

An Interesting
Thanksgiving Story

(Continued from page three)

cleared.

Perhaps she got well and is coming.

She said bravely.

Hello.

What, Oh, is that you? What, can't

come.

Oh, yes, perfectly. Of course, I un-

derstand. But couldn't you—couldn't

you bring her too?

No, I suppose not. Such a short

time. Naturally she wants you to her-

self. I'd like so much to meet her.

Yes, well, next time, I hope.

Yes, I'm disappointed, too. I'd so

counted on having you meet Brenda

Clifford. Yes, she's coming. Didn't I

tell you?

Thank you. Awfully sorry. Better

tuck next Thanksgiving. Oh, of course

I understand; yes, indeed. Goodby,

goodby.

Arlene jerked back her chair.

Whatever will I do with Brenda?

I'd promised her Forrest Dane. He's

just the kind she loves to impress.

And now that inconsiderate mother of

his comes to town like this. Brenda

will be furious.

A ring at the door results in an un-

fastening of the lock and a bringing

of a tousled golden head into the

view of the elevator boy. A handful

of mail was poked in through the nar-

row opening.

See if Mrs. James can come up and

make my breakfast, will you, Robert?

My maid is at home ill.

Mrs. James, Robert explained, was

out of town. She had gone up State

to spend Thanksgiving with her folks.

The door closed and Arlene, shivering

ran into her bedroom, closed her win-

dows and once more jumped into bed.

It's a conspiracy to starve me," she

laughed.

She stuck the pillows behind her,

pulled an extra coverlet over her shoul-

ders and opened her letters. At the

third she paused, leaned back and

burst into girlish laughter.

I don't want to play in your yard,"

she sang. "That makes three of them."

She poked up another letter, one she

had laid aside to read the others.

Let's see what His Majesty has to

offer for a reason for not coming. No

one seems to care for little Arlene and

her Thanksgiving dinner. Arlene is

honest, I know, when she says her cold

is too bad to let her out—and anyhow

I asked her awfully late. I'm glad

Brenda's deserted, only I know it's be-

cause she got asked at the last minute,

to Fred Benton's motor party. She has

no conscience, that girl. Jimmie was

uncertain at best and I'm not surprised

that he can't come. Now I'll guess

why Alec Trevor's gone back on me—

just because he doesn't like me—and

that's the only guess I have.

She looked at the folded letter in

her hand.

I wish I knew why," she said wist-

fully. "I've been plain and simple and

friendly with him, not at all a bit.

And I've never run after him. No one

can say that. And I only dared ask

him after I'd heard him say he wasn't

going anywhere. I ought not to have

corralled him like that, I suppose. I

didn't think how it would seem. Of

course he couldn't say no—then. Well

he evidently has now."

She opened her letter and read it.

Then she looked out of the window

that gave her favorite view of river

and shore and trees beyond.

You'll have to eat your Thanksgiving

dinner all by yourself Arlene, she

said. "Alec Trevor is not going to

sit opposite you, as you thought he

would, or look at you half disapprov-

ingly and half as if he couldn't help

liking you, as you hoped he would. Well

I don't blame him. He's a gentleman

first and foremost and a really good

actor. Why should he bother with you

and the second rate set you get a-

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dened on having here to live things up a little going to do something else. And the only one I really wanted the only one that amounted to anything at all, just wouldn't come, just wouldn't come, just didn't want to.

"Oh, I know, it wasn't that he was tired out at rehearsal. He didn't want to."

The tears had their way; the distorted little smile disappeared. The cap and plate were pushed aside and a forlorn yellow head lay on two outstretch ed pink silk arms.

"I wanted Alec to come. I did. And I don't see why he couldn't have."

The slim shoulders heaved and the white hands clenched. Then she sat upright with a suddenness that brought the yellow hair unbecomingly over her eye.

"Idiot!" she muttered. "Why not join the matinee idol class and be done with it? Alec! Why, you've never called him Alec in your life. And what's more, you never will. Now, drink the rest of that beastly coffee and mop you foolish face."

She did as she bade herself, drank the coffee, choked down the remainder of a roll; then she pushed her chair back.

"Now," she said, "for pity's sake, Arlene, think of something nice to do. Get out of this desperate looking place or you will have the blues, and there's no need of it."

"Peggy is my last resort," she announced, after a few moments' silence. "She is sure to have no plans. She's an awful bore—poor little Peg—but she likes to eat, and can take her for a good drive first. A matinee, too, she would enjoy. I thought I was rid of shop for one day, but any port in a storm."

She took up her telephone book and searched for the uninteresting Peggy's number.

As she sat at her desk there was a whirl of the bell at her elbow. She unhooked the receiver.

"Yes, Miss Sayre."

"What?"

"Mr. Trevor?"

"Why yes, I did get your letter, just now, this morning."

"Why, no, I shouldn't think it strange at all. It isn't only women who are allowed to change their minds."

"Of course, I understand. Only I won't admit that you would have been tiresome, even if you were fagged."

"It seems too bad you have to do so much more than the rest of us. Repertoire isn't quite as much fun as it might be, is it?"

"Why, of course, you may come, only—"

"No, I haven't asked anyone in your place, but—"

"Indeed, I'll be delighted. I was going to say, though—"

"No, no; don't call it off. Do come. Do come."

The color surged up into Arlene's face. She hit the desk with a silent fist. She hadn't meant to say it in just that tone.

"Not in the least. I can arrange perfectly. The party has changed a little, but there's plenty of room."

"All right, I'll expect you."

"Oh, rather early. Nothing formal, you know. We'll eat when we are hungry."

She laughed at his response.

"There won't be much to drink if we are dry, only common claret. I'm a poor provider that way."

A smile stole about her lips as she listened; a tender, unconscious curve that made her mouth beautiful.

"Thank you; yes, I know. I think it is better, too."

"Well, you'll come?"

"All right. Yes, lovely; just cold and sunshiny enough to make it real Thanksgiving. Have you been counting up your mercies?"

"Yes, a lot of them. One nice big one."

"No, I can't tell what it is."

"Well, you'll come?"

"Yes, sure it won't. We—we'll all be glad to see you."

"Goodby."

She hung the receiver up, pressed her hands to her cheeks and looked straight ahead of her with shining eyes.

"He is coming. He is coming."

She ran to the mirror.

"You little, idiot," she cried. "He does not want to see you any more than he did when he said he couldn't come. It isn't you. It's only because he is rested and he feels better and wants some Thanksgiving dinner with friends. Don't deceive yourself. But maybe, maybe if you're nice and natural and don't laugh too loud, or drink too much claret, or say silly, flippant things, maybe he'll look at you as if he could not help liking you a little, and perhaps you'll catch him at it."

Tears struggled through the smile and dewed the shining eyes.

"You really are tired of the stage, little Arlene. You wish you had a real housekeeping place, with stoves, order and worries about the steak being tough and the grocer's bill altogether too much. You don't want to be featured any more, nor have your picture on the bill-boards. You're tired of it, dead tired of it. But you must not let anybody know. They'd laugh at you. And he mustn't know, above everybody else, because he might suspect he had something to do with it. And he hasn't. Not a thing. Not a single—"

She broke off, struck at the tears

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"THE GENDRON DRIVER"

that had begun to fall, and pursed her

mouth into a prim line.

"Ninny! Foolish! Red Nose! You'll

look prett for your dinner party."

She laughed at a quivering little laugh

and ran into her bedroom.

Each room looks worse than the last

I'll call down and get Mrs. James to

straighten things out. Oh, dear! That

horrid boy said she's gone to her folks

Well, I'm glad; I want everybody hap-

py to-day. Isn't that selfish, just be-

cause I'm happy? If I wasn't, I sup-

pose—well, I'll phone for Tilly."

Tilly, the laundress, whom an obli-

giving druggist occasionally summoned

to the booth in his store, was not at

home. Neither was Peggy, the fear-

some bore who was to play Miss Pro-

priety, and eat her fill at Arlene's board

nor Miss Nelson, a chance, but pleas-

ant acquaintance, whom she franti-

cally hit upon as a sop to Mrs. Cerber-

us Grundy.

Bereft alike of servants and guests,

Arlene grew desperate. Thankgiv-

ing Day was slipping by. Here she

was in wrapper and untidy piled up

hair, wandering about a distinctly un-

presentable apartment, her uncooked

dinner holding chaotic sway in the tiny

kitchenette, the one person whom she

wanted to dinner with her within a

few hours of his appearance—and no

one to dine with him; but herself, no

one to cook for him.

She stopped short in the midst of a

futile dash at the overworked tele-

phone.

Suppose, she—

Well, why not? She hadn't done muc

of it, it is true, but she had seen oth-

ers do it.

Here a few moments ago she had

been longing for domesticity—fairly

weeping for it—and now it was hand-

ed out to her in an unpleasantly large

dose, to be sure, but she would not

flinch. She would clear up; she would

cook; she would dine with him alone—

just the two. Surely she would earn

it if she could prove herself a good

little housewife—no, not housewife.

You couldn't be that till you were

married.

She dropped off the loose gown she

wore and dived into her bathroom.

There issued forth sounds of splashing

and a murmured conversation a soli-

taire.

She came forth radiant, pink cheek-

ed. At her dressing table she coiled

the elbow hair in neat braids about her

head. Then a fast, but careful toilet

and Miss Arlene Sayre stood alert and

smiling in a short red skirt, a collar-

less plain white blouse, trimly belted.

A little search evoked a trim apron, pur-

chased for the erring Katie or one of

her predecessors.

The sitting room first, cried the new

housekeeper, and she started boldly in.

It was half past four when the bell

rang.

The flowers, cried the tired young

woman who walked shakily to the

door. "My, but this is hard work. Ev-

erything is going lovely, though."

She pulled the door open toward her

in the narrow hall and ran be into

the kitchenette.

"Take them into the sitting room,"

she called, "and send up some more ice

when you go down."

Her eyes were fixed with tragic in-

tensity on the huge bird in the gas

brown hair that grew in boyish wavy

fashion about a broad white brow.

Trevor's earnest inquiring eyes looked

into hers.

"Oh, said Arlene softly. "Oh." And

she sat quietly down on the floor and

covered her face with her hands.