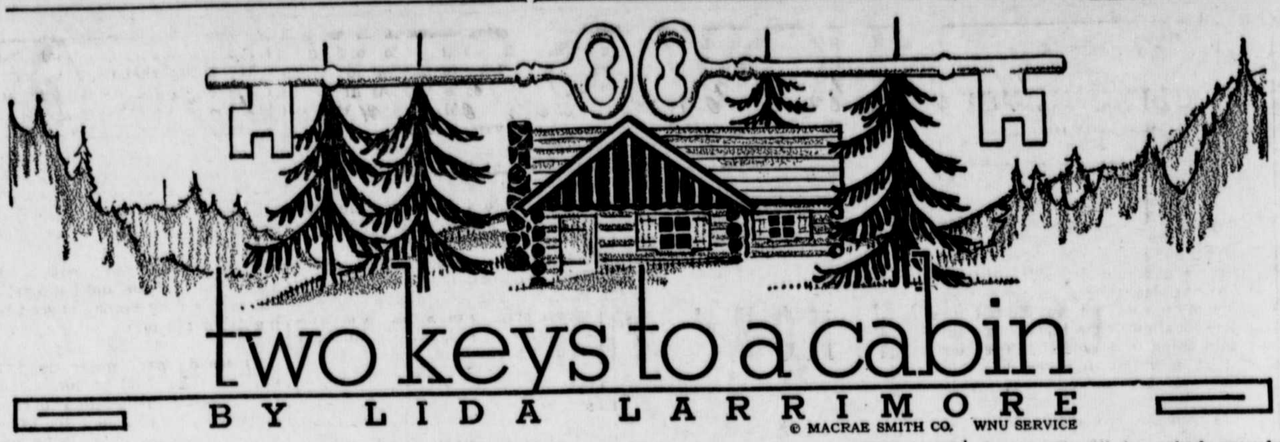

two keys to a cabin

BY LIDA LARRIMORE

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CHAPTER XVI—Continued.

—23—

Nat, pulling Skippy in an express wagon, came up to the side of the car.

"Hello!" he said, his smile widening with recognition, displaying a missing tooth. "I'm not Admiral Byrd now that there isn't any snow."

"Of course not. How stupid of me. I should have known. This is my cousin, Miss Oliver, Nat, and Skippy," said Gay.

"Hello, Nat," Kate said. "Hello, Skippy."

"Hello." Nat grinned again and Skippy ducked his head.

"Is Dr. Houghton in now?" Gay asked, feeling her heart leap and plunge.

"No, he's not here now."

"You mean he isn't here at the house?"

"He went away last week. Grandfather came home. He brought me a whole fleet of boats."

"Brought me a boat!" Skippy piped up.

"Is your mother here, Nat?" Gay asked.

"Aya, she's here. She'll be pleased to see you, I expect. Did you come all the way from New York? 'Course I like boats better on account of my father's an officer in the Navy but that's some swell car."

"Drive them around a couple of blocks, will you, Kate." Gay opened the door and stepped out. "I want to talk to their mother."

"Hop in, kids." Kate slipped over under the wheel.

"Whoopee!" Nat shouted and Skippy echoed his brother's enthusiasm, then ducked his head again.

The long tan roadster moved away from the curb. Gay walked up the steps of the house and sounded the knocker. Mary Adams herself, opened the door. Her brown face twinkled with pleasure when she recognized Gay.

"Come in," she said. "This is a surprise."

The wide hallway was familiar, though now there were peonies and iris in the vases which in March had held bitter-sweet and feathery plumes of pine. Following Mary through the living-room to the porch which faced the lawn, she remembered her last day here, the day after John had brought her in from his mother's home. They'd been so distant, she and John, polite to each other, unhappy, remote. Mary must have noticed. Was she, too, remembering the end of Gay's visit here?

If she remembered, she gave no sign.

"Are you alone?" she asked. "It's marvelous to be able to use the porch again. You don't appreciate this weather unless you've spent a winter in Maine."

"My cousin is with me, Kate Oliver."

"Oh, I've heard John speak of her." Mary darted up from her chair. "Where is she? Why didn't you bring her in?"

"She's taking Nat and Skippy for a ride. Mary," Gay asked, "where is John?"

Mary curled herself into a wicker chair. "I don't know exactly," she said.

"Has he left here," Gay's voice faltered, "for good, I mean?"

"Yes. He was in Boston last week." Mary glanced at Gay, then down at her small brown hands.

"I know. He wrote me from there."

"That there is a chance of his getting in the research department connected with the General Hospital?" Mary asked eagerly. "Father thinks it's fairly certain. John made a splendid impression when he interned there."

"But since then," Gay persisted. "He isn't in Boston now?"

"We've been forwarding mail to his mother's. I re-addressed a letter from you this morning. I've learned to know your handwriting pretty well. I—"

"This morning? A letter?"

"Yes. Why?" Mary asked quickly, in surprise.

"It was a letter which shouldn't have been written," Gay said. "I've come to head it off or explain. Could he be at his mother's in Rockland?"

"I don't know. Why don't you—" She paused, then said, "If you don't want to go there, or call, I'll call for you."

"Will you? I don't— There are reasons. I'd like to see Debby but I'm sure it would be better if you—"

"I will." She rose, smiled at Gay compassionately and went into the house.

Gay sat on the porch looking out across the sunny lawn where peonies bloomed along the fence and the foliage of a maple tree shaded the children's sand-box and swing. She was only absently aware of the [illegible] eyes rested upon. Every [illegible] in her body was [illegible] of suspense. [illegible] deliberately, to avoid any move from her? Was he, by his silence, making a clean break as effectively as she had meant to make it when she had written the letter which Mary, this morning, had re-directed?

She started up as Mary returned to the porch.

"He isn't at home," Mary said. "His mother thinks that he may have gone to a cabin down east near Machias—"

"John is at the cabin?" Gay's voice was light and breathless.

"They aren't sure. They've had no word. They're holding his mail."

"Of course he has. I didn't think—" Gay glanced at her watch. "We can make it before night. Thank you, Mary. I must find Kate."

"You're going there?" Mary asked doubtfully. "It's a fairly long drive. I had expected that you would stay for lunch, at least."

"No. We're going. Wish me luck, Mary. I'll need it."

Mary Adams smiled and pressed Gay's hand.

"I think you'll carry your luck with you," she said.

CHAPTER XVII

—

John placed a log on the fire, went to the doorway, stood looking out across the lake. Dusk was falling. The last reflection of the sunset had faded from the still surface of the water. Across the lake a loon screeched mournfully through the silence. John closed the door and returned to the fire.

He should prepare something for supper, he thought, standing irresolutely on the hearth with his back to the fire. Funny how he had come to dread getting supper. When that had been accomplished, the day was definitely over and night had begun. He was able to get through the day fairly well. While the sun shone, he made fishing from the canoe or lying on the float an excuse for being out of doors. But the nights were unbearably lonely.

He shouldn't have returned to the cabin. He should have taken the walking trip through Canada which he had half planned when Dr. Sargeant had insisted that he take a two weeks vacation until the Boston matter was settled one way or another. He would be able to make the decision he must make more calmly and with less pain anywhere in the world except here. The cabin was filled with ghosts of Gay. He saw her everywhere, on the couch with the lamplight falling across her hair; seated on the footstool beside the hearth in a characteristic position, her arms hugging her knees; coming out through the door of the bedroom she and Kate had occupied, her face fresh and smiling after a long night of sleep, in a jersey and slacks, a ribbon around her hair . . .

He hadn't expected to feel as he did. He had thought that he would be able to make the decision here. He had not questioned his ability to think clearly and logically, to discipline his emotions. Strange that he had not considered the pignant insistence of memories, the ghosts of Gay that lived on in the cabin.

But he must make a decision. If he secured this post in Boston, he would have to decide whether he was willing to have her there with him, using her own money to provide a place for them to live or whether it was wiser, for her ultimate good and his own, to make a definite break and follow, alone, the course he had charted for himself before he had declared his love to Gay. It was all or nothing. There could be no compromise. The next time they met—

But would they meet again? He had sensed in her letters a change in her feeling for him since she had returned from her visit to Maine. He couldn't blame her. It had been pretty awful for her, as estranging as his visit to New York. She loved him. He did not question that. He loved her. But was love enough? Was it as fresh and as steadfast now as it had been here at the cabin last fall? Could any love survive the misunderstandings, the quarrels, the bickering to which their love had been exposed? Wouldn't it be better—?

He wouldn't think of it, now. He would build a fire in the kitchen range and prepare supper, making a long job of it to keep night from coming too soon.

He went out into the dusk, filled a basket with chips and birch logs. None of his senses was secure from ghosts of Gay. The smell of pine needles and freshly chopped wood recalled the night she had slipped out of the cabin to meet him, the night Todd Janeway had arrived. His eyes lifted above the pile of chips. They had sat there, leaning above the logs. She'd worn a soft white dress fastened up under her chin and her hair had curled loosely against her shoulders. He'd loved her so, then. He loved her now. If they might have stayed here—

He lit the lamps in the kitchen, laid the fire carefully, taking a great deal of time. Yellow flames curled around birch-logs in the stove. He collected ingredients for flap jacks; butter, milk, flour, eggs— There were the fish he had caught this morning, cleaned and salted, ready for the pan. Cornmeal, salt pork cut in strips.

He placed the fish in the pan. Through the sputtering sound they made, he heard a car coming in the lane. One of the acquaintances he'd made at the store in the village, perhaps young Dr. Reynolds, stopping in on his rounds. Any visitor would be welcome. Whoever it was would see the light and come in. He couldn't leave the fish.

He heard the motor of the car race, then die off into silence as an ignition key was turned. That motor! No one of his acquaintances here drove a car with such power. His hand, holding a fork over the fish, was shaking. He turned, his heart thumping, a singing sound in his ears.

The kitchen door stood open. He saw her coming toward him through the dusk, running across the clearing, up the steps.

"Gay—!" he cried, and plunged forward to open the door.

She came into the kitchen, hesitantly, as though the sound of his voice had checked the impulse which had brought her swiftly to him through the dusk.

"Hello, John," she said.

They stood staring at each other like strangers.

"Where did you come from?" he asked at last. "How did you know I was here?"

"I wrote you a letter," she said quietly, "telling you that I was going to marry Todd."

"I have not received it."

"No, it's in Rockland."

"Have you been there?"

She shook her head. "Mary called your mother for me. She, your mother, thought you might be here."

The singing in her ears dimmed her voice to a thread of sound.

"But if you wrote me that," he asked, "why are you here?"

"Because I didn't mean it. I discovered, after I'd mailed it, that I couldn't. I tried to get to you before the letter did. I drove last night to Portland, then on here today." Her eyes widened, then closed. She swayed, reached out for the table. "John—!"

He caught her, held her. She clung to him. They kissed. Presently she drew away. "Are you glad to see me?" she asked.

"Glad! Oh, Gay!"

"Will you still be glad when I tell you that I'm going to stay?"

"Are you?"

"Always—as long as you want me."

He looked down into her lifted face, weary but radiant, her eyes shining softly through the tears that misted her lashes. "Will you take a chance, Gay?" he asked gravely. "Can we make a go of it? Will you be happy? In spite of everything that has happened or will happen, do you still want to marry me?"

"Darling!" She smiled. "Would I have driven all these miles—?"

His lips against hers stilled her voice. They had in that moment of reconciliation, of faith and trust renewed, no need for words. His arms, holding her, were strong and secure and safe. Her vital young body pressing close to him, was a promise and an assurance. Moments ticked away unconsidered in the secure realization of weeks, months, years stretching in a bright open vista ahead.

"I beg your pardon," a voice said from the door.

They drew apart, smiling. Kate came into the kitchen.

"It may mean less than nothing to you," she said, "but something is burning."

"Good Lord!" John groaned. "It's the fish!"

He glanced around with a dazed expression. Kate caught up a dishcloth and grasped the handle of the pan. She turned to regard Gay and John with an expression of studied derision which failed entirely to conceal the emotion in her eyes.

"Get out of here," she said. "I'm hungry. I want something that's fit to eat."

Still fuming, she slapped the pan in the sink. Gay and John looked at each other and broke into laughter, then, hands joined, went out into the dusk.

[THE END]

'Built-In' Type Furniture Is Latest Building Trend

Built-in furniture is rapidly increasing in popularity. In planning a built-in corner cupboard, upholstered wall seat, or some other piece of furniture, the home owner should decide well in advance about such important details as what fillers, finishing materials and colors to use.

According to an authority on hardwood finishing, it is important that the right fillers be used in accordance with the color and consistency desired, and also that the filler be wiped at the proper time. A filler is basically a mineral pigment such as an asbestos compound, silica, whiting, or clay, bound together with a small amount of vehicle and thinned with gasoline or mineral spirits. There are many finishing materials, and most of them are well known to the home owner. Among those most often used are white and orange shellac, rubbing varnish and spar varnish.

Because there is such a wide choice of colors and demands vary so greatly, each home owner should select the color for his built-in pieces so that they will be in harmony with the general style of the room. The natural color of wood represents the warm side of the color scale, and, remembering this colors should be selected to conform with the usual rules governing good decoration.

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IT IS a tale of robust action in the days when hard-fisted men were rulers of an empire. Days of Captain Sutter and Kit Carson. Interwoven with the history of these strong men is the gentle story of a great love.

DON'T MISS A SINGLE CHAPTER

PROGRAM FOR THE WILLKIE ACCEPTANCE

Morning:

1—Inspection of the house in which Wendell Willkie was born, with special attention to exhibits including:

(a) Milk bottle broken by the infant Willkie when he heard for the first time the mention of a name that sounded like "Roosevelt"; (b) blackboard upon which he once drew a donkey and scribbled the words, "This is a turkey"; (c) faded Mother Goose book with page turned to a verse brought up to date as follows:

Old Mother Hubbard went to the cupboard
To get her poor doggie a bone;
When she got there the cupboard was bare—
The New Deal had skinned it by phone.

• • •

2—Short talk by nursemaid who remembers distinctly that as a child in arms Willkie had the kind of personality that made her give him a lollipop when the doctor ordered paregoric.

• • •

3—Reception by Mr. and Mrs. Frank McCarthy, present tenants of the old Willkie home, marked by frequent exclamations by both, "If we'd ever had an idea of this we'd never have taken the place!"

4—Address by the mayor of Elwood: "Home Town Boy Makes Good."

• • •

5—Sight-seeing tour through business area, with special attention to the cobbler's shop where Willkie's shoes were repaired, and the barbershop where he was first shaved and in which the barber is still trying

to argue him into getting his hair cut some day. Review of places featuring Wendell Willkie Hamburgers, Wendell Willkie Barbecue Lunch, Wendell Willkie Haberdashery, and the "Wendell Willkie Punch —Positively One to a Customer."

• • •

Noon to 2 p. m.:

Band concert on the Elwood Green.

Selections: "Banks of the Wabash," "Inquisitions of the Potomac," "I'm on My Way," "Throw 'Em Down McClusky," "Just a Little White House Built for Two."

2 p. m.:

Athletic Events at Gallaway park.

Greased Pole Climb: Bob Taft.

Escaping From Locked Trunk Demonstration: Mr. Willkie.

Throwing the 100-Pound Racket: Thomas Dewey.

Boxing Rodeo: Mr. Frank Gannett vs. the whole New Deal.

Sack Race: Original Willkie for President men vs. alternates.

Wrestling Events: Charlie McNary vs. Past Performances; Mr. Willkie vs. the field.

3 p. m.:

Parade.

Section 1—Republicans Who Had Just About Given Up Hope.

Section 2—Republicans Who Had Definitely Given Up Hope.

Section 3—Battle-scarred Tories.

Section 4—Businessmen's Clubs of America (on stretchers).

Section 5—Budget Balancers (in ambulances).

Section 6 — Thrift Clubs (on crutches).

Section 7—Efficiency Experts (by proxy).

Section 8—Brass bands playing the theme song, "Heaven Help the Poor Businessman; the New Deal Never Will."

• • •

4 p. m.:

Mr. Willkie accepts the nomination at Elwood high school while his school teachers shake their heads and whisper, "You could knock us over with a feather."

5 to 8:

Dancing, cold snacks and arguments over the Gallup poll.

• • •

SUMMER PORTRAIT

Hills and dales
And cars with banners
Full of folks
With rotten manners.

• • •

Add similes: As ironic as the idea of Pierre Laval putting other French leaders on trial for making mistakes.

• • •

Adolf Hitler has sent to Mussolini as a gift a train of three armored cars equipped with 16 anti-aircraft guns in the hope "that it may accompany you in the future to protect your life." This would indicate that the reaction to those balcony speeches isn't what it used to be.

• • •

Out of 900,000 tulip bulbs planted by the city of New York in a special Riverside drive garden 800,000 failed to come up. After that we don't feel so futile about the daffodil bed.

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Harsh Words

A wound inflicted by arrows heals, a wood cut down by an axe grows, but harsh words are hateful—a wound inflicted by them does not heal. Arrows of different sorts can be extracted from the body, but a word-dart cannot be drawn out, for it is seated in the heart.—Mahabbarata.

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