

THERE IS TODAY

By JOSEPHINE LAWRENCE

CHAPTER VII
Big-hearted Sarah Daffodil acts in every capacity for the four-family house in Garset after her husband's death. The frugal, elderly Mr. and Mrs. Peppercorn and the newly-weds Andrew and Candace Thane occupy the two top-floor apartments and below them middle-aged Bert Pitts and his wife — who is too engrossed in war activities to care for her home — and King Waters, veteran of World War I, and his wife Emma, a devotee of fine crocheting. The Thanes plan to invite six couples to their Thanksgiving feast and great preparations are afoot!

His wife nodded. It didn't make sense, she soothed him, perhaps it was quite true that many of the tasks she had Zither perform, or helped her to perform, would pass unnoticed and in any case would not compensate if the dinner failed. "But I do think, Andy," maintained the clear voice, "that everyone is more at ease in a house that is clean and in order. Not stiff, mind you, but livably neat. It's more a feeling than a matter of actual vision, or perhaps it is only that the hostess is more relaxed if she knows her house is clean."

The cash grocery store, Sarah Daffodil reflected, might lack the props of the old-time general store and might operate on a shorter day, but its atmosphere, clientele and social advantages, with some allowance for general alterations, remained essentially unchanged.

Tonight as she waited in the background of the late shoppers she saw most of her tenants in the group pressing purposefully up against the counters. King Waters was buying meat, Toni Pitts stood counting oranges into a bag. Before the dairy counter Mr. and Mrs. Peppercorn, Dottie tucked securely under the old man's arm, watched the scales as the clerk cut a pound of tub butter for them.

"Awful, trying to get waited on, isn't it?" Toni Pitts had spied Sarah. "I'm having soup and orange salad tonight, nothing else. It's so hard to keep food from accumulating, but we're going away for Thanksgiving — down to Atlantic City, Bert's taking me for a rest." She had been working day and night, she asserted, trying to be fair to every organization, anxious to do her best for each. "And fancy, they want us to ask some of the Service men for Thanksgiving dinner. Selectees from camp. I simply couldn't undertake another thing and Bert put his foot down."

It's a good story, if one can imagine Bert Pitts putting his foot down, Sarah reflected. I can't. "Hello, Mr. Waters—you're luckier than I am, for you're on your way out."

King Waters removed his hat, smiled mechanically. "Thanks-giving rush, I guess. I hope you're planning a pleasant day, Mrs. Daffodil. My wife and I are dining with an old friend of mine—a buddy who saw service abroad with me."

"Yes, I think of good old Barrows, every time I see the war news." King Waters was saying briskly. "He's in the Reserve and likely more serious. I had lunch with Barrows last week and he said he didn't know how the Government could use him — he has fallen arches, sinus trouble, his arteries are in bad shape and he has been out of active business for several years. But he said to

me, King, if Uncle Sam needs me, if my country calls, I'll go. I suppose he'll get a desk job in Washington and release a younger man for field service. The salary," Waters added contemplatively, "would be a godsend to him."

She couldn't help wondering, Sarah murmured knowing that she had no business to wonder, if it wasn't a reserve officer's patriotic duty to keep himself in good physical shape. "He'd be more of an asset if he were half-way fit."

No one could expect a veteran to be as resilient as a younger man, Waters reproved. Physical deterioration wasn't serious, where the mind remained unimpaired. "Barrows won't have to endure long marches or be under fire — it's the youngsters' turn to undergo all that. We served our time at it."

As she watched him make his way to the door, Sarah told herself that she understood how such complacency drove younger people to profane and rude retorts.

Sarah Daffodil considered the question of waiting on herself to save the clerk's time, but the Peppercorns were coming toward her, all smiles. Dottie's tall wagged in friendly greeting, too.

"The store looks so nice!" Old Mrs. Peppercorn beamed. Her black coat, cut full like a cape, seemed to weigh her down and it's hem almost touched the floor. She went on to say that she loved to smell the freshly ground coffee and to see the bright colors of the oranges and lemons, the bunches of yellow bananas, the mountains of polished apples. "It makes you hungry for Thanksgiving dinner," she said.

Their Thanksgiving? Oh, yes, they were invited out, she replied happily, answering Sarah's question. Hen, the junkman, had promised to provide a complete dinner for the family he had befriended and who occupied the second floor of his house still.

"They get along," chimed in old Mr. Peppercorn, "but they don't have many luxuries, that's to be expected. Hen has no family of his own and he got the idea that he'd like to get up a turkey dinner with all the fixings. Mother and me are going down to his house to help him. He's got a nice kitchen down there, gas stove and all. You'd be surprised to see how handy he is at housekeeping, though of course a real Thanksgiving dinner is a little too much for him to tackle all alone."

Zither, when she came at one o'clock Thanksgiving Day, reported that the wind was raw and felt like snow. She still disliked to answer bells or to speak to strangers, but now that she had accustomed herself to the Thanes, she sometimes talked a good deal while she worked. One had to listen attentively to hear her, for she spoke faintly and unless she faced her listener many of her words, as Andy complained, seemed to fall back in her throat. If she had something to say, she was likely to say it whether she had auditors or not, but this, Candace insisted, should not be regarded as talking to herself.

"If no one's there and she starts a conversation, who's she talking to if she isn't talking to herself?" Andy not unreasonably demanded.

She couldn't explain it properly. Candace informed him, but it was not the same as talking to oneself. "It's different. You needn't hoot — what I mean is that if Zither talks she's talking to me, whether I'm there or not. It's the way she talks at home, I think — whenever she has something to say she says it and takes a chance that someone will hear her say it. You get the impression that she isn't terribly important in her auntie's household, even if she does help finance it."

To Candace there was something pathetic in the colored girl's admiration of the pretty, convenient kitchen and the simple furnishings of the other rooms. Zither was as eager to be a success as the young host and hostess whose anxiety she shared. I couldn't do all this for someone else, not unless I had something of my own to go home to, Candace thought watching Zither's absorbed face as she counted out the dessert plates.

Leila Orton and Kurt Hermann arrived first because Kurt, Leila said, was still on daylight saving time. "He liked it last Summer and he sees no reason for ever changing anything he once liked." Thinner and more beautiful than ever, Leila in her almond-green sweater and matching skirt looked, Andy told her appreciatively, like an endorsement for a cold cream advertisement. She wore her thick hair parted in the center and knotted low on her neck. Kurt, she remarked casually, hated a fussy hair-do.

The arrival of Minnie Davis and Halsey Kenneth set Andy to mixing highballs and a few minutes later Muriel Wright rang the doorbell. She was alone and looked pinched and cold. "Isn't Hugh here?" She gazed nervously around the room after the introductions. "He was to meet me—I gave him the address." Her husband, she murmured, had gone uptown to see an old friend.

"Give him time, give him time," Andy's placid voice advised her. "Here's your warmer-upper, Muriel. It's all right to call you Muriel, Dace said, if you don't mind."

Muriel Wright was rather large, pleasant-faced and looked older than the other women, perhaps because she wore glasses. Every-

thing she had on, dress, shoes, even her too tight permanent, appeared to be new — Candace surmised that she had spent money, perhaps saved with difficulty, to make herself attractive for her husband's return.

They had had one round of highballs and Zither was manifesting uneasiness about the dinner, when the house phone rang. Someone asked to speak to Mrs. Wright on the outside phone, Sarah Daffodil said. She had just locked her door, ready to start for her dinner engagement, when the ringing bell had called her back.

Andy took Muriel down to the first floor, waited for her in the hall. When they returned, the girl's embarrassment was evident.

"I don't know what you'll think, Dace — Hugh isn't coming." She sounded close to tears. "These people he went to see have asked him to stay for dinner and go to a show. I told him we'd already accepted your invitation and that

we were waiting dinner for him, but he — well, he wants to go to the show. I don't know what to say, Dace, there isn't anything I can say to excuse him."

But after they were seated, with the silver at Hugh's place hastily removed and the colorful fruit cups before each guest, Muriel made one more attempt. It was because Hugh was a soldier, she declared, the Army did nothing to foster unselfishness in the man in service. "I suppose when they have to sacrifice so much, nothing should be asked of them. Hugh has forgotten how to be a husband — he's so used now to having a fuss made over him that he thinks he can get away with anything he chooses to do."

The yellow candles burned steadily, their shining light reflected in Candace's great, soft eyes. "I think that thousands of men who see service will find it hard to settle down to normal, ordinary living," she agreed.

"Sure," Halsey Kenneth put down his fork. "You take the Air Corps. Aviators get a dozen thrills a day, every flight is a gorgeous, pulse-racing adventure. Those fellows won't be able to settle down to a humdrum existence, once they're discharged. They'll be restless, always wanting to be on

the go, impatient of drudgery, eating their hearts out for the spectacular."

"What are you trying to do — scare Dace?" Leila Orton challenged belligerently.

She didn't scare worth a cent, Dace smiled as Zither brought in the turkey. "The secret is to marry your man first — ahead of camp, or ahead of war. If he's a husband before he's a soldier — well, I think you both have a greater chance of being happy when he comes back."

After dinner, when the living room had been restored to its single function and the brightly blazing fire drew the group to sit in a semicircle around the hearth, Minnie said that her brother would soon be called for selective training. "It's all right to say for a year — call it a year's training, if it makes you feel any better. He's lived through a depression and maybe we will live through a war."

"I wonder if ours is the lost generation you hear about," Halsey Kenneth lighted a cigarette for her, avoiding her eyes.

Muriel Wright, her face turned from the first, laughed cynically. "Generations have been lost for the last thirty years, haven't they? It's an old story."

"No — Minnie's right," Andy said

and for all his calmness he managed to gain their attention. "We — the ones who got out of high school between 1930 and 1935 — have played out of luck. That's not a whine, just a statement of fact. We tramped our feet off looking for jobs, and those we got were poorly paid and led nowhere. We couldn't marry, because we

had to help out at home, for no one had much work. Between our dependents and our small wages Dace and I had to stay engaged three years. Nobody's fault — we just didn't get the raisins when our cake was sliced."

(To Be Continued)

REMEMBER PEARL HARBOR!

ADEQUATE
INSURANCE
IS YOUR BEST INVESTMENT
GWYN
INSURANCE AGENCY
PHONE 258 — ELKIN, N. C.

THE LONE RANGER BY FRAN STRIKER

Panel 1: WE'LL MAKE CAMP AT THE FIRST SHELTERED PLACE WE FIND, TONTO! THE BLIZZARD MAKES IT TOUGH GOING FOR THE HORSES!

Panel 2: AN OLD CABIN...PROBABLY LEFT BY SOME HUNTER!

Panel 3: GO BACK! TURN BACK, IF YUH VALUE YER LIFE!!

Panel 4: SOMEONE IS THERE, TONTO... BUT I CAN'T HEAR WHAT HE SAYS!

Panel 5: DAD! HE'S MASKED!! GREAT DAY! SO HE IS! GIMME MY RIFLE!

Panel 6: CLOSE IN, TONTO, BEFORE HE SHOOTS!!

Panel 7: GIT BACK OR I SHOOT!!

Panel 8: YOU AREN'T THE SORT WHO FIRES AT STRANGERS! IF YUH AIN'T HERE TO KILL US, YER HERE TUH DIE WITH US!

Panel 9: I'M NO OUTLAW! WE CAME HERE FOR SHELTER FROM THE STORM! WELL, NOW YOU ARE HERE, YOU MAY AS WELL COME IN!

Panel 10: ME FIX UM SCOUT AND SILVER!

Panel 11: WHAT'S THIS!! THUD!

Panel 12: WHO SEND UM MESSAGE THIS WAY?

Panel 13: NOW THAT YOU'RE HERE, YOU'LL STAY HERE TUH DIE! NONE OF US CAN LEAVE HERE ALIVE! WHY NOT?

Panel 14: IT'S THOSE PELTS! THEY'S FUR WORTH A FORTUNE AN' CROOKS ARE AFTER IT!! DAD AND I SPENT MONTHS TRAPPING THE ANIMALS!

Panel 15: SOMEONE SHOOT UM ARROW WITH MESSAGE! THAT'S THE SECOND ARROW THEY'VE FIRED AT US!

Panel 16: LET'S SEE THE MESSAGE!

Panel 17: WHOEVER SENT THIS SAYS WE'LL BE KILLED, IF WE TRY TO LEAVE HERE! THAT'S THE SAME MESSAGE THEY SENT US! IT'S FROM THE CROOKS HID BACK O' THE ROCKS!

Panel 18: OVER THERE AT THE FOOT OF THE SLOPE!

Panel 19: THEY GOT THE MESSAGE ALL RIGHT, BOSS! AND IF I DON'T MISS, MY GUESS, THEY'LL STAY THERE AN' STARVE, SOONER'N TAKE A CHANCE ON THE SUDDEN DEATH OF A BULLET!

Panel 20: I KNOW WHO IT IS! IT'S BLACK BARTON AN' HIS GANG! THEY'RE FUR THIEVES... AN' ARE LAYIN' IN WAIT FER US! BLACK BARTON, EH?

Panel 21: IF THEY KILLED US THEY'D BE HUNTED DOWN—BUT IF THEY HOLD US HERE TO STARVE, THERE'LL BE NO SIGN OF MURDER! THESE MESSAGES WILL BE FOUND HERE—

Panel 22: OH, THEY'D DISPOSE OF THOSE WHEN THEY COME TO TAKE OUR FURS. THEY WANT US DEAD WITH NO MARKS OF MURDER! ME MAKE UM RUN FOR HELP!

Panel 23: STAY HERE, TONTO! I'LL TAKE SILVER AND MAKE A RUN FOR IT! YUH CAN'T MAKE IT! THOSE RATS ARE DEAD SHOTS!

Panel 24: BETTER TO GET UM SHOT THAN STARVE! IF ANYONE IS TO GO, I'LL GO!

RUSH! RUSH! RUSH!

Orange Crush
THE BIG US ME ON
CARBONATED BEVERAGE

AMERICA'S LEADING BOTTLED ORANGE DRINK

Bottled By
NORTH WILKESBORO
COCA-COLA BOTTLING CO.