

By HAROLD GRAY

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fitted the rifle. If it did, he would

have a showdown with Dan at once. He felt sure that Dallas knew more than he was telling.

But Pat did not reach the cabin. As he made his way around the edge of the aspen grove, he saw something moving up the winding trail on Squaw Mountain. He stopped and watched. A man in white was plainly visible, wearing his way in and out along the curving loops of the path. For a minute Susie's fantastic story of the white miner rushed back to Pat's mind.

"Apple sauce!" He said it aloud. Then he started off at a brisk run to follow. If there really was a white apparition he would soon know it.

The steepness of the trail slowed down his impetuous pace to a steady effort. He had time to review again the events since the evening before.

The old house, crouching Sphinx-like in the shadow of the huge twin-topped pine. Murderous shots in the dark. Eb gone —and now Bob lying seriously injured. Things like that just didn't happen, not in this unromantic day.

Pat had come quite a way. Those trees that had towered above him a few minutes ago now were spindling tops. He looked across at the Fosdick house, thinking that the arrow mark in Lyman Fosdick's room certainly pointed in this direction, too. Could it have meant, after all, something as distant as Squaw Mountain? A gleam of white ahead made him bend his shoulders and once more take up the rocky trail.

He began to save his breath and energy, stopping at brief intervals, then trudging on again. Whatever else the man in white might be, he was sure a hang-up mountain climber, Pat decided, after several more loops of the trail, in which he did not seem to be gaining on his quarry. What if, after all, he was following some image of his own imagination, inflamed perhaps by lack of sleep and anxiety over Bob?

He shook the idea from his mind and peered ahead. Yes, there was no doubt about a distinct white figure crossing a shale drift at this very minute.

"No spook ever had to be that cautious," Pat told himself, and started on again.

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As he rounded the curve that brought him to the edge of the shale, he was astonished to see the man in white vanish suddenly from sight.

"Well, I'll be—!" Pat hurried across the sliding, sharp particles, every bit of his sense of balance brought into play to maintain his position on the shifting footing.

At last he was over. Before him

Could this be what the arrow meant? Every claim in this part of the country was duly recorded, as he well knew, so why the mysterious hokum on Lyman Fossick's part?

The hole explained the disappearance of the man in white, however. Pat determined to investigate further since he had come this far.

The entrance was still well timbered, he discovered, as with the aid of a box of matches, and later a cigarette lighter, he made his way along the damp passage. Once he thought he heard a noise ahead, but could not be sure it wasn't a bat. The walls showed unmistakable signs of having been excavated for mining purposes though there didn't seem to be any cross cuts, as yet.

Pat's last match was gone, and he was afraid the cigaret lighter would give out. He decided to retrace his steps, and slipped the lighter in his pocket. His hand felt cold as he could not see his way back without its help and he might need it—

Strong arms seized him from behind, and he found himself in the grip of an antagonist as clever as he was muscular. After the first shock of surprise, Pat's fighting Irish blood rushed to his rescue. Twisting sharply, he managed to jerk one arm free and plant a blow that crunched tellingly against firm flesh and bone. The thought flashed through his mind that at least he was not fighting a shabby enemy. Again and again he was thrown over. In the light darkness, ending the clutching hands that gouged at his eyes.

Once for a brief second he gripped his opponent's hand in his own, and his mind automatically noted the fact that he would know this man if he ever met him again, for the little finger of that hand was cut off. This was known was a past master of all the devilish tricks of an underworld fighter. Pat realized it was a battle to the death. The blackness and silence added to the horror. He could be killed here without anyone being the wiser.

Once again he landed a smashing uppercut, then felt himself being battered backward along the slimy, rotting boards that formed the flooring of the tunnel. Desperately he braced himself, and tried to regain his lost position. His foot stepped suddenly into space, and Pat felt himself falling down—down into darkness.

(To Be Continued)

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Orientals do not make better acrobats than Americans and Europeans, contrary to popular belief.

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