two keys to a cabin

BY LIDA LARRIMORE

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CHAPTER VIII—Continued

—12—

"You broke the rules," said John. "It's like a labor union. Only instead of skill in a trade you must have wealth to be admitted. Money. You must inherit it or marry it. I—"

"Don't speak that way of money," Gay said, her voice sharpened by weariness, by a consciousness of the distance widening between them. "We've all lost a great deal and are likely to lose more."

"I've learned that. Your friend, Connie Belmont, told me that her family are 'practically paupers.'"

"It seems so in comparison with what they've had. Mother, Robert, Dad—They feel that their world is changing, that in their life-time, perhaps, things will never be as they have been. Oh, why do we talk of it? They, my friends, who were here tonight, aren't important." She moved close to him and put her hand in his. "We're here together. It's Christmas Eve. Let's forget them."

His fingers closed around her hand but the pressure was negligent.

"They are important. You defend them. You were afraid they wouldn't accept me."

"I was afraid for you, not for myself."

"Is that true? Would you be content to go away with me and never see any of them again?"

"Yes, oh, yes!"

"You think so now. But in a little while, when being with me isn't a novelty any longer, when I'd be at work and you'd have nothing to amuse you—"

"You have no confidence in me. You still resent me. How can I convince you?"

"Forgive me, Gay. I'm sorry." His arms went around her, drew her close to him. His lips followed the curve of her cheek to her lips. She clung to him, conscious of a sort of desperation in the embrace, more of fear than of passion or tenderness.

Gay laid down her crumpled square of heavy damask as Burton, at a signal from Aunt Flora, stepped behind her aunt's chair.

The gentlemen rose as the ladies left the table. Gay glanced at John, standing very stiffly beside his chair at Aunt Flora's right. She smiled and his face brightened. She felt him watching her a little forlornly as she, with her aunts and cousins, followed Aunt Flora's measured steps out of the dining-room, as studied as when, wearing the traditional train and three feathers, she had walked along a strip of carpet which led to a throne.

Aunt Flora sat on the love-seat before the fire and Ernest, the footman, set a tray with the coffee service on a table before her. Aunt Lucy, Uncle James' wife, her fading prettiness extinguished by wine-colored satin and the jewels she wore, sat in a chair at the opposite side of the marble hearth. The younger women, Elsa Lancaster, Aunt Flora's daughter, Muriel Von Steedham, her daughter-in-law; Margaret Newland, Aunt Lucy's married daughter, and Janet Graham, her unmarried daughter, grouped themselves, respectfully or resentfully, around the room. Gay stood in the curve of the small piano, resigning herself to the half hour of boredom which was Aunt Flora's tribute to tradition.

"Millicent and Grace were unable to be with us today." Aunt Flora's diamonds flashed as she poured coffee into porcelain cups set in cases of filigreed silver. "Grace has a touch of neuritis."

"The weather has been so changeable," Aunt Lucy contributed brightly.

Gay glanced at Kate, seated in a chair a little removed from the group about the fire. Kate's eyebrow lifted and her glance, meeting Gay's, twinkled with derisive humor. Aunt Flora had not invited Cousin Millicent and Cousin Grace, two elderly and impoverished spinsters who were, ordinarily, present at family gatherings.

She hadn't long to wait.

"Well, Gay," Aunt Flora said, as Ernest left the room. "I suppose you won't mind telling us your plans."

Gay felt the sudden hush that fell upon the room, felt her aunts and cousins watching her, though no one, except Aunt Flora, who had asked the question and young Janet, who admired her, looked at her directly. She felt a familiar resentment, an emotion which extended far back through adolescence to her turbulent childhood. She felt exactly as she had felt then, but she was too old for tantrums now.

"I have no definite plans," she said quietly.

Aunt Flora looked at her in silence. Then, "You mean that you prefer not to discuss them with us," she said with dignity which scorned irritation, though irritation prickled in her voice.

"Why should she?" Janet asked warmly. She was fifteen, tall and with the same awkward grace that Gay herself had had at that age. Janet was going to be the Graham beauty of her decade, Gay thought, amused and touched by her young cousin's eager partisanship. She had bright brown curls that foamed over her head, peach-colored skin, eyes as green and translucent as emeralds fringed with brown lashes tipped with gold. "Why should Gay hash over everything, if she doesn't want to? I mean, it's her business. Good heavens!"

"Really, Mother—" Margaret's flower blue eyes were reproachful.

"Janet, dear," Aunt Lucy said imploringly.

Aunt Flora's glance moved from Janet to Gay. There, see what an influence you have, the glance said, but the words she spoke were more conciliating. "We're only trying to help you," she said. "I won't pretend that it all hasn't been very painful and embarrassing, but the thing to do now is to help you all we can. There's no doubt, of course, that we can do a great deal to establish Dr. Houghton in New York. If people know that your father's family is—"

"Excuse me, Aunt Flora." Gay's voice was steady, a little remote. "I'm sorry to interrupt but you have been misinformed. John has no intention of locating here."

"Where, then?" Aunt Flora asked. "Certainly he doesn't intend to remain in Maine. Any practice that he might establish there would, necessarily, be limited. And frankly, Gabriella, I can't see you living in Maine."

"John is a scientist," Gay said patiently. "That is, he hopes to be. He has no intention of establishing a private practice anywhere."

"But I thought—"

"Yes, he is assisting a Dr. Sargeant in general practice now, but that is a temporary arrangement."

"And after that—"

"I really don't know, Aunt Flora."

"But what are we to tell people?" A flush suffused Mrs. Von Steedham's handsome features and irritation sharpened her voice.

"Must you tell them anything?"

"That's what I say," young Janet broke in. "Why must you explain what's purely and simply Gay's business, to a lot of old moss-backs who think Victoria is still the Queen of England. What does it matter who Gay marries as long as it suits her, that's what I'd like to know?"

"Janet!" Aunt Lucy wailed helplessly.

"I can hardly expect you not to be obstinate, Gabriella," Aunt Flora said. "You've been that since the day you were born, but I do expect you to show us a little consideration. After all we've gone through." She paused.

"I know, Aunt Flora." Gay's eyes lifted. "I'm truly sorry, as I have told you before, not that it happened, but that you should have had to suffer for something which wasn't your fault."

Her aunt's expression softened. "Then you'll understand that we don't want to interfere, but to help you," she said more gently. "We think it would be wise for you to persuade Dr. Houghton to establish a practice in New York. He's had excellent training, I understand, and shows great promise. With the family influence behind him, he might go far."

"He's really very attractive." Elsa Lancaster's bright competent glance moved around the circle, rested with especial brightness upon Gay. "If he gets the right start, I shouldn't wonder if he'd be popular, socially as well as professionally."

"I think he's swell," Janet said defensively. "I like strong silent men."

"He has a pleasant voice." Muriel lifted eyes like brown pansies from contemplation of her slender white hand. "I think it's important that a doctor should have a pleasant voice."

"Such a sweet mouth," Aunt Lucy said. "I suppose that sounds odd in speaking of a man," she added, as though she expected to be contradicted, "but it is. I don't think that a young man with a mouth like that could be any of the things—" She faltered, flushing. "Could be other than kind and—sincere," she finished in some confusion.

"And being Dr. Lawrence's nephew is an asset," Aunt Flora said. "It isn't as though he's just somebody Gay happened to meet somewhere. After all, Dr. Lawrence was Gay's god-father, though I could never quite understand why David was so fond of him."

Gay looked at Kate, who was looking at her. As their glances met, Kate smiled. The smile widened into an encouraging grin. Gay laughed.

"What's so funny?" Elsa Lancaster asked.

"You are, all of you. I'm sorry, Aunt Flora," she added, seeing her aunt's face assume an offended expression. "You're talking about John exactly as you would speak of a servant you were considering engaging. You're right. He has excellent references, but he isn't looking for a job."

The sun-burst of diamonds on Aunt Flora's bosom glittered as she drew herself erect. "I don't see what cause we've given you to take that attitude, Gabriella. We're merely trying to help you."

"I appreciate your intentions," Gay said. "I know that it seems important to you to whitewash a scandal. But John and I aren't having any, thank you."

"You have no sense of responsibility toward your family. It's only to be expected, I suppose. Your mother—"

"Leave Mother out of this, if you please. She, at least, has some respect for personal independence."

"But have you never heard of conduct?"

"I think I'm conducting myself very well." Gay made an effort to

Aunt Flora looked at her in silence.

control her temper, rising now, flushing her cheeks, giving warmth to her voice, quickening her breathing. "I brought John here today because I—we—want to show you all deference and consideration. But you aren't going to arrange our lives for us. John will make his own decisions and I will accept them." She made a half-turn toward the door. "And now if you will excuse me—"

Mrs. Von Steedham stayed her with a peremptory gesture. "Something must be decided," she said, insistently. "We can't go on like this, making excuses, trying to explain—" She waited a moment, then, abandoning high-handed methods, "What are we to tell people?" she cried despairingly.

"Tell them, as you have been telling me, that I am my mother's daughter," Gay said and, holding her head very high, she went out of the room.

John stood beside the chair in which he had been seated while Gay's Uncle James, his two sons, James and Andrew, handsome Dirk Von Steedham and Reginald Lancaster, filed out of the study. The door closed. David Graham seated himself in his chair beside the hearth.

"Sit down, John," he said.

John sat in the chair at the opposite side of the hearth. He had felt fairly confident while the others were there, but now that he was alone with David Graham, constraint locked his jaws and made a vacuum of his mind.

The butler closed the door. David Graham cleared his throat.

"Gay tells me that you must return to Maine tomorrow night," he said.

"Yes, sir."

"You're located in Portland?"

"In Portland. Yes, sir. At present." John glanced at David Graham and was surprised, almost shocked, to discover that he, too, felt a certain amount of constraint. His blue-gray eyes regarded him, John, kindly but with diffidence through the lenses of Oxford glasses which sat with scholarly dignity upon the bridge of his salient nose.

"I suppose I owe you an apology, sir," John said hesitantly, wanting for David Graham's sake, as well as his own, to get on with the interview and have it over. The older man appeared to be as embarrassed as he, John, felt. He sat forward in his chair, his tall well-groomed figure fixed in an uneasy attitude.

"For falling in love with my daughter?" A twinkle of humor shone through the lenses of the Oxford glasses. "I should have expected you to apologize if you hadn't."

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."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Stabilization of Roads Saves Motorists Money

Increased safety and lower costs, both to the motorist and in highway maintenance, are obtained through the stabilization of gravel roads, says Associate Professor Roy S. Swinton, of the University of Michigan department of engineering research. In a survey of wear on several Michigan highways Professor Swinton discovered that stabilization saved about two-thirds of the material losses which are so great on loose, untreated gravel roads. Stabilization consists of the use of proper mixtures of soil, moisture and chemicals in road construction.

In Professor Swinton's survey, begun in 1935, extensive and continued examinations were made of gravel roads in five Michigan counties. About 100,000 wear readings were made on these five road sections. While a saving of more than 60 per cent was made on stabilized roads, Professor Swinton found, other roads receiving surface treatment with calcium chloride had only about one-half as much material loss as the untreated roads.

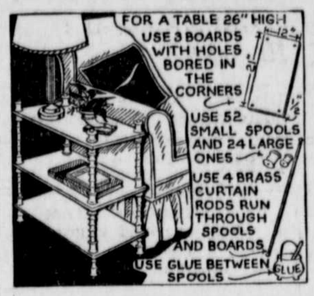
The cost of road stabilization, says Professor Swinton, is little or no greater than the maintenance cost of untreated roads where the loss of materials is so much greater. In addition he points out, the stabilized road is much safer because it is dustless and has no loose surface, and at the same time allows greater speeds which may be counted as a saving for the motorist.

Handy End Table Made From Spools

By RUTH WYETH SPEARS

"DEAR MRS. SPEARS: I would like to make some handy end tables of spools for the living room, but I can't think of a way to make them rigid. Have you any suggestions as to how this may be done? B. P."

Curtain rods are used through the spools to make the legs. Better take along a spool to try when



you shop for the rods; and get the type that has one piece fitting inside the other. If the spools are a little loose on the rod, it won't make any difference for they must be glued between each spool, and also between the spools and the table shelves. I have shown in the sketch everything else you need to know to make this table. Good luck to you!

* * *

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Strange Facts

Double Risk
Utter Silence
Fooling Death

¶ Some South American tribes have amusing laws on personal-injury compensation. For example, if a burglar should fall off a wall and get hurt while attempting to rob another's domicile, the innocent man must pay damages because it was his property that was responsible for both the burglar's presence and his accident.

¶ Probably the oddest of the 19 buildings occupied by the national bureau of standards in Washington is the soundproof reverberation chamber, where acoustical building materials are tested for sound absorption. No one is allowed in this chamber during a test, the motors, loud-speakers and microphones being operated from, and all records transmitted to, an adjoining building.

¶ An old custom, still existent among many primitive peoples, is to change the name of a very sick relative in the hope that it will deceive any messenger of death who might be looking for him.—Collier's.

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Sunken Treasure

Because there is no property right in oceans, it is widely believed that anyone is entitled to hunt and keep the countless millions of dollars of treasure lying in sunken ships, says Collier's. However, this is not true as the underwriters become the sole legal owners of these wrecks and all contents on the day the insurance is paid.

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WNU—4 22—40

Variable Nature

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