The House of Whispers

By William Johnston

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CHAPTER XXIII—Continued.

—16—

No sense of shame nor of guilt possessed me. I was aware of having done wrong to no one. A clear conscience kept assuring me that it was misfortune and not error on my part that had brought me here. At every point in the strange chain of circumstances I felt that I had acted as a man of honor should have acted. My sense of innocence upheld me even though the deliberate malicious plotting of evil men might make it appear to the judge, to the jurors, to the whole world that I was a murderer. Even though I should be sentenced to death for killing a woman I never had seen the knowledge that at every point I had done what I still believed to have been right, brought me strong comfort and filled me with new courage.

Yet it was with lack of interest that I listened to the monotonous questioning that formed a part of the selection of a jury.

"So far as I am concerned," I had said to my counsel in our last chat, "any sort of a jury will do. Unless we succeed in upsetting the evidence against me with a crash that all the world can hear it makes no difference."

"I guess you are right," he answered, despondently, it seemed to me, "and if the worst happens, we always can take an appeal."

His reply convinced me that he, too, was anticipating the result, which I long ago had decided to be the only outcome, unless something unforeseen happened—a verdict against me of murder in the first degree.

I heard, almost with amusement, the district attorney, with eloquent oratory, tell the jury the crimes he expected to prove against me, even smiling a little at the picture he painted of a gangster seeking employment in an apartment occupied by families of wealth that he might find opportunities for plundering them, and when he was surprised in the midst of his burglarizing, brutally choking the unprotected woman whose home he was despoiling and then as she lay there, helpless and insensible, shooting her through the heart.

In fact, I quite agreed with all he said, even to his most strenuous adjectives—except for the one fact—that I knew I was not the man he was talking about. It had been a brutal, cowardly murder, and I was fully as anxious as the district attorney could possibly be to see the miscreant who had killed Miss Lutan brought to book.

The testimony that was to come, I devoutly hoped, would give some clue that would lead to the unmasking of the real murderer. The first witness called was one of the detectives who had arrested me. He told concisely, as though repeating a well rehearsed story, of having been summoned to the Granddeck and finding there the body of Daisy Lutan. He said that she had been shot through the heart.

"Was there anyone in the apartment when you arrived?"

"Yes, a doctor."

"Anyone else?"

"Yes, Mr. Wick, the superintendent of the apartment, and the prisoner."

"What did they say? How did they explain their presence there?"

"They said they had heard a shot and had come in to investigate."

He told of examining the body, questioning the physician and of making a search of the apartment for the murderer, but finding no one else there.

"What did you do then?"

"My partner and I followed the prisoner to his apartment and placed him under arrest. We searched his room and in the dresser I found a revolver with one chamber recently discharged."

"What made you suspect Nelson? Why did you arrest him?"

"My partner and I talked it over, and we both were of the opinion that it was an inside job. A burglar would have no chance to get into a building like the Granddeck and make his getaway. It was between the superintendent of the building, who was a man of responsibility, and this young fellow—who was only a caretaker."

"Had anything in Nelson's actions made you suspicious of him?"

"I noticed that he was greatly excited."

"Anything else?"

"After Nelson had gone upstairs to his own apartment, I questioned Mr. Wick. He said he had been in the elevator when he heard the shot. He had gotten out at the fifth floor, where it seemed to have come from. At the door of Miss Lutan's apartment he had found the prisoner."

"That's all," said the district attorney triumphantly.

My attorney waived cross-examination. The second detective was put on the stand and corroborated his partner's evidence in every respect. Both of them told of finding blood on my coat. The physician whom Wick had summoned gave a somewhat technical description of the bullet wound, and the prosecution put in evidence the bullet extracted from the body and the revolver the detectives had found, pointing out that they were of the same caliber.

"Call Mr. Wick," said the district attorney.

I leaned forward to listen to every word of Wick's testimony. In fact from the moment he was brought in I never took my eyes from him. It would be black enough for me if he merely stated the facts as they actually had happened, but I doubted if he would be content with that. If, as I felt certain, Wick was in the employ of the conspirators, it was more than likely that they would seek to clinch the case against me with his testimony.

He gave his name, James Wick, and his occupation as superintendent of the Granddeck.

"How long have you been employed there?"

"Ever since the building was opened."

"Where were you employed previously?"

Wick hesitated. I wondered if Gorman's surmise that he had been in prison were true, what he would say.

"Before that," he stammered, "I was in the employ of Mr. Kent in the West."

"Who is Mr. Kent?"

"He owns the Granddeck. He had known me for years. He brought me on when he built this building."

While his answer seemed to satisfy the district attorney, I was convinced from Wick's nervousness that he was concealing something, that further questioning into his past might lead to unexpected developments.

"Are you acquainted with the defendant?"

"Very slightly."

"How long have you known him?"

I was listening intently. Would he admit knowing that I was a relative of old Rufus Gaston?

"I don't really know him," Wick explained. "I've seen him two or three times. Mr. Gaston, one of my tenants, told me that he was going away and that he had given the key of his apartment to a young man named Nelson whom he had employed as caretaker. He said that the caretaker would arrive at ten o'clock on the Sunday morning that the Gastons went away."

"And did the defendant arrive at that time—at the time he was expected?"

"He did not. What first attracted my attention to him was that he sneaked into the building earlier than he was expected."

"You say he sneaked in," the district attorney's voice expressed a proper horror of such conduct. "Please explain to the jury what you mean by that."

"Instead of announcing his arrival, he watched his chance and waited till one of the tenants was coming in. He slipped in beside her and went up in the elevator without being announced. Naturally the elevator man thought he was a friend of the young lady tenant."

"How do you know he was not a friend of the young woman with whom he entered the building?"

"I asked him if he was acquainted with her, and he said he was. Later that same day she passed him in the hall of the building. I noticed that she did not speak to him or recognize him in any way."

The prosecutor waved his hand to the jury as if to say, "You see, gentlemen," and followed on with another question.

"Was the defendant's conduct in the building in any other way such as to arouse your suspicion?"

"He'd hardly got located before he began buzzing the telephone girl, asking her all kinds of questions about the other tenants in the building. He kept trying to get her to go out to dinner with him."

"Did she go?"

"Yes, she did. She reported his actions to me, and I suggested that she

I Leaned Forward to Listen to Every Word of Wick's Testimony.

go with him and try to find out what his name was."

"What else do you know about the defendant?"

"That's all—except—"

"Except what?"

"What I saw on the night Miss Lutan was murdered."

"Tell the circumstances."

"I was in the elevator coming down from the top floor. I heard the sound of a shot. It seemed to come from the fifth floor. I got off there to investigate. As the door of the Lutan apartment stood Mr. Nelson."

"What was he doing there?"

"Just standing there. It looked to me as if he had just been coming out and that when he saw me he had stopped suddenly."

"What was his manner? Describe the position in which he was standing to the jury." Again there was in the district attorney's voice a triumphant ring.

"He was all excited and trembly-like," Mr. Wick went on, "and his eyes seemed to be bulging out of his head."

"What did he say?"

"I asked him if he had heard a shot and he said that he had. I asked if it had not come from the Lutan apartment and he said that it had seemed so to him. I wanted to keep my eye on him, so I took out my pass-key and suggested that we investigate together. He did not seem at all anxious to go back into the apartment with me, but the elevator man was standing there, so he came along and was with me when I found the body. I kept him there until the police came."

I had expected that my counsel would offer objections to Wick's testimony, especially to his having said that I did not appear anxious to "go back" into the apartment, but McGregor contented himself with two questions.

"Do you not know that Mr. Spalding Nelson is a grand-nephew of Mr. Rufus Gaston? Did not Mr. Gaston tell you of this relationship?"

"He did not," lied Wick calmly.

"How was Mr. Nelson first standing—when you got out of the elevator—when you first saw him?"

I recalled my attitude distinctly. I had been standing facing the door, straining my ears to catch any sound

"Is That Your Real Name?"

in the apartment. When I heard the elevator stopping, I had looked around over my shoulder as Wick emerged.

"He was standing," said Wick, of his own accord, speaking direct to the jurors, "with his back against the door. One hand—his right hand—was behind him. I thought at first he might have a revolver in it and drew one I always carry, but he had not. It looked as if he had just slipped out of the door and was reaching behind him to close it when I discovered him."

"That will be all," said my counsel, to my great disappointment. Throughout the mixed medley of truth and lies that Wick had been telling, there had been manifest to me his deliberate purpose to discredit me and cast suspicion on me. I felt certain that an abler lawyer could quickly have riddled his testimony, but McGregor showed no disposition to take advantage of his opportunity.

Nellie Kelly was called. Briefly she told of her job—switchboard operator at the Granddeck. She corroborated Wick's story of my first arrival at the Granddeck and bore out his statements about my having chatted with her and also told of having gone to dinner with me. When I had begun questioning her about other tenants, she said, she excused herself and went to the telephone and called up the Granddeck for advice as to how she should answer. For some reason, she said, when she returned after phoning, the defendant had not questioned her further but had seemed anxious to get away from the restaurant.

"You say," said McGregor, as he began her cross-examination, "that your name is Nellie Kelly. Is that your real name?"

My counsel's unexpected question came as a thunderbolt to the opposition. The whole courtroom seemed to sense that something crucial was about to be brought out. The jurors to a man leaned forward to listen for her answer. The district attorney, plainly puzzled, half rose in his seat and then subsided. Wick's face went white, and the girl herself started and her eyes turned helplessly to Wick, as if seeking instructions as to how to answer.

"Is that your real name?" McGregor repeated, this time a little more emphatically.

"It is—that is—it was," she stammered.

"It was your name," said McGregor sarcastically, "and what might be your name now?"

"My name," the girl hesitated, as if struggling with herself, and then casting a defiant look in Wick's direction, she answered with pride rather than with boldness, "my name is Mrs. Edward Moore."

"The wife of Lefty Moore, the burglar in Sing Sing, you mean, do you not?" sneered McGregor.

"I am," she replied with a proud lifting of her chin and a flash in her eye. "I'm Lefty Moore's wife, and I'm proud that I am—his lawfully wedded wife and I don't care who knows it. I love Lefty Moore."

There was instant consternation in the district attorney's camp. With visions of discredited testimony confronting him, he was on his feet roaring objections. Throughout the whole courtroom there was a sibilant stir, and the judge began rapping for order.

Close behind my counsel my mother had been sitting, accompanied by some woman wearing a heavy veil. I had paid little attention to her hitherto, supposing that it was some hotel maid whom my mother had hired to accompany her to court, for so far as I knew my mother had no women acquaintances in New York. This woman now, to my amazement, reached forward and plucked McGregor by the sleeve. As she pushed back her veil to whisper to him, to my utter surprise and consternation I saw that it was Barbara Bradford.

How had Barbara come to be sitting there in court at my mother's side? Delighted as I was at seeing her, I was puzzled and perplexed. I had sternly forbidden both Gorman and McGregor from making any plans to call her as a witness. I had urged her to keep silent and not become involved in any way in the case. My eyes sought hers for an explanation, but after that one whispered word, that I was unable to hear, she had quickly drawn her veil over her face.

"Your honor," said McGregor, rising, "in view of this unexpected testimony, I should like to request a recess."

"Granted," said the judge. "Adjourned until two o'clock."

CHAPTER XIV.

Impatiently I waited for the recess to be over. I could not understand what was happening. Neither Gorman nor my counsel came near me. Even my mother made no attempt, so far as I could learn, to see me. The one glimpse I had had of Barbara there in the courtroom had fired me again with wild desires to see her. My feelings were equally divided between hoping she would and hoping she would not make any effort to reach me—at least not until my trial was over.

That something was happening to keep them all away—something perhaps vital to my freedom—I was certain. On no other ground could I explain the fact of none of them seeking me for consultation. Yet what it might be I could not possibly conjecture. Eagerly I hurried into the courtroom again as soon as the recess was over, at once turning my eyes to see if the girl I loved was there.

Quickly I located her still sitting beside my mother. Her veil now was boldly thrown back, and as she gazed at me with sparkling eyes and a confident smile, I felt sure that across the distance she was trying to send some message of good tidings. My mother's face, too, I observed, now wore a happier look, and about Gorman and McGregor both was an air of greater confidence than either had manifested before.

What had happened? What had they found out? Eagerly I waited developments.

The telephone girl was recalled to the stand and her cross-examination resumed.

"Mrs. Moore," began McGregor—and I observed curiously that his voice in addressing her no longer was harsh and sarcastic but merely suave and impelling—"you have testified here as a witness against Mr. Spalding Nelson, accused of having murdered Daisy Lutan, have you not?"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

LOW IN SCALE OF HUMANITY

Cave Dwellers in the Canary Islands Practically Live as Do the Wild Animals.

Principal cave-dwellers' settlements in the Canaries are at Atalaya, in the island of Grand Canary. The name means the "Giant's burrow," and from a distance the place closely resembles a rabbit-warren or a honeycomb swarming with bees. The caves are more or less in terraces on the side of a steep rock, overlooking a glen and river bed. Atalaya supplies the entire group of the Canaries with clay pots, every cave having its own set of rude appliances for making pots, and the people display great ingenuity and quickness in the work. Men, women and children squat about at the entrances to their caves, kneading the clay with their hands into elegant jars and using their finger nails to apply decorative lines.

These troglodytes, or cave dwellers, are almost like wild animals, having no morals, and very little clothing to boast of. During the summer the children run about almost naked, and the woman wear the shortest of skirts. They are probably the last remnants of the aborigines of Grand Canary, who are known to have lived in caves 500 years ago. The cave dwellers are very different from the rest of the islanders, who look upon them as pariahs and would as soon think of intermarrying with monkeys as with them.—Wide World Magazine.

How the Python Kills.

The python kills by contraction, says Prof. John A. Jordan, in the Wide World Magazine. He says he has heard many discussions as to how this is done, some men stating emphatically that the python must get its tail around some solid object to get a leverage. Most agree, however, that the giant python can overpower and kill almost any animal. Some declare that the width of its jaws will only allow of the passage of an animal about the size of a goat. This is not correct, says Professor Jordan for he claims he has killed pythons with the horns of a Topi hartebeest sticking out of the jaw, and the Topi weighs well over 200 pounds.

Chautauqua or Circus.

The manager was strolling about the big Chautauqua tent, which had just been set up in a small Missouri town, and the boys were laying the plank seats, when the whir of engines was heard, and two automobiles appeared, racing furiously toward the Chautauqua grounds. They stopped side by side in the dust and smoke of heavily set brakes, and the drivers leaped from their seats and ran at top speed toward the astonished Chautauqua manager.

"I'm a butcher!" gasped the first.

"I'm a butcher!" cried the second.

Then both together they shouted, "I want the contract to furnish meat for the animals!"—Youth's Companion.

Short Story About Shellac.

Shellac is the joint product of insects and plants and comes from India. The lac insects are about 1.25 of an inch long, a bright red in color. They suck the juices of plants, digest them and exude them in the form of resin, which soon encases the whole insect. When the young insects have swarmed out, the resin is scraped from the branches, ground, washed, mixed with colophony and orpiment, cooked slowly and drawn out into the thin sheets we know as shellac.

In All-White Summer Garb

MODISTES and dealers have been casting about for a name suited to those luxurious looking sport clothes that are made of silks and used for informal but smart wear. They have been called "country club" clothes, but that high-sounding title is too narrow, while country wear is misleading, since the town is even more familiar with this order of apparel than the country. So far nothing has succeeded in taking the place of "sport clothes," which includes everything that is made for resort and pastime wear and worn almost anywhere.

A chic and handsome outfit of this kind is illustrated here. The always popular and always useful skirt of white wash satin makes a good beginning for it and a white tricolette blouse gives it an added luster. It is one of those slip-over, kimono-cut affairs that make one wonder why anything less simple is ever worn, they are so graceful. Disks in the material appear to be woven in, in a sort of knitted stitch resembling drawn work. Medallions of coarse lace might be set in plain tricolette and outlined with buttonhole stitch, to get this effect.

To emphasize its practical side a costume of this kind employs white canvas shoes and plain silk stockings, and to show allegiance to art, it is finished with an unusual hat. A small Breton sailor covered with white satin has an old applique pattern in petals for trimming and a very long white silk tassel falling from the crown. The costume is white from head to heels and its wearer a joy to look upon on midsummer days—a joy that many will share, for dress of this kind is at home on the streets.

Two-piece suits of white wash flannel and of white jersey cloth are made on simple and severely tailored lines, and answer the same demands as the costume pictured. They are only practical for out-of-the-city, because they must be immaculate to be attractive, and spend much of their time at the cleaners, but they are immensely smart.

"Why Veil the Rose's Bloom?"

ANY sophisticated and up-to-date young woman of today stands ready to answer the question quoted above, and the bard of Avon might not ask it if he were living in these times. Veils of the kinds we have now are very kind to the roses that bloom behind them and to the eyes that shine through them. It is the mission of some of them to heighten the charms they cover or to fix attention on them, and of others to soften or obliterate defects. Others still do not veil the face at all, but add the grace and life of flowing lines and the tone of fine lace to the costume. Small face veils do their bit in preserving neatness and add this unfailing charm to the street costume, and they are required also to be becoming.

In face veils there are varieties that are so fine that they are almost invisible and color is an important item in choosing them. The most popular patterns are in heavier threads and in large meshes, usually hexagonal or diamond shaped, but to be found in round, square and oblong mesh as well. Dots are less favored than small, odd figures or an embroidered lace pattern and nearly all veils have a border of some kind. Each of the three veils pictured is a type and of each type there are many varieties. Black, bright navy, brown, beige, tan and gray are fashionable colors in mesh veils; there is greater variety of color in chiffon veils, but they are another story.

The veil with diamond-shaped mesh and border of plain chiffon, in the group above proves quite generally becoming. Often the band is brought up close about the throat and sometimes it covers the chin. A lovely veil of black chantilly, covering a wide-brimmed straw hat, forms a hat trimming and a fascinating background for a fair face which it is not intended to cover. An embroidered pattern appears in a fine veil with hexagonal mesh having a deeply scalloped border and a floral pattern wandering over it. Veils are to be selected with as much care as hats for an immense amount of time and thought are given to making them becoming.

Julia Bottomley

Yellow Creeping In.

Some of the more exclusive dressmakers are snubbing the much loved jade and introducing yellow—yellow in the faint tones which correspond with flesh, yellow in intense shades which are expected to rival jade, yellow in soft, tawny, leathery tones which are possible for street wear, and yellow in brilliant evening shades. The summer will not be complete without an organdie and a linen in any of its various tones, and many a lace gown will be tinted either yellow or flesh.

Brilliant Linings.

Brilliant linings, bold in color combinations and design, are already reported as the trend in Paris for wraps of all kinds, and we have and shall have these linings here in greater variety as summer advances into early fall.

For Summer Days.

A white batiste frock for summer days, finished in checked gingham, yellow and white, a little around the skirt and sleeves and more puffed into paniers, is quite smart.

Shadowless Petticoats.

Double panel shadowless petticoats of white silk have deep ruffles with hemstitched hem, sometimes done in pointed lines instead of straight. These semi-tailored petticoats are particularly practical as well as smart.

Bright Shoes for Sports Wear.

Bright red leather slippers are a Paris mode, and smart American women have already taken to bright colored shoes for sports wear.

Large Taffeta Hats.

Large taffeta hats trimmed with leather are the newest thing in the millinery shops.

Home Town Helps

COUNTRY'S NEED OF HOMES

Apartment House Can Never Really Take the Place of the Individual Abode.

In helping solve the housing problem of the cities the apartment house meets a very real demand. There is need for such houses with sufficient rooms to care for families. There is a place for others with smaller quarters where bachelor apartments may be maintained. It is well for cities to have apartment houses in such numbers as to help meet the demand for quarters from those who prefer to live in rooms without the advantage of yard and garden.

But it is far better for a city to have a hundred new separate homes erected than to have a hundred-family apartment houses constructed. The proper and natural way of living is for one family to have a house, with the little grass plot in the yard, a bit of garden in the back part of the lot, with the freedom and conveniences and privacy that separate homes provide. Columbus has a housing demand now that calls for some more apartment houses, those with proper conveniences and a rental not too great. But it has a greater need for more separate homes. There are hundreds of vacant lots, the cost of the building being suited to the neighborhood. There is a great need for the homes that will care for small families, homes within the purchasing power of the man of limited means, who has saved some money, is well employed and wants to pay out for his home during the coming years. Every man is a better citizen when he becomes a home owner.—Ohio State Journal.

HAS THREE GOOD PURPOSES

New Public Park Fixture Would Seem to Be About the Last Word in Drinking Fountains.

Three purposes are served by an artistic new public park fixture, which comprises sanitary drinking fountains, watering troughs for dogs, and a lamp post. The latter is a fluted iron column, set on a four-sided concrete base, and surmounted by a frosted-glass globe. For canine use, there are

Perfect Drinking Fountain.

two metal basins, located near the bottom of the base, opposite each other, while for humans there are four porcelain-enameled fountains, one on each side of the base at such a height as to be convenient for both adults and children.—Popular Mechanics Magazine.

Work of "City Beautiful."

The Cleveland Betterment council has undertaken the work of trying to make Cleveland not only a healthful city and a clean city, but a beautiful city as well. Everyone who keeps his yard and his place in immaculate order will receive a letter of commendation thanking him for his interest in the furthering of the "City Beautiful" movement.

It is proposed that a vigorous campaign be started to clean up the city, also that everyone should plant up his yard, and if he has no yard, to have window boxes or porch boxes surrounding his home.

Two Groups of Rice Plants.

Rice is the chief sustenance of one-third of the world's population. It has been cultivated from time immemorial in tropical and semitropical countries and more than 1,000 different varieties have been recognized. The rice plant is similar in appearance to wheat, but instead of having a compact "ear" it bears a head composed of fine stalks, each of which contains one grain. The grains are covered with a brown husk; when separated from the rest of the plant they are known as "paddy." Rice plants may be broadly divided into two main groups, namely, "upland" or "hill" rice and "lowland" or "wet" rice. Upland rice can be cultivated as any ordinary crop, whereas "wet" rice is sown under conditions necessitating the flooding of the fields for a considerable time during the growing period.

Religious Belief About Dove.

The people of northern Europe used to say that the ring dove (a partly domesticated bird well known to them) perched near the cross when Jesus was dying, and wailed out its sorrow, to alleviate the sufferings of him who was crucified. A dove with six wings is one of the types of the Church of Christ.

More Beef Than Brains.

Some men weigh a lot more on the scales than they weigh in the community.—Boston Transcript.