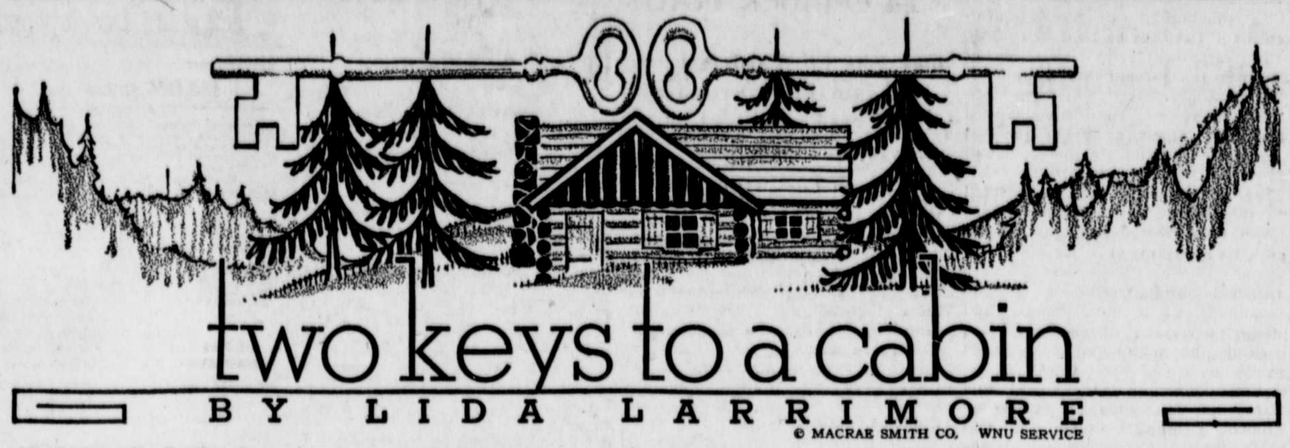

two keys to a cabin

BY LIDA LARRIMORE

© MACRAE SMITH CO. WNU SERVICE

CHAPTER VII—Continued

—11—

"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.

CHAPTER VIII

—

The last record in the electric Victrola whirred 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, 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 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.

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

On the surface, at least, it was all very friendly.

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 fiance. "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 tonight—"

"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)

'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.

In every test the cards were shuffled and set out of range of sight and hearing, and in about half of the tests the subjects were a quarter of a mile away.

The records indicate, contrary to chance expectation, that there is a definite relation between the scores of some of the sets of cards. Control series and statistical analysis suggests that something other than chance is at work. There are several phases of the distributions of the date which are difficult to interpret and it is considered wise to continue the experiment, using new subjects as well as continuing with the old.

Kathleen Norris Says:

Women Dodge Thought of Aging

(Bell Syndicate—WNU Service.)

Whatever she is when she is old—and to her forty-five is old—she knows she'll hate it. So why worry about it?

By KATHLEEN NORRIS

DON'T be one of those women to whom only beauty, money and a good digestion are important in life.

Don't be one of the millions who consider eating and drinking, amusements and parties, flirtations and gay companies, smooth hair and smooth skin the real objects and aims of existence.

All these things are fun, in mild doses. But there is only one companion who goes with you to the end, and that's yourself. Find that companion, cultivate her, give her a taste for the things that last, before it is too late.

Women don't think enough about this. When they are young they feel that age never will come, and when it does come it finds them utterly unprepared. These ripe years, which ought to be the very best of all, strike them like a thunderbolt. They've never considered the financial side of them. They've never considered the social or domestic side of them. They've never considered the moral side of them.

Twenty-Five Years Ago.

To be sure, 25 years ago Peggy married gaily enough, leaving her own father and mother alone. And when that mother was widowed, Peggy shed dutiful tears for her lost father and felt quite sorry for mother, who was immediately plunged into money difficulties.

But all this doesn't affect Peggy personally at all. SHE never thinks of herself as fifty, and alone. SHE never will be widowed, her one child married, her entire provision for old age a small life insurance policy.

When these inevitable conditions arise in her own case Peggy is shocked and despairing. All her plans have included herself as important, attractive, and protected by John. But now her daughter is married and gone, her husband dead, she must give up her home, and in her bitterness and loss she feels that there is nothing left. She very probably sinks into the limbo of those unhappy lonely little women who live only in their child's life—complaining, remembering, grieving.

Burden on Others.

Instead of having that child depend upon her, and half envy mother's independence, freedom, high spirits, Peggy becomes a burden upon the younger family. Her conversation becomes a long dreary recital of what glories and possessions she once had. She cannot sufficiently reiterate the trials, the dismalness of age; when you get to her age, she says, you might as well be dead, and goodness knows she often wishes she were dead.

Now, since you know, you women of 25, 30, 40, that this time must come, why not prepare for it, why not defeat it of its horrors? It can be the most serene, the most triumphant period of your whole life. It can be a time of harvest, rather than of famine.

Older Women Different.

For in the years after 45 a woman can be herself, express herself, live her own life as she never can in younger years. No girl is so useless, so defeated and unhappy, as the girl who tries to be independent. In rushing off to Paris, or into some unknown field of endeavor, she only proves to herself that she has thrown away the honest beginnings of life, refused to play the game by rule, and beside making herself ridiculous, has made it practically impossible to get back to a real start.

With the older woman it is different. She has served her apprenticeship. She has been daughter, wife, mother, housekeeper for a long quarter of a century. And these have been happy years, proud years, years full of the joys of trips and frocks, parties and flattery and self-confidence.

> ***Your Companion***
>
> *Maybe you never stopped to think about it, says Kathleen Norris, but there really is only one companion that you have throughout your life and that is . . . . . YOU.*
>
> *Finding out just what that companion is like, what she wants and doesn't want, what she needs and doesn't need is the job every woman should take upon herself.*
>
> *Age creeps up on a person and all the things that seem important to young women aren't really that important.*
>
> *Find out what you need to prepare for old age. Prepare yourself for it and it will be the happiest period of your life. Don't prepare and you'll live to regret that you didn't.*

But they have vanished now. And now comes HER time; the time when she can be most truly and wholly herself. Her small house is a veritable kingdom with its garden, its dog or its cats, its visits from adored grandchildren, its quieter visits from old friends. In planning trips, in club work and charities, in easy hours and easy dressing and games of dominoes or cribbage or backgammon with a few tried and true neighbors and friends, are real pleasure.

If the companion of her youth is still beside her, all this felicity is doubled. But even if he is not, rich and ripe and useful living is still hers.

Tame and Uninteresting.

Now, unfortunately, this paradise of the middle years sounds extremely dull, to youth. It sounds tame and uninteresting to the last degree. Youth never will change ideals with age; it hates the thought. Age is no more convinced that it never will be youth than is youth sure it never can grow old.

And so many a woman who could be planning now for her later years draws away in repugnance from the thought of them. Whatever she is when she's old—and to her 45 is old—she knows she'll hate it. So why think about it?

Why train her character to desire what is true and lasting; why search into her own soul and develop its miraculous resources? Why deny herself and the children superfluous luxuries and extravagances now, to gain the superlative comfort of financial security for her old age? Why form a taste for fine books, for language study, for gardening, for any one of a hundred interests and avocations, when today there are movies and beauty parlors and flirtations and night clubs to fill her time?

What is the answer?

Ask yourself why.

Answer Is Apparent.

The answer is that if you knew that in 25 or 30 years you had to move to a strange country, a country in which the eyes you use now could see nothing, in which your present ears could hear nothing, of whose language and customs you know nothing, you would certainly prepare to make that change. You would study the conditions, the limitations and opportunities of the people of that country; master its language; cultivate a few friends who must make that journey with you.

Middle age, old age, can be a long peaceful holiday. A useful holiday—not by any means an idle holiday. But a happy time in which a woman who has done her honest share of living in the younger years can find endless interest, a thousand absorbing occupations, complete peace of spirit.

That's something worth achieving!