

two keys to a cabin

BY LIDA LARRIMORE

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CHAPTER VII—Continued

"Mother gave my father a great deal of happiness while she was his wife, the Major, too, I suppose, though I was with them very little. Robert adores her." Gay changed her position and laughed. "How solemn we're being! We weren't solemn today. Did you enjoy seeing New York in a snowstorm?"

"I enjoy being with you wherever you are, though 'enjoy' is much too polite a word."

"Those first few days at the cabin—We were so polite to each other."

"I can barely remember. I wish we were there now."

"So do I. Thinking of the woods in a snow-storm makes all this seem like a stage-setting, doesn't it? Do you remember when you asked me if I would love you, when we were together in New York?"

"Yes—" He held her closer. "I was afraid to come."

"But you aren't afraid now."

"No. But I can't believe it's true."

"Dear, dear!" She lifted her head from his shoulder and, smiling, drew an exaggerated sigh. "Convincing you is certainly up-hill work. You're the most obstinate person I know."

"I guess you're right. I loved you pretty stubbornly for six years."

"It has its advantages, hasn't it?"

She looked at him gravely, her eyes soft and bright. "I love you," she said.

He drew her close to him. "I love you," he said, his lips against her cheek.

At a repeated sound from behind them, Gay drew away somewhat hastily. John, too, turned. The Japanese house-boy, his face discreetly expressionless, stood just inside the room.

"What is it, Suki?" Gay asked.

"Comp'ny come, please. Gentleman, ladies call up from below. Say send down elevator, please."

"Good-Heavens!" She looked at him in dismay. "I might have known—I should have told them we were going out to the country."

"Tell them now."

She shook her head. "Who is it, Suki?"

"Miss Wales. Mrs. Howard. Lady not say gentleman's name."

"Send the elevator down."

The house-boy bowed himself out of the room. She turned to John. Her face cleared. She laughed. "You look frightened."

"I'm terrified."

"If I refused to let them meet you, they'd think you weren't presentable. I want them to meet you. I'm proud of you. You look grand in evening clothes. You ought to wear them always."

"I might get a job as a waiter."

He caught her hand. "I won't know what to say to them."

"Idiot! What do you say to me?"

"I tell you I love you."

Her brows lifted. "You can omit that. Don't be frightened. They're really quite harmless."

"If you would coach me a little—"

"Oh, John!" She kissed him, but absently, he thought. Her expression was thoughtful, a little apprehensive as she pulled him up from the davenport, as they walked through soft glow of concealed lighting, through the frosty glitter of the Christmas tree toward the door to greet her friends.

"You're a wonderful dancer," she said, settling herself in a swirl of scarlet chiffon.

"You sound surprised." John smiled. "We aborigines who live in Maine don't confine our amusement to war dances, by any means."

She glanced at him doubtfully, then laughed. "The mystery is clearing up," she said.

"Mystery?"

"Well, we have wondered, you know," she went on with an air of artless frankness too deliberate to be entirely sincere. "I mean, Gay goes dashing off into the wilds and then comes home and breaks her engagement and won't tell us anything about you except that you're a doctor and her god-father's nephew. You can't imagine how curious we've been to meet you."

Here it was again. John had been obliged to respond to that approach many times during the evening as Gay's friends had arrived and departed in restless, animated groups.

"You must find me very disappointing," he said, making no effort to re-phrase a reply which, so far, had appeared to be adequate.

"Not at all." Her bright brown eyes sparkled at him through curling lashes. "Of course most of us

met you at Gay's debutante party but we didn't—"

"—pay any attention to me?" He felt that his smile was becoming fixed.

"I'd meant to say that we didn't dream all this romance was brewing. It is romantic, you know. I mean you never expect such a thing to happen to one of your friends."

On the surface, at least, it was all very friendly. Perhaps he only imagined that under their apparently casual acceptance of him, these friends of Gay's were deliberately making him feel an outsider in subtle ways of which he was conscious but which he could not define. That was natural, he told himself. Todd Janeway was one of them. His name had been mentioned, during the evening, in connection with Christmas Eve of last year, with reference to the Army-Navy football game, in casual reminiscence. Todd's sister, Ellen, was here, the slight graceful girl in the tailored hat who, coming in with the good-looking red-haired boy in tweeds, had explained that they were on their way out to the Janeway country place for Christmas.

"Don't you adore this apartment?" she was asking when he gave her his attention.

"It's very—unusual."

"I'm crazy about it. I've been trying to persuade Mums and Dads to take a pent-house but they say they can't afford to sell the family mausoleum even if anybody could be persuaded to buy it. We're practically paupers," she added cheerfully. "Dads is loaded with foreign bonds and you know what they're worth now."

John wanted, very sincerely, to understand, if he could the point-of-view of these sleek young people for, though she was more intelligent than the girl who chattered beside him, it must, of necessity, be Gay's. It was a rare person who remained uninfluenced by the thought and behavior of his or her companions. You never entirely escaped the environment in which you had been reared. You were bound to the past by a thousand tenuous ties of habit, prejudice, affection, ties of which you were unaware, perhaps, until, when confronted by some opposite idea, you felt them tugging you back into the safety of familiar ideas, values, habits. He'd felt them tugging when . . .

"I beg your pardon," he said, warned by a sustained upward inflection in his companion's voice that she had asked a question.

"It doesn't matter." He thought that she looked a little bored. Her eyes flicked past him toward the piano where the girl with auburn hair was singing, apparently for her own amusement since the group clustered about her continued to talk in staccato tones which carried across the room. "I asked you if you and Gay were spending tomorrow here or at her father's place in the country."

"In the country, I think." He wanted to add something to that. He wanted to apologize more fully for his inattention. What a dull lot she must think him. Not that he cared, except for Gay. He was as relieved as he felt his companion must be when he saw a group of four people come in from the hall and cross the room toward the davenport.

"We've been out on the terrace looking at the view," Tory Wales said as she came up to them. She dropped down on the davenport and a white fur coat, so soft that it crumpled like velvet as it fell, slid down over her bare brown shoulders and back.

"Your slippers are wet, I'm afraid," her companion, the burly but well-groomed young Englishman who was her fiancé, said.

"Don't fuss, Hal. You can't kill an Indian with a little snow." She leaned back against the apricot leather of the upholstery and held up two fingers. Her fiancé put a cigarette between them.

The girl in red laughed. "Don't you two talk the same language?" she asked.

"Well, you must admit that my English is a little different from Hal's," Tory Wales said, her light eyes, startling in contrast with her skin, twinkling with derisive humor which reminded him of Kate. "When his family was here in October we practically had to use deaf and dumb signals. I'm learning, though." She glanced up at her fiancé who smiled as though he found her very amusing, relaxed against the upholstery, graceful legs crossed, and made a half turn toward John, seated between her and the girl in red, who, now that reinforcements had arrived, showed no inclination to leave. "When are you planning to locate in New York, Dr. Houghton?"

"I don't expect to locate in New York," John said, a little startled at the question.

"Oh, aren't you going to practice here?" the girl in red asked. "We naturally assumed that you were."

"Why 'naturally'?" John asked smiling, but with the uncomfortable feeling that he was being deliberately quizzed.

"Well, Gay's connections are here. We thought—that's very disappointing." The girl in red gave a ripple of laughter which held, John thought, some confusion. "I was planning to develop a chronic ailment. After all, one must be loyal to one's friends."

"I appreciate your interest," John said, "but I shouldn't have a private practice in any event."

"Dr. Houghton is a scientist, darling," Tory Wales said speaking across him to the girl in red.

"That's very interesting." The Englishman lowered his glass to look at John.

"Are you working with a foundation?" the boy in the tweed suit asked.

"Nothing so impressive." John laughed briefly. "Just now I'm as-

sisting a physician in Portland. General practice. I'm hoping—"

The girl in red interrupted with a request for a cigarette. John felt both irritated and relieved. He didn't want to talk of his work, especially, but that was preferable to more personal references. In the flurry of providing the girl at his right with a cigarette, he glanced toward the group at the piano. Gay turned, as he watched, started across the room with Janice Howard. The others followed.

"Jan and Rickey think they must go," Gay said, coming up to the davenport.

"You needn't, Tory," Janice Howard said. "We can call a cab. But if we're to join the family festivities tomorrow, steps must be taken at once."

"We must go too, Tommy." Ellen Janeway rose. "We're meeting the midnight train in from Chicago. Francie and Ned are arriving, Gay. Maybe we'll see you in the country tomorrow."

"I want to see Francie and Ned. Are they bringing the babies?"

"Oh, yes. We're driving them out to the country tonight. The roads are fairly clear. Todd phoned—" She stopped and her soft color deepened.

"We're shoving off, Hal," Tory Wales said quickly. She rose and shrugged into the white fur coat. "We're going home and hang up our stockings. Maybe you'll get a bale of oats in yours, if you're good," she added, linking her arm through the arm of her fiancé.

"Good-night, Gay. Good-night, Dr. Houghton. We'll see you Wednesday evening."

"Good-night, Dr. Houghton," Janice Howard extended a slender hand. "It's been pleasant to meet you."

"Good-night, everybody," Gay said. "Merry Christmas. Good-night—"

John was standing at one of the long windows when Gay came into the drawing-room. She went to him, moving swiftly, noiselessly over the rugs which Suki had replaced.

"What do you see?" she asked, standing beside him. "Are you watching for Santa Claus? He doesn't come in a boat."

He turned when she spoke, glancing at her, looked out and down through the window again.

"Manhattan is an island, isn't it?" he said in a detached, distant voice. "I've never been able to believe it. But seeing water down under the windows—"

"John—" Her breath caught in her throat. He looked so unapproachable standing there with his back to the room, in darkness, now, except for the blue and silver dazzle of the Christmas tree, the restrained glow of the birch-log fire. She slipped her hand into the pocket where his was thrust, laid her cheek against his arm.

"It must be colder," he said steadily. "The snow isn't melting. See it on the deck of that scow there under the light."

"John—Darling—I know what you're thinking. Don't!"

He looked at her then and she saw the unhappiness in his eyes. His lips moved as though he meant to speak but no sound came.

"John," she said quietly, "look at me."

He turned, silent, unsmiling, waiting for her to continue.

"Have you changed your mind?" she asked steadily. "Are you trying to tell me—?" Her voice faltered, trembled, was stilled.

"Oh Gay, no!" He made a despairing gesture. "I'm trying to see this thing clearly. We can't rush into it blindly."

"Can't we be comfortable, at least," she said wearily.

He followed her to the davenport before the fire, sat at a little distance from her.

"Cigarette?" she asked.

"Thank you." He struck a match to light hers. As he bent toward her, she saw that his expression had softened. "You're tired," he said gently.

"A little."

He did not touch her, though she willed him to with all her strength. When his cigarette was lit, he sat back against the upholstery. "I don't wonder," he said bitterly. "You've carried me on your shoulders all evening and I'm a pretty heavy load."

"Don't be an idiot, darling."

"You watched me, you watched your friends, as though you were afraid—"

"I was afraid."

"That I'd do or say something that would humiliate you?"

"No, John. That they would try to make you feel uncomfortable, an outsider, someone who didn't belong."

He turned to her, puzzled.

"Deliberately?" he asked.

She nodded.

"I sensed something of the sort."

"You can't understand it, I suppose."

"I'm trying. I've been trying all evening." He crushed out his cigarette. "It's the assurance that wealth gives, I suppose. These friends of yours who were here to-night—"

"They can be loyal, too," she said quickly, more defensively than she knew. "It would have been loyalty to Todd if they'd been unpleasant to you, tonight."

"But what about you, and your cousin?"

"He—I—" She was silent.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

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(TO BE CONTINUED)

'Sixth Sense' Governs

Guesswork Accuracy

A sixth sense—extrasensory perception—governs to a certain degree the accuracy of guesswork, tests conducted by Columbia university psychologists indicate.

The research workers, after conducting a series of 1,000 tests with hidden cards, said even the average man or woman had some sort of mental prompting which tended to bring forth higher-than-chance-guesswork on the part of some of the subjects.

"Something other than chance is at work," the psychologists said, but offered no opinion as to what the extra-chance factor might be.

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