



Lida Larrimore
writes

Two Keys to a Cabin

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, he is 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, warm 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.

CHAPTER VII—It is Christmas and Gay is home in New York, awaiting John's arrival for the holidays. She meets him at the station, and they go to her home to be met by Gay's mother and step-father, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Cameron. John likes her father, but is ill at ease in the presence of Kitty Cameron. Gay's mother is an unusual woman. Frequently divorced, she remains on friendly terms with her former husbands. She divorced them because she grew bored by their company.

The twinkle in the gray-blue eyes was reassuring. John realized, gratefully, that Gay's father, whatever embarrassment he suffered, bore no resentment against him. The constraint lessened a little. David

Graham leaned back in his chair. John lit a cigarette.

"I meant an apology for my share in the great deal of unpleasantness," he said, smiling.

"It's a pleasure to meet someone who employs the use of understatement," Gay's father returned the smile. "The only apology you owe me, personally," he went on, "is for making me rush home from London before I'd had a chance to bid on a painting I very much wanted."

"I'm sorry about that, sir," John was beginning to understand the life-long friendship between this man and his Uncle John. He even felt that he understood why Kitty Schuyler, at eighteen, had married him.

"Perhaps it is I who owe you an apology," David Graham said, presently. "Gay calls my attention to the fact that I, originally, was at fault. I invited John Lawrence to be her god-father. Of course I had no idea that the nephew he spoke of so often was going to grow up into a menace, or I should have made other arrangements."

"Gay has told you," John said, "that our meeting at the cabin was not pre-arranged?"

"But it was pre-arranged, wasn't it? Yes, Gay has told me. I refer to the arrangement John Lawrence made. No one ever suspected him of his genius for pulling strings. He had it, though, to a remarkable degree. I remember when we were in college—"

He went on to speak of John's uncle who had been his friend, quietly, appreciatively, in a pleasant, unhurried voice. The anecdote he told was familiar to John. Though he gave the appearance of listening intently, his mind was occupied with the task of fitting together from what he had heard of him, from what he had observed, a clear understanding of Gay's father.

As he thought of her, he heard her voice.

"Are you getting along, you two?"

"Splendidly," her father said.

"Have you been telling John disgraceful episodes in my past?" She came toward them, walking quickly and lightly through a shaft of sunlight, touched John's arm in passing, went to sit on the arm of her father's chair.

"The young are self-centered," David Graham said. "No, my dear. I've been talking about the days when I was young and not so handsome. I've enjoyed it but John has probably been bored."

"Not at all, sir."

"I expected that you'd either be leading John through the art gallery or that you'd be sitting here in utter silence."

"You underestimate the privilege

it is to me to be permitted to talk without being interrupted."

"I suppose so." She was silent for a moment, then asked, "Have you told John, Dad?"

John saw David Graham's expression alter. The diffidence he had lost while he had talked of John's uncle returned. He glanced at John, almost, he thought, watching, in apology, then up at Gay, considering. "No," he said. "I haven't."

"It's about getting a place for you in the research department at Johns Hopkins," Gay said, eagerly. "That is what you want?" John heard the hesitancy in David Graham's voice, saw the considering expression in his eyes.

"I'd hoped that I might work and study there," he said slowly. "It's seemed pretty far in the future to make definite plans."

"There will be an opening for you the first of the year. I've been in communication with the authorities. Your training and ability will be investigated, of course, but that's largely a matter of course."

"Grandfather had an operation there," Gay's voice was excited and happy. "Considerate of him, wasn't it?"

John looked directly at David Graham.

"I appreciate what you've done," he said, "but I couldn't accept a place there the first of the year."

"Gay has told me—" David Graham's embarrassment visibly increased. "But I—we—she seemed to think that some arrangement might be made."

"Isn't it possible, John?"

"I'm afraid not." He saw a little of the brightness go out of her face but continued, "I've given Dr. Sargeant my promise to remain in Portland until October. You see, Mr. Graham, I'm discharging an obligation. Dr. Sargeant made it possible for me to complete my medical course and that was the stipulation."

"But if it's only a question of money," Gay's color deepened and her eyes were very bright. "Couldn't you—"

She paused at a warning glance from her father, looked down at her hand.

"It isn't entirely. I've been working with Dr. Sargeant since October. He's leaving for a cruise the first of the year. There wouldn't be time to break in another assistant even if—"

"—Even if you could swallow your—"

She broke off, her eyes blazing, her chin held high.

"Gently, Gay," David Graham's face was very troubled. "This is a decision which John must make."

They were staring at each other like strangers, John thought, antagonism humming between them in vibrations across the dim, richly furnished room. But he could not, he would not yield. It was not, he told himself, entirely pride, not only stubbornness. There was a deeper reason, something he was unable to analyze fully. It had to do with all the other pressures being exerted upon him by this life into which he had been plunged.

"I'm sorry," he said, conscious of

David Graham's eyes fixed upon him in compassion. "I can't break that promise, Gay. Dr. Sargeant is depending on me. I can't let him down."

There was silence for a moment. Then Gay's expression softened. She gave a low shaken laugh.

"I'm as bad as Aunt Flora," she said. "I've just been despising her because she very kindly offers to arrange your life for me. I'm doing the same." Her breath caught on a sob. "Forgive me. I'm sorry." She slipped from the arm of her father's chair and came toward him.

"I'll be patient. I can wait."

He looked down at her as she stood beside him, lovely in this changed and softened mood.

"You do understand, Gay?" he asked, wanting to take her in his arms, to heal the hurt he had been obliged to give her in the only way at his command. Diffidence held him motionless, self-conscious in the presence of her father.

Her eyes fell away from his pleading glance. "Of course I understand." She laughed too quickly, too brightly. "It's just that Grandfather's offspring have always had too much of everything, I suppose. We don't accept disappointments gracefully. Except you, Dad. You're the



"We don't accept disappointments gracefully."

only one of us who doesn't snatch and grab." She linked her arm through John's. "Have you finished with John?"

"I hope not." David Graham smiled but his eyes were grave. "I hope to have the pleasure of a prolonged acquaintance."

"At the moment, I mean. This house. Swarming with relatives. No wonder we're all on edge. Will you excuse us, Dad? John and I are going out and walk five miles."

CHAPTER IX

The sun, dropping toward the horizon, laid a dazzling sheen on the snow, which covered the wide lawns sloping away from the gray stone towers and turrets and Victorian embellishments of the house, but when they entered the grove the glow was dimmed by the foliage of evergreens, striped and filigreed by the trunks and bare branches of trees. Rabbit tracks printed the path before them, whorls, scalloped indentations, like waves on sand, where the snow had been blown by the wind. They ploughed through, kicking up a fine white mist that sprayed their faces with stinging cold.

"It's like a Maine snow," John said, as Gay became silent.

"Yes, isn't it?" she said brightly. "Dry and like powder. We don't often have them like this."

"Do you ski near here?" Why wouldn't she look at him? Her arm, linked through his, was unresponsive beneath the thick fur coat sleeve. When he glanced sideways and down, he saw only tendrils of red-brown hair curling out under her cap, the curving line of her cheek half-buried in fur. He had thought that here, alone, out of doors, he would find her again, but she had ignored or deliberately misinterpreted his diffident attempts to effect a reconciliation so that he no longer made an effort to break through the brittle gaiety of her mood.

"We have," she replied. "On the slope just beyond the grove, between the Janeway place and ours. It isn't very exciting though. Coasting there is more fun."

"The Janeway place is beyond the grove?" John asked. Why should he apologize again? He asked himself. Gay had known that he was obligated to Dr. Sargeant until the coming October. She shouldn't have made plans for him which she knew he would be unable to endorse. She'd always been able to buy what she wanted. Well, in this instance, there was something more important than money. It was his services the doctor needed. Besides—

"Yes, 'Highcliff,'" Gay said in reply to his question. "It was a show-place until 'Dunedin' was built. Originally—I don't remember but I've seen photographs—people spoke of it as an Italian villa. It looked like a steel-engraving with terraces descending in a series to a lake and balustrades and urns and weeping conifers. Our family are parvenus in comparison with the Janeways. The land was granted to one of Todd's ancestors in 1630. That's why they can live simply

now, without observing all the silly conventions that Aunt Flora struggles to maintain."

A hemlock branch, weighted with snow, cut across the path.

"Duck!" he cried and reached forward, too late, to thrust it aside. He caught her as she stumbled.

"Heavens!" she gasped and looked up at him, snow covering her face like a mask. She blinked, then laughed, a gay laugh, free from constraint. "You look like a snow-man," she said.

He blinked to clear his vision. "You look like a snow-maiden." He laughed with her. "No, that's too poetic. You look as though you'd fallen head-first in a barrel of soap flakes. I can't see anything but the tip of your nose. Here. Wait."

His arm held her while, with the other hand, he brushed the snow from her face. As he bent toward her, he saw the laughter dim in her

eyes. A half-smile trembled across her lips.

"I've been—Can you forgive me?"

"Oh, darling—Yes!" His arms held her but did not draw her toward him. "But," he said steadily, "you must understand."

"I do. I've been despising myself for—I'm hateful to you because I love you. That long stupid dinner and then Aunt Flora. I told you that we Graham's don't accept disappointments gracefully. It was a disappointment."

"But you knew I was obligated."

She smiled ruefully. Her eyes were shy. "I wanted it so much," she said. "When I was away from you, I thought that when we were together again, you'd want it as much as I did, that being together would mean more to you than keeping a promise."

"I do want it. You know that, Gay."

"Yes, I know. But—"

"I could not love you, dear, so well I loved I not honor more—"

"You're making fun of me."

"No, John, I'm not. Have I quoted correctly? Dad read the 'Idylls of the King' to me when I was little. I thought the king was very noble, but even then—"

Humor shone fleetingly in the blue depths of her eyes, "—that it was a little hard on the queen."

"You make me feel—"

"I have great respect for your honor," she said steadily, "but I resent your lack of confidence. Oh, I don't blame you," she went on as he made a sound of protest. "Now that you've had a chance to look us over, you're probably justified. Mother is a dear, generous and amusing, but not very reliable, I suppose, and Aunt Flora and Uncle James— Isn't Uncle James ridiculous? And Muriel and Elsa and Dirk and Reggie Lancaster. Dad's the only one of us you could possibly admire—"

"I do admire him. You're like him—a little."

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