



The House of Whispers

By William Johnston

Illustrations by Irwin Myers

A BEAUTIFUL GHOST.

Synopsis.—Spalding Nelson is occupying the apartments of his great-uncle, Rufus Gaston. The Gastons, leaving on a trip, tell him about mysterious noises and "whispers" they have heard. He becomes acquainted with Barbara Bradford, who lives in the same big building. He instinctively dislikes and distrusts the superintendent, Wick. The mysteries in the apartments begin with the disappearance of the Gaston pearls from the wall safe. He decides not to call in the police, but to do his own investigating. It is soon evident that someone has access to his rooms. Becoming friendly with Barbara, he learns that her apartments are empty and mysterious. She told him, at several years before her sister Claire, who lives with her, had made a run-away marriage with an adventurer, from whom she was soon parted, and the marriage had been annulled. She is engaged to be married and someone has stolen documents concerning the affair from the Bradford apartment and is attempting to blackmail the Bradfords. Nelson takes Miss Kelly, the telephone girl, to dinner with the idea of pumping her. Gorman, the detective, recognizes her as the wife of Lefty Moore, a noted burglar. Nelson partly confides in the detective and arranges to meet him.

CHAPTER VI—Continued.

"You're right about that," I replied, "and say, look here. Why can't you meet me somewhere tomorrow afternoon. There are a lot of mysterious things happening in the Granddeck. Maybe you can help me in trying to clear them up."

"It's a date. I'll be in the back room of Jim Connor's place over on Third avenue at three o'clock waiting for you."

"I'll be there," I said, as I bade him good night.

"Hold on a minute," he said. "Do you know where Lefty Moore's wife lives now?"

I recalled the number she had told me to give the taxi man and repeated it to him, an address way over on East Sixty-second street near the river.

"I like to know them sort of things," he explained. "In our business you never know when you'll be needing them."

On my way home, after I left him, I congratulated myself on having made James Gorman's acquaintance. In him I had found a man with police and detective experience. The fact that he held a responsible position with a big hotel ought to be sufficient voucher for his honesty. Of course Miss Bradford must be consulted before I met Gorman the next afternoon. I could hardly tell him my own almost unbearable experiences without bringing in the attempts to blackmail her sister. Surely Miss Bradford would not object to my plan. We were making such poor headway in solving the mystery ourselves that I was certain she would welcome Gorman's advice.

And would it not be a surprise to Barbara Bradford to learn that a criminal—or at least the wife of a criminal—was employed as a telephone girl in the apartment house? I was hoping that she would be at home and in her room when I arrived at the house so that I might signal her and tell her my great news at once.

I let myself into the apartment and without bothering to turn on the lights made my way back toward my own



As the Light Flooded the Room There Was a Suppressed Scream Followed by a Frightened Gasp.

room. As I reached the end of the hall my ears detected a scuffling noise that seemed to come from my quarters. I stopped stock-still and listened breathlessly. Unquestionably there was someone in my room.

I tiptoed softly forward. As I crept along in the darkness, making no sound, I found myself devoutly wishing for some weapon. Of course it might be Barbara, who had entered by means of the ledge to leave some message for me, but if it were not she, I felt certain that I would discover who was at the bottom of the plots against us.

I gained the door without my presence having been discovered. In the dim light that came from the open window I could detect a figure standing on a chair apparently feeling along the wall near the ceiling. I recalled with curiosity that it was from that spot that the whispers I had heard had seemed to come.

Inch by inch I edged noiselessly forward, my eyes on the intruder until at last my fingers found the electric light button. As the light flooded the room

Barbara Bradford, yes, and by Claire, too. That is, if the reason Claire had given to account for her presence in my room was the true one. It sounded logical, and yet I did not place the confidence in her that I did in Barbara. But what I relied on most of all to convince Gorman of the truth of my preposterous tale was his own knowledge of who the telephone girl was. Just when I had reached the deduction that the band plotting against us must have a coadjutor in the building, he had come forward with the knowledge that pointed toward the person most apt to be involved.

I was pondering it all over in my mind as I left the house to meet Barbara. I was out on the street and just turning the corner when I remembered that I had spent most of the money in my pocket the night before. Retracing my steps, I returned to my apartment and took some bills from their hiding-place in the ooccase. As I entered into the street again, I became aware that across the street was a man whose appearance seemed vaguely familiar. As I once more turned the corner, walking briskly, I glanced back for a second look at him and was surprised to see him coming in my direction.

As I stared at her she sprang from the chair and made a rush for the open window. I grabbed for her and though she fought desperately I managed to hold her fast and to drag her away from the window. After a moment's futile resistance she suddenly collapsed in my arms, moaning in a tense whisper:

"Let me go, please let me go."

I placed her in a chair, and still keeping a tight hold on one of her arms, studied her, debating what to do. What desperate motive could have driven this girl to the daring journey across the narrow ledge by which she had gained access to my quarters? Was she, I wondered, once more in the power of that evil ex-husband of hers, driven by fear of him to such desperate deeds?

"Let me go," she moaned again.

"Not until you tell me what you were doing in my rooms," I answered firmly.

"I did not know there was any one here. I thought the apartment was vacant. I thought the Gastons were away."

"But why did you come?"

"I can't tell that," she moaned. "I can't! I can't!"

"You must," I repeated. "I am going to keep you here until you do tell me."

"You must not keep me here," she said. "I don't want my people to know about my having been here. You look like a gentleman. Please let me go."

"Doesn't Barbara—doesn't your sister know you are here?"

At my mention of her sister's name an expression of amazement escaped her.

"Who are you?" she asked excitedly. "How did you know who I was?"

"I am a friend of your sister," I answered. "She will tell you who I am. You must trust me. I feel I have a right to know what you are doing here. Won't you tell me?"

A strange look came into her eyes and she shook her head.

"You wouldn't understand, I was trying to trace the whispers."

"The whispers!" I cried excitedly. "You have heard them, too?"

"Often," she said. "I heard them tonight. Mother and Barbara were out to the theater. They seemed to come from near the ceiling in my sister's room. They seemed to vanish in the direction of this room. I thought there was no one here. I decided to creep along the ledge and see if I could trace them."

"And did you succeed?"

She shook her head.

"When I first came in this room I could still hear them. They seemed to be coming from up near the ceiling. I got up on a chair and put my ear to the wall to listen. Then they stopped altogether and then—they you came in. May I go now—before my mother comes home?"

"On one condition," I answered, "that you tell your sister about your having been here."

"I'll tell her if you wish me to," she replied, "and now, please may I go? Could you let me out of your door? See, I brought a key to our apartment with me. I don't think I dare make that trip across the ledge tonight."

As I escorted her to the door, my mind in a whirl over the events of the evening, I suddenly remembered how important it was that I should see her sister for a long talk before I kept my appointment with Gorman.

"Tell your sister," I said. "To Claire Bradford as she departed, "that it is imperative that she meet me at luncheon tomorrow. I have news of the utmost importance—news that concerns all of us. Tell her to meet me at the Astor at one. She must come."

"I'll tell her," she replied.

CHAPTER VII.

It was the next evening that I made my astounding discovery, when pure chance led me plump into what both Barbara Bradford and I recognized at once as our first real clue to the mysteries surrounding us.

My find came unexpectedly as at the end of an exciting day. As I crept along in the darkness, making no sound, I found myself devoutly wishing for some weapon. Of course it might be Barbara, who had entered by means of the ledge to leave some message for me, but if it were not she, I felt certain that I would discover who was at the bottom of the plots against us.

I could not help but realize how preposterous it would sound in the telling. Mr. Gorman could hardly be blamed for believing that my mind had been inflamed by witnessing too many movie thrillers. Yet I had proof. There were the entries in my great-uncle's diary that I could show. I had anonymous notes. My story of the strange whispers, if need be, could be confirmed by the old landlady, by

"But how do you know she's aiding them?"

"I don't know it. But I do know that nobody could pull off all the things that have been happening in the Granddeck without some one there helping them. We've found someone used to helping criminals—a criminal's wife. Isn't that enough? All we need to do now is to watch her closely and fasten the thing on her."

"How are you going to do that?"

"That's why I insisted on your coming here today. I am to meet Detective Gorman at three. I feel that he could aid us, and I think we ought to tell him everything."

"Tell the police!" Her face grew white at the thought. "Wouldn't that be a scandal—the newspapers and all that sort of thing?"

I shook my head decisively.

"Gorman's not with the police now.

He is employed as a hotel detective. But he is just the man we need to help us. He knows all about criminals and how to track them. With his aid we can quickly clear the whole thing up."

"Will you have to tell him everything about Claire's marriage?"

"We've either got to tell him everything."

"Oh, how I wish we did not have to."

"How are you going to do that?"

"I'm afraid most people would not agree with you. They would regard me as a worthless discredited young fellow out of a job."

"But it's not your fault."

"The point is," I went on, "that we have reached a place where we need expert advice. Gorman has fortunately turned up to give it. The only way is to tell him everything."

For a moment she debated the matter silently, her pretty forehead puckered in thought.

"It's the only way. But won't he want a lot of money for his services?"

"I'll attend to that," I answered.

"I'll make my great-uncle reward him handsomely for recovering the Gaston jewels."

"If he does."

"He must. We've got to get them back."

From her hand-bag she produced the anonymous letters she had received and handed them to me.

"Will you want to show the detective these?"

"Yes, I think I had better. The whole tale sounds so preposterous that I need every bit of corroborative evidence we can muster."

For half an hour we argued over the table, discussing all the aspects of the case. Eventually I think I persuaded Miss Bradford that the evidence pointed most damningly to the telephone girl as one of the conspirators or at least one of their sides. She was eager to know what plan of action Gorman would advise and as we argued we arranged to be at our adjoining windows at ten that evening in order that we might have another chat.

I found Gorman waiting for me at the place he had mentioned.

"I told you that girl was a bad one," was his greeting.

"What do you mean?" I cried.

"What have you learned about her?"

"Nothing except that the address she gave you last night was phony. The number she gave is the hospital grounds"—he pronounced it "horspital."

"Where does she live, then?"

"She's keeping that under cover. She shook the taxi at Fifty-ninth and Third."

Detective Gorman to the rescue.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

PINS NOT LONG PERFECTED

Production of the Really Finished Product Only Dates Back to the Year 1824.

In 1775 the American congress, realizing the absolute necessity for pins in the development of the civilization of the country, offered a bonus of £50 for the first twenty-five dozen domestic pins equal to those imported from England.

In 1797 Timothy Harris of England devised the first solid-headed pin.

American inventive genius, as usual, continued on the job until the best idea was hit upon, Lemuel Wilmot of this country invented a machine in 1824 which gave the industry much headway. His machine made solid heads to the pins by a process similar to the making of nails, by driving a portion of the pin itself into a countersunk hole. This was done automatically and consisted of a device by which the wire was seized in two small grooved cheeks. When both cheeks are placed face to face, the wire is held tightly in the groove with a small hammer connected with the machine strikes on the projecting portion, thus forming the head.

To the nine hundred and ninety-nine pins was a word of ill-omen, a word of terror and fear. To the one in a thousand it was a word of hope, a light for the feet of a stumbling world, and the nine hundred and ninety-nine said that some of these people called Bolsheviks were dreamers of a strange dream, that twisted idealism had made them mad, that the majority of those who profess faith in Bolsheviks were sick with a strange, social fever, that they were mischief-makers, ne'er-do-wells, criminals, that they sought to burn the world.

I made up my mind that I would learn the real meaning of the word. The dictionary definition threw no light on its meaning. I came to the

WHAT DROPPED.

The dining room of a very exclusive residential hotel. Diners in full swing.

Clatter of knives and forks and the usual buzz of conversation. Suddenly, a crash at one end of the room, a sound of falling dishes. An abrupt pause in the conversation, attention concentrated on the scene of the calamity. Then, suddenly, soaring above a rising murmur of inquiry, one clear voice with the desired information, "Squash, my dear, of all things!"

More fish are eaten by the Japanese than by any other nation.

PROBLEMS FACING STRICKEN WORLD

Shall Chaos or Reconstruction in Europe Follow the Great World War?

MEN TURNING TO BOLSHEVISM

Something Profoundly Disquieting in the Constant Repetition of Word Which Seems to Convey Such a Sinister Meaning.

Article XII

By FRANK COMERFORD.

I met a young American major just back from the French front. I had known him for many years. Before the United States entered the war he was one of the many impatient at our delay. He believed that it was just to join the fight when the ruthless submarine campaign torpedoed the Lusitania, sending to cold, wet graves American women and children. I distinctly remember his face as he read the headlines in the papers telling of the murderous slaughter of Americans on the high seas. Now when he greeted me he started with his first words, "The war is over. I'm a Bolshevik." I did not know what the word meant, yet it carried to my mind an impression, and while the impression was hazy, it was clear at least in one particular. It sounded like the confession of a crime.

He had always been of a quiet, conservative type. Before the war one would have judged him to be a pacifist; he was even-tempered, mild of manner, and I still think that before August, 1914, he was a pacifist in head and heart. It was only the call of a just cause, the fight for an ideal in which he believed, that had made him a soldier. In this respect he was typical of 90 per cent of his countrymen.

I had spoken to him the day he enlisted, for he was one of those who volunteered, who might have waited for conscription and claimed a just exemption. He was in the beginning of his married life, with two very young children. By profession he was an engineer. Going to war meant leaving a wife and two babies, leaving a job that promised advancement. I recall his enthusiasm, the intensity of his patriotism, his quiet disregard of the danger to himself. I am sure that there was little hate in his morale. He saw a danger to the world. The honor of his country had been offended against. He was an American, one of those upon whom the duty fell, so he went.

He was a Bolshevik! Why? I was confused, confused. The only meaning I gave to his remark was that he was an anarchist. The word "Bolshevik" sounded red to me. It flared of the torch, photographed disorder, lawlessness—it registered blood, violence, assassination, force, hate, insanity. I wondered how this nine-lettered word had become the vehicle for so many sensations that disturbed peace of mind and sounded alarm.

Where had the word come from and what company had it kept that so fouled its soul? What did it really mean—had it a definite meaning? Was it a bug like the "flu" germ? Had it come among nations to destroy them and to the hearts of men to silence the heavenly message, "Peace, on earth, good will to men"? Would it run around the world as a scourge? Was it a postscript to the bloody war lesson, prophesying more anguish and tears than four years' fighting had brought? Would the world, coming out of the war bent now be broken? Or was it a meaningless myth? Was the word a bogie, a bad joke, a nightmare pressing heavily on a tired, nervous world's head?

Seeking Word's Real Meaning.

Or was the meaning that had been read into the word a lie? Was Bolshevik the message of a new Messiah being cried down by the money-changers of our time in the same way that our ancestors had silenced the word from the Mount and destroyed the Messianic Bearer with the lash and the cross?