



THE STORY

CHAPTER I—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 immediately that someone has been, and probably is, living in the cabin. Kate suspects that Gay knows the identity of the mysterious occupant.

CHAPTER II—While the girls talk the mystery man returns. Gay, surprisingly enough, introduces the man to her. He is John Houghton, a young doctor whom Gay had known in previous years. Soon after arriving at the cottage Gay discovered his identity through an old monogrammed sweater. 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. 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.

CHAPTER III—Before he leaves, John goes for a walk. When he returns he finds Gay sitting before the fireplace. They begin talking on a more friendly basis, and she asks him to reconsider his decision to leave. The next morning brings a different feeling, and John decides to remain for his vacation—one more week.

CHAPTER IV—The night before Gay and Kate are to return home to New York John gets an urgent request to call at a nearby farm. Gay accompanies him while he cares for the patient. Returning to the cabin at a late hour, John stops the car. He tells Gay that he loves her, and she admits that he is necessary to her happiness.

"Don't talk about it. You needn't, I mean. There's nothing you're obliged to explain."

"But I want to," she said earnestly. "I could have gone away letting you think what you pleased of me but someone else is involved. This—yesterday morning when I pulled my act on the boat I must have given you a very unfair impression of Todd. I'm not being forced into this marriage."

John gave a short laugh. "I could scarcely have that impression," he said.

"None of the things you probably think are true," she went on. "We didn't merely drift into an engagement. It wasn't propinquity or the fact that both families hoped and expected that we would marry. I suppose that would have put us off each other, if anything. We're neither of us lambs which could be led to a sacrifice without a good deal of bleating."

Presently she continued. "I like Todd better than anyone I've ever known," she said, as though she were explaining the situation to herself as well as to him. "We enjoy being together. We think the same things are amusing or sad or exciting."

"I should think that would be an excellent foundation for marriage," John said as she paused.

"But it isn't enough. It's all too—What were the words you used?—controlled and detached. We hold things too lightly." Mounting passion flamed in her voice. "Todd shouldn't have let me come here," she said.

"Let you?"

"Oh, I know." She gave a low rueful laugh. "He couldn't have prevented my coming. But if I'd cared enough for him I wouldn't have needed to come. If he'd cared enough for me he would have tried to keep me there with him. If—she broke off, and added: "I meant to correct the unfair impression of Todd I'd given you. I'm not doing a very good job."

He ignored that. "Why did you come, Gay?" he asked.

"I've wanted to tell you." Her voice was quiet, now, very thoughtful, wholly sincere. "I've been afraid to try. It doesn't seem reasonable, even to me. I had no idea that you would be here."

"I know that," John was unconscious of the fact that he had slackened the speed of the car. With his eyes still fixed on the road ahead, he waited for her to continue.

"I'm not afraid now," she went on after an interval of silence. "Tonight, while I was waiting for you, I thought of Uncle John."

"Yes?" he said, bending toward her.

"Do you suppose that when you are—dying," she asked simply, like a child puzzling over a mystery beyond its comprehension, "that some especial wisdom is given to you?"

Her phrasing of a thought he'd had, startled him with its similarity. He remained silent, his weariness gone, every nerve in his body suddenly tense and alert.

"I thought of that tonight," she went on without waiting for a reply to her question, "while you were bringing that baby into the world."

When realities touch you, pride seems unimportant. I'm not afraid to tell you now. I wanted to come back to the cabin because I'd felt intensely here. I'd been both happy and unhappy and not ashamed of either, no hidden emotion beneath mockery for fear I'd be thought sentimental and naive."

"But you were so young then, Gay," John drew in at the side of the road and stopped the motor.

"And have you—succeeded?"

"I was disappointed the night Kate and I arrived. I realized how foolish I'd been. The cabin was as I remembered it, but I had no feeling about it until—"

Her voice which had been composed trembled to a faltering stop. She glanced up at him and he saw, in the light from the dashboard, the tears on her lashes, the uncertain half-smile on her lips, the melted stars in her eyes. His arms went around her, drew her close.

"Gay," he said. "Darling! I love you. It's a relief to say it. I'm not afraid either. Oh, Gay."

She turned so that her cheek touched his. Her arm went up around his neck.

"John!" she cried softly. "Oh, I was afraid it wouldn't happen. I was afraid I'd go away without having really been with you. Or that you would. We're both so stubborn and proud and ridiculous." She laughed, half sobbing. "John!"

"I couldn't have gone while you were here," he whispered against her cheek.

Her arm tightened. Her hand moved in gentleness from his temple down along the thin line of his jaw. "I couldn't have either. It was always you. It was because you had been there that I had to come back. I loved you awfully that summer and have always since. I thought just being here—But it wouldn't have been any good. The night Kate and I came—the cabin was just as I had remembered it. But I had no feeling about it until I found your sweater, this sweater, and knew it was you who was there."

"That old sweater. It was new the summer you were here. You remembered!"

CHAPTER V

Kate roused, opened her eyes, blinked at the light coming in through the window beside her bed. She had forgotten to draw the shade when she had retired, she thought. She had forgotten to undress, too, apparently, since she seemed to be fully clothed. That was a little careless, to say the least. She stretched under the blankets, blinked again and remembered.

Her eyes, wide awake now, flew to Gay's bed at the opposite end of the room. The counterpane was drawn smoothly over the pillows and Gay's white wool robe lay flung across it as it had lain since yesterday afternoon. Kate glanced at her watch. Nearly half-past seven. She threw back the blankets, sprang from the bed, stood listening.

She glanced in the mirror above the low chest of drawers. Her face, colorless from anxiety and fatigue, glared back at her in the morning light. What a fright she looked! Not that it mattered. She was glad she'd done what she had. She'd wondered, last night, how she would feel about this morning. Gay would be furious. Let her. There were limits to patience and tolerance and being a good sport. Last night, at least, she hadn't let her sympathies run away with her common sense.

How treacherous sympathies were! Kate, brushing her long sandy hair, felt hers stir beneath anxiety and exasperation as she thought of Gay and John. They were so obviously in love with each other, romantically in love which was more dangerous than a mere physical attraction. Not that he wasn't physically attractive. He had charm and good breeding. His characteristic gravity, lit by flashes of humor, was appealing. He was sensitive, but Gay couldn't dominate him, which, for her, must be unique and intriguing. In that quality, call it strength of character or stubbornness as you please, lay, she supposed, his strong attraction.

What was that? Kate dropped her brush on the top of the chest. They were here. They were laughing together, somewhere, close at hand. Her first reaction was a light-headed sense of relief. She opened the bedroom door into the main portion of the cabin.

The sound of laughter reached her more clearly. She smelled bacon frying and toast and coffee. Relief sharpened into indignation. They were laughing, were they, having breakfast, while she worried. Kate's back stiffened. As she walked through the living-room, she glanced at the telephone against the wall. She was glad she had done it, she told herself, steeling her sympathies, resentfully forcing from her mind an unjustified feeling of guilt.

But she wasn't so sure she was glad when she came to the doorway of the kitchen. Sympathy, for a sentimental moment, took precedence over indignation and anxiety. They had built a roaring fire in the wood range and were cooking breakfast together. Gay, wearing his sweater, too large for her, the sleeves rolled back to free her hands, was toasting bread. John, standing beside her, turned bacon in the skillet. Steam rose from the coffee-pot, curled in a wreath above their heads. Sunlight streaming in through the two east windows lay over them, a promise, a seal of approval, a benediction.

They were not aware of Kate standing in the doorway. Their faces bent over their separate tasks were absorbed and smiling. As she watched, their glances lifted and met. They broke into soft laughter though no word was exchanged. Leaning toward her, his lips brushed across her hair.

The light caress, significant of a new relationship, banished sympathy and sentiment. Kate stiffened. "Well!" she said crisply. "For two people who've been out all night—"

"We didn't expect to be so long," Gay interrupted. "John had a baby. It took all night."

"What!" Kate's hands grasped the sides of the doorway.

"A Mrs. Whittaker had a baby," John said. "I merely assisted."

Kate drew a steady breath. "And what did you do?" she asked Gay.

"I waited for John outside in the car."

"I'm surprised you didn't—assist."

"I wanted to. John wouldn't let me."

Kate felt her lips twitching in spite of the very real dismay that weighted her spirits. "I'm glad he had that much sense," she said. "You couldn't have telephoned, I suppose."

"There wasn't a phone."

"I am sorry, Kate," John roused from the trance-like state so alarming to Kate. "You must have been

frantic. I tried to send Gay back. But you know how she is."

"Just a spoiled brat," Gay glanced up at him, smiling.

"The toast is burning," Kate said. "Heavens, yes!" Gay snatched the rack up from the stove.

"Can't you keep your mind on your work?" John took the rack from her. Their hands touched, reluctantly parted. Gay gave a laughing cry.

"Can't you? The bacon is burned to a crisp."

"Good Lord!" The rueful smile widened into his engaging grin. "Will you cook this breakfast, Kate?"

"I'll have to, I suppose," she said grumpily. "If I'm to have anything fit to eat." She took the skillet from John's unresisting hand and marched to the sink. "After you've had breakfast you'd better get some sleep. We can't start for New York today."

A sudden hush fell upon the room. Kate could not see their faces. She was scraping burned bits of bacon from the skillet into the sink.

"The Northfield garage couldn't cope with the generator," she went on. "I left the car there and that boy with the teeth brought me back here last night. They kindly offered to take the car in to Machias today. That means, I suppose, that it won't be ready before night. I'll be glad to get back to civilization again where it doesn't take forever to get something done." She turned. "Where's the rest of the bacon or have you—"

Sympathies were treacherous. They looked at her as though she had given them a reprieve from death. Seeing the gratitude and affection for her which shone in Gay's face, in John's, she felt with uncomfortable sharpness that unjustified sense of guilt. She walked to the icebox, stooped, jerked open the door. She had been right to call Todd last night. But knowing that he was now, at this moment, on his way to the lake, was no longer the sustaining relief it had been. She felt like a traitor. She felt as though she should be taken out to the clearing behind the cabin, stood up against the woodshed, and shot.

The long low roadster sped down a hill, across a bridge in a swampy hollow, up a gently rising grade. Todd Janeway, his blond head bare, his body slumped with fatigue against the leather upholstery, his eyes smarting from the sting of the wind, glanced at the speedometer. Better take it easy, he thought, slackening the rushing speed of the car.

Lucky he'd left word at home where he was going last night. He'd expected to hear from her. He wouldn't have been surprised if she'd walked in on Tony Wales' party. A week, she'd said, and Gay kept her promises. But it had been Kate who called. She'd said Gay didn't know she was calling. The telephone connection was bad. He hadn't been able to hear very well. When he'd learned that Kate wanted him to come, he'd concentrated on getting the directions she gave him fairly clear in his mind.

Continued Next Week

CHARLES W. MARTYN

Services for Charles W. Martyn, retired assistant superintendent of the Southern Pacific railroad, who died Friday, were held Tuesday at the J. P. Finley & Son funeral home.

Born in Lawrence, Kan., December 26, 1868, Mr. Martyn came to Oregon as a boy with his parents settling in Corvallis. He began to work with the Southern Pacific company in 1890 and remained with that organization until 1934 at which time he retired.

Survivors include a son, W. H. Martyn; two sisters, Mrs. Oscar Paulson and Mrs. Ralph Merchant, all of Portland; a brother J. F. Martyn of Beaverton, and three grandchildren.

JOHN SHRIER

John Shrier, late of Tigard, Ore., died June 21. Father of Mrs. Frank Weiman of Salem, Ore.; Mrs. Kathleen Euter of Helena, Mont.; J. L. Shrier of Mount Vernon, Wash., and F. J. Shrier of Kelso, Wash. Funeral services were held Monday in Finley's Rose Chapel, interment Crescent Grove cemetery.

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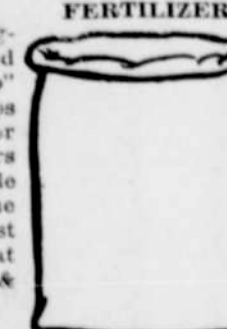
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