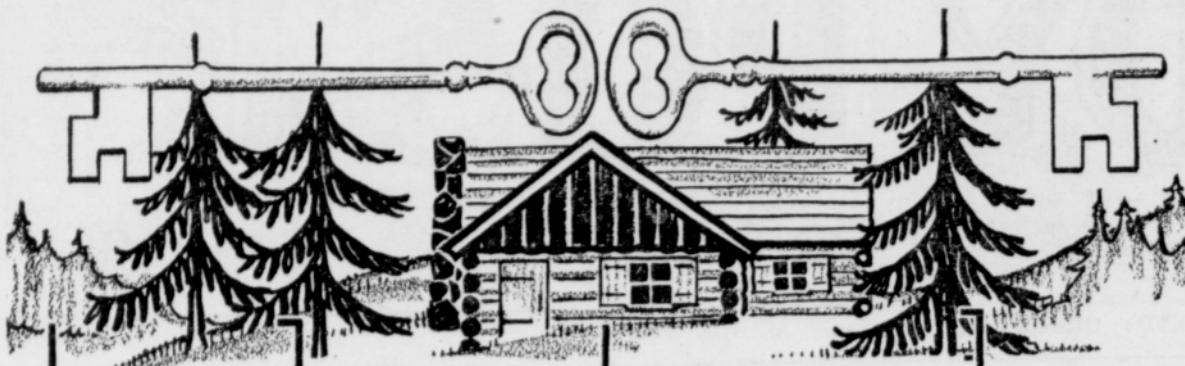


OUR WEEKLY SERIAL STORY INSTALLMENT



two keys to a cabin

BY LIDA LARRIMORE

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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, he 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. Looking at him in the doorway, her old feelings return. She knows that he is more necessary to her than is Todd Janeway, the man she is to marry. Gay asks John to reconsider his decision to leave.

CHAPTER III—Continued

Not that problems were pressing. They seemed to retreat farther into the hazy distance with each day that Gay spent at the lake. She was active from the hour of their early breakfast until the inevitable moment when her eyes dropped over a magazine, the parchesi board or the word games which Kate instigated to while away the after-supper interval when darkness fell over the woods and the lake. She slept soundly, without dreaming.

It was the air of Maine, she supposed, and the simple life she'd been living for—How long? Five days, she calculated, surprised that it had been that long, equally surprised that time had passed so swiftly. She hadn't realized how tired she'd been until she began to rest. It was for this she had come to the cabin, she thought, the contentment she felt, her pleasure in the sun and wind, the daylight hours of activity, the long nights of restful sleep. But would she have stayed if John had gone? Would she be so contented now, lying warm and drowsy in the sun on the rocking float, if he were not there in the cabin pottering with his test-tubes and microscope in the room that had been Mrs. Dill's?

But he wasn't there. At a cheerful hail from the shore Gay rolled over and then sat up. He stood on the boat-landing in swimming trunks and jersey, an arm raised in salute. "Is the water cold?" he called.

"Frigid. I have icicles in my ears."

"Think I'll paddle over."

"Sissy!" she taunted. "I swam." "You were showing off." He dipped his toes into the water and withdrew them with a grimace. "Pure exhibitionism."

"Superior stamina."

"Oh, yes?"

Thank heavens they'd gotten over being so terribly polite, she thought, watching him take a shallow dive from the end of the landing. The first day after she and Kate had arrived it had been pretty dreadful. They'd watched each other warily, suspicious of the meaning behind every gesture, all defenses stoutly guarded. It was different now. Each day that passed brought them closer together in an impersonal companionship, based on experiences shared, household chores squabbled over and gaily performed, a great deal of laughter. Kate's presence was a safeguard. Her wry humor, her resourcefulness, her energy and enthusiasm kept them occupied and amused. Gay, sitting on the float, her arms hugging her knees, wondered what would have happened

if Kate hadn't been there. She was glad, really glad, that Kate was.

"Perishing?" she asked as John's head bobbed along the side of the float.

"Practically." He pulled his long body up on the planking, shook himself, scattering a shower of drops.

"Hey!" Gay said, ducking.

"Sorry." He sat beside her, opened the pocket on the belt of his trunks, produced matches and cigarettes. "Will you light one for me?" he asked. "My hands are wet."

She lit a cigarette, placed it between his lips. The brief contact was closer to intimacy than they had been during the past five days. For an instant their eyes met and held, then Gay glanced away.

"Are your germs behaving well?" she asked, when the light quick beating of her heart had subsided.

"Abominably." He stretched out on the float beside her, his hand supporting his head. "I've just buried the whole lot under a pine tree. The odor of the cabin is vastly improved."

"Oh, what a shame!" she said in sympathy, surprised that he seemed so cheerful.

"That's the way it goes," he said. "You've got to have the patience of Job."

"Aren't you—?" An altered tone in his voice caught her straying attention.

"Mmm?" she hummed on a rising inflection.

"I asked you if you were bored."

"Certainly not."

"You weren't listening."

"I was."

"Don't be polite." He sat up to light a cigarette. "There's no reason why you should be interested. It must seem very dull and, as you said, unrewarding."

"I can think of gayer subjects," she said, wanting to hurt him because he had hurt her.

"Such as—?"

"Well, aquaplaning, for instance."

"All right. Talk away. I'll listen."

"As a penance?"

"I shan't be able to add anything to the conversation. I've had neither the time nor the opportunity for luxury sports."

"Skiing, then?"

"You're good at that, aren't you?"

"Fairly. It was included in the curriculum of the school at Geneva."

"I can't add much to that subject," he said. "I've done a little skiing on the hills at home. Nothing sensational. You'd consider my exploits amateurish, I'm afraid."

There was no humility in his voice. His obvious intention was to imply that an interest in sports was trivial in comparison with his more serious aspirations. Gay turned her head and looked out across the water toward the shore. If it was a defense, she could break through it, she thought. But was it a defense? Didn't he, hadn't he always, considered her interests trivial? Heaven knew, she thought they were. If, in justification, she could talk to him, tell him why she'd returned to the cabin—

"I can't talk about polo, either," he said, breaking a lengthening pause. "Or horse shows or yacht races or the Costume Ball at Southampton."

"Well," she said, presently, "I suppose we can talk about the weather."

"Always." She turned her head to find him smiling at her, not the ironical smile which fostered hostilities,

but a smile which widened into his engaging grin. "I understand there's been a heat-wave in New York."

"Idiot!" Gay laughed. They laughed together, amused friendly laughter which narrowed the distance between them, laughter which held a trembling vibration more conciliating than words.

"That's better." He offered her a cigarette. "I suspect your motives when you're polite."

"When you're polite, I know very well what your motives are."

"What?" His eyes met hers above the match that he held to her cigarette.

"You're filled with disapproval."

"I'm not." His smile softened the contradiction. "I'm filled with suppressed curiosity."

"Scientific curiosity?" She sat back on the float, her arms around her knees.

"No, purely human." He hesitated, then asked, "Your experiment?"



"You needn't, you know," John said presently.

Is it working out? Or have you buried it under a pine tree?"

His question caught her off-guard. Her eyes turned, again, to the canoe tied to the landing.

"It isn't so easily disposed of," she said.

"Are you—working at it?" His voice was very persuasive.

"Not seriously. I never seem to find time. I'm always sleepy or hungry or interested or—contented."

A shout hailed them from the shore. Gay turned to see Kate gesturing from the landing.

"Hello!" she called in reply to the hail. Kate eased herself down into the canoe, unfastened the tie-rope and picked up a paddle.

"The marines are coming." Gay looked at John, not knowing whether she felt more relieved or annoyed by the interruption. What he felt was obvious.

"Tell them to go shoot an Indian," he said.

CHAPTER IV

John caught the side of the canoe. It wobbled, then steadied against the float. Kate dropped the paddle.

"Are you landing?" he asked.

"No, thank you." Something had disturbed her, he thought. Her plain clever face, usually serene, looked both irritated and concerned. She glanced up at him as though he was the cause of her concern and irritation. "I'm going back in a minute," she said.

Then, why had she come? He thought, he was sure, that Gay would have answered his question if they had remained undisturbed. He liked Kate. He'd been glad, at first, that she was here. Lately, though—this morning—"Have you robbed the mail-man again?" he asked. "You'll land in jail. All those papers—"

"New York papers?" Gay scrambled to the edge of the float. "Where did you get them?"

"I sent for them," Kate said. "Is there—?" Gay asked quickly. Then, more deliberately, "What's the news?"

"Your father sailed three days ago," Kate said in reply to Gay's question.

"But he wasn't to have returned until—"

"Exactly." His eyes turned to Kate. She sat with compressed lips looking up at Gay through slightly narrowed eyes. "He missed the auction in London," she said.

"That's bad. That's really very bad." Gay gave an exclamation, half dismay, half exasperated rage. "Aunt Flora probably cabled him," she said.

"Your mother has not been idle," Kate reminded her grimly, "not to mention a varied assortment of relatives."

"They're such an articulate family."

"Yes," Kate said dryly, "and, unfortunately, cable rates are no deterrent."

"But why couldn't they have waited?" The humor that had brightened her voice was gone. Though he saw her only in profile, John knew that her eyes were dark and mutinous. "Why must they jump to conclusions? Aunt Flora would, of course. But I thought Mother had more sense!"

"It's been five days," Kate pointed out. "They probably think you've been kidnapped. You can't wonder that they're anxious," she added in a tone of increasing exasperation.

"I've been away longer than that."

"But not at a time like this when something has been arranged for you practically every hour. Think of the excuses, the questions, the evasions."

"You think of them. I haven't the strength."

"You haven't communicated with anyone?"

"No. Why should I? Todd—understood. I told both Mother and Aunt Flora in the notes I wrote them that I would return at the end of the week."

"And will you?"

She remembered him, then. John's heart leapt as his eyes, for a moment, met her shadowed glance. It sank again as she replied with unconscious arrogance:

"I usually keep my promises, don't I?"

"In that case," Kate said, and he thought she sounded considerably relieved, "we'll be obliged to start in the morning. And I think we should both apologize to John. He can't have enjoyed having this discussed in his presence. And he couldn't escape," she added, humor, fostered by relief, breaking through concern and irritation. "He's holding me steady. Very generous of him not to have set me adrift."

"Think of me as a landing-post," John said, "if that will make you feel better."

Kate drew the rope into the canoe. "It would—if I could," she said. Her smile was faintly derisive but the expression in her keen light eyes was not unsympathetic. She took up the paddle. "I'm going to get lunch," she said, speaking past John to Gay who sat still and aloof at the edge of the float, looking down into the water. "I'll call when it's ready."

The canoe moved off from the float. The dip and swish of the paddle grew fainter as Kate approached the landing. Gay remained silent, her eyes fixed upon the tiny waves disappearing in bright succession

beneath the float. John's eyes rested upon her profile. Moments passed in an estranging silence.

"You needn't, you know," John said presently.

She glanced at him questioningly. "Apologize," he said. "You can think of me as a landing-post, too."

"I am, I suppose," she said, after a moment.

His glance, in turn, questioned. "All the things you're thinking."

She laughed, a clear brittle laugh, quickly stilled. "Spoiled, selfish, inconsiderate."

There was no humility in her voice. She was neither apologizing nor admitting. She seemed, John thought, to be taking some sort of perverse pride in the unadmirable qualities she listed. The sincere protest which sprang to his lips remained unspoken. Tenderness crystallized into antagonism.

"If you are referring to the anxiety you are probably causing at home," he said coolly, "I think I agree with you."

"Of course," she said brightly. "What else could you think? I have everything, haven't I?"

"Certainly, by any standards, you have a great deal."

"There's no sensible reason why I should run away less than a month before my wedding?"

She did not look at him. Her eyes were again fixed upon the waves disappearing under the float. Color had flushed into the cheek that he saw in profile. Her hands were clasped so tightly about her knees that the knuckles showed white.

"I can't answer that," John said. "I know nothing of the circumstances."

"Well, there isn't," she said. "No sensible reason. Todd is—splendid. I suppose we've been half in love with each other since I was six and he was nine."

Only half in love? he wanted to ask. Instead, thoughtfully silent, increasingly astonished, he lit a cigarette.

"We're to be married at Southampton in the Little Red Church on the Dunes." She spoke lightly, quickly, adding word to word as though she were building a house with cards which a breath, a too impetuous touch would destroy.

"It's Mother's show. You see Dad gave me my debutante party. Now she has her inning. It's a little complicated." She laughed again, that clear brittle laugh, quickly stilled. "Aunt Flora insists that she won't attend the reception in my step-father's home. She will, though, if only to point a reproving moral."

"Todd's father is giving us a boat for a wedding present," she went on as though there had been no break in the clear rippling stream of words. "We're sailing south. We'll leave the boat in Florida for the winter and bring her north next summer. The Janeways have a place at Palm Beach."

"Will you actually sail?" John asked, his interest for the moment quite detached from Gay.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Meat Curing Simplified By Using New Process

Certain difficulties in curing meats at home have been eliminated with the use of smoke salt and special meat cures now available at low cost. With the use of these preparations nothing needs to be added at home except water in the case of pickling meat. Special meat cures, already mixed except for the water, are pumped to the area around the bones in ham and shoulders, as well as around joints in other cuts of meat, so that, after the outer part has been cured with smoke salt, it can truly be said that the cuts have been cured from the inside out as well as from the outside in.

At small cost, a specially constructed pump is now available, writes John E. Hubel in the Pennsylvania Farmer. This pump has a needle with several small holes at the bottom, so that the pickling solution is spread to the areas around the bones, which are so hard to get at with curing salt when ordinary salt is used for curing hams and other cuts.

The pumping process is so simple that any one can do a good job.