

BRENTWOOD

By Grace Livingston Hill

SEVENTH 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. Her sister and brother resent her being there but her mother and father are very joyful over it. Finally, when she buys them all the things they need the whole family celebrate her appearance. They tell her about the wonderful place called Brentwood where they lived before her father lost his job.

"Oh, I'll straighten it a little. But I wish you would go up with him this time. It hate to meet him looking this way. I ripped the sleeve half out of my dress last night when I stooped over to pick up Sunny, and I've just spilled some grease down the front of it. I'm a sight! And this is the only dress I have. I couldn't possibly get it washed out and ironed and on before he comes."

"Oh, I can fix that," said Marjorie smiling, "you'll wear one of my dresses, of course. We're just the same size, so it's sure to fit you. Let's open my suitcase and rummage."

Betty's eyes lighted with sudden longing, but her lips set in a thin line.

"Indeed I couldn't deck myself out in your wonderful clothes. I couldn't do that!"

"No?" said Marjorie teasingly. "Suppose I deck you then? Come

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on, let's see what I've got that will be suitable."

She dashed into the front hall, brought back her airplane baggage and opened it right there in the kitchen before the ravished eyes of her beauty-starved sister.

Marjorie reached under the neat muslin packing bags that contained frivolous evening things and pulled out two knitted dresses, simple of line, lovely of quality, and rich of color.

"There!" said Marjorie happily, "take your pick. I think there's a blue one here somewhere, too. Yes, here it is," and she flung it across a chair. "Put them all on and see which you like the best!"

Betty stood spellbound. "Oh! I couldn't wear those lovely things. It wouldn't seem right!"

"Now please, Betty, don't spoil things by objections. Put them on one at a time and let me see which is the most becoming."

Betty finally chose the dark blue.

"It is less dressy than the others," she said gravely, "though it's awfully smart. I couldn't ask anything handsomer on this earth. I never thought I'd have a chance to even try on one of those wonderful hand-knit costumes."

"Well, I'll be awfully careful of it," compromised Betty, "and I'll take it off as soon as the doctor has gone."

"Nonsense! You'll do no such thing!" said Marjorie. "You'll wear it whenever you like. Here, I've got a couple of little cotton house gowns, sort of aprons they are, to slip over another dress when you're actually working. You take the blue one and I'll take the pink, and then we can tell each other apart. We'll put those on for kitchen work."

"You make life a kind of play," said Betty as she wondrously obeyed. "It doesn't seem right to be dolled up like this to make a bed."

Presently they heard the doctor coming upon the porch and Betty in the slim blue dress went to open the door, her hair a little gold flame of light about her shapely head. Marjorie, standing back in the tiny parlor almost out of view had time to notice the quick look of interest in the doctor's face as he took account of the exceedingly pretty girl who was meeting him, and the little flush of rose that crept up into Betty's cheeks as she met his gaze.

Then the doctor turned and looked keenly at Marjorie.

"Oh, you're the new sister, aren't you?" he said pleasantly. "Aren't you twins? You look so very much alike. I doubt if I could have told you apart if I

hadn't met Miss Betty several times."

Marjorie looking up caught a bright flame of color on Betty's face and thought how pretty she looked in the new dress. She wondered in passing if this nice pleasant doctor was interested in her sister?

Betty lingered a moment at the door talking with the doctor, asking him particularly about her mother's diet and medicine, and the young doctor looked at her approvingly and smiled as he finally went out.

Ever since she had arrived Marjorie had been planning what she would do, but there hadn't as yet been time to carry out her plans.

"Monday you and I ought to go out and do some Christmas shopping," said Marjorie to Betty as they were putting everything in shining order Saturday evening after supper.

"Christmas shopping, my eye! A lot of Christmas shopping I could do. I haven't got ten cents of my own," said Betty ruefully.

"Oh, yes, you have," laughed Marjorie. "Look in your purse. I put some in there this afternoon while you were down at the store and it's for Christmas shopping and nothing else."

"Do you think I would go Christmas shopping with your money?" asked Betty scornfully.

"It's not my money," laughed Marjorie. "It's yours. I gave it to you so we could have some fun. You don't think it's any fun, do you, to do all the shopping myself, and not have anybody else getting up secrets too? Now don't act that way."

"And I used to think you were selfish!" said Betty sorrowfully.

It was Sunday morning while they were getting breakfast together that Marjorie asked quite casually:

"Where do you go to church? Is it far from here?"

Betty stopped stirring the pancake batter she was preparing and stared at her.

"Go to church," she laughed. "We don't go. We haven't since we left Brentwood. For one thing we didn't have the clothes to go there or anywhere else. And for another thing I guess we were all too discouraged and disheartened to bother about church. People don't feel much interested in going to church when they are having such a time as we've had. It isn't easy to believe in a God who lets people like Father and Mother suffer as they have done. I don't believe in a God myself."

Marjorie looked at her aghast. "Oh, Betty! That's awful! You mustn't talk that way."

"Why not, I'd like to know? Do you believe in a God?"

"Certainly."

"Why do you?"

Marjorie looked at her thoughtfully.

"I never stopped to think about why," she said slowly, "but I do. I certainly do!"

"Well, I didn't mean to worry you only you asked about going to church, and I suppose you'll be disappointed in us if that's what you expect of us. Not one of us goes to church except Ted. He's the religious one of the flock."

"Ted?" said Marjorie, lifting astonished eyes.

"Yes, Ted. He's as faithful as the clock. He walks away back to Brentwood every Sunday. He's got a crush on a young preacher back there, and we can't keep him away. He'll probably want to walk you way out there with him if you suggest church to him."

"Why, I'd love to go," said Marjorie. "Why don't we both go? It's a gorgeous morning."

"Thanks, no," said Betty coldly. "I don't feel religiously inclined, and anyway, I haven't a coat. You couldn't just divide your coat with me though I presume you would if it were possible. Besides, it's you that wants to go to church, not me. Here, Ted," as the boy came in from the street, "here's a candidate to go to church with you."

Ted looked at Marjorie with a sudden sparkle in his eyes.

"Sure, I'll take her," he said diffidently. "But you haveta walk. There's no carline except a long roundabout way."

"I'll love to walk!" said Marjorie.

So Marjorie and her brother started off to church.

"I guess you'll be ashamed of me, but they don't mind clothes where we're going."

"No," said Marjorie thoughtfully. "I'm not ashamed of you, I'm proud of you. Things like that are only comparative, anyway, aren't they? They shouldn't have any part in going to church."

Ted eyed her speculatively, and finally ventured another question:

"I guess you're saved, aren't you?"

"Saved?" said Marjorie altogether startled. The phrase was not common among the young people she knew.

"You haveta be born again, you know."

She gave him another keen look and as if he were answering the question in her eyes, he said: "You believe, you know, that's how you get to be born again. That's how you get saved. You just believe."

"Believe?" said Marjorie inquiringly. She didn't say "believe what?" But her tone said it. So he answered:

"Believe that Jesus is the Son of God and died to take our sins upon Himself and suffer their penalty." He explained it gravely, as if he had done it before, and understood thoroughly what it meant.

"I was taught to believe that when I was very young, though I'm not sure that I know much about it."

"Gee, it's great when you get to studying it!" said Ted irreverently.

Marjorie looked at him in surprise. "Have you studied it?"

"Sure! We had Bible classes twice a week at the Brentwood chapel. Gosh, I was sorry to move away!"

"You must have had a good teacher," said Marjorie wonderingly.

"I'll say he was! He was swell! He seemed to know just what you'd been going through that day, and how to show you where you'd got off the track, see?"

"Who is this teacher?"

"Gideon Reaver's his name. He's just a young fella, only been out of Seminary a little over a year, but he certainly knows his Bible. He can preach all around any preacher I ever heard before. But you'll hear him. You'll see what he's like."

"Well, I hope I shall be able to keep from going crazy over him," Marjorie smiled.

Ted turned red.

"Oh, you're not like that. You're sensible! But he's a prince, you know. I'm not blaming 'em for going crazy over him. If I was a girl I might do it myself."

"Did Betty use to go to church with you when you lived in Brentwood?" asked Marjorie.

Ted's face darkened. "No!" he said shortly. "She wouldn't go. She said she had no time for church. She was all taken up with a poor fish in the office where she worked. He useta come out in a second-hand roadster and take her places. He made me sick. Had one of those misplaced eyebrows on his upper lip, thought he was smart, could smoke more cigarettes in an hour than anybody I ever heard of, and wore his hat way off on the back of his head like he was bored with the world and thought he was too good to associate with common people."

"Then she doesn't know Gideon Reaver?"

"No, she wouldn't be introduced one day when I brought him home. She said she didn't care to know preachers, they would bore her, and it might be embarrassing to have him hanging around. Oh, she makes me sick, sometimes."

"I guess she's had rather a hard time," suggested Marjorie gently.

"Sure she has! We've all had a hard time. And she's been a good scout, worked like everything to take care of Mother and Father, and all that, but still — sometimes she makes me sick."

He suddenly broke off and his

voice grew jubilant. "There's Brentwood now! See it up there on the hill? And that's our house, that long low stone house with the white pillars to the porch? Isn't that some swell location? And there! Upon my word if there doesn't come Gideon Reaver now!"

Then Marjorie looked up to see a tall finely built young man coming toward her with astonishingly wonderful eyes that seemed to have seen further into life than most men see, yet they had a deep sweet settled peace in them. She wondered if it could be real. She had never seen a young man who had that look.

(Continued Next Week)

EXECUTOR'S NOTICE
The undersigned, having qualified as Executor of the Will of Noah W. Tharp, deceased, late of the County of Surry, this is to notify all persons holding claims against the estate to present same to us duly verified on or before March 20th, 1940 or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery.
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