

OUR WEEKLY SERIAL STORY INSTALLMENT



two keys to a cabin

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SYNOPSIS

Charming, wealthy Gabriella (Gay for short) Graham, engaged to Todd Janeway, returns to a cabin in the Maine woods accompanied by a friend, Kate Oliver. The idea of a stay at the cabin occurred to her when she received a key to it following the death of her godfather, Uncle John Lawrence. The two girls notice that someone is living in the cabin. Kate suspects that Gay knows the identity of the mysterious occupant. The mystery man returns. He is John Houghton, a young doctor whom Gay had known in previous years. Immediately aggressive, Gay asks him by what right he is in the cabin. His right, she finds, is greater than her own. He, too, possesses a key, but more than that, is heir to it from his Uncle John, Gay's godfather. Gay is high handed with him, and he states courteously that he will leave.

CHAPTER II—Continued

"I had no thought of finding you, John," said Gay.

"I know that." He had, she thought, interpreted her statement as a rebuff. The smile vanished. "I'm sorry to be a—complication."

He was a complication. He had been a complication since the night they'd driven together through Central Park, before that, even, since the summer here at the lake. She realized, now, how largely he'd been responsible for her dissatisfaction, her restlessness, her uncertainty concerning her approaching marriage to Todd. A complication? That was too unimportant a word. Looking at John, silent and unapproachable in the doorway, feeling his presence here in every tingling nerve, with every racing heartbeat, Gay knew she had found the answer to troubling questions. He was necessary to her, had always been, since she was fifteen years old. Todd was not a necessity. It was as simple, as hopelessly, frighteningly involved as that.

CHAPTER III

He'd have to clear out. He'd have to clear out, now, tonight, before he saw her again. John walked, restless, in long plunging strides, along the rutted clay-shell road. The experiment was less important than what was certain to happen to him if he remained at the cabin. He'd fought that battle twice before, and he had no intention of fighting it again.

But wasn't that necessity already upon him? He'd wondered how he would feel if, by chance, he should meet her again. Chance, assisted by Uncle John, had given him that knowledge. He felt as he'd felt when they parted six years ago. There was something between them which time and separation had not altered, more vital than it had been three years, six years ago, because they were more mature, now, more emotionally aware.

Not that he hadn't been emotionally aware of her that summer she'd spent at the cabin with Uncle John. He should have cleared out then, he told himself a trifle grimly, instead of prolonging what he had intended to be a week-end visit into a stay of three weeks.

He should have left before the day she'd turned her ankle walking with him through the woods and he'd carried her to the cabin in his arms. After that nothing could have induced him to leave. He remembered with a feeling of tenderness for the innocent ardor of their relationship which resentment could not efface, the week which had followed. He remembered saying

good-by to her at the station in Machias, straining for a last glimpse of her face, young and defenseless in the transient grief of parting, tears glittering on her lashes, her wide sweetly curved mouth trembling in an effort to smile. "I'll see you soon, John," she'd said, clinging to his hand as they stood together in the vestibule of the train. And, sustained by his presence, too much in love with her to reason or question, "Yes, very soon," he'd replied.

But he had not seen her again until he'd gone with Uncle John to New York for her debutante party. Her mother had taken her abroad that fall after her summer here. She'd written to him at lengthening intervals during the first year, from Geneva where she was in school, from various points on the French Riviera when her vacations permitted opportunities for travel. He'd been relieved when the letters stopped coming, glad that he had been on a canoe trip in Canada when, nearly two years later, the cablegram announcing her return to America had arrived, glad, too, though he'd watched the mail for weeks, that she had not answered his formal note of apology and explanation. It had been easier, then, to close a door in his mind, for reason, during long hours of logical or rebellious thought, had convinced him that the door must be closed and locked and the key thrown away.

The key? John turned, realizing that he had reached the village. Why had Uncle John made that gesture? he wondered, walking more slowly back toward the cabin. He'd known, of course, of that young attachment between himself and Gay. It probably hadn't been difficult for Uncle John to read his thoughts the morning after the party in New York when he, John, had insisted, stubbornly and not very considerably, that they return to Cambridge at once. And Uncle John loved Gay. He had for her a deeper affection, perhaps, than for anyone in the world except him.

But Uncle John should have foreseen, he thought irritably, that nothing of lasting value could come of that attachment. He was romantic, idealistic, in the way of his generation, but he was neither sentimental nor impractical. He must have seen that he, John, and Gabriella Graham lived in different worlds, that each would be a stranger in the atmosphere familiar to the other. Perhaps though, the thought continued, when you were dying, such things as wealth or a lack of it, the differences in viewpoint which wealth engendered, the distinctions and antagonisms it raised seemed relatively unimportant. Uncle John had known he hadn't long to live when they'd gone to New York. Perhaps during the following weeks, when his grasp on living had loosened, some wisdom had come to him which, by the gesture, he had attempted to communicate to them.

Perhaps—But the wisdom which might come with death was, now, of no practical value. He and Gay had, in all probability, a great deal of living to do. Their divergent courses were charted, had been determined, he supposed, long before they met here at the lake. That meeting was accidental and had no influence upon the direction of their separate lives. He was going to Portland to take over Dr. Sargeant's practice for a year in payment for loans which had enabled him to

complete his medical course at Harvard. After that, if he could manage to support himself, he was going on with scientific research. There were before him years of work which he loved, of loneliness which he accepted. Gay was to marry Todd Janeway—

He had not allowed himself to think of that until now. His thoughts had moved warily, dodging that painful fact. But it must be faced, squarely and honestly. The fact must be accepted and removed from his mind. He'd known, of course, almost as soon as the engagement had been announced. He'd thought he had accepted it. He'd been able, during the summer, to look at camera poses of Gay and Todd Janeway with interest not too intolerably mixed with pain. There had been a great many of them. It would be an important wedding. Todd Janeway



"You're being pretty stuffy about this, aren't you?" she asked.

way was connected with the private bank in New York of which his father was president. The Janeway estate on the Hudson adjoined "Dunedin," the Graham estate. It was all eminently suitable, he supposed. He'd met young Janeway at Gay's party and had been impressed with his friendly manner and blond good looks. Oh yes, it was all eminently suitable, Gay's destiny, determined at her birth, an eventuality which no chance meeting could alter or efface.

The cigarette he had lit and neglected had burned his fingers. The smart of physical pain routed memories, brought him abruptly to his senses. What he'd been thinking was madness. Uncle John had not intended them to have a stolen week together, hidden away in the woods. And he'd been presumptuous in assuming that Gay had any such thought or desire. Besides, there was Miss Oliver—

No, not too presumptuous, reverting to Gay's possible thought and desire. He'd seen the expression in her eyes when she'd looked at him through the lamplight. There was no sane middle-course of friendship for them. At a word, a gesture, the antagonism which was their safeguard would melt and with more far-reaching consequences, now,

perhaps, than in the past, since now they met as a man and a woman and would never meet again.

His resolution wavered as he opened the door into the kitchen. Knowing that she was there seemed to give the door she had opened an especial significance. He felt her presence in the atmosphere of the kitchen and more materially in the perfume that filled the air with a fading scent. A light burned in the living-room. He would not go in there. He passed the door with his face averted. And then he heard her voice calling his name. He turned, disconcerted, incensed at having his resolution so unexpectedly frustrated, immensely and joyfully relieved.

"Hello," he said from the doorway. "I thought you were asleep."

"I am—almost." She sat curled against heaped cushions in a corner of the couch beside the hearth. She wore a soft white woolen robe fastened close up around her throat with long sleeves and a cord knotted about her waist.

"You should be in bed." He walked to the fireplace in which a log she had evidently placed there burned above a bed of embers. "Are you warm enough? It's cool here at night."

"It's heavenly. New York has been a blazing furnace."

"The papers report a heat wave." He bent over the log on the andiron, making a clattering noise with the tongs.

"It's been really dreadful."

"So I've understood."

She laughed suddenly, disarming. "Must we talk about the weather?" she asked.

He rose to a standing position, stood looking down at her, unable to resist the appeal of her smile. "You suggest a subject," he said. "I'm afraid I lugged in the heat-wave." The smile slowly vanished. "I've been thinking of Uncle John," she said. "I was terribly sorry not to have come for his funeral."

"It was pretty ghastly. The college turned out. You were fortunate to have escaped it."

"But I would have come. I was in Bermuda."

"Yes, I know." He walked to the side of the hearth opposite to the couch, rested his elbow on the low stone shelf, stood looking down at her through the smoke of his cigarette. "You wrote me."

"Dad cabled. I couldn't have made it." Her eyes moved slowly, a little sadly around the room. "It's strange to be here without him."

"I've become accustomed to it. I've been here half a dozen times in the past three years."

"Kate told me I shouldn't have assumed that he left me this." Reviving humor glinted between her thick dark lashes. "She pointed out a few things I'd overlooked, that there would have been a deed, a transfer of property, tax bills."

"Uncle John's estate pays the taxes. There has been a transfer of property. The estate—there's very little—is held in trust for my mother during her life-time. At her death it reverts to my sisters and to me."

"Then I am—intruding?" she said uncertainly. "The cabin is—yours?"

"Not entirely, apparently. Not for an uncertain number of years."

"I've been wondering. That's why I waited up to talk to you. I'm afraid you've been bearing some expense which I should have shared. After all, my option—is that the word?—should entail responsibility as well as create privilege. Do I owe you anything?"

"Certainly not," he said a trifle brusquely.

"But the expense of taxes and upkeep must cut into your mother's income," she persisted.

"There's a special fund for the maintenance of the property."

"But that's hardly fair, is it?" she asked impulsively. "That fund might be added to your mother's income if some other arrangement was made. Why can't I help? If Uncle John intended me to have the privilege of coming here whenever I like, certainly you shouldn't object to my sharing the expense."

"That's quite unnecessary," he said stiffly and saw her expression change. She had, he knew, interpreted the words, the tone of his

voice, as a rebuff. And rightly, too, he thought in bitter self-reproach. Her offer had been fair and generous. Why couldn't he have accepted it in the spirit in which it was made?

Presently, with a gesture which expressed some thought completed, some course of action determined, she dropped the fringed end of the cord. As he watched her, still broodingly silent, she rose from the couch, composed, lovely, remote.

"Then I shall be obliged to stay as your guest," she said and walked toward the closed door into the room she was to share with Kate.

"You win again, Gay." Strange that it was less difficult to renew his resolution now that he realized he'd been a presumptuous fool. Odd that now, when her manner expressed indifference, he was impatient to go. "I won't be here. I'm leaving—"

But flinging off at this hour was unnecessarily dramatic and so he added, "—tomorrow."

"You're being pretty—stuffy about this, aren't you?" she asked.

"Possibly." The knowledge of what he had seen in her face was sustaining. He felt himself relaxing as though, by some agency, a strain had been relieved. "Worse than that," he continued responding to the humor and the friendliness in her smile. "I'm being, I've been, unpardonably rude."

"You have," she agreed cheerfully. "I understand, though. The shock was, is, mutual. We've neither of us behaved very well. Let's not make—decisions tonight."

"But my decision is made." He knew that his voice lacked conviction. He saw her smile widen and deepen.

She appeared to be satisfied. "Shocks are wearing," she said. "I'm going to get some sleep."

"You'd better. You look all in."

"Thank you. Aren't you afraid you'll turn my head?" She stood smiling back over her shoulder, her hand on the knob of the door. "Good-night."

"Good-night. Pleasant dreams."

"I know I shall have them. Remember. No decisions. We'll draw Kate's straws—tomorrow."

Gay lay on the float in front of the cabin, her face buried in the hollow between her crossed arms. The sun shone warmly on her back and legs and the wind, ruffling her hair, was refreshingly cool. The float moved gently, rocked by waves which scurried before the wind across the surface of the lake. The warmth, the gentle motion, the whispering sound of the water, induced a state of drowsy contentment. She found it increasingly difficult to concentrate upon problems and eventualities though that was what she had gone there to do.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Robot Voice Machine Seen as Speech Aid

Sir Richard Paget, inventor of a machine that talks, seems to have confused for a time his inventive genius and his ultimate goal; but out of his works may come in the end an improvement in methods of human speech. His machine feeds air through a tube to various mouthpieces, and by pressing the bellows with his foot and placing a thumb before the orifices he makes the apparatus utter a few simple words. All right so far; but it is the hardest way to talk ever demonstrated with success.

On the other hand, Sir Richard philosophizes that, culturally, human speech is thousands of years behind the times. He notes that speech is the natural result of gestures of the mouth and jaws, capable of 144 variations; but that the upper arm, forearm, wrists and fingers together can make 700,000 gestures. To complicate speech by sign language would generally annoy all except tourists in a strange land, but the talking machine has a mission if finally perfected.

Radio, for example, would become more popular if all announcements were broadcast by a robot voice. All would sound alike; no peculiar hates would be attached to voices under general classifications of silly, raucous, nasal, flippant, guttural or stomachic.