



# HILLTOPS CLEAR

By Emilie Loring

## CHAPTER I

The automobile lurched over deeply rutted roads. When it didn't lurch, it skidded. A cold, bone-penetrating fog transformed trees into ghostly giants, houses into weird dwarfs and filled the world. Moisture dripped from twigs and branches. The faint far moan of a buoy drifted through the grayness with melancholy monotony. The smell of the sea crept behind the slackly fastened side curtains of the car. The lean, angular driver stopped the engine and climbed out.

"What is the matter, Mr. Puffer?" Prudence Schuyler inquired from the cavernous gloom of the back seat.

"Tires leaky. Guess they'll hold out till we get there, though."

His passenger valiantly swallowed an exclamation of concern. She patted encouragement on the hand of the woman beside her. She really needed someone to pull her spirit out of the pit of depression, she told herself.

A motor purred alongside.

"That you, Si? What's the matter? Tire trouble? Flat?"

The voice was hollow, muffled, a man's voice. Shut within the curtained car, Prudence could see nothing but the uncanny mist.

"Tain't flat yet."

From the gruffness of his answer she judged that Mr. Puffer did not care for the person who had halted him.

"Has the girl come?"

There was eagerness in the question, a hint of anxiety, more than a hint of arrogance. If the wheel under her could talk, she would have said that its shake was warning her to keep quiet, Prudence decided.

"Gorry-me, you wouldn't expect city folks to come to the country in this storm, would you? Whatta mean is, guess she'll get to the red brick house 'bout tomorrow."

The red brick house! Her house! The voice in the fog was inquiring for her, Prudence Schuyler! Why had Mr. Puffer evaded the question? She watched him as he resumed his seat.

"Phone me the minute she arrives, Si."

A grunt from the man at the wheel was the only response. A red tail light shot into the golden mist of its own powerful headlights and dwindled to a spark.

Prudence leaned forward. "Was that voice, which sounded like a demon of the fog, inquiring for me, Mr. Puffer?"

"Yep."

"Why did you sidetrack him? Why tell him that I was arriving tomorrow?"

"Gorry-me, you wait an' you'll see, Miss Schuyler. Whatta mean is, by tomorrow you'll have kinder got yer bearin's an'll know what to say. Len Calloway'll tie you up tight to him, if he can."

"Tie me up! You're not alluding to a matrimonial tie by any chance, are you?"

The driver looked back. "Glad to hear you laugh. When I met you at the station, I was afraid you was going to break out cryin'. It sure is a mean night for you to arrive. Not much further to go. We're passing the Gerard place now."

It was evident that he considered the voice in the fog a closed incident. Couldn't he feel that she was fairly tingling with curiosity? Prudence asked herself. She had better seem indifferent. She said lightly.

"I'm glad to know there is something tangible to pass."

"Tain't always like this; just wait till the sun shines. Gerard is your neighbor on the east, that is, if you can call it being a neighbor when the houses are two miles apart. His folks come down only for the summer, but I reckon you've come to stay, judgin' by the truck load of stuff I carted up to the red brick house the other day."

For no reason she could explain to herself, Prudence Schuyler evaded an answer. With the intention of turning the driver's attention from her affairs, she suggested:

"Tell me about the Gerard family."

Her ruse succeeded. "I'll tell you about the Gerard's; perhaps 'twill take your mind off the rough going. The estate, which includes plane landing field, golf links, mountain streams, an' 'bout two miles of pond shore besides the sea front, belongs to Rod Gerard. His name's Rodney, but the townspeople call him Rod. He's one of those rich fellers you read about who fly airplanes, own a string of polo ponies, an' have a vally to bring up their breakfast, crease their pants, an' lay out their pink silk pajamas—but he ain't a bit stuck-up."

"Sounds like a first family of Hollywood."

"Whatta mean is, folks here think a lot of Rod, but he has an older brother Walter an' that brother has a wife. Walt was the son by old man Gerard's

first marriage; that wife didn't have any money, neither did he. After she died, Gerard, who was a handsome, gifted man, married an heiress and Rod's their child. They built a house of stone and oak on a high ledge; that's the name of the place—High Ledges."

"It has a sort of approach-if-you-dare sound."

"As I was sayin', Rod's mother loved every inch of the land, turned abandoned quarry holes into gardens. She and her husband are buried in one of them. Old man Gerard died, then she went several years ago, and Rod—well, Rod was just out of law school and crazy about flyin' when he came into a big fortune; perhaps you've met fellers like that."

"Just like that!" Prudence concurred bitterly, and hoped in the next second that the man had not noticed the sting in her voice.

"He didn't show up here for two years after he lost his mother. Then last June he opened the place, and who'd he bring with him but Walt Gerard and his wife and little girl. Walt lit out pretty quick, but the Mrs. seized the reins of management and how she did drive. She's one of them women who's so busy helpin' God run his world that she lets her own folks get along as best they can. She's all a-twitter, winks one of her cold blue eyes when she thinks she's bein' smart; before you've been talkin' to her five minutes, she'll lug in a remark about 'my cousin, the ambassador.' She kept the house full of company all summer, young folks, but the girls were so homely they'd have stopped even one of them electric clocks which is supposed to run forever. She's a wise one."

Prudence temporarily forgot the fog, the reason for her coming.

"I hadn't supposed there were any 'homely girls' now, they know so well how to look like a million. Why is Mrs. Walter Gerard wise? Not because she doesn't care for beauty?"

"Whatta mean is, Walt, her husband, is handsome as a movie actor. She is tall, with horses' teeth and a kind of horse-shaped face. Guess she was handsome once—the women here say she's a nifty dresser—must have been or Walt never would have married her. He—well, he knows where the corn crib is. Their kid is thirteen years old. She's cute, but that curious that folks lock up everything when they see her coming. Rod's awful good to her and she worships him. The Walt Gerard's haven't much money. Rod gives them an income. That's another reason his sister-in-law doesn't want pretty girls around. 'Twould upset her apple cart terrible if he should marry."

"Has Mr. Rodney Gerard no mind of his own?"

"Yes—yes, he has, but since his mother passed away, Rod's kinder lazy; besides, he's got the idea some girl will marry him for his money." Prudence's voice deepened with affectionate anxiety.

"You see, he has all he can spend. This is, I'm guessing so. Perhaps he thinks, why should I work now an' take a job from someone else?"

"Here we are, Miss Schuyler, this is your uncle's place. I forgot; it's yours now. Sorry you had such a tough night to arrive."

He stopped the car in the road before brick gateposts and sounded a lugubrious horn. In response, the house door opened and let out a stream of yellow light; a soft, cushiony voice called:

"That you, Si?"

"That's Mother—my wife," Puffer explained, as he unfastened the cur-

tains on Prudence's side of the car. He helped her out, then extended a bony hand to the gaunt woman who seemed to unfold like an extension ladder as she stepped cautiously to the ground.

Prudence Schuyler's throat tightened as she blinked at the red brick house she had inherited. Its white trim, its hooded doorway glowed faintly through the fog with a sort of phosphorescence.

A woman, designed on the feather-bed plan, with an extra chin or two in the best Rembrandt manner, greeted her in the hall. She looked quickly away from the girl's face, patted her arm with motherly understanding.

"Come right in and wash and take off your hat. Supper's all ready, dearie. When you get something to eat, things'll look different. Life can seem awful dark and dreary on an empty stomach."

Prudence achieved a smile. "Thank you, Mrs. Puffer. This is Jane Mack, who has come to help me keep house. She has been a standby in our family since the first day she came to make little girl frocks for me. Will you tell her where to find things, please?"

As the two women disappeared, Prudence lingered in the hall, slipped out of her rain coat, pulled off her close turban. She entered the room on her right. Her brown eyes, already black from emotion, dilated as she saw herself reflected in the long old-fashioned pier glass between the windows.

"Not too bad." She made a gamine face at the looking-glass girl, before she turned to inspect her surroundings. The room was cozy, homey. Her spirit stirred damp wings. Her back-to-the-farm venture might not prove the flop it had seemed a few moments ago.

The dining room was cheery with crackling logs in the Franklin fireplace when she entered a few moments later. A huge platter of savory beef stew, garnished with fluffy white dumplings flanked by piles of plummy brown bread, gave out an appetizing aroma. For the first time she had left New York Prue's heart felt warm.

"Oh, how tempting! Come, Macky, aren't you starved? Mrs. Puffer, won't you sit with us and serve? It will seem more homey to have you here."

Stark, thin-lipped Jane Mack, her high cheek bones flaunting red flags of excitement, took her seat with an air of being about to commit a social blunder. The rosy-faced stout woman plumped into her chair with a contented sigh.

"Dearie, I'll do just that." After an interval devoted to serving and eating, she sympathized: "Hope you didn't mind the trip from the railroad station. Seven miles isn't far, but it's a long way to drive over a strange road in a fog."

"Only seven! I thought it must at least have been a thousand." The satisfying food was ringing up the curtain of depression. "That is ungrateful when Mr. Puffer diverted our thoughts by most interesting descriptions of our neighbors."

Jane Mack made her one contribution to the conversation.

"Do you have movies here, Mrs. Puffer?"

"Three times a week in the village. The manager tries to show the films people want to see."

"Does he?" Jane Mack's eyes snapped. "I love mystery and gangster pictures."

Prudence gazed at the thin face in speechless amazement. She had known the woman almost all her life, but had she been taking her to a picture, she would have selected one with de luxe settings and smart frocks. How little one could tell what was going on in a person's mind, even the mind of someone near and dear. She said aloud:

"Now we'll help clear away and do the dishes."

"Not you, dearie. You go into what your uncle called the living room, and set. If Miss Mack wants to lend a hand, perhaps she'll be more contented to be busy."

Curled in the depths of a wing chair before the purring fire, Prudence looked about the room—indubitably a man's room—which almost over night had become hers. It had the musty smell of furniture drenched with stale tobacco smoke. There was an air of mystery about the closed secretary. When her uncle had last sat at that desk, had he felt the faint far breath of eternity blowing toward him?

Her interested eyes wandered on. Above the mantel hung the one picture the room presented: a delicately colored engraving of Franklin at the court of France. Benjamin, stage center, bent his head to receive a wreath from the gorgeously appareled Countess Pollnac; while from a divan, Louis the Sixteenth and Marie Antoinette looked on with royal indifference.

They all had been real once, the girl mused; they had held their heads high while their hearts broke, they had smiled through tragedy, while she, with youth, health, opportunity, and her brother, had fairly wallowed in self-pity these last few weeks.

She sprang to her feet. "I'll make a vow, now, that from this moment I forewarn self-pity. I will regard this experience at—at—what shall I name the place which has a lift to it? I know! Prosperity farm! Grand!—at Prosperity farm as an adventure which will lead to health for David and great, good fortune."

"I thought I was coming to a treadmill of endless monotonies, and within the first hour a hollow voice—which set little merry pranks pricking through my veins—rumbles through the fog: 'Meaning me. Why does the man want to know the moment I arrive? Why will he try to 'tie me up tight

to him?' That was an interesting bit of biography Mr. Puffer volunteered about our neighbors. I'm willing to wager my first crop of chickens that I shall detest the Gerard heir. Rich playboy. I have no illusions about his type. If I meet him, I'll be colder than an electric ice-box running on high. Also something tells me that Mrs. Walt and I will be antagonistic from the start. Maybe, though, I won't meet her; maybe she won't see her farming neighbor even as a dot on her social horizon."

"Miss Prue, I'm ready to go up now," lean, lank Jane Mack announced from the threshold. "Mrs. Puffer showed me where to find the supplies. I guess she'll be a good neighbor. Wish I hadn't seen that procession in my tea cup, though."

"Now, Macky, don't look for trouble in tea grounds; haven't we had enough fairly sitting in our laps these last weeks without hunting out more? Come on up, let's see the rest of the house."

Interest in Prue's eyes glowed into excited anticipation as they went from room to room.

"Macky, think of having a whole house in which to spread out after years in an apartment! We'll make it a dream. We will warm it with color till it makes hearts glow just to come into it."

A faint pink crept under the woman's skin. Her washed-out eyes shone with a lovely light.

"You'll make hearts glow all right, Miss Prue. Your brother said to me just before we left the apartment, 'I'm not afraid for Prue. She'll make a home wherever she is. She's like her mother.'"

Prue slipped her hand within the crook of the woman's thin arm and for an instant pressed her cheek against her hard shoulder.

"I suppose there isn't a person in this village who doesn't know that my brother's wife ran away with my sister's husband," she said in a muffled voice.

"There, there, Miss Prue, suppose they do? 'Twasn't your brother David's fault nor your sister Julie's. If folks here know about it at all, they know that. If you make too much of it, they may think there's something back of it all you're ashamed of. I know folks."

Prudence smiled and patted the woman's bony hand before she entered the room she had selected for herself.

Long after she had extinguished the light, she lay with wide-open eyes staring at the fog which hung like a curtain of gray gauze before the wide-open window. She watched the steamy fringe of water dripping from the window as she lived over the last weeks. As if his heart had not been sufficiently uprooted by the desertion and tragic death of his wife, David, whose health had been undermined by service overseas, had been ordered to give up work and live in the country.

The country! The inexorable command had staggered her at first. How could they go with no money for living? When the crash had come in their fortunes six months before, she had opened a studio and had worked professionally at what had been a delightful avocation—the craft of designer and maker of jewelry and silver boxes. Each month had seen an increase in the number and importance of her orders; then had come the command to go to the country, which had meant that she must give up her shop.

While she was struggling with her problems and doggedly assuring herself that she would find a way to relieve the situation, a way opened, but not from her effort. Her father's brother, Austin Schuyler, had invested part of his small fortune in an annuity, then had made the dream of years come true by buying and stocking a Maine farm with the remainder. For the first time in his life, he had said, he had what he wanted—and then one morning he didn't waken. He had willed the Maine property and five thousand dollars in cash to his niece Prudence.

The legacy had providentially answered the on to the country problem. Now that the strain was eased, she had but a confused remembrance of the days during which she had cleared and sub-leased the apartment. At the last moment, Jane Mack had begged to go with her. Her eyes were giving out for sewing, she had said, but she knew almost everything there was to know about a house—she had been trained by a New England mother. Prudence had hugged her in her relief. Jane Mack might be grim and a confirmed pessimist but she could cook, while she herself farmed and, if opportunity and time allowed, worked at her craft.

Could she afford to keep Si Puffer as helper on the place? Her thoughts ran on. She couldn't afford not to at present. Already he had stood like a guardian angel between her and the voice in the fog; how he had growled the name, "Len Calloway!" What had the man wanted? Something in his demand had antagonized her. "Tomorrow" was almost here. Soon she would know.

The muslin hangings swung into the room like two frail, transparent wings. Had the wind changed?

She ran to the window. The fog had cleared as if by magic. With a surge of indefinable longing, the girl looked up at the star-punctured heavens. With a shaky laugh at her own absurdity, she flung out her hands toward the man in the moon.

"Your excellency, I thank you for this royal welcome! Prue of Prosperity farm salutes you!"

(Continued Next Week.)

## LETTERS to the Editor

The Editor, The Dallas Post, Dallas, Pa.

In a recent issue of another newspaper there was a report of a Committee who visited the County Commissioners at Wilkes-Barre. The statement was incorrect and we, the Officers and Members of the Dallas Borough and Dallas Township Unemployed League Branch No. 31 desire to make this correction relative to the visit of said committee to the County Commissioners about the Project which is to begin shortly in our community and is to employ in the neighborhood of 300 men.

It is true that Burgess Wagner of Dallas Borough arranged the meeting with the Commissioners but it is not true that he was the spokesman for the committee, neither did he have anything to say other than to introduce the committee to the County Commissioners. This committee was composed of members of the Unemployed League from Lehman Township, Lake Township, Dallas Borough and Dallas Township and Mr. Disque, the chairman of the 6th Legislative District and the Rev. A. A. Mahler and the Rev. S. R. Nichols, ministers who are deeply interested in this particular matter because it is going to give employment to some 300 men and will be a great benefit to the Back Mountain people who have been out of work so long. Mr. Nichols was chosen as spokesman for the committee and in a few well chosen words he laid before the County Commissioners the plan to have the Back Mountain districts taken care of first, and received the assurance that the County Commissioners would do all in their power for the men of the Back Mountain Districts.

We, the Unemployed League Committee, feel that Burgess Wagner should have corrected this false statement himself and not allowed the Unemployed League to do so.

Arthur Updyke, Sect.

## LEGAL ADVERTISEMENTS

**SHERIFF'S SALE**  
FRIDAY, MAY 3, 1935,  
AT 10 A. M.

By virtue of a writ of F. I. No. 129, March Term, 1935, issued out of the Court of Common Pleas of Luzerne County, to me directed, there will be exposed to public sale by vendue to the highest and best bidder, for cash, at the Sheriff's Sales Room, Court House, in the City of Wilkes-Barre, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, on Friday, the 3rd day of May, 1935, at ten o'clock in the forenoon of the said day, all the right, title and interest of the defendant in and to the following described lot, piece or parcel of land, viz:—

All the surface or right of soil of all that certain piece or parcel of land situated in the Borough of Dorranceton, Luzerne County, Pa., bounded and described as follows:

Said piece of land fronting on the southwest side of Union Street; Beginning at a common corner of lots Nos. 109 and 110, thence by line of the same South 53 degrees 36 minutes West 183 feet to an alley, which has an laid out width of 20 and 26 feet; thence along said alley South 36 degrees 24 minutes East 25 feet; thence North 53 degrees 36 minutes East 183 feet to Union Street; thence along said Union Street North 36 degrees 24 minutes West 25 feet to the corner of lots Nos. 109 and 110 the place of beginning.

Improved with a frame dwelling known as 84 Union Street, Kingston, Pa.

Seized and taken into execution at the suit of Elizabeth Gabel, widow, vs. Venora A. Wheeler, widow, with notice to Gilbert Wheeler, et ux, terre tenants, and will be sold by

LUTHER M. KNIFFEN, Sheriff.

J. F. McCabe, Att'y.

**SHERIFF'S SALE**  
FRIDAY, MAY 3, 1935,  
AT 10 A. M.

By virtue of a writ of Alias F. I. No. 125 May Term, 1935, issued out of the Court of Common Pleas of Luzerne County, to me directed, there will be exposed to public sale by vendue to the highest and best bidder, for cash, at the Sheriff's Sales Room, Court House, in the City of Wilkes-Barre, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, on Friday, the 3rd day of May, 1935, at ten o'clock in the forenoon of the said day, all the right, title and interest of the defendant in and to the following described lot, piece or parcel of land, viz:—

Being nineteen and one-quarter acres of land in Dallas Township fronting on the West side of the Dallas-Tunkhannock Highway, Route 92. Having thereon two outbuildings, one spring, foundation wall, fruit trees, etc. Bounded on the south by lands of Clay Price and on the north by Marvin Elston.

At the suit of Tilo Roofing Company vs. Ann Peterson.

LUTHER M. KNIFFEN, Sheriff.

Peter P. Jurchak, Attorney.

**IN THE ORPHANS' COURT OF LEGAL NOTICE**  
LUZERNE COUNTY, No. 487 of 1934.

IN RE: Estate of Fred Wilkins, Deceased.

To the Heirs, Legatees, Creditors and other Persons interested in said Estate: Notice is hereby given that James R. Oliver, Executor, has filed in the office of the Clerk of the Court, his petition praying for an order of County, Pennsylvania, at private sale, to Edna Karcher for the sum of Fifteen Hundred Dollars (\$1500.00) for the payment of the decedent's debts. If no exceptions are filed thereto or objections made to granting the same, the Court will be asked to take action upon the petition on April 26th, 1935, at ten o'clock a. m.

A. L. TURNER, Attorney for Petitioner.

**SHERIFF'S SALE**

**SEND YOUR NEWS ITEMS TO**

**THE DALLAS POST**

## ROADSIDE MARKETING

By T. J. Delohery  
CO-OPERATIVE ROADSIDE MARKETS

ROADSIDE markets are individually owned as a rule, but where a number of farmers are engaged in the production of different lines of crops but don't produce enough to keep a roadside market supplied through the season, co-operatively owned wayside stands have been established and successfully operated.

Probably the most extensive and best-managed of co-operative roadside markets is the chain in southeastern Wisconsin, which was started by the first fruit growers association in that section of the Badger state. More than a dozen markets, spread over several counties in the fruit belt, have shown a healthy increase in business for each of the three years they have been in operation.

While the members are primarily fruit growers, some of them are now growing patches of vegetables, own small flocks of poultry and several hives of bees. Thus they are able to supply the markets with a good line of food which keeps them open during the outdoor season instead of a short time in the late summer and fall when fruit is ripe.

Each market handles the products of from six to ten farmers. Management and sales are left in the hands of the grower on whose property the stand is located, or with a hired salesman. Much caution has been used in the selection of salesmen and market managers, with the result that the representatives have been a great help in the increased business which the markets report.

The chain of roadside markets is the outgrowth of the farmers' efforts to increase local consumption of their fruit after they had put on a campaign to improve quality. The first step in the marketing campaign was to exhibit apples, pears and plums in various food shows.

After canvassing possibilities of several outlets, Mr. Pallet decided on a co-operative roadside market; but before proposing it to the fruit growers, he and C. L. Knebler, state fruit specialist, made a trip through the fruit belts of Wisconsin and Michigan to study the various phases of the business. Returning, he suggested a co-operative roadside market, and upon approval, built a portable stand which was first exhibited at the state fair.

"The Fruit Market," the official name of these stands, is a portable affair made of a striped green canvas roof, green woodwork and shelving which permits the display of several dozen harmoniously colored baskets of apples, pears, plums and crab apples, with a background of golden cider. The first one cost \$60 to build and won \$125 in prizes at the fair.

During fair week thousands of people stopped at the booth of which "The Farm Market," fully equipped,



Fruit Market.

was a part. Numerous questions were asked and answered by the county agent who was in attendance.

"Opening on Sunday when motorists were out in full force, the market clicked right away," said County Agent Pallet. "In fact, we sold out early in the afternoon, and it was necessary to phone a dozen farmers to rush in more fruit. The color scheme of the stand, the baskets of well-graded fruit, all of which had tags telling the variety and the price, made a picture which undoubtedly influenced a number of purchases."

The success of the first "Fruit Market" is responsible for the establishment of the others. Hired salesmen, operating a few of these markets, are permitted to handle eggs, vegetables and honey if the farmers do not produce these foods. This concession has been found to be an incentive for the salesman who realizes that his earnings are based on sales of fruit with additional revenue in the other products.

Co-operative roadside markets are advisable also where they will eliminate competition and, as pointed out, give small growers a chance to get better prices than is possible at wholesale markets or where keeping open a roadside outlet would necessitate the buying of other things to complete the line. Of course, the success of group-supplied markets will depend largely on the manager or salesman and his ability to give each member a fair deal and maintain harmony among the contributors.