

A Step of Luxury

Hagemeyer Generations - Chapter Nine

by Stanley Hagemeyer © 2020

Bauwina sat at the kitchen table peeling potatoes. She felt like she could barely reach the bowl and shifted sideways, to see if that would help her get the job done better. She had hoped the baby would have been born by now. The middle of October, 1906, had come and it was time. She was getting tired of waiting. Her cousin, Frances, was going to come tomorrow to stay through the time of the birth and after. Bauwina was glad they had Jennie Friedrich to help out now. She was a mature seventeen and had eagerly taken on the household tasks as well as watching after little Carl, who was now four years old.

“Mrs. Hagemeyer, are you sure you should be straining like that to peel the potatoes? You know I could do that. I’m here so you don’t need to do those things.”

“Yes, Jennie, I know you are here to help. But I’ll tell you, I need to do something. I can’t just sit around doing nothing. You are doing everything we need done, and it makes me feel so much better.”

The wood and coal fired cook stove kept the kitchen warm. Jennie had stoked it up with a little extra fuel to cook their dinner. Now both of them were feeling the heat a little more than they wished. But that was how it worked when you needed to cook.

Jennie’s eyes moved up from the beans she was snapping, looked at Bauwina’s weary face, and decided to say what was on her mind. “Well, my mother warned me to not let you do too much. She said if you get up and walk around all the time, it can do something to the baby. I don’t know what. But that’s what she said.”

“Don’t you worry about what your mother said. I had a mother, too, and I saw her having babies when I was your age. She didn’t take it easy, I can tell you. When Dirk was born, I was fifteen years old, and I was the only girl in the family. I had four brothers, but they were of no use in the house.”

“Didn’t you have somebody come and help?”

“I was the oldest of the family. So she had me, and she didn’t want anybody else coming over except the midwife when we needed her. Our house was crowded enough, she said, without somebody interfering. So I did all the work you are doing. But she did plenty, right up to two days before Kurt was born in November.”

“And your brother was alright?”

“Oh ya, he’s just fine. Turned out to be a real rascal, always playing jokes on us. You never knew what to expect. He’s clever.”

“What about your mother?”

“What do you mean? Oh, she was doing great. I could not keep her down for more than a few days after he was born. And you know what?”

“No, what happened?”

“Well, by then she had given birth eight times. But what I meant to tell you is that she had five more children yet after Kurt! My youngest sister, Ella, was born just three years ago in July, 1903 when my *muter* was forty-seven years old.”

“What, she’s still . . . ?”

“Ya, it’s enough to scare you, isn’t it!” Bauwina gave a little chuckle. She was embarrassed now that she had said something so frank to her young companion. Jennie was a young girl, after all. But she was very grown up and practical. She might get married sometime soon, and she should know what might happen.

Jennie did laugh and then she held her mouth, stifling a giggle.

A short while later Carl came running through the kitchen. He had been outside playing. “Papa is coming home! And he’s got something funny looking.”

Siebe had gone off to Clara City that morning after breakfast. He said he needed to get medicine and liniment for the horses. Bauwina gave him a list as well, and asked him to stop and see Frances, to tell her she was feeling well, but expected the baby to come soon.

“What do you mean, he’s got something strange?” Bauwina responded.

“Ya, Ma, he’s pulling another wagon behind.”

“Well, I guess we’ll just have to wait and see what that means,” said Bauwina. She was about done peeling, and wanted to finish first. Jennie put the newly snapped fresh green beans in a pot on the stove.

Siebe pulled up into the farm yard, unhitched the team and walked them over to the water tank, tying them there. He wanted them refreshed because after dinner they would head out to pick corn all afternoon. Looking over his shoulder to see if anyone had come out of the house to see his prize, he smiled and headed for the house.

“Well, how are you two doin’? Just about ready for dinner?” It was 11:30, and they usually ate dinner close to 12 o’clock noon.

Bauwina saw an unusual grin on his face and knew he wasn't there to check on whether dinner was ready. "So, what have you been up to? Carlie said you were pulling something funny with you."

"Ya, I got something we'll be needing. You'll have to come out and see it!"

Bauwina looked a bit annoyed. Siebe could not tell if she was putting on a slight scowl to tease him, or if she was really annoyed. She eased herself up out of the chair and they moved toward the kitchen door.

Standing in the yard was a black double buggy with a canvas canopy lying back. Bauwina took in the scene, and spoke first. "Siebe what did you do?" as if she were questioning a naughty boy. But her face conveyed something else.

Her husband guessed what she was really feeling. "Ya, I did buy that buggy! I made a good deal with Herman Richards. He got this one in trade when the doctor bought a new buggy from him a week ago. I had told him to watch for something special like this. I knew it wouldn't stay there long. Doctor Ferguson always has a good buggy, and this one is a Hansford deluxe made in St. Paul, with the extra soft springs and two seats with springs, too."

"Well, I don't know what a 'Hansford' is, but we don't need something like that," Bauwina offered, with some concern. "We're not rich people."

"Oh, *liebschen*, this is just what we need. You're going to have a baby in just a little while. And winter is coming. You always want to go to church, even when the weather isn't good. Now we can go to town whenever we want. This isn't one of those Sears and Roebuck buggies you see all over. It's a lot better!"

Bauwina turned and finally gave him a big smile. It was something they needed, something she had been hoping for ever since they moved here. The crops had been good and Siebe was thinking of her and their family. She was happy.

"Siebe, you've been scheming behind my back, talking to that buggy dealer without telling me. But I don't mind. I should have known you had some good plans in mind. I'm glad you did this." She gave him a pleased look.

Her husband responded with his smile reflecting hers and he gave Jennie a grin, too. "You women can go back in if you want. I'm going to set Carl up in the buggy to try it out."

Carlie sat on the seat with a big grin on his face. Soon Siebe said, “We’ll take a ride in a couple days when I bring Jennie back. But come down now. I have to get ready to pick corn after dinner.”

The day was only half over, but they all looked forward to enjoying a little more luxury in their lives. A buggy with springs.

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