

Grosvenor Lane Ghost

By Jeremy Tyrrell

Book 1 of Paranormology

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Dedication

For my guide, instructor, bag of laughter and brother,
Kieran.

The Professor

It may be some time before this manuscript sees the light of day, perhaps well after I am long gone from this world. As such, I have decided, given the frustrating rate of progress, to write down this story so that my experiences might not go with me.

I was only a young lad when I first met the Professor. It was probably for the best, since it meant my preconceptions were limited. Maybe that was why he hired me.

As I think back, I was barely a man, dressed as well as my few remaining coppers would allow, sitting at the bench receiving a private lecture. For the past week I had been settling into my new found occupation, learning quickly about this and that, applying whatever skills I had learnt previously.

It was late in the day when I had been called aside from my duties. The Professor had been rabbiting on about his personal theory pertaining to other-worldly phenomenon.

“Are you listening? It's the light, you see. Something about the spectrum, something about the higher end in particular. Exactly what it is, I don't know. That's something I'm hoping to find out.”

I shook my head, not quite sure what he was getting at. Truth be told, I had not really paid attention over the past hour and I had not the foggiest idea of what he was going on about.

“Well, it's not just that, but it certainly plays a part in it. I mean, from what I've read, you can banish them in the twinkling of an eye with a strong light. It's anecdotal evidence, of course, but it's compelling. I've been meaning to set up a few experiments, you see, that will allow me to figure out whether it's a threshold, or a particular colour, or even a combination of colour or if, in fact, it has nothing to do with nature of the light at all, rather the intensity.”

I held up my hand in a bid to slow him down, but he

continued unabated. He has that habit, as I would find out, of continuing on whether anyone was listening or not. It is like he has a bladder in his brain, swollen and distended, and once the valve is released his thoughts gush out to relieve the pressure within.

For a while I sat, listening to the ramble in a quiet hypnotic state, letting his words flood about me. It was only after a few minutes that my brain decided to catch up with current events.

“...and that brings under the microscope all manner of questions, such as how the light interacts with them in the first place or if there is some kind of unknown effect that plays a part in it. It's a doozy, I'm telling you, what with all the possibilities it opens up,” he cried, his engine revving, “Because then you have implications upon Momentum, that mighty stone of science, and Force and Energy! *Energy!*”

“Energy,” I nodded.

“Yes, Energy. And if there is such an interaction, then the Laws of Physics as we apply them today would then need to be applied to all events, otherwise they aren't Laws, now, are they? And if they cannot be, in certain circumstances, applied, what then?”

“What then indeed?” I asked, doing my best to keep up.

I failed. There was just so much to comprehend, so much that seemed simply unreal that my mind gave up making sense of it all and concentrated on something small and tangible. I needed something I could hold onto. He was looking at me expectantly through his circular glasses, wiggling his eyebrows, swirling a pair of marble-balls in his hand.

“So, um, Professor?”

“Yes?”

“Can I see them?”

“Who?”

“The, um, the ghosts.”

“I don't know. Can you?” he asked, wiggling his dark eyebrows harder, shaking his pointed beard and looking around, mockingly, “Is there one in here right now?”

“I don't see one.”

“How would you know if you did?”

“I, um, I guess that I should discern a face or a body or, I don't know, something.”

His eyebrows stopped wiggling and dropped back down over his eyes like a canopy. He was growing frustrated, I could tell, that I did not understand what he was driving at.

“That's your problem there, lad, hoping for the obvious to show up. That's the problem with the whole damn field. Everyone wants one they can sit and chat to, that they can relate to, that they can put a ruddy face on. And the clairvoyants and soothsayers have just made a complete mess of it. Now the only thing that people want, what they *demand*, is a half exposure of someone in a white sheet.”

He tugged at his goatee beard in vexation.

“That's the problem. It's *expectations*, is what it is. It's you projecting what you want to see and hear and feel over what you actually see and hear and feel. It's a farce. It's a shambles,” he remonstrated, rifling through a drawer and bringing up a handful of photographs.

“And it always comes down to the visuals. Well, so be it. There!” he announced, thumping his finger on the pile, awaiting my reaction.

After a couple of seconds I timidly reached forward and took up a few, flicking through the grainy images of walls and doors and floors. On each was a series of glowing dots.

“What do you see?” he asked.

“I'm not sure if I'm supposed to see anything,” I admitted as I squinted, “It looks like a couple of doorways. I can see some paint peeling there...”

“You've got an eye for detail. That's good, that's

commendable, but look first, lad, for the obvious.”

“Oh,” I said, squinting and looking closer.

He sighed, pulling my head back from the photograph and circling the picture with his finger.

“The *obvious* first,” he growled, pointing to bright circles on the pictures, “These! In the air, floating about here.”

I shrugged, thoroughly confused, “And is this what I am looking for?”

“No! No! No! This is simply what *others* look for! These blobs of light are nothing more than dust specks in the air, nothing more! They act as tiny reflectors, catching the camera flash and shining light back onto the lens, looking for all the world like floating points of light. And they can be created at a whim, and discredited just as fast, for they are well known in the field,” he said, taking the photographs back and taking his time flicking through, “And I would not waste my time chasing dust, now, would I? No. I wouldn't, let me tell you. But what I might chase is this!”

The last photograph of the pile was placed under my nose. It looked very similar to the rest, with a glowing dot positioned a little off-centre, somewhere near the door covered in peeling paint. I expressed my indifference, expecting another lecture.

“I thought you would say that. Everyone says that. But here, here is the thing. That dot there is *not* a piece of dust.”

“It's not?”

“No. Does it look like the other floating specks?”

“Well, yes.”

“Does it have the same intensity?”

“No. No I guess it doesn't.”

“Look closely. I instructed you before to look for the obvious first. Now I want you to look for the nuance, the subtlety, the obscure, the latent little clues that will yield the answer.”

He handed me a magnifying glass so I could get a better look. I was only an assistant, back then, and I was still quite raw. What could I possibly see or say that would be of use to the Professor? Still, I looked closely and compared the tiny ball with the other photographs.

“It's certainly, um, *subdued*, isn't it? I'm not sure if that's the right word. And it does look different to the other pictures that you have here. But surely brightness is not...”

“Is not what I would base a discovery on, no. But look closer. These photographs, this one, and this one, all of them, are taken with a flash. You can see the reflections here, easily enough, on the opposite wall, on that door. The light, you see, is coming out from just above the camera and reflecting back to the lens. That's the flash,” he said, sounding a little giddy, “Whereas with *this* one, the light is coming from the orb itself! See? Look again!”

I looked once again at the photograph. It was true. The only reason I could see the paint peeling on the door was from the light coming from the point that hovered just next to it. The shadows caused by the paint flecks were also at a different angle. The Professor nodded sagely as I pointed this out.

“Plus, the point of light was not blurred and close to the lens, as with these dust specks, this is further away, right next to the door there and, if you use this,” he instructed while impressing upon me an even larger magnifying glass, “You can see that the image is quite well defined, not hazy and fuzzy like these, and that there is an apparent *structure* to the ball. Yes? It has a geometry!”

I took my time examining his evidence. Certainly this was no speck of dust, nor a clumsy reflection. The question had to be asked, however, and I was more than a little afraid to do it. He sensed my hesitation and, no doubt, knew what I was thinking.

“As for being some kind of double exposure, yes, I can

see how one may think that it would be possible. But here's the thing: With a double exposure you include a bunch of artefacts into an image with the express purpose of defining a disembodied face for the fancy of a wealthy client. Do you see a face? No. Do you see a floating white sheet? No. That's because there isn't one. If you're looking for something like that, I'm very happy to disappoint. That's showmanship. It's charlatanism. It's dishonourable and disrespectful to the field and I simply won't do it," he sniffed, "It brings everything down to the level of mere money grubbing, whereas I am a man of science. If those boobs stumbled upon the genuine article, they'd just as soon sell it to make a buck. If I make no pennies tomorrow but uncover undeniable proof of the existence of such beings that would start up this field in earnest, I will die a happy man."

"So you say," I said, a little more familiar than I would like.

As it was, the Professor did not take it the wrong way.

"I *do* say. And it is natural for you to be sceptical, for that's what happens when you let a bunch of no good, blind, frivolous, money-hungry gypsies run the show," he seethed, "I was sceptical myself. I have to be, being a man of science. But there are two things to which I can attest that will allay you of any suspicions. Firstly, that cannot be a double exposure, for the paint flecks on the door to be visible, for that embossing to show up, for the handle to reflect the light like that, overlaying a glowing dot would do no such things."

"Yes, Professor. I have worked with a photographer once," I said, immediately regretting my words.

I hoped that he would not ask me why I was no longer working with the photographer. He did not.

"Hmm? Oh. Good. That may come in handy."

He looked a little peeved that he had lost his train of speech, so I prompted him, "So, what's the second reason?"

“Ha! The second is that I consider the taker of this photograph to be credible. Very credible. Almost infallible. You see, *I* was the one who took the picture.”

“You?”

“On my word, I saw this very orb with my own two eyes! And this can be shown by the nature of the photograph once more: The angle of the door frame is not square to the edges. There is nothing of interest in the shot itself, no stairway or mantle-clock or fireplace or whatever the tricksters prefer to use in their images. The dot itself is close to the centre of the frame, but this is only because I turned the camera at the last instant to capture its image!” he said with a laugh, “A second later and you'd be looking at black plate. You see, it was all I could do to hit the shutter when I saw the spectacle, it moved so fast...”

“You *saw* it?”

“Yes! Keep up, now! I saw it, with my own two eyes, I saw it! One moment I was taking shots in the dark, testing a new plate that I've been working on. It works on the lower end of the spectrum, you know, in what is known as infra red.”

“Infer red?”

“No, no. *Infra*. If we look at the spectrum as the rainbow – you do know that colours of the rainbow, don't you?”

I immediately felt a little silly, “Of course! There's red and yellow and pink and green and purple...”

“Stop there. Stop, stop, stop! I know the rhyme. Well. It might interest you to know that there isn't really a red, a yellow, a pink and a green.”

“What?”

He rummaged underneath his desk and came up empty handed. Cursing quietly to himself, he left the room to fish about in his study, clanking and clattering away as he searched about. I took the opportunity to look at the photographs again.

My initial misgivings slowly gave way the more I

inspected and compared the shots. While I am no photographer, and cannot profess to be anything remotely close to an expert on the topic, as an observer who has used his eyes his entire life and has relied upon them for many different things, I would argue that my opinion would be as good as any other layman's in judging the artefacts before me.

The light coming from the dust reflecting back to the lens was evidently a common problem with photographers taking images of old houses or castles. Time had allowed copious, uncountable drops of dust to settle about, ready to fall and tumble through the air should a bumbling oaf come stomping through.

The one plate of interest, however, was nothing like this. The crispness of the ball, the definite glow that it emitted, the *form!* It had a geometry to it, that was striking. It was positioned quite close to the door, almost like it was resting against it, like it was making its mind up whether to enter the room or leave again.

“Here! Sorry about that. You buy these things and use them for demonstrations, then they grow legs and walk off by themselves. I've got a mind that Miss Fitzgerald is playing games with me,” muttered the Professor, assembling a prism within a holder, “I've found so many things that I thought were lost, and I'm convinced that, unless I placed them away when I was under the effects of some opiate, which, mind you, I could never be since I do not partake in it, then she has been toying with me... the blinds, lad! The blinds!”

I, lost in his rambling words, looked up, startled, “I'm sorry?”

“Don't be, and pull the blinds down! We need darkness for this demonstration! Wait! Let me light this lantern first.”

After a few minutes to find the lantern, a few minutes more to refuel it, and yet another few minutes to find some matches, “I don't smoke any more,” he had added, and a few

minutes more to attach an iris, he was ready to begin.

Finally, with the curtains drawn tightly, we sat in the hot glow of the lantern.

“Now watch closely, for this is the meat of the matter. Ha! Now to make it a little clearer, I shall put up this white piece of paper here. No, maybe a little further back. Yes, there. Now if I adjust his lantern to limit the light to only project this much, maybe less, you don't mind the dark, do you? Good.”

He adjusted the aperture of the lantern, slowly closing the iris until it let through only a thin stream of light. The blinds were quite effective, and I found myself captivated by the tiny emission, claiming my attention since it was the brightest thing in the room.

“Note the line produced by the beam of light is fairly invisible until it should strike another surface, like the paper. When it strikes it rebounds haphazardly, casting itself about the room. If I should sprinkle a little dust, there, you can see clearly the rod of light, yes?”

“Yes I can,” I observed.

“Good. And you'll notice, too, that the dust that might be present within the beam also acts to scatter the light about. From this we can surmise that one of the natures of light is that it prefers to continue as it is until something should present itself as an obstacle.”

I nodded, “So, similar to the momentum of a body?”

“How so?” he asked at my suggestion, eyebrows raised.

“Um. Well, I am not entirely familiar with the topic as you would be, but from what I understand, it was one of Sir Isaac Newton's famous statements, was it not, that spoke about a body in motion, and that the body prefers to maintain its motion unless acted upon by an unopposed force.”

My face went red. Here I was, a young, half-educated upstart talking to a seasoned Professor about a topic near to any Physician's heart.

He strummed his beard, “That’s a good analogy, I should suppose, but there is more to that story. For it applies to a body at rest, you know, and from what we can tell, light is never really at rest. But I suppose if it aids your understanding, then you should stick with it.”

“Sorry.”

“Don’t be! I use analogies all the time! So long as you do not carry them too far, or give them more credit than they are due, they are very useful indeed,” he said, “Now let us continue. Bring that prism holder closer, will you? Keep it in the holder, it’s expensive you know, don’t drop it, a bit to the left...”

We adjusted the position of the prism until it interfered with the beam of the light, causing the homogeneous ray to separate itself into a rainbow, projected neatly onto the paper.

“And here is your spectrum.”

“I see.”

“Yes, you do. But note what I was saying before. What colour is this?”

I shrugged, “Red.”

“Very good. Very good. Now what colour is this?”

“Green, Professor.”

“And you are right again, full marks. Now here is a trickier question: Is red the same as green?”

I laughed spontaneously at his question, for I was expecting it to be something more scientific in nature.

He looked deadpan, “What is so funny?”

“Well, red is not green, Professor.”

“Then why not just say so? Why laugh?”

My face turned red, a hotness I sensed was plainly visible even in the darkness, “Well, I, er, I’m not sure. It’s an obvious answer, isn’t it?”

I could see his teeth from the lamplight leaking around the edges of the aperture, “My good lad, nothing is *obvious*. I’d

be out of a job, otherwise. Even the simplest of questions can be broken down to find some very, very strange conclusions and some cannot even be answered definitively at all.”

I said what I said whenever I had nothing left to say (which was often), which was, “Yes, Professor.”

He lowered his voice to a growl that shook my nerves some, “So I’ll ask again, is red the same as green?”

My mind felt a little dizzy. I did not wish to disappoint him or face another lecture.

“Um. No?”

“No? You sound unsure.”

“Yes?”

The Professor dragged his hands across his face, “Is it yes or no? Be observant! Make an observation!”

I breathed deeply, “No. Red is not the same as green.”

“It isn’t?”

“No.”

“Are you certain this time?”

“Yes.”

“Good. That was my conclusion as well. I see red, I see green, and I see that they are not the same. So let us play a little game.”

He took out a ruler from his pocket and handed it to me along with a pencil.

“Please mark, on the paper there, where red ends and where green begins.”

“But, um, there are other colours in between.”

“Then mark them out, also.”

Clumsily I drew on the page a line, just after the sheen of red turned to an orange. I measured a little across and drew another line between orange and yellow, then between yellow and green.

“You’ve marked this area as being distinct from this area, and this from this and so on,” he said, taking the pencil from

me and pointing to the portions, “And this appears to be a valid separation, for this red here is clearly different from this orange, and this yellow likewise. Now, move the paper to the next bench please.”

“Further away?”

“Yes, just onto the next bench there. Note that the further the prism is from the paper, the greater the spread of the colours. This is to be expected.”

“I should suppose,” I replied, coming back to the professor, but he stopped me.

“No, stay there. I want you to do the same as before.”

“But it's too wide, now. The green has fairly moved off the paper.”

“That's quite alright. Just mark out the individual areas as best you can.”

I scratched my head and began again, this time getting up to yellow before going back on my work. The larger distance and greater separation of colours showed that there was something else afoot.

“It might be wise, to play this properly, to indicate that there are actually differences in colour between the orange and the red, and the orange and the yellow,” I muttered.

The Professor merely grinned, showing his teeth over his goatee beard, “And this is where our game becomes difficult. Where, pray, does the red *stop* being red?”

“Around about here, I should think. It's more of an orangey kind of..”

“Around about? Use the ruler, man! Draw a line! Surely red is red only up to a point?”

“Well, um, then there,” I said, making my mark, “But it's a little hazy. It's hard to make it distinct.”

“So it is. If it was easy, it wouldn't be much of a game. But that shows you yet another strange facet of light. Red is not red. Red is merely the name we give to the colour of light that

is, as you said, around about there. Ish. Kind of. Sort of. Give or take,” he chuckled, “And that part you pointed out could easily, should I occlude this portion of the spectrum like so, it could easily pass as an orange.”

He held a card in front of the ray of light, blocking sections of the spectrum.

“I guess it could.”

“So, rather than a distinct separation of colours, one may conclude that the colours of the rainbow encompass a very gradual and subtle transition.”

“That is a revelation,” I said, looking closely at the rainbow, “I never thought of it like that.”

“Probably because you've not been taught to think of it like that. I could go on for some time about this topic, you know...”

“No doubt you could,” I mumbled, thinking about the long-winded lecture that morning.

“...for there are many, many interesting attractions to this field of optics. One, for example, is that when passing white light through particular media, we find that voids within the spectrum are produced.”

“I'm sorry?”

“Voids. Missing colours. Colours that otherwise would be there, but are strangely diminished in their intensity. It's a conundrum, one that I hope to examine when I've time, and one that is currently being scrutinised by some of my contemporaries.”

I pondered, “Why not join them?”

“I would, I would. But currently they are looking at merely reproducing what can be reproduced, and measuring what can be measured. It's a rather tedious part of study. I think that I shall be more content to examine what evidences they've gathered,” he said.

“But that might preclude you from discovering

something important along the way.”

His eyebrows dropped and his chin jutted forward, thrusting his beard at me, “I don't do this for accolades, lad! It's for the betterment of understanding! It's for knowledge! My pride has no place in the history books, and it won't help any formulas to be derived.”

“My apologies. It's just that...”

“Every other scientist you've come across is hell-bent on being the next, great Pascal, the next Bernoulli?”

I reluctantly nodded, “Yes, in fact. I would not have put it so bluntly, but.”

“I know it. They have glorious visions of having their minds celebrated, thrust into the sky for all to admire. They revel in the gasps of wonder at their achievements, listen intently for their name being tied to a phenomenon, or a formula, or a method. And, while I'm not about to deny that such an honour would be most appreciated on my part, it would be only as a bonus to what reward I should receive upon discovering that vital piece of evidence, that delicious nugget upon which I can deliberate with my peers and bring the field away from the occult and into the light of science,” he intoned, his eyes sparkling softly in the lamplight, “And that is why I would like you to understand first what it is that you are looking for.”

“I see.”

“Or, rather, you don't!”

“But...”

“No, no. There is one last little portion of this game that I wish for you to play. The next step is only natural in the sequence that we've, so far, played out. Mark, with your graphite upon the paper, the point where you can no longer see any red light,” he instructed.

Carefully I took my ruler and drew a line where I determined that the redness was no longer visible. Again, it was

a little unclear, but I was determined to mark it where there was not an speck of light showing.

“Good. That will do just fine. You've seen, then, that the light is dispersed across the paper, from red, through green, through cyans and blues, up through to violet. And, although it may appear obvious to you, we can see nothing further past that violet there, and nothing further past red in the other direction,” he summarised, quickly opening the blinds.

The sudden brightness caused me to squint. I could not tell if the Professor was doing the same, for he had donned a pair of shining, obsidian glasses.

“And so having established this clear set of rules, we need to ask ourselves if there is anything outside of the visible spectrum? Anything past the end lines that you have made?”

“I, um, I should think so.”

“But you cannot see it.”

“No,” I admitted plainly, “I can't...”

“Can you smell it? Go on, have a sniff. Can you feel it? If the answer is no, how can you form an opinion?”

I held my hands up, “Because you have already said that there is this infernal red!”

“*Infra* red, lad! That's right, though. I've already given you the answer. But, as a true scientist, you will want evidences for yourself, and I would think it only proper to demonstrate these to you. However, I fear we do not have as much time as all that, for I mean to get you into training...”

I started, “Training?”

“... immediately. And for this I will require you to accept, at my word, that the spectrum continues unabated to the left and to the right, before the red and after the violet.”

“I have no objection to take this at face value.”

“You should!”

“What? But I don't! I'll be happy to question it, if you like.”

“No! Not if *I* like, it should – look, the necessity to question is a fundamental quality of a scientist! I was hoping for a bit more resistance...”

I shot, perhaps a bit too cheekily, “You were hoping to give another lecture!”

He harrumphed, “Quite! Quite! Another lecture indeed!”

“I mean no offence, Professor.”

“Yes, well, ahem, *had* you doubted me, I could have cited many experiments that point to the contrary and, I shall yield, I would be proud to demonstrate them for you. Well, take it as you like, but I expect that, as a friend and fellow you will question me more on this topic later!”

I nodded, happy to have one over the Professor, “I will. Thoroughly. But about this training.”

“Ah, yes. The training. You see, in order to test my theories of the effect of light upon the subjects, I need first to ensure that I can readily and repeatedly gain access to a subject.”

“A subject? You mean a ghost?”

“Call it what you will.”

“But how...”

“Can I conjure up a ghost? I cannot. But what I can do is use the power of statistical analysis to show me when a ghost is more likely to be manifest.”

“Yes, Professor.”

“Imagine, if you will, that I might perform such a similar experiment as that with the prism, at the drop of a hat, on demand, just like that,” he said, clicking his fingers, “Whenever I should please. That's repeatability. That's why I need successive encounters: so there can be no doubt. No speculation. No jeering from the audience.”

“Do you wish to capture a ghost?”

“Good Lord, no! Well, perhaps. That's a thought I hadn't entertained. But, no, my plan was, and still is, to use a

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