

GHOST HOLLOW

"Take Jack Hobbs with you to Winikak Bay," said Sergeant Daley of the Portland police, "and see if you can get a line on the rum-runners in that district; at the end of the week, if you have not heard or found out anything, report to me for further orders. I would strongly advise you also to go fully prepared. Have plenty of ammunition and grub. You may take the car as far as the condition of the roads will permit."

Towards the evening of the third day, a thick, heavy fog began to descend, which thoroughly wet us and made it almost impossible to discern objects at a distance of twenty yards. Jack and I had been walking during the whole day and we were nearly exhausted from the mud and mist that enveloped us. As we trudged along the road leading to Winikak, we watched for some place where we might gain shelter for the night. Finally, as we descended into what seemed a wooded valley, we saw an old house. This, we thought, would be a suitable place to stay and rest.

Around the house was a picket fence so rotten, indeed, that it was not safe to lean upon. The glass was broken out of the windows. The shingles were decayed, and there were places where they had rotted off and now the boards showed. As I gazed on this structure and heard the moaning of the buoys and the roar of the sea, a chill ran through my body; but as it was, perhaps, the only shelter for five miles, and as the fog was settling heavier in the gathering dusk, we decided to remain for the night.

On entering, we found ourselves in a long hall. The floors were bare and the paper on the walls hung down in places, almost touching the floor, which was strewn with plaster that had fallen from the ceiling. We opened a door and entered another room. This we believed to be the kitchen. There was a stove, three or four chairs and a table. In one corner was a cupboard, and to our astonishment it contained a few plates and other kitchen necessities. Sitting on the table was a small lamp, which we lit. In another corner was a small cellar hatch partly concealed by a mat, and it would not have been noticed but for my tripping over the ring used to raise it.

In a manner that was not strange to him, Jack at once began to prepare supper from the kit which we always

carry with us. Since we had a fire in the stove, we decided that we would sleep in the kitchen. Spreading our blankets in the corner directly opposite the cupboard, we lay down and were soon fast asleep.

It must have been eleven o'clock when we were awakened by a dreadful noise that seemed to rock the floor beneath us. It was followed by an unearthly scream which came, as far as we could determine, from the cellar directly under us. It came again and again, and reechoed through the house. Trembling with fear, I looked over towards the stove, and my attention was drawn to the hatch in the corner, which was moving upward as if someone was trying to get out of the cellar, but in the dim light of the fire I could not see any cause for this. Slowly it rose until it was nearly perpendicular to the floor and then fell with a bang. We lay still for a time, and again the hatch began to ascend. Soon after the cupboard swayed to and fro, at the same time howls and screeches seemed to issue from every corner in the house. The plates rattled and rolled as if they had taken legs and were actually jumping around on the shelves. Then the hatch began to ascend slowly again and I thought I saw a dark form disappear into the cellar.

Finally, despairing of any rest, we ran into the yard. All was silent now. The fog, which had hung so thickly during the early hours of night, had lifted, and the moon shone brightly at intervals, giving the trees a somewhat ghost-like appearance. The moaning of the sea, together with the splash of the water on the rocky shore, were the only things that broke the death-like stillness of the night. We sat down on the doorstep to rest and collect our scattered wits. After a time we went in again. There was no noise now, and no sign of anyone's having made any noise. Nothing seemed to be disturbed. We lay down again and were soon asleep, despite the weird interruption we had experienced.

The next morning after a hasty breakfast, we went out to take the fresh air before beginning our investigation.

"Good morning," came a voice from the back of the house, "it seems rather good to see anyone round here. Generally people try to avoid this place."

Thinking another apparition had come upon us, we both turned to gaze upon a man who had every appearance of being a farmer. Getting over my surprise, how-

ever, I gazed at him for a moment and asked, "why should that be?"

"Because," replied the stranger, "this place is supposed to be haunted. For my part I don't think it is, because I never believed in Ghosts. But there is a story told of a man who killed his wife and child here some years ago, and then went and hanged himself on yonder birch. Ever since his spirit is supposed to roam around the yard, and especially in the house, bewailing the murder of his wife and babe."

With this he continued on his way. After his departure it occurred to us that we should immediately search the house. We entered and began our investigation. We opened the hatch—for it seemed to be the centre of the nightly revels of the ghost—and descended into a narrow passage by means of a ladder that creaked and groaned under our weight. The passage was dimly lighted by a small window. But nothing was to be seen here. We were about to go when suddenly Jack cried out in surprise. He had stumbled in the poorly lighted passage and put his hands out to the wall for protection; instantly a door opened. It was painted a dark red, resembling the clay of the wall, and would not be easily perceived by anyone. Evidently he had touched a secret spring that opened the door. But search as we might we could not find any spring.

With ready revolvers and quivering nerves we crawled into the darkness. Directly ahead was a dim light, and as we approached we could see four or five rough-looking men seated on the ground around a lamp. Two more were busy packing cases in a passage leading out towards the shore. We crept nearer and listened. From their conversation we found out that they were bootleggers, and had this tunnel to hide their illegal goods. Immediately we advanced with our revolvers ready; but this precaution was hardly necessary, for they surrendered without resistance. On inquiry they told us that they had taken advantage of the stories concerning the house to cover their unlawful trade. They also explained that they had caused the noise and that one of their number had come out of the cellar to tilt the cupboard back and forth in an attempt to frighten us away and thereby prevent investigation and subsequent discovery.

A. E. L. '31.