

Alabaster Lamps

By Margaret Turnbull

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CHAPTER VI—Continued

"How about me?" the young Claude had asked, and realized as he said it that it was a fool's question.

And the girl had laughed. "Oh, after tonight you won't count." She had dared to say it, actually dared to look him in the eyes and say it.

"Is that so?" the boy had snapped, and he had never been angrier in his life. Rebellion seethed within him. And yet, he remembered, he had not hated her.

"After tonight, eh? Well, the night's still young."

Something in the way he said that, struck through her laughing guard. Her expression changed. She began to look ever so little—what was it—frightened?

"It's getting late. I think you'd better go."

"It's my last night," he had answered, without moving. "Why cut it short?"

Then she had moved to the door, swiftly, and held it open. He rose to his feet somehow and moved with her. He could not have told exactly why, but there was a dangerous feeling growing up inside him. Yet, now that he understood his younger self, Claude Dabbs felt if the girl had not looked so scared, the feeling would not have grown as fast, nor been so dangerous. If she had laughed at him, he would have been ashamed. If she had trusted him he would have been compelled to be worthy of her trust. But she saw, and feared, the flood tide of feelings she had deliberately evoked and something in her must have answered his passion. She was deadly afraid of that—as well as of him.

"I want you to go now," she had said, hard, cold and staring. "If you don't, I'll call down to the office."

He had faced her and shut the door, and now he was sure he hated her. "Go on," he had said grimly. "Call 'em up at the office. What you going to tell 'em? That I'm not your husband?"

She shook her head. He could see her face, puzzled, bewildered, frightened.

"That I am your husband, and you don't care about having me 'round?" She still stared at him, her mouth open in an odd, babyish way that, angry as he was, he remembered he had thought pretty.

"I'll make your stay in this house short, if you start a row like that."

She sprang to the door, but Claude was there before her. Their hands met on the handle, and somehow, at his touch, she had given up, and swayed against him. Claude felt a little shiver run through his strong body now at the remembrance of how it had "finished" him, too, but not in the way either of them dreamed.

He was beyond reasoning or thought then. He was entirely given up to feeling. He put his arm about her waist and held her closely to him as he turned the key in the door.

"You can have the key," he had whispered, in a queer, husky voice, "when you call down to the office and say that the man in your room isn't your husband, and you want to get rid of him."

She had looked at him, given a queer little sound, and hidden her face against his shoulders.

Claude Dabbs stared before him, his lips moving. After awhile he lit his cigar, crossed one leg over the other, and began to talk, in an even voice, quite as though he was continuing his narrative to Ned from the point he had left off.

"Next morning I went out for a stroll before breakfast, and to settle in my mind a plan I meant to carry through quickly, before Polly made up her own mind. We'd talked lots about everything, but nothing was settled.

"Nobody'll ever know how wonderful it was to me to have Polly to talk to. It changed everything. There wasn't a girl in Peace Valley could talk as she did, none I knew, anyway; and the short while I'd been at Rutgers I hadn't met any girls, except Polly. She made me realize that we'd been fond of each other for a long time, though it had taken this to bring us together."

Claude looked up at Ned, who with a languid movement of his hand removed the cigarette from between his lips. Claude noted idly that it was not lit. He glanced at the wall above Ned's desk. A small photograph in an old-fashioned frame hung above it. It was that of a lovely young country girl, with character behind the young loveliness. She was Claude's mother.

"You see, Ned, I'd always been queer about girls. I liked 'em, but expected a good deal of 'em. Not every girl pleased me. Sounds connected, but I don't mean it that way. It wasn't that—it was Mom."

His eyes turned again to the photograph. "It's one of those things you can't find words for. It's a feeling. Anyway, Mom gave it to me about girls, and Polly was the first. I meant she should be the last. I felt that if we were careful enough about explaining our marriage to Mom she would understand and be pleased. But she never knew."

"Nobody'll ever know how wonderful life was to me that morning. I hadn't forgotten Pop, but since I'd told Polly just how I felt about him, and she'd tried to comfort me, I could bear it easier, because Polly understood. I forgot all about her money. It never entered my head. I only

thought of Polly. When I was going out, she kissed me and said:

"Claude Melotte, is your home lit by alabaster lamps?"

"I thought she was just fooling about my silly name. She'd read the play, you see. I hadn't, then. I just told her they were Rochester lamps. When I thought about it, as I turned back toward the hotel, I wondered if there was more to her question than just lamps—something behind it. I thought she might have been turning over in her mind whether she'd live with Mom, or insist on having a separate house for just us two. I didn't care. She could have her own way about that—and most everything else, too. But I've read the play since, and I'm pretty sure that there was a catch in it. Her question, I mean. It's the part where he's blowing about the house he's gonna take her to. All lies!

"She wasn't down in the dining room when I came back from the walk, but she'd told me to give her



He Turned Out the Lamp and Left the Room.

plenty of time to pack, so I went up to her room. She wasn't there, and her trunks were gone. I went to inquire at the desk. They said the bill had been paid and Polly had gone, bag and baggage, to the station, half an hour after I left."

Claude paused, knocked the ashes from his cigar, and without looking up, went on hurriedly: "I'm not asking for sympathy. The girl served me right, and I know it as well as you do. I've told you this, Ned—and you're the only one I have told—because I want you to know the worst of me."

"Polly knew blame well I couldn't follow her, seeing she had money and I had none. Her lawyer, all these years, has refused to give me any clue. But she's never divorced me. Unless I'm much mistaken, the Mrs. Johnston who is up at the White House is Polly, and what I want to know is who is Miss Johnston?"

A little sound, like a sigh, came from Ned and he turned gently on his pillow, and then silence.

Claude jumped to his feet and went noiselessly over to the bed. Ned was sleeping as quietly as a child. Claude took the cold, unlighted cigarette from between Ned's fingers and looked at him with affection.

"Forty-seven years old, and I don't have sense enough to know or remember that other people's love stories are as big a bore as other people's dreams!"

He turned out the lamp and left the room.

In the morning, when he could get Dabbs alone, Ned's apologies were sincere. But though Ned insisted that he had only dropped off at the end, Claude had a shrewd idea from the lame way in which Ned fished for information, that slumber had overtaken him in the middle of the tale. They were in the garage where Ned had tracked him down, and he only laughed as he put his hand on Ned's arm.

"My boy, I was an ass to insist on telling you my old trouble. Botted down, without any of the frills I put on so that you would get my side of the case, the facts are that I slipped up on my promise, broke my word to Polly, and she ran away. And Peace Valley thinks me an old bachelor."

He had made up his mind that it

Gay Colors Put Away in Nature's Storeroom

One of the densest jungles on earth today lies along the Motago river in Guatemala. Should nature, by the process of the coal age, transform that jungle into a coal seam, it would be only a few inches thick. What a forest of tree life it must have been to produce the seams of coal which we mine today. One of the thickest on record is 96 feet. While nature was storing away the sun heat captured by the prehistoric jungles, nature also put away the color of that tropic world. Within the last 50 years chemists have discovered vats of every imaginable color concealed in gummy black coal tar. Modern styles for women's clothing quickly took possession

wasn't the thing to tell Ned his suspicions until he had corroborated them, or dropped them. It would be awkward for the boy, since he was seeing the Johnstons daily.

CHAPTER VII

Mrs. Johnston, having something rather disagreeable to tell Mary, kept putting off the evil day and hour.

Sooner or later it must be told, but Polly Johnston, though by no means a fool, was of a singularly sanguine temperament. She still hoped that kind fortune might intervene in some miraculous manner and save her the trouble and necessity of telling. If not, it would have to be done, but not this day, if she could help it. Having come to that decision, it behooved her to keep away from Mary.

She could refuse to go out, pleading a headache, thus removing herself from Mary's presence and scrutiny.

When the girl presented herself, fresh, smiling, and ready for motor-ing, she found her mother lying down. She did not see the novel that her mother had poked under her pillow when she heard Mary coming. Explanations were made, received, and then came silence.

Mrs. Johnston wriggled herself into a more comfortable position, and the novel fell on the floor. Mary restored it to the couch. Mother never read when she had a real headache. The situation became tense.

"Come, Mother," coaxed Mary, "what's up? You've been grousing sweetly for several days, you know. I've got to know sooner or later, so let it be now."

Mrs. Johnston sighed, made a swift mental calculation that she had better tell the most obvious first, and began:

"I can't keep it from you forever, but I did want to keep it just a little longer. However, here it is, Mary. I haven't any money. Not a cent. And the dividends on the stock, payable this month, just aren't going to be paid."

Mary gave a little gasp of astonishment and sat down on the floor by the couch. "Do you mean, Mother, that we haven't any money at all, or that we're just faced with a period of depressed finances and will have to tide over things until the first of next month, when you'll get something from somewhere? Tell me the whole thing. The very worst."

Mrs. Johnston saw instantly how useless it was to keep anything back from Mary. "It means the very worst you can think. I drew the last money I had in the bank to come down here. I expected, of course, to have Colonel Rittenhauser send me enough money to carry me along for another three months."

"Well, my dear, he's been speculating with all available money and securities. He lost mine along with those belonging to other people, and he's in jail."

"The rest of my money is tied up in stock that isn't paying dividends—that is, all except money invested by my uncle in Russian securities, which are now worth nothing. There's some land here, in this country, but I can't raise money on it at a moment's notice."

"Poor old mother! Have you any cash at all?"

Mrs. Johnston laughed. "About thirty dollars left. I said I'd sent for servants, but I haven't. However, I have interviewed Mrs. Pulsifer on the subject of coming here and closing up this house for me in case I have to go to New York suddenly, so that's that. I think I'll have to go there soon. It'll be a lot harder for you, Mary, than for me. Just now you ought to have everything."

"Pooh!" said Mary. "Wait till you see me suffer. Honestly, Mother, I can't realize it. We've never had to speak of money like this before. Why, we've always had it."

"You always have," Mrs. Johnston answered, "but there was a time when I had none."

Mary was amazed. "You never told me that. You must, but not now. We'll just have to be practical, Mother. What can we sell, and how shall we go about it?" She considered for a long moment, while her mother watched her. "Bring out your jewelry, Mother, and I'll bring out mine. Rent must be paid, you know. We can do without servants."

Mrs. Johnston put her hand on her daughter's arm as Mary rose from the floor. "Don't dear. I can go to New York and borrow money on the land, I'm sure. I was making up my mind to that when you came in."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

of these color "miners," so our avenues are brilliant with the hues of luxuriant herbage which we may imagine beautified our earth, millions and millions of years ago.—National Geographic Society Magazine.

Early Church Bells

The Irish name for bell is "clog," and in the French it is "cloche," which some assert is derived from the Irish, whose missionaries in the early centuries carried with them not alone their books, but their bells also, to ancient Gaul to be used "in ore Scotorum" (after the manner of the Irish) in the service of religion.

CAP AND BELLS



SOUNDING HIM OUT

They were trying thought-reading. "What did I just think of?" asked Max of his friend Arthur.

"You thought, Max, that if I were to ask you now for the loan of \$50 till the first of next month you would say you couldn't do it. Was that right?"

"No, that's wrong."

"Really? Then you can let me have the money."

GREAT DISCOVERY



"I've made a great discovery, Mom."

"Well, what is it?"

"I've found out that the heavy end of a match is the light end."

Uh-Huh

Oh, was it me if I should see The wofus or the snickerer? 'Tis marvelous, indeed, the crass Of him who always seeks a pass.

All in One Spot

Friend—Well, how do you like being married? You were always lamenting when you were a bachelor.

Newly Married Friend—Oh, it's much better, thanks. Before I was miserable at home and miserable when I went out, and now I am only miserable at home.—Der Gootz, Vienna.

Terrible Scandal

Neighbor—Don't tell a soul about it, but did you know Mr. and Mrs. Smith parted yesterday?

Village Gossip—Do tell. No, I never dreamed of such a terrible thing. How did it come about?

Neighbor—Why, you see she went to her sewing club and he attended the stock show.—Copper's Weekly

Power of the Press

"Do you stand back of every statement you make in your newspaper?" asked the timid man.

"Why-er-yes," answered the country editor.

"Then," said the little man, holding up a notice of his death, "I wish you would help me collect my life insurance."

SKINNING THE BOOBS



Lynx—How much did you lose on the Hare-Tortoise race?

Fox—Not a cent. I had inside information that the race was fixed so I kept off it.

Photomania

The world is full of picture books. A dazed public thinks. Intent on how a person looks Instead of what he thinks.

How Stupid People Are!

Patient—Is the doctor in?

Office Boy—No, he just stepped out for lunch.

P.—Will he be in after lunch?

O. B.—Why no, that's what he went out after.—Boston Transcript.

He Is That Way

Betty—Tom said he started life by running away with a circus.

Mertie—I don't doubt it. He'd run away with anything that's not nailed down.

No Escape

"I hear that your divorced wife has made up her mind to marry a struggling young lawyer."

"Well, if Margaret has made up her mind he might as well cease struggling."

A Sure Thing

"Why are you so willing to bet all you've got that the jury will disagree?"

"Because," replied Henry Peck, "Henrietta is on the jury."

Remains of the Mayas



A Maya of Today Beside a Carving of His Ancestors.

(Prepared by the National Geographic Society, Washington, D. C.)

Few civilizations of the past in any part of the world have been so worthy as that disclosed by the ruined cities of the Mayas in Central America. From about 500 B. C. until sometime between 471 and 530 A. D. the Mayas lived in the region now included in the states of Tabasco and Chiapas in Mexico, the department of Peten in Guatemala, and just along the western frontier of Honduras.

There a magnificent civilization had been developed. This region, now overgrown with a dense tropical forest, had been cleared and put under intensive cultivation. Great cities flourished on every side. Lofty pyramid-temples and splendid palaces of cut stone, spacious plazas and courts filled with elaborately carved monuments of strange yet imposing dignity, market places, terraces, causeways, were to be counted, not by tens and scores but by hundreds and thousands.

Indeed, it is not improbable that this was one of the most densely populated areas of its size in the world during the first five centuries of the Christian era, the seat of a mighty American empire.

Nor did other arts and sciences lag behind architecture and sculpture in the Mayan cultural procession. Metal, it is true, the Mayas of the Old Empire did not have, but the lack of it did not prevent them from carving such a hard substance as jade, which they made into beautiful pectoral plaques sometimes six inches square, showing their principal deities and rulers in acts of adoration or sacrifice. Necklaces, anklets, wristlets, earrings, nose ornaments, beads, and pendants were fashioned from the same refractory material.

Exquisite wood carvings, delicate modeling in stucco ceramics, painting, weaving and gorgeous mosaics made of brilliantly colored feathers were some of the other arts in which, so far as the native races of the New World are concerned, the Old Empire Maya acknowledged few equals and, with the possible exception of the Incas in the art of weaving, no superiors. And when one comes to a knowledge of the abstract sciences, such as arithmetic, chronology and astronomy, they had few peers among their contemporaries, even in the Old World.

Great Mayan Exodus

But the Mayan Dark Ages were approaching. Art, architecture and learning were soon to suffer a temporary eclipse—one, indeed, from which the first never again fully recovered. The Mayas during the Seventh century were forced to abandon the Old Empire region, where they had wrought so laboriously and had achieved so splendidly, and to seek new homes elsewhere.

The cause, or perhaps better, causes of this great Mayan exodus are as yet obscure. Climatic changes rendering the region unfit for further habitation, internecine strife, foreign invasions, intellectual and social exhaustion following hard upon such rapid esthetic development, devastating epidemics of yellow fever, even such a modern manifestation as the high cost of living, have been suggested to account for this great historic event.

This last explanation seems a likely one. The agricultural practices in vogue among the ancient Mayas were such as gradually to exhaust the productivity of the land available for cultivation. Planting eventually became impossible, as the repeated burnings which alone served to clear the ground in the absence of tools and work animals, permitted such a thick sod to grow that no cereal could force its way up through it.

The people, it seems, were literally starved into searching for new homes. No lesser calamity than this, apparently, could have driven a whole nation to such a drastic step as the complete abandonment of a region where in they had expended such a tremendous effort.

Whatever may have been responsible for this migration, the fact itself is sufficiently clear that Yucatan was discovered as early as the latter half of the Fifth century, by advance parties of Old Empire Mayas pushing northward along the then, and even still, unexplored forests of southern Yucatan, looking for a new and more promising land in which to live.

Yucatan must have held not a few disappointments for these early adventuring Americans. It is at best but a parched and waterless land. There is no surface water, and there are no rivers or streams and only one or two lakes. The country is of limestone formation, with only a subterranean water supply and relatively few places where this may be got at naturally. And these first Mayan explorers had neither time nor means for drilling wells.

Cities by Water Holes

Here and there about the country a few natural openings or wells have been formed, great holes in the ground, sometimes several hundred feet in diameter, places where the limestone crust has become undermined and has fallen through, exposing subterranean water. These the Mayas called cenotes, and wherever they existed, there, by very force of circumstance, important centers of population were established and flourished.

The place where Chichen Itza, the great city of the New Empire, was later to be founded, was peculiarly favored in this respect, for here the waterless plain of Yucatan is pierced by two of these great natural wells within half a mile of each other. Under primitive conditions, this fact alone determined that an important city would one day grow up around them.

In the late New Empire five centuries and more after the cities of the Old Empire had been abandoned and lay in desolation, buried beneath a vast tropical forest, Chichen Itza had grown to be the largest city of her day—indeed, more—the holiest city of her times, the Mecca of the Mayan world.

In 1504 A. D. the three largest city-states—Chichen-Itza, Uxmal and Mayapan—formed a triple alliance, under the name of the League of Mayapan, by which the government of the peninsula was divided equally among them.

This is the period of the true Mayan Renaissance. Under the peaceful conditions and general prosperity brought about by the league, art and architecture revived.

But not yet had Chichen-Itza reached her greatest development, her crowning glory as the holy city of the Mayas. In 1501 A. D. the ruler of Mayapan made successful war on Chichen-Itza, and from this time until its final abandonment, in 1448, the city was held in thrall by foreign rulers, the Toltec-Aztec allies of Hunnuc Ceel.

This foreign influence from the distant Vale of Anahuac gave to the city not only new rulers, but also new customs, new esthetic inspirations, a new architecture, even a new religion, all of which reacted powerfully upon the Itza people and raised their capital to a position of honor and sanctity never enjoyed by it or any other Mayan city before or since.

Great Building Boom

The conquerors brought with them the worship of the fair golden-haired god, Quetzalcoatl, the "Feathered Serpent." Removed to Chichen Itza, this Toltec Zeus became Kukulkan, a direct Mayan translation of Quetzalcoatl; and presently all over the northern part of the city, which dates principally from this last period, temples and sanctuaries were rising to the new god, all adorned with highly realistic representations of the Feathered Serpent—in columns, balustrades, cornices and bas-reliefs—until his sinuous trail was to be seen on every side.

In two and a half centuries, 1201-1448 A. D., more buildings went up in the city than had been built since its foundation, close to six centuries earlier.

A considerable part of Chichen Itza has been brought to light by the excavations of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, begun in 1924. One of the principal structures found, which has been named the Court of the Columns, covers five acres.

After Chichen Itza was abandoned, in the middle of the Fifteenth century, and the Itza had withdrawn from Yucatan back toward the south, whence they had originally come, it is highly probable that a few stragglers lingered on in the deserted city and sheltered themselves here and there in its empty temples and palaces.