



Plum Thicket

J. H. Giles

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Janice Holt Giles had a life before her marriage and writing career in Kentucky. Born in Altus, Arkansas, Giles spent many childhood summers visiting her grandparents there. After the success of her historical novel *The Kentuckians* in 1953, she planned to write a second frontier romance. But a visit to Altus caused her imagination to drift from Kentucky in 1780 to western Arkansas in 1913.

At age forty-eight—the same age as Giles at the writing of the novel—the heroine Katie Rogers recalls her first visit alone to her grandparent's home in Stanwick, Arkansas. Eight-year-old Katie spends her summer climbing the huge mulberry tree and walking with her wise grandfather, a veteran of bloody Shiloh. She is fascinated, not frightened, by the grave of an unknown child in the nearby plum thicket. Throughout the visit Katie helps Aunt Maggie plan her wedding and looks forward to the three-day Confederate Reunion. But the Reunion—and the summer—end violently, as guilt, repression, and miscegenation are unearthed. "That summer was the end of a whole way of life," Katie realizes, for she can never again dwell in the paradise of childhood.

In *Katie Rogers*, Giles voiced her own lament for "the beautiful and the unrecoverable past." To her publisher Giles wrote, "Out of my forty-odd years of living, much of whatever wisdom I have acquired has been distilled into this book." This new edition of *The Plum Thicket* gives Giles's many fans a powerful, moving glimpse into the mind and heart of this beloved author.

Janice Holt Giles (1905-1979), author of nineteen books, lived and wrote near Knifley, Kentucky, for thirty-four years. Her biography is told in *Janice Holt Giles: A Writer's Life*.

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