was not late coming back for dinner. She could see the team of horses he had unhitched from the planter. He walked along behind them as they came toward the farm yard. Soon he appeared at the kitchen door and stepped in with a sigh of satisfaction.

“The planter I bought from that Street guy is in good shape. It never clogged up or gave me any trouble.”

“I’m glad. It sounds like you had a good morning. I had a visitor stop by this morning.”

“Who was that?” Siebe asked curiously. A visitor stopping by was rare.

“The Watkins man,” Bauwina said.

“What is a ‘Watkins man’?” Siebe countered.

“Oh, you know, Siebe. Didn’t your mother ever buy anything from a Watkins man? They travel around to sell all sorts of things you need in a house, like spices and soap, things like that.”

“Well, did you buy something?” he questioned.

“I only bought a bottle of vanilla extract,” she replied. “I remember my Ma always said the Watkins vanilla is the best you can get anywhere.”

“How much did it cost?”

“It cost five cents. I know that’s more expensive than what you find in most stores, but it’s really the best. You can use a little less, so it really pays in the long run.” She felt a little defensive. She added, “I told him we were just getting started and short of money, so I couldn’t buy anything else today.”

Siebe was not unhappy. “I’m surprised he found our place, seeing that we are over a half mile off from the road, and it’s a dead

end lane that leads to our house. But I suppose those guys are used to wandering around to find farmers.”

Bauwina was relieved that he seemed to approve her transaction. Now with the food on the table, they began to eat in silence for a while. She had opened a jar of canned beef they had brought from Iowa. Meat and potatoes plus some sauerkraut made a hearty meal they both enjoyed. Soon he was headed out the door.

“I’m going to get as much done as I can today. Will you pick the eggs and do some of the chores this afternoon so I can stay out longer? I will milk the cows and put the hay out for them when I get back.”

Bauwina did not hesitate, “Ya, you get going and I’ll take care of that.” She was pleased and happy that their spring planting would soon be finished and felt proud of Siebe, how hard he worked.

---

For Siebe the afternoon went all too fast. The horses plodded along at a steady pace, but the rows, running parallel with south fence line, were long. The southwest quarter of their land was relatively high ground and good rich soil. He had planted ten acres of Timothy grass on the southeast side, but left the best ground for corn. Although the planting was a slow process, the satisfaction of being on his own farm land quickened his heart. But now he was tired and headed home after a good day on the land that he was coming to love.

The horses pulled the wagon back to the farm yard with the remaining seed corn, leaving the planter standing in the field. Siebe wanted to keep the wagon inside the lean-to next to the barn away from any possible rain. It didn’t look like rain, but he was taking no chances.

Siebe was surprised to see Bauwina come walking out to meet him as soon as he got near the farm yard. She was not happy, and her fast gait concerned him.

He stopped and got off the wagon seat. “What’s got you goin’ so *schnell*?”

“Honey, we’ve got trouble!” Bauwina blurted out. “A man came out here and said he was looking for Lewis Street, that man who had the farm last year, the one we bought out. He said the Streets owed him a lot of money. He sold Mr. Street some farm equipment on

credit a couple years ago and they didn't make their payment last fall."

Thinking for a moment, and then replying with a note of confidence to assuage her fears, Siebe said calmly, "Well, I'm not too surprised. That Street guy didn't seem to know much about farming. I think he had big ideas and found out it didn't work out very good for him. That's why he let the farm go, and we took it over his mortgage with the land company."

"Yes, but that's not all. He wanted to know if there was any of the Streets' equipment around because he was going to take it back."

"What did you tell him?"

"Well, I didn't tell him you were out in the field using the corn planter we bought from the Streets. I just told him you were way out in the south field. He didn't seem to want to get his shoes dirty."

"Ya, those city slicker salesmen don't really want to work for a living. They just want to get people in debt to them."

"But Siebe, it gets worse. That man told me he's going to take the farm away from us because it was the Streets' farm. He said he's going to go the courthouse and do something to try to get our farm! Can he do that?"

Now Siebe was concerned. "It doesn't make any sense to me. We really bought the farm from the land company, not the Streets, because we took over their mortgage."

Bauwina continued, "I know that's right, but that man was really mad. He said the Streets ran away without paying him, and he's going to get his money one way or another. He said he could take it away from us. We can't lose the land now! We have everything just started and all our money is in it. What will we do?"

Her husband was trying to keep calm. He wanted to assure Bauwina, too, but his mind was racing to sort out this threat. "I don't know for sure, Bauwina, but I think I need to talk to somebody in town."

"Who will you talk to?"

"Well, first, I'm going to go see the president of the German American State Bank. I met him last November when Pa and I were here. We used his office to sign papers with the McLarty guys. We needed somebody to witness our signatures, so he did that. He's a smart man and maybe he knows something that will help us."

"You've got to plant the corn, don't you? Maybe we should just wait and see. But I don't know if I can sleep with those words in my

head. He said, ‘I will seize this property if I have to in order to get my money back.’”

Siebe replied, “I don’t want to miss any good planting days, but I think I will head off to Clara City right away tomorrow morning. I’ll go to the bank first. Then, if I have to, I’ll go over to that lawyer named Anderson. I hate to talk to a lawyer, ‘cause I’m told they charge a lot of money just to let you talk to them even if they don’t do anything for you.”

Siebe hung his head for a moment. It was a heavy blow to his enthusiasm. He had just finished his first day of corn planting, and now everything was threatened. He reached out to put his arms around Bauwina.

“We won’t let them take it, *Liebchen*. God is good, and this bad news is not his will for us. I believe that, don’t you, too?” It was not really a question. He knew her heart. They stood there a couple more moments, in the presence of uncertainty, embracing the certainty of their love and their faith in God.

## END OF CHAPTER FOUR