



# INITIALS ONLY

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"THE FILIGREE BALL" "THE HOUSE OF THE WHISPERING PINES"  
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## SYNOPSIS.

George Anderson and wife see a remarkable looking man come out of the room at the Clemons hotel, look around furtively, wash his hands in the snow and pass on. Chatterton attracts them to the Clemons, where it is found that the beautiful Miss Edith Challoner has fallen dead. Anderson describes the man he saw wash his hands in the snow. The hotel manager declares him to be Orlando Brotherson. Physicians find that Miss Challoner was stabbed and not shot, which seems to clear Brotherson of suspicion. Grevy, an aged detective, and Sweetwater, his assistant, take up the case. Mr. Challoner tells of a batch of letters found in his daughter's desk, signed "O. B." All are love letters except one, which shows that the writer was displeased. This letter was signed by Orlando Brotherson. Anderson goes with Sweetwater to identify Brotherson, who is found in a tenement under the name of Dunn. He is an inventor. Brotherson tells the coroner Miss Challoner repulsed him with scorn when he offered her his love. Sweetwater recalls the mystery of the murder of a woman in a rooming house in which some details were similar to the Challoner affair. Challoner admits his daughter was deeply interested, if not in love with Brotherson. Sweetwater gets lodgings in the same building with Brotherson. He watches the inventor at work at night and is detected by the latter. The detective moves to a room adjoining Brotherson's. He borrows a hole in the wall to spy on Brotherson. He visits him and assists the inventor in his work. A girl sent by Sweetwater with Edith Challoner's letters is ordered out by Brotherson. He declares the letters were not written by him. Sweetwater is unmasked by Brotherson, who declares he recognized him at once. The discovery is made that the letters signed "O. B." were written by two different men. Sweetwater goes to Derby in search of the second "O. B." whom he expects to locate through one Doris Scott, mentioned in the letters. She is found acting as nurse for Oswald Brotherson, who is critically sick and calls the name of Edith in his delirium. Sweetwater comes across a peculiar hat in the woods. He sees a load of boxes marked "O. B." Brotherson, taken into the hut under the supervision of Doris Scott.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.—Continued.

"I cannot tell; I do not know," said she. "Nobody knows, not even the doctor, what effect the news we dread to give him will have upon Mr. Brotherson. You will have to wait—we all shall have to wait the results of that revelation. It cannot be kept from him much longer."

"You have had much to carry for one so young," was Mr. Challoner's sympathetic remark. "You must let me help you when that awful moment comes. I am at the hotel and shall stay there till Mr. Brotherson is pronounced quite well. I have no other duty now in life but to sustain him through his trouble and then, with what aid he can give, search out and find the cause of my daughter's death which I will never admit without the fullest proof, to have been one of suicide."

Doris trembled.

"It was not suicide," she declared, vehemently. "I have always felt sure that it was not; but today I know."

Her hand fell clenched on her breast and her eyes gleamed strangely. Mr. Challoner was himself greatly startled.

"I've not told any one," she went on, as he stopped short in the road. In his anxiety to understand her, "But I will tell you. Only, not here, not with all these people driving past; most of whom know me. Come to the house later—this evening, after Mr. Brotherson's room is closed for the night. I have a little sitting-room on the other side of the hall where we can talk without being heard. Would you object to doing that?"

"No, not at all," he assured her. "Expect me at eight. Will that be too early?"

"No, no. Oh, how those people stared! Let us hasten back or they may connect your name with what we want kept secret."

He smiled at her fears, but gave in to her humor; he would see her soon again and possibly learn something which would amply repay him, both for his trouble and his patience.

But when evening came and she turned to face him in that little sitting-room where he had quietly followed her, he was conscious of a change in her manner which forbade these high hopes.

"I don't know what you will think of me," she ventured at last, motioning to a chair but not sitting herself. "You have had time to think over what I said and probably expect something real—something you could tell people. But it isn't like that. It's a feeling—a belief. I'm so sure—"

"Sure of what, Miss Scott?"

She gave a glance at the door before stepping up nearer. He had not taken the chair she proffered.

"Sure that I have seen the face of the man who murdered her. It was in a dream," she whisperingly completed, her great eyes misty with awe.

"A dream, Miss Scott?" He tried to hide his disappointment.

"Yes; I knew that it would sound foolish to you; it sounds foolish to me. But listen, sir. Listen to what I have to tell and then you can judge. I was very much agitated yesterday. I had to write a letter at Mr. Brotherson's dictation—a letter to her. You can understand my horror and the effort I made to hide my emotion. I was quite unnerved. I could not sleep till morning, and then—and then—I saw—I hope I can describe it."

Grasping at a nearby chair, she leaned on it for support, closing her eyes to all but that inner vision. A breathless moment followed, then she

murmured in strained monotonous tones:

"I see it again—just as I saw it in the early morning—but even more plainly, if that is possible. A hall—I should call it a hall, though I don't remember seeing any place like it before, with a little staircase at the side, up which there comes a man, who stops just at the top and looks intently my way. There is fierceness in his face—a look which means no good to anybody—and as his hand goes to his overcoat pocket, drawing out something which I cannot describe, but which he handles as if it were a pistol, I feel a horrible fear, and—and—" The child was staggering, and the hand which was free had sought her heart where it lay clenched, the knuckles showing white in the dim light.

Mr. Challoner watched her with dilated eyes, the spell under which she spoke falling in some degree upon him. Had she finished? Was this all? No; she is speaking again, but very low, almost in a whisper.

"There is music—a crash—but I plainly see his other hand approach the object he is holding. He takes something from the end—the object is pointed my way—I am looking into—into—what? I do not know. I cannot even see him now. The space where he stood is empty. Everything fades, and I wake with a loud cry in my ears and a sense of death here."

She had lifted her hand and struck at her heart, opening her eyes as she did so. "Yet it was not I who had been shot," she added softly.

Mr. Challoner shuddered. This was like the reopening of his daughter's grave. But he had entered upon the scene with a full appreciation of the ordeal awaiting him and he did not lose his calmness, or the control of his judgment.

"He seated, Miss Scott," he entreated, taking a chair himself. "You have described the spot and some of the circumstances of my daughter's death as accurately as if you had been there. But you have doubtless read a full account of those details in the papers; possibly seen pictures which would make the place quite real to you. The mind is a strange storehouse. We do not always know what lies hidden within it."

"That's true," she admitted. "But the man! I had never seen the man, or any picture of him, and his face was clearest of all. I should know it if I saw it anywhere. It is imprinted on my memory as plainly as yours. Oh, I hope never to see that man!"

Leaning toward her that he might get her full attention, he waited till her eyes met his, then quietly asked:

"Have you ever named this man to yourself?"

She started and dropped her eyes.

"I do not dare to," said she.

"Why?"

"Because I've read in the papers



"It is he! It is he!"

That the man who stood there had the same name as—

"Tell me, Miss Scott."

"As Mr. Brotherson's brother."

"But you do not think it was his brother?"

"I do not know."

"You've never seen his brother?"

"Never."

"Nor his picture?"

"No, Mr. Brotherson has none."

"Aren't his friends? Does he never mention Orlando?"

"Very, very rarely. But I've no reason to think they are not on good terms. I know they correspond."

"Miss Scott?"

"Yes, Mr. Challoner."

"You must not rely too much upon your dream."

Her eyes flashed to his and then fell again.

"Dreams are not revelations; they are the reproduction of what already lies hidden in the mind. I can prove that your dream is such."

"How?" She looked startled.

"You speak of seeing something being leveled at you which made you think of a pistol."

"Yes, I was looking directly into it"

"But my daughter was not shot. She died from a stab."

Doris' lovely face, with its tender lines and girlish curves, took on a strange look of conviction which deepened, rather than melted under his indulgent, but penetrating gaze.

"I know that you think so—but my dream says no. I saw this object. It was pointed directly towards me—above all, I saw his face. It was the face of one whose finger is on the trigger and who means death; and I believe my dream."

Well, it was useless to reason further. Gentle in all else, she was immovable so far as this idea was concerned, and seeing this, he let the matter go and prepared to take his leave.

She seemed to be quite ready for this. Anxiety about her patient had regained its place in her mind, and her glance sped constantly toward the door. Taking her hand in his, he said some kind words, then crossed to the door and opened it. Instantly her finger flew to her lips and, obedient to his silent injunction, he took up his hat in silence, and was proceeding down the hall, when the bell rang, startling them both and causing him to step quickly back.

"Who is it?" she asked. "Father's in and visitors seldom come so late."

"Shall I see?"

She nodded, looking strangely troubled as the door swung open, revealing the tall, strong figure of a man facing them from the porch.

"A stranger," formed itself upon her lips, and she was moving forward, when the man suddenly stepped into the glare of the light, and she stopped, with a murmur of dismay which pierced Mr. Challoner's heart and prepared him for the words which now fell shudderingly from her lips.

"It is he! It is he! I said that I should know him wherever I saw him." Then with a quiet turn towards the intruder, "Oh, why, why, did you come here!"

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### Do You Know My Brother?

Her hands were thrust out to repel, her features were fixed; her beauty something wonderful. Orlando Brotherson, thus met, stared for a moment at the vision before him, then slowly and with effort withdrawing his gaze, he sought the face of Mr. Challoner with the first sign of open disturbance that gentleman had ever seen in him.

"Am I in Oswald Brotherson's house?" he asked. "I was directed here. But possibly there may be some mistake?"

"It is here he lives," said she, moving back automatically till she stood again by the threshold of the small room in which she had received Mr. Challoner. "Do you wish to see him tonight? If so, I fear it is impossible. He has been very ill and is not allowed to receive visits from strangers."

"I am not a stranger," announced the newcomer, with a smile few could see unmoved, it offered such a contrast to his stern and dominating figure. "I thought I heard some words of recognition which would prove your knowledge of that fact."

She did not answer. Her lips had parted, but her thought or at least the expression of her thought hung suspended in the terror of this meeting for which she was not at all prepared. He seemed to note this terror, whether or not he understood its cause, and smiled again, as he added:

"Mr. Brotherson must have spoken of his brother Orlando. I am he, Miss Scott. Will you let me come in now?"

Her eyes sought those of Mr. Challoner, who quietly nodded. Immediately she stepped from before the door which her figure had guarded and, motioning him to enter, she begged Mr. Challoner, with an imploring look, to sustain her in the interview she saw before her. He had no desire for this encounter, especially as Mr. Brotherson's glance in his direction had been anything but conciliatory. He was quite convinced that nothing was to be gained by it, but he could not resist her appeal, and followed them into the little room whose limited dimensions made the tall Orlando look bigger and stronger and more lordly in his self-confidence than ever.

"I am sorry it is so late," she began, contemplating his intrusive figure with forced composure. "We have to be very quiet in the evenings so as not to disturb your brother's first sleep which is of great importance to him."

"Then I'm not to see him tonight?"

"I pray you to wait. He's—he's been a very sick man."

"Dangerously so?"

"Yes."

Orlando continued to regard her with a peculiar awakening gaze showing, Mr. Challoner thought, more interest in her than in his brother, and when he spoke it was mechanically and as if in sole obedience to the proprieties of the occasion.

"I did not know he was ill till very

late. His last letter was a cheerful one, and I supposed that all was right till chance revealed the truth. I came on at once, I was intending to come anyway. I have business here, as you probably know, Miss Scott."

She spoke her head. "I know very little about business," said she.

"My brother has not told you why he expected me?"

"He has not even told me that he expected you."

"No?" The word was highly expressive; there was surprise in it and a touch of wonder, but more than all, satisfaction. "Oswald was always close-mouthed," he declared. "It's a good fault; I'm obliged to the boy."

These last words were uttered with a lightness which imposed upon his two highly agitated hearers, causing Mr. Challoner to frown and Doris to shrink back in indignation at the man who could indulge in a sportive suggestion in presence of such fears, if not of such memories, as the situation evoked.

"The hour is late for further conversation. I have a room at the hotel and will return to it at once. In the morning I hope to see my brother."

He was going, Doris not knowing what to say, Mr. Challoner not desirous of detaining him, when there came the sound of a little tinkle from the other side of the hall, blanching the young girl's cheeks and causing Orlando Brotherson's brows to rise in peculiar satisfaction.

"My brother?" he asked.

"Yes," came in faltering reply. "He has heard our voices; I must go to him."

"Say that Orlando wishes him a good night," smiled her heart's enemy, with a bow of infinite grace.

She shuddered, and was hastening from the room when her glance fell on Mr. Challoner. He was pale and looked greatly disturbed. The prospect of being left alone with a man whom she had herself denounced to him as his daughter's murderer, might prove a tax to his strength to which she had no right to subject him. Pausing with an appealing air, she made him a slight gesture which he at once understood.

"I will accompany you into the hall," said he. "Then if anything is wrong, you have but to speak my name."

But Orlando Brotherson, displeased by this move, took a step which brought him between the two.

"You can hear her from here if she chances to speak. There's a point to be settled between us before either of us leave this house, and this opportunity is as good as another. Go to my brother, Miss Scott; we will await your return."

A flash from the proud banker's eye; but no demur, rather a gesture of consent. Doris, with a look of deep anxiety, sped away, and the two men stood face to face.

"Mr. Challoner, do you know my brother?"

"I have never seen him."

"Do you know him? Does he know you?"

"Not at all. We are strangers."

It was said honestly. They did not know each other. Mr. Challoner was quite correct in his statement.

"Men sometimes correspond who do not know each other. You knew that a Brotherson lived here?"

"Yes."

"And hoped to learn something about me—"

"No; my interest was solely with your brother."

"With my brother? With Oswald?"

What interest can you have in him apart from me? Oswald is—"

Suddenly a thought came—an unimagined one; one with power to blanch even his hardy cheek and shake a soul unassailable by all small emotions.

"Oswald Brotherson!" he repeated; adding in unintelligible tones to himself—"O. B. The same initials! They are following up these initials. Poor Oswald!" Then aloud: "It hardly becomes me, perhaps, to question your motives in this attempt at making my brother's acquaintance. I think I can guess them; but your labor will be wasted. Oswald's interests do not extend beyond this town; they hardly extend to me. We are strangers, almost. You will learn nothing from him on the subject which naturally engrosses you."

Mr. Challoner simply bowed. "I do not feel called upon," said he, "to explain my reasons for wishing to know your brother. I will simply satisfy you upon a point which may well rouse your curiosity. You remember that—that my daughter's last act was the writing of a letter to a little protegee of hers, Miss Scott was that protegee. In seeking her, I came upon him. Do you require me to say more on this subject? Wait till I have seen Mr. Oswald Brotherson and then perhaps I can do so."

Receiving no answer to this, Mr. Challoner turned again to the man who was the object of his deepest suspicions, to find him still in the daze of that unimaginable thought battling with it, scoffing at it, succumbing to

it and all without a word. Mr. Challoner was without clue to this struggle, but the might of it and the mystery of it, drove him in extreme agitation from the room. Though proof was lacking, though proof might never come, nothing could ever alter his belief from this moment on that Doris was right in her estimate of this man's guilt, however unsubstantial her reasoning might appear.

How far he might have been carried by this new conviction; whether he would have left the house without seeing Doris again or exchanging another word with the man whose very presence trifled him, he had no opportunity to show, for before he had taken another step, he encountered the hurrying figure of Doris, who was returning to her guests with an air of marked relief.

"He does not know that you are here," she whispered to Mr. Challoner, as she passed him. Then, as she again confronted Orlando who hastened to dismiss his trouble at her approach, she said quite gaily: "Mr. Brotherson heard your voice, and is glad to know that you're here. He bade me give you this key and say that you would have found things in better shape if he had been in condition to superintend the removal of the boxes to the place he had prepared for you before he became ill. I was the one to do that," she added, controlling her aversion with manifest effort. "When Mr. Brotherson came to himself he asked if I had heard about any large boxes having arrived at the station shipped to his name. I said that several notices of such had come to the house. At which he requested me to see that they were carried at once to the strange looking shed he had put up for him in the woods. I thought that they were for him, and I saw to the thing myself. Two or three others have come since and been taken to the same place; I think you will find nothing broken or disturbed; Mr. Brotherson's wishes are usually respected."

"That is fortunate for me," was the courteous reply.

But Orlando Brotherson was not himself, not at all himself as he bowed a formal adieu and withdrew past the drawn-up sentinel-like figure of Mr. Challoner, without a motion on his part or on the part of that gentleman to lighten an exit which had something in it of doom and dread presage.

## CHAPTER XXX.

### Chaos.

It is not difficult to understand Mr. Challoner's feelings or even those of Doris at the moment of Mr. Brotherson's departure. But why this change in Brotherson himself? Why this sense of something new and terrible rising between him and the suddenly beclouded future? Let us follow him to his lonely hotel room and see if we can solve the puzzle.

But first, does he understand his



"What Do You Wish to Ask?"

own trouble? He does not seem to. For when, his hat thrown aside, he stops, erect and frowning under the flaring gas jet he had no recollection of lighting, his first act was to lift his hand to his head in a gesture of surprising helplessness for him, while snatches of broken sentences fell from his lips among which could be heard:

"What has come to me? Undone in an hour! Doubly undone! First by a face and then by this thought which surely the devils have whispered to me. Mr. Challoner and Oswald! What is the link between them? Great God! what is the link? Not myself? Who then or what?"

Flinging himself into a chair, he buried his face in his hands. There were two demons to fight—the first in the guise of an angel. Doris! Unknown yesterday, unknown an hour ago; but now! Had there ever been a day—an hour—when she had not been as the very throbbing of his heart, the light of his eyes, and the crown of all imaginable blisses?

This was no passing admiration of youth for a captivating woman. This

was not even the love he had given to Edith Challoner. He did not know himself. There was nothing in his whole history to give him an understanding of such feelings as these.

He, Orlando Brotherson, had never thought much of love. Science had been his mistress; ambition his lodestar. Miss Challoner had roused—well, his pride. He could see that now. The might of this new emotion made plain many things he had passed by as useless, puerile, unworthy of a man of mental caliber and might. He had never loved Edith Challoner at any moment of their acquaintance, though he had been sincere in thinking that he did. Doris' beauty, the hour he had just passed with her had undeceived him.

Did he halt the experience? It was not likely to bring him joy. This young girl whose image floated in light before his eyes, would never love him. She loved his brother. He had heard their names mentioned together before he had been in town an hour Oswald, the cleverest man, Doris, the most beautiful girl in western Pennsylvania.

He had accepted the gossip then; he had not seen her and it all seemed very natural—hardly worth a moment's thought. But now—

And here, the other demon sprang erect and grappled with him before the first one had let go his hold. Oswald and Challoner! There is more than Fate's caprice in Challoner's interest in a man he never saw. Had he found the connecting link? Had it been—could it have been Edith? The preposterous is sometimes true; could it be true in this case?

He recalled the letters read to him as hers in that room of his in Brooklyn. He had hardly noted them then, he was so sure of their being forgeries, gotten up by the police to mislead him. Could they have been real, the effusions of her mind, the breathings of her heart, directed to an actual O. B., and that O. B., his brother? Oswald had been east, Oswald had even been in the Berkshires before himself. Oswald—Why it was Oswald who had suggested that he should go there—go where she still was. Why this second coincidence, if there were no tie—if the Challoners and Oswald were as far apart as they seemed and as conventionalities would naturally place them. Oswald was a sentimentalist, but very reserved about his sentimentalities. If these suppositions were true, he had had a sentimentalist's motive for what he did. As Orlando realized this, he rose from his seat, aghast at the possibilities confronting him from this line of thought. Should he contemplate them? Risk his reason by dwelling on a supposition which might have no foundation in fact? No. His brain was too full—his purposes too important for any unnecessary strain to be put upon his faculties. No thinking! Investigating first. Mr. Challoner should be able to settle this question. He would see him. Even at this late hour he ought to be able to find him in one of the rooms below; and, by the force of an irresistible demand, learn in a moment whether he had to do with a mere chimeric of his own overwrought fancy, or with a fact which would call into play all the resources of an hitherto unconquered and undaunted nature.

There was a wood-fire burning in the sitting-room that night, and around it was grouped a number of men with their papers and pipes. Mr. Brotherson, entering, naturally looked that way for the man he was in search of, and was disappointed not to find him there; but on casting his glances elsewhere, he was relieved to see him standing in one of the windows overlooking the street. His back was to the room and he seemed to be lost in a fit of abstraction.

Orlando was, as I have said, an extraordinary specimen of manly vigor in body and in mind, and his presence in any company always attracted attention and roused, if it never satisfied, curiosity. Conversation accordingly ceased as he strode up to Mr. Challoner's side, so that his words were quite audible as he addressed that gentleman with a somewhat curt:

"You see me again, Mr. Challoner. May I beg of you a few minutes' further conversation? I will not detain you long."

The gray head turned, and the many eyes watching showed surprise at the expression of dislike and repulsion with which this New York gentleman met the request thus emphatically urged. But his answer was courteous enough. If Mr. Brotherson knew a place where they would be left undisturbed, he would listen to him if he would be very brief.

For reply, the other pointed to a small room quite unoccupied which opened out of the one in which they then stood. Mr. Challoner bowed and in another moment the door closed upon them, to the infinite disappointment of the men about the hearth.

"What do you wish to ask?" was Mr. Challoner's immediate inquiry.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)