

HOUSE OF SHADOWS

by Ida R. Gleason

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CHAPTER IV

She had been too excited to see that her hand was hurt by broken glass, but now she was aware of a throbbing pain. Pat tried to stop the bleeding with his handkerchief and Susie sent Eb for a bandage.

"Dan Dallas," Bob said, "is sleeping on the premises?"

"He's around," Susie answered. "Yes, in the cabin down near the tool house."

"He's a—"

"Hold your tongue, Susie," ordered Pat. "He had come back in time to the conversation. He turned to the conversation. He turned to the conversation. He turned to the conversation."

"I don't know where this shooting is coming from nor who's doing it," said Pat. "I suspect anyone."

"The three of us had to give the place the once-over."

"An hour the light from the lanterns flickered about the place as a careful search was made. Not a trace of anything or anyone could be found. Down at his feet, he had been awakened and found, but said he had seen nothing that would indicate a hostile force."

"I looked around the place after the dog was killed," he told them. "I couldn't find anyone."

"And you didn't hear anything?" asked Bob.

"No," Dan answered. Pat meant to wait over to a corner of the cabin and picked up a gun. He was leaning against the wall. He was leaning against the wall. He was leaning against the wall."

"This shell is empty, Dallas. Looks like it had been fired recently."

"The man turned and looked coolly at the questioner. 'I shot one bullet yesterday,' he said."

"Well, come along out with us. We're going to look over the place."

"The light was breaking when the dog finally ended without result. When he came back into the house."

"I was telling Susie again the mark on the wall behind the door. Dan listened with an expression of interest in his eyes. 'You ever run across that kind of thing?' he asked suddenly."

"She cast a quick glance at the mark. 'But how should I know it?' he asked."

"I, who had dropped into a chair, sprang to his feet. 'Come on. It's light enough now to go up the cupola and give it the once-over.'"

"And you and I had better get started, Susie," Claire urged. "We'll all need something to eat after such a night."

"What happened to him?" Pat asked.

"Oh, he took up with a fellow who came from out California ways. They went up to the kid's claim and worked it all summer. One ran pretty good, too. I used to see quite a lot of them both when they came down for the town dances. Then one night they both been drinking a lot and had a fight."

"Over you, perhaps, Miss Spratt?" asked Pat, his eyes twinkling. "I'll bet you were by way of being a town belle when you were young."

"Susie shot him a coquettish glance. 'Go on with you, Mr. Pat.' Then she sobered. 'I ain't sayin' what was the cause o' the row. Anyway they drifted long toward morning and we never see the white miner again. And the other one only once more when he went through town on his way back to California, so he said. A year or two after someone found a man's skeleton under the flooring in their cabin. They couldn't prove it was the kid, though you can't make no one 'round here believe it wasn't his. Only the folks do say when something's goin' to happen, the white miner is seen again trudging along the mountain trails.'"

"And someone's met up with him lately?" asked Bob Steele.

"Susie nodded solemnly. 'George Banes, the butcher down in the village, said he seen him plain over near the big dump on Squaw Mountain the other night.'"

"Dan abruptly pushed back his chair."

"Where's that?" asked Pat.

"Opposite the house here," Claire told him. She added slowly, "The mountain that fired the gun at me."

"Um," Pat shrugged his shoulders. "This is getting good—white miner—mysterious shootings. Come on, let's go out and look at these chippings where someone's been getting busy. I'd like to do a little digging myself around the cupola. See if we can unearth another arrow sign."

"The sun was beginning to redden the sky as they went outside. 'Wonder where Eb is?' asked Bob. 'I'll go down to the tool house and get some shovels from him. Dan said he was there, didn't he?'"

"Pat nodded and walked on around the cupola. Dan was already there, staring down at the ground. 'Someone's already started digging here.' He pointed to a small hole close by the cupola wall."

"Pat dropped to his knees and examined the place closely. 'That's been done recently,' he announced. He made a careful circle of the surrounding grass and bushes. 'Here comes Bob. Let's see what he makes of this.'"

"But Bob was looking at the cap he held in his hand. 'Isn't this Eb's?' he asked Dan."

"The man nodded. 'Well, I found it down near the tool house, but Eb wasn't there. Did he come up here?'"

"No," began Pat and then stopped. "What the—?"

"Yes," said Bob slowly. "There are fresh blood stains on it. Blood—but where is Eb?"

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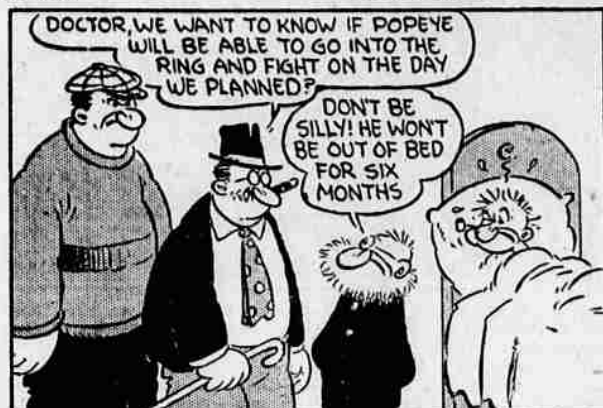
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