

# BRENTWOOD

by Grace Livingston Hill



## SECOND INSTALLMENT

### SYNOPSIS

When the wealthy foster parents of Marjorie Wetherill both die she finds a letter telling that she has a twin sister, that she was adopted when her own parents couldn't afford to support both of them and that her real name is Dorothy Gay. Alone in the world, but with a fortune of her own, she considers looking up her own family whom she has never seen. A neighbor, Evan Bower, tries to argue her out of it and tells her he loves her and asks her to marry him. She promises to think it over but decides first to see her family. She goes to their address, finds that they are destitute, have sold all of their furniture, have no coal, her mother is sick and her father has no job. Her sister treats her like an enemy and resents her offer of help, but finally, after many explanations, agrees to take money to buy coal and food in order to save her mother's life.

"But it isn't her money now! It is mine! And I am going to look after my family. We are going to do it together! Quick! Tell me where to go, and I'll have the fixings here in short order."

"It's two blocks down, and a block to the right. Brown's Coal Yard. But there's a bill for twenty-three dollars. They won't send any coal till it's paid. Here! Take back the money!"

She held out the roll of bills half reluctantly, looking at it with a sort of fierce wishfulness.

"No," said Marjorie. "You keep that. I've more in my purse. You might have some need for it while I'm gone. Don't worry, I'll find my way. But say, what shall I call you? I can't exactly go around calling my own sister 'Miss Gay,' can I? And you know I never knew your name."

The other girl stared.

"You don't mean they never told you your own sister's name? Well, that certainly is funny! I'm Elizabeth. They call me Betty."

Her voice was a trifle warmer.

"That's a pretty name, Betty Gay! I like it. And I'm—Dorothy—isn't that it? The letter told me that."

"Yes, but they call you Marjorie" Betty's voice was suddenly hard again.

"Well, I couldn't help that either," grinned Marjorie. "Say, suppose you stop having grudges awhile."

Betty suddenly softened again and almost smiled, and Marjorie saw that her eyes were really lovely when she smiled.

"I'm sorry," said Betty. "I guess I've been pretty poisonous to you. But maybe if you'd been here and seen your people you loved suffer, you'd be poisonous too."

"I'm sure I should!" said Marjorie with a sudden quick setting of her lips. "I'm quite sure I would feel just as you feel. And now let's forget it till we get this place comfortable for you all."

Marjorie turned and put her hand out to open the door, but before she quite touched it someone fumbled at the knob from the outside, the door was suddenly flung open with a bang letting in a rush of cold air, and someone stumbled into the hall leaving a heavy burden.

Marjorie stepped back, startled, staring at the tall man carrying a heavy sack of coal upon his back and another of small pieces of wood in his arms.

But Betty rushed forward and put up her arms to take one bag from him.

"Oh, father!" she cried, "where have you been? How did you get it?" And then, giving him a quick searching look, "Where is your overcoat, father? Oh, you didn't sell your overcoat, did you? Your nice overcoat? Oh, father, and you are sick!"

"It couldn't be helped, Betty," said the man in a hoarse voice. "I had to get this house warm somehow for your mother. I couldn't let her freeze to death! There was something warm and tender in his voice that brought the tears to Marjorie's eyes and a great rush of love for her unknown father to her heart.

Then the man suddenly dropped the bag from his back to the floor, put his hands up to his head with a bewildered look, and staggered over to the stairs.

"Father, what is it?" cried Betty rushing over to him.

"Oh, it's nothing!" murmured the man with an effort. "Just a little dizzy, that's all. I'll be all right in a minute!"

"You had no breakfast. That's

what makes it!" said the girl in deep distress.

That picture of her father sitting on the stairs, his head bowed in his hands, would stay with her always, she knew.

"I'll get you a drink of water!" Betty was saying. "Thank fortune, they haven't turned off the water yet!" and she vanished thru the door into the kitchen.

Marjorie saw there was a door from the little parlor where she stood and opening it she followed and found her sister as she brought back the water.

"I'll get him something to eat right away," she whispered. "Is there a restaurant or any place nearby where they have food?"

"Only the drugstore. You can get a bottle of milk. Yes, bring it back quick."

Marjorie ran down the uneven little sidewalk, breathless with the thought of her father sitting there in the bare ugly house, cold and hungry, dizzy with faintness, and her mother, no telling how sick upstairs. It was too dreadful.

Arrived breathless at the diminutive drugstore she found to her joy that they had a soda fountain and served soup or coffee with sandwiches. There was hot coffee and there was hot tomato soup, that is, it wasn't hot yet but the man said he could heat them both in a jiffy. And he had just two thermos bottles left. He hadn't had such a large order in weeks.

While he was getting them ready Marjorie hurried across the street to the grocery and bought two baskets big enough to carry her purchases, and also a dozen oranges, a loaf of bread, a pound of butter and a pound of sliced ham.

Back at the drugstore she added a quart full of milk to her other purchases and started back to the house.

Arrived at the house she found the front door unlatched, but her father was no longer sitting in the stairs, and she heard sounds from the cellar.

Betty came hurrying up the cellar stairs as she came out to the kitchen, a long streak of soot on one white cheek and her eyes wide and worried.

"He would go down and start the fire," she said in distressed tones. "I couldn't do anything with him." Her voice was almost like a sob. "He always thinks a woman has to be waited on, but he's had another dizzy spell and he's sitting on the cellar stairs now. Did you get anything?"

"Yes," said Marjorie eagerly. "I brought hot soup and coffee, and here's some aromatic ammonia. Perhaps that will help too. And here, I have two hot-water bags nice and hot. Take one down and put it on his lap. Haven't you got a flannel or bit of old something to wrap it in? He ought to get warm right away."

"Oh, you're great!" said Betty and the tears were rolling down her cheeks, tears of relief.

She snatched a nicked cup from the shelf and poured out coffee and with a hot-water bag under her arm hurried down cellar again.

Marjorie hunted around and found plates and more cups and a knife, and cut some slices of bread, buttering them and putting ham between them. When Betty came back upstairs she had a plateful of nice sandwiches ready for her, and a cup of coffee.

"Take a swallow of this," said Marjorie, holding out a cup of coffee, "and take this sandwich in your hand. You'll be sick next if you don't look out."

Betty looked hungrily at the food. "But I must take something up to Mother first," she said.

"No, drink this first, quick. It won't take you but a minute, and you can work better with something inside of you. Take this sandwich in your hand, and carry a cup of something up to mother. Which should it be? Coffee first, or soup, or isn't she able for those? I've got oranges here. I can fix her a glass of orange juice in no time."

"Oh, wonderful!" said Betty gratefully, her eyes filling with relieved tears again. "I—don't know—what we would—have done if you—hadn't come!"

"There. Never mind that now. Just drink a little more and then go up to mother. As soon as she knows about me I can help you care for her. I know how to take care of sick people. And now, shall I just slip out and have that coal sent up? You haven't got enough to last long in those bags, and the house ought to get thoroughly warm and stay so.

And while I'm out I'm going to order some groceries. Is that store I went to the best, or is there a better one somewhere else?"

"That's the best near here. They are all right. Ted will be home by and by perhaps and bring the things up for you."

Betty, with her sandwich in her hand, went down cellar and hurried up again.

"He's eaten all the soup and is eating his sandwich now. I think he feels better."

So Betty flew away up the stairs, and back again in a moment.

"She is still asleep," she whispered.

"Has she had a doctor?" asked Marjorie.

"No, she wouldn't let us. She said we hadn't the money to pay him. But father is almost crazy about it. I think we ought to have him come just once, anyway, don't you?"

"I certainly do!" said Marjorie. "Where is he? I'll get him before I do anything else."

Betty gave the name and address. "He's supposed to be a good doctor. I guess his prices are rather high," she said sorrowfully.

"What difference does that make? We want the best there is," said Marjorie. "I'll send him as soon as I can, and you'd better make him prescribe for father too. I'll tell him about it, and you make him. And, where do I talk to the gas people to get that gas turned on? We want to be able to cook some real dinner tonight."

"Oh!" said Betty, quick tears stinging into her eyes. "You are going to be wonderful, aren't you?"

"No," said Marjorie smiling. "I'm just going to be one of the family, and try to make up for lost time. Does the water bill need looking after, too? We can't have that shut off. And what about electric light?"

"Oh!" cried Betty softly, sinking down on the lower step of the stairs, "you'll use all your money up."

"Well," said Marjorie happily, "that's what money is for, isn't it? To be used up?"

"You're really real, aren't you?" said Betty. "I can scarcely believe it."

"What did you think I was, a spirit? Here, write those addresses quick. I want to get things started and get back to help."

She handed her sister a little note book and pencil from her handbag.

"You'll be sorry you ever came near us," said Betty sadly, "having to spend all this money and go on all these errands."

"I'm already glad I came," said Marjorie, "and if mother and father get well, and you don't get sick, I'd say I'm having the time of my life. It makes me greatly happy to be able to help and I only wish I'd known before that you had all this suffering. And me with plenty."

Then, also she was almost choking with tears, she gave a bright smile and hurried away on her errands.

She betook herself to the drugstore where there was a telephone booth and did the doctor, the coal, the gas, and electric light by telephone, and her crisp young voice, accustomed as it was to giving orders that were always promptly obeyed, brought courteous service at once, especially since full payment of the bill was promised when the agent would call.

Then the groceries arrived and filled the shelves with stores.

In the midst of it Betty came down with round eyes of astonishment at the magic that had been wrought.

The chill was partly gone from the house by this time, and Marjorie took off her fur coat and her smart little felt hat, and hung them in the almost empty hall closet.

"Now," she said, "I'm ready for work! Where do I put these things? Are there special places for them, or do I park them wherever I like?"

"Wherever you like," said Betty throwing open the little pantry door and displaying a vista of empty shelves.

"And there comes the coal," said Marjorie. "You'll have to tell him where to put that."

Marjorie enjoyed putting away the things.

Betty came up from the cellar and looked at her.

"Well," she said in her sharp young voice that had a mingling of tears in its quality. "I suppose you must be pretty wonderful, and I'm crazy."

"Nothing wonderful about it. I'm just an ordinary sister, Betty, that's mighty hungry to be taken in and

made one of you."

"Well, I should say you'd taken us in, if you asked me. I thought we'd reached the limit and tonight would see us well on our way out of this life, but you've somehow brought us back again where we have to go on." Suddenly Betty dropped down on a box by the kitchen door and putting her head down in her hands burst into tears. Betty was worn out.

Marjorie was at her side at once, her arms about her, soothing her, putting the hair back from her tired forehead, putting a warm kiss on the back of her neck.

"Why, you're cold yet, you poor dear," she said. Come into the hall and sit over the register and get your feet warm."

"No! No, I'm all right," insisted Betty, raising her head and brushing away her tears. "I just can't understand it all, everything getting so different all of a sudden. Food in the house, and heat, and a chance to sit down."

"But, my dear, you've scarcely eaten a thing. Come, let me get you a nice little lunch."

Marjorie made Betty sit down and eat.

"Mother said the soup was the best thing she had eaten in weeks," she said as she ate hungrily.

"Have you—told her about me—yet?" asked Marjorie anxiously.

"No," said Betty. "I didn't have a chance yet. I didn't want to excite her while she was eating. And besides father had come in and dropped down on the other edge of the bed. He went right off to sleep."

"You spoke of Ted. Is he your brother?" Marjorie asked.

"Of course. Hadn't you heard of him either? He's almost seventeen, and he's a dear. I don't know what we would have done while father was sick, if it hadn't been for Ted. He worked early and late, just like a man. He's out now hunting for some kind of a job. And he hasn't had much to eat for a day and a half. He had a real desperate look on his face when he went away this morning. I wish he would come back and get something to eat. But he won't come until he finds something."

"Oh," said Marjorie, "couldn't I go out and find him?"

Betty's eyes filled with tears, but she smiled thru them, and shook her head.

"I wouldn't know where to find Ted. He goes all over the city when he gets desperate. He'll come pretty soon perhaps, because he said if he couldn't find something else this morning he'd come back and get that chair and take it to the pawnbroker. He felt we ought to have some coal as soon as possible but he hated to give up the last chair."

"Oh, my dear!" said Marjorie, her eyes clouded with tears of sympathy.

"Oh, if I had only known sooner!"

"Oh, don't you cry!" said Betty. "You've come and I can't tell you how wonderful it is just to have it warm here again and have something to eat, and not be frightened about mother and father. I'm sure I'll love you afterwards for yourself, but just now I can't help being thankful for the things you've done. Maybe I can make you understand some time, when I'm not so tired. But you see I've hated you and blamed you for being better than we were so long. I see now it wasn't fair to you. You couldn't help what they did to you when you were a baby of course. Only I never dreamed they wouldn't tell you anything about us. Mother said Mrs. Wetherill had said they would tell you they were adopted, and I supposed of course you knew, and didn't care to have anything to do with us."

"I don't think Mrs. Wetherill knew much about you either," said Marjorie thoughtfully. "Not until mother came to see her. And she never told me about that at all. She just left a letter."

"I see," said Betty sadly. "I was all wrong of course. But I guess that was what made mother suffer so. thinking she had let you go. She has cried and cried over that. Whenever she wasn't well, she would cry all night." She said Mr. Wetherill came to her when she was weak and sick and didn't realize fully what she was doing. Father was threatened with tuberculosis and Mr. Wetherill promised to put him on a farm and start him out. Besides he gave them quite a sum of money to have me treated. It seems I wasn't very strong and had to be under a specialist for a long time. They said I wouldn't live if I didn't have special treatment."

Betty's eyes grew stormy with bitterness.

"I used to wish sometimes they had let me die. I thought mother didn't love me at all, she mourned for you so much."

"Oh, my dear," said Marjorie coming close and putting her arms about her sister. "My dear, I think we are going to love each other a lot."

It was very still in the little dreary

kitchen for a minute while the two sisters held each other close. Then Betty lifted her head.

"I'm glad you've come, anyway," she said. "You've been wonderful already. And I'm glad for mother that she needn't fret for what she did any more. As soon as the doctor's been here I want to tell her. It will cure her just to know you are here. I know it will."

"Well, you'd better ask the doctor if it won't excite her too much. There. Isn't that the door bell? Perhaps he's come! But it isn't quite two o'clock!"

Betty hurried to answer the bell, and Marjorie lingering in the kitchen saw thru the crack of the door that it was the doctor. Betty took him upstairs at once, and Marjorie stood for a minute by the kitchen window looking out.

Then she remembered the pantry which she had been putting to rights, setting the supplies up in an orderly manner on the shelves.

She stepped on a box to reach the top shelf, and there she discovered a handleless cracked cup with little tickets in it. Were they milk tickets or what? She wiped off the shelf stepped down with the cup in her hand, and stood there examining the bits of paper. Each one had something written on it.

"Six plain sterling spoons," one said. "One brussels carpet," said another. "Three upholstered chairs."

Marjorie stared at them in dismay as she realized what these bits of paper must be. They were pawn tickets! They represented the downfall of a home. A precious home where there, her own flesh and blood had lived.

She went on with the tickets. "One child's crib-bed." "Six dining room chairs."

She stood studying them, trying to make a rough estimate of the entire amount loaned for all those articles, when suddenly she heard the kitchen door open and a boy's voice said:

"What's the idea, Betts, of having the cellar window open? Did you think it was milder out than in?"

Marjorie turned startled, letting the pawn tickets fall back into the cup, and facing him, not realizing that she still held the cup in her hands.

She saw a tall boy, lean and wiry, with a shock of red hair and big gray eyes that had green lights in them.

He stared at her first with a bewildered gaze like one who had come in out of the sun and could not rightly see in the dimmer light.

"You are Ted, aren't you?" He stiffened visibly, realizing that he was in the presence of a stranger.

"Yes," he said coldly, lifting his head a trifle, with a gesture that in a man would have been called haughty. He was alert, ready to resent the intrusion of a stranger into their private misery.

Then he saw the cup in her hand, and putting down the bucket of coal he had picked from the dump he stepped over and took the cup possessively.

"That wouldn't interest you," he said coldly, reprovingly.

"Ted!" said Marjorie impulsively. "I'm your sister! Don't speak to me that way."

"My sister!" said Ted scornfully. "Well, I can't help it if you are, that doesn't give you a right to pry into our private affairs, does it?"

An angry flush had stolen over the boy's lean cheeks and his eyes were hard as steel.

"Oh, please don't!" said Marjorie covering her face with her hands, "I wasn't prying. I was trying to help."

"Well, we don't need your help!" said the boy with young scorn in his eyes.

"But you see, Ted, I'm not a visitor. I'm one of the family, and Betty and I are working together."

"Betty! Does my sister Betty know you are here? Where is she?"

"She's upstairs with the doctor."

"The doctor? Is my mother worse?"

"I don't know. I haven't seen her yet, but as soon as I heard she was so sick I begged Betty to get the doctor. You know pneumonia is a very treacherous disease."

"Yes, and who did you think would pay for the doctor?" asked Ted in that hard cold young voice so full of anxiety and belligerence.

"Oh Ted, I'll pay, of course."

"Yes, and what do you think Mrs. Wetherill will say to that?"

"She won't say anything, Ted. She's dead!" There was a bit of a sob in Marjorie's voice in spite of her best efforts.

The boy looked at her speculatively and frowned.

"If you are our family why didn't you ever turn up before when mother was fretting so for you?"

"Because I didn't know anything about her or any of you except that you had let me be adopted."

The hardness in the boy's face relaxed.

Then they heard the doctor coming downstairs with Betty just behind him, and by common consent they froze into silence. Marjorie with a hand to her throat to still the wild throbbing of her pulse. They they heard the doctor's voice:

"No, I don't expect her fever to go higher tonight. Oh, perhaps a little more. All she needs is rest and nourishment and good care. Be careful about the temperature of the room. Of course, don't let her get chilled. That is the greatest danger. No, I don't think her lungs are involved yet. Good care and rest and the right food will work wonders some time. She has just come back. Do you think it will hurt mother to know she has come? She has been grieving to have her at home."

"What kind is she? Will she worry your mother, or will she be a help?"

"Oh, she'll be a help. She's rather wonderful!"

Ted stole a sudden shamed glance at Marjorie, with the flicker of a grin of apology in his young face.

"Well, then, tell her about it, by all means. Joy never kills. Perhaps you'd better wait till she wakes up."

When the door closed behind the doctor Marjorie had a sudden feeling of let down as if she wanted to sit down and cry with relief.

Betty's face was eager as she came out into the kitchen. She looked straight at Marjorie. Perhaps she didn't see Ted at first.

"He thinks maybe she won't have pneumonia after all," she said with relief.

"Oh Ted, you've got back. I've been worried. You went out without any breakfast, and you had no sinner last night."

"Aw, whaddaya think I am? A softie?" said Ted.

"I've been keeping the soup hot for him," said Marjorie. "Here it is, Ted." She placed a bowl on the box and brought the thermos bottle. "There's coffee too, and a plate of sandwiches." She set the things before him.

"Gosh!" said Ted dumbfounded. "Where did you get all this layout?"

"You don't know what's happened since you left, Theodore Gay! A miracle has come, that's what," said Betty. "We've got another sister, and she's just like Santa Claus. She did it all."

"Gosh!" said Ted, wrinkling his nice mahogany brows, "but I don't think we ought to take it."

"Well," said Betty, "I thought so too, but I found out it was a choice between that and dying, and she seemed determined to die with us if we did, so I let her have her way."

Marjorie felt a sudden lump coming into her throat that betokened tears near at hand. She felt so glad to have got here in time before her family started to death. How awful to think they had been in such straits while she feasted on the fat of the land!

(CONTINUED NEXT WEEK)

## GOLDEN GLEAMS

Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them.—Shakespeare.

'Tis always morning somewhere in the world.—R. H. Horne.

Pale death, with impartial step, knocks at the huts of the poor and the palaces of kings.—Horace.

Our days begin with trouble here, Our life is but a span, And cruel Death is always near, So frail a thing is man.

New England Primer.

Our men scarce seem in earnest now distinguished names!—but 'tis somehow, As if they play at being names Still more distinguished, like the games Of children. —Robert Browning

Pastor and Mrs. S. W. C. meeting of the D. in Syracuse, Saturday.

Milford Bassett, sett and Mrs. Mett Hornell on business.

Private Jason E. from Camp Bennett ten days with his Mrs. H. H. Hawks.

Paul Vincent was falo to spend the Mrs. Vincent and Spicer's.

Joe Seymour of guest of his sister Clarence Whitesell end.

Pastor and Mrs. spending a couple their son, Dr. and at Bridgeton, N. J.

Mr. and Mrs. Wallace, Mr. and more and Carl att family reunion a Wellsville, the Po

Mr. and Mrs. E. having "open hour" 13 so anyone wishing son Jason who is h

ning, Ga.

Mr. and Mrs. A. family of Rocheste urday and Sunday Cleon Clarke.

Lawrence White nell Tuesday even for the examinatio draft.

Mr. and Mrs. C. Jr., and William Md., Mrs. Carrie Mr. and Mrs. Deo Jerry of Whitesev dinner guests of M. Clarke.