OUSE OF SHADOWS

by Ida R. Gleason © 1936 NEA Service, Inc.

CHAPTER X

swift twilight of the mountains inning to fall as Claire gained en air. Everything about her normal and peaceful, and al- she was beginning to feel d of her fright.

fine treasure hunter you make, e away like a scared rabbit the first noise you can't ex- she scolded herself.

put down the empty lamp and resolutely through the aspen to the tool house. "I'll get a r or something and see if I find out what's going on down cellar," she told herself. "May- n Dallas could dig—" But on thought she decided to see she could do alone. She was not sure about Dan Dallas.

securing the crowbar and a kerosene, she passed the open door. She could see Susie, about getting supper and talk- Dan Dallas who sat by the peeling potatoes. Claire paused r voices came to her.

ard anything from your brother sie?" the man was asking.

Susie did not turn from the "But he's all right. I ain't n' none. He often goes off half- like that, if he happens to something he wants down in city. Eb always was closer ed than a ward politician. At couldn't help think of the white but when I got to figurin' it I decided Eb'd gone to the city, at's all there is to it."

," granted Dan. "How do you the cap with the blood

, you ain't tryin' to work up a story 'round here, are you? I see such a scary crowd! Eb ly banged his head on some- r other and come in and got his hat. It's gone out of his room, y, I looked to see."

is?" Dan glanced up at her "And you figure Mr. Steele irt in an accident, too?"

re. I heard the Doc say he ir slipped and fell against some- It's easy to do on them pine s. They're slick as grease after walked on 'em long enough." at's Miss Fosdick up here for, y?"

housekeeper shrugged. "It's ose, ain't it? I suppose she's e right to come and upset things me she takes the notion. But I, e, will be glad when she goes kes that old hell-cat of a Han- rd her. The men are all right— at woman!"

en you think she just happened e up here?" he persisted. "How explain the gun with the silenc- d the dog being killed, and the arrow mark?"

w should I know?" Susie's voice d sharp. Then she turned with ettish smile. "Try one of these s. If I do say so, as I shouldn't, sure make 'em."

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re waited a minute longer, but id not return to the subject, so ent on to the cellar. Queer that Dallas should be quizzing Susie. had put the silencer on his own roof, why should he mention it ? Was he testing her to see if ew Eb had borrowed the gun? walked to the farther wall of ellar, where she had heard the g sounds. Dead silence. She put ar against it and thought she something, but could not be Experimentally she struck the with the crowbar. Almost at here was a response, like a big beating with horrible regularity here in the darkness.

kwardly she began digging, and several minutes had quite a size- ole. Painfully she flexed her ed muscles. On the floor at her y a pile of dirt half as high as rge barrel of salt pork nearby. ercy, what a mess!" she gasped "If I don't find anything, what- will Susie say?" But Claire not feel very penitent. After e House of Long Shadows be- to her, not Susie.

ast she was forced to stop, and more she put her ear against wall. Certainly something was g behind there. She must go f only she dared to ask Dan to help her!

e thoughts raced through her as she worked. When she was to stop for breath, she fancied unds were growing louder. she be nearing the solution of ystery? And what would she Suppose she should suddenly through a retaining wall and er some horror better left

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r's nervousness by this time ginning to get the best of her, she still worked on steadily. next she stopped for breath, ought she could hear a new against the wall. Like someone ing heavily—or was it only her laboring lungs and pounding She sat down on the pile of to rest, then moved the lamp to of the pork barrel so that its fell directly over her shoulder. examined the hole closely, but, so far as she could see, all sides of it were firm enough. Apparently there was no sign of anything falling from above.

Wearily she started in again, and the very next stroke thudded with a different sound. Claire stopped in fright and listened. Dead silence. If there had ever been any movement or noise beyond that darkness, it certainly was not there now. Half-timidly she dug farther.

Now the crowbar was cutting through an opening. There could be no doubt about that. Breathlessly she brought the lamp and held it close to the small place where the sharp point of the instrument had gone through. What was her astonishment to see—not darkness, as she expected—but a dim, wavering radiance. She blinked her eyes and looked again. It was gone. Then it had been only her imagination. She carried the lamp back and started making the hole larger.

After much effort she again brought the lamp, for now the opening was large enough to put her own head through. Carefully she moved the light so that she could see for quite a radius in the gaping darkness.

Apparently she had cut into another small tunnel. The air seemed fresh and cool. Piles of fresh dirt lay before her, and at one side a piece of wood. Then she gave a start. Something black was crumpled close to the wall just below her. She turned the lamp so she could see, then gave a little cry.

A man. Though he was so covered with dirt he looked hardly human. He was lying face down in the soft earth, quite motionless. Claire watched for a terrified moment, then spoke to him, though her voice sounded strangely cracked and unnatural.

He did not move, so she reached her hand through and touched him on the shoulder. Was it a corpse or had he just dropped unconscious? She must go for help. Quickly Claire started to back out of the hole, when her attention was caught by another sound before her.

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She stopped, listening and holding the lamp ahead of her to throw as long a light ray as possible. Something or somebody was certainly stirring on the other side of the opening. Maybe the man on the ground—

Without warning and for the second time since she came to the House of Long Shadows, the lamp in her hand shattered into bits. There was a sudden rumbling, and then darkness closed about her.

But not for long. Almost immediately from behind her another circle of light swept the opening and there was a deafening report. Claire collapsed in a frightened heap. Then, finding she was not hurt, she turned to see Dan Dallas, flashlight in one hand, a still smoking revolver in the other.

He leaped to her and drew her back into the cellar, being careful to keep out of range of the hole.

"Hurt, Miss Fosdick?"

"N-no. I guess not. But what—?" Claire began.

"Another close call. You aren't due to be shot, evidently." His tone sounded relieved. Without waiting for further explanation, he crept back into the hole, his gun ready.

But now there was only silence. Then Susie's frightened voice called from the steps outside.

"Dan! What is it?"

Claire ran to her and grasped the housekeeper's arm as she came down into the cellar. "Hush!" Claire commanded tensely. Still clutching Susie firmly, she dragged her forward and held her firmly against the wall.

After what seemed an endless wait, Dan crawled back. "He got away again."

"But he was on the floor—he didn't move. I even touched him," Claire gasped.

"On the floor?" Dan turned and went back into the opening. After listening for several minutes he cautiously lowered his flashlight to the other side of the hole and turned it on.

"There's someone here. Can you hold the light for me while I make the opening large enough to drag him through? Keep to one side. There was someone else in there, too. This fellow didn't do the shooting because he's already dead." Then, seeing Susie, he told her threateningly, "Don't you dare make a move."

Claire held the electric torch while Dan dug with quick, strong movements. Then he reached down and dragged the inert form through the hole. Claire held her breath, while Susie made queer little clucking noises in her throat as though she were half-dead with fright. Carefully Dallas turned the man over on his back. Claire gave a gasping cry.

"Pat—why it's Pat!"

(To Be Continued)

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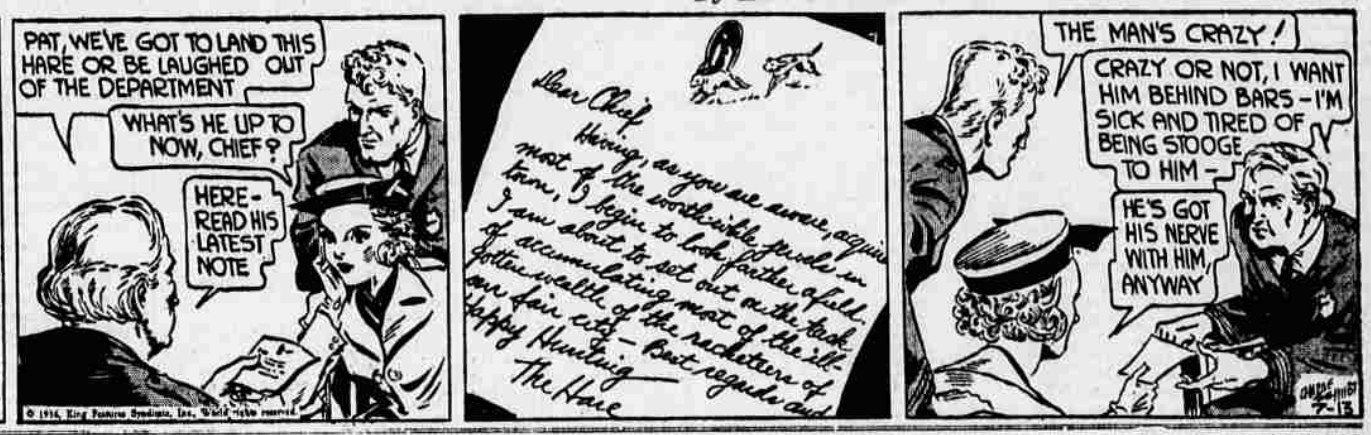
FOREWORD:

FOR SOME TIME A PERSON, SELF-STYLED "THE HARE", HAS BEEN ANNOYING THE POLICE WITH WARNINGS OF HIS INTENDED JEWEL ROBBERIES AND HAS BOASTFULLY TAUNTED THEM WITH HIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS.. TRAP AFTER TRAP HAS BEEN SET FOR THE THIEF, BUT WITHOUT SUCCESS, WHILE THE NEWSPAPERS HOLD UP TO RIDICULE THE EFFORTS OF THE POLICE TO CAPTURE THE DARING BANDIT.. SPECIALIZING IN THE THEFT OF FAMOUS JEWELS AND GEM COLLECTIONS "THE HARE" HAS MADE MANY RICH HAULS—ALWAYS OPERATING ALONE, HE HAS EVEN TURNED OVER TO THE POLICE MALEFACTORS USING HIS NAME.



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