



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.

CHAPTER V—Meanwhile, worried by their absence, Kate has called Todd Janeway in New York. She knows that Gay and John feel a strong attachment for each other, and wants Todd to come to Maine where he can talk to Gay. Todd arrives while Kate is alone. She breaks the news to him. Todd, wary, hearted and generous, is heart-sick but refuses to become melodramatic.

CHAPTER VI—Gay and John, who have been canoeing, return to the cabin, there to find Todd. John leaves temporarily and Gay tells Todd that she has fallen in love with John. Todd, understanding that it is unavoidable, tells her he is still her best friend. Gay realizes that Todd will always be her friend, and that if she ever needs help she has but to turn to him.

He would like to feel at home. But how could he, how could anybody feel at home in this room? It was as artificial as the silvered wreaths which hung in the windows, as the Christmas tree, silvered too, reflecting its fantastic dazzle of blue lights and twisted glass icicles in a wall formed by mirrors, cut into sections by strips of chromium.

"Well, what do you make of it?" He turned guiltily, conscious of some possible rudeness, then relaxed. Gay was walking toward him, so lovely in the dress of deep blue velvet she'd worn at dinner that his breath caught in his throat. She came up to where he stood and slipped her hand through his arm.

"What were you thinking?" she asked, smiling up at him with amusement in her eyes. "You looked startled when I spoke to you."

"I was afraid someone had caught me being critical of the decorations." He turned again to the panel above the fire. "What is it?" he asked. "Flowers? Fruit?"

"It's a color note." Her smile deepened.

"Then it doesn't mean anything?" "Not to me. Don't puzzle your head over it, my sweet. If you do, you'll go quietly mad." She led him to the davenport which stood facing the fire. He sank down beside her into soft leather upholstery. "Mother had all this done to occupy her mind when she found she hadn't a wedding to arrange. Besides Cedric needed the money."

"Cedric?"

"The earnest young man who had the brainstorm. It has made him. He has more commissions than he can handle. He regards Kitty as a cross between Lady Bountiful and a fairy with a wand, which is very flattering, of course. How did you get on with her?" She asked the ques-

tion lightly, but he felt her waiting a little apprehensively for his reply.

"She's lovely to look at," he said guardedly, "and very kind."

Gay looked up at him. "But—? I want you to tell me what you think of everything. No reservations. They lead to misunderstandings." Her face was grave. "Be frank with me, John."

"I'll try to be frank. It sounds ridiculous, I know, but I think I'd feel more comfortable if she hadn't received me so courteously."

"Why?" Gay asked in surprise. "Well, after bracing myself to face the opposition I expected, it's a little disconcerting to have your mother, figuratively, at least receive me with open arms."

She laughed in genuine amusement. "Did you want to fight dragons, darling?"

"I suppose I did." He laughed with her.

"Well, cheer up. There's Aunt Flora in the offing."

"Who is Aunt Flora? Is she a dragon?"

"She's my father's sister, a widow. She's lived with him since Mother's defection. No, she isn't a dragon. She's pathetic, really. She persists in observing the conventions of a polite world of society which is past and gone. And she expects other people to observe them. She won't receive you with open arms. Not that she blames you for the recent catastrophe, though. She tells me that I am my mother's daughter."

"You aren't like your mother, except in certain superficial points of physical resemblance."

She looked at him, considering, looked away.

"Have I offended you?" he asked, realizing that he had spoken with more warmth than the comment required. "I didn't mean—Your mother is charming. I—"

"I wasn't offended." She took his hand in hers. "I was wondering how I could explain Mother to you. No, I'm not like her. I wish I were. Mother is really very logical. When places or people bore her she sees no reason why she should pretend that they mean anything to her. She was bored with Dad and so she divorced him and married Major Summerfield."

"You mean—Mr. Cameron is her third husband? I heard her speak of a Major Summerfield at dinner, but I had no idea—"

"She's on friendly terms with both Dad and the Major," Gay said but her smile wavered a little. "She doesn't dislike them because they bored her. She was very sorry to have had to hurt them but she saw no reason in continuing a relationship which was no longer agreeable. You look horrified, John."

She dropped his hand. "I don't suppose you can understand."

"I was thinking how—confusing it must have been for you," he said slowly.

"It was, until I was old enough to understand Mother's point of view. Now, it's all very simple. Mother has never cared deeply for anyone. It isn't in her nature to cling to things, though she's loyal in her way, and generous and kind. That's why she looks as she does. She has no regrets for anything that has happened. She gave Dad 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." She 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. "Gentlemen 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 gentlemen's name."

"Send the elevator down."

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.

CHAPTER VIII

The last record in the electric Victrola whirled to a stop. John led the small vivacious brunette with whom he had been dancing to the davenport facing the fire where he had sat with Gay.

"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,

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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,



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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 lout 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.

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Indian Burial Ground

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