

# THE BAT

A Novel from the Play  
By Mary Roberts Rinehart and Avery Hopwood

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WNU Service

### STORY FROM THE START

Defying all efforts to capture him, after a long series of murders and robberies, a super-crook known to the police only as "The Bat" has brought about a veritable reign of terror. At his wife's end, and at the man's own request, the chief of police assigns his best operative, Anderson, to get on the trail of the Bat.

### CHAPTER II—Continued

She had skimmed the paper hurriedly—now a headline caught her eye. "Failure of Union Bank"—wasn't that the bank that Courtleigh Fleming had been president of? She settled down to read the article, but it was disappointingly brief. The Union bank had closed its doors—the cashier, a young man named Bailey, was apparently under suspicion—the article mentioned Courtleigh Fleming's recent and tragic death in the best vein of newspaperese. She laid down the paper and thought—Bailey—Bailey—she seemed to have a vague recollection of hearing about a young man named Bailey, who worked in a bank—but she could not remember where or by whom his name had been mentioned.

Well—it didn't matter. She had other things to think about. She must ring for Lizzie—get up and dress. The bright morning sun, streaming in through the long window, made lying in bed an old woman's luxury—and she refused to be an old woman.

"Through the worst old woman I ever knew was a man!" she thought with a satiric twinkle. She was glad Sally's daughter—young Dale Ogden—was here in the house with her—the companionship of Dale's bright youth would keep her from getting old-womanish if anything could.

She smiled, thinking of Dale. Dale was a nice child—her favorite niece. Sally didn't understand her, of course—but Sally wouldn't. Sally read magazine articles on the Younger Generation and its wild ways. "Sally doesn't remember when she was a Younger Generation herself," thought Miss Cornelia. "But I do—and if we didn't have sports roadsters in the eighties we had buggies—and youth doesn't change its ways just because it's bobbed its hair." Before Mr. and Mrs. Ogden left for Europe, Sally had talked to her sister Cornelia. . . long and weightily, on the problem of Dale. "Problem of Dale indeed!" thought Miss Cornelia scornfully. "Dale's the nicest young thing I've seen in some time—and she'd be ten times happier if Sally wasn't always trying to marry her off to some young snip with more of what fools call 'eligibility' than brains!"

But there, Cornelia Van Gorder—Sally's given you your Innings—rambling off to Europe and leaving Dale with you all summer—and you've a lot less sense than I flatter myself you have, if you can't give your favorite niece a happy vacation from all her immediate family—and maybe find her some one that'll make her happy for good and all into the bargain!" for Miss Cornelia was an incorrigible matchmaker.

Nevertheless, she was more concerned with "the problem of Dale" than she would have admitted. Dale, at her age, with her charm and beauty—"why, she ought to behave as if she were walking on air," thought her aunt, worriedly. "And instead she acts more as if she were walking on pins-and-needles. She seems to like being here—I know she likes me—I'm pretty sure she's just as pleased to get a little holiday from Sally and Harry—she amuses herself—she falls in with any plan I want to make—and yet—" And yet Dale was not happy—Miss Cornelia felt sure of it. "It isn't natural for a girl to seem so lack-luster and—quiet—as if her age—and she's nervous, too—as if something were preying on her mind—particularly these last few days."

Then Miss Cornelia's mind seized upon a sentence in a hurried flow of her sister's last instructions—a sentence that had passed almost unnoticed at the time—something about Dale and "an unfortunate attachment—but of course, Cornelia, dear, she's so young—and I'm sure it will come to nothing now her father and I have made our attitude plain!" "Pshaw—I bet that's it," thought Miss Cornelia shrewdly. "Dale's fallen in love, or thinks she has, with some decent young man without a penny or an 'eligibility' to his name—and now she's unhappy because her parents don't approve—or because she's trying to give him up and finds she can't. Well—" and Miss Cornelia's tight little white curls trembled with the vehemence of her decision. "If the young thing ever comes to me for advice I'll give her a piece of my mind that will surprise her—and scandalize Sally Van Gorder outen out of her seven senses. Sally thinks nobody's worth looking at if they didn't come over to America when our family did—she hasn't gumption enough to realize that if some people hadn't come over later, we'd all still be living on crullers and Dutch punch!"

She was just stretching out her hand to ring for Lizzie, when a knock came at the door. She gathered her Paisley shawl more tightly about her shoulders. "Who is it—oh, it's only you, Lizzie," as a pleasant Irish face, crowned by an old-fashioned pompadour of graying hair, peeped in at the door. "Good morning, Lizzie—I was just going to ring for you. Has Miss Dale had breakfast—I know it's shamefully late."

"Good morning, Miss Nelly," said Lizzie, "and a lovely morning it is, too—if that was all of it," she added, somewhat tartly, as she came into the room with a little silver tray whereupon the morning mail reposed.

"We have not yet described Lizzie Allen—and she deserves description. A fixture in the Van Gorder household since her sixteenth year, she had long ago attained the dignity of a Tradition. One could not imagine Miss Cornelia without a Lizzie to grumble at and cherish—or Lizzie without a Miss Cornelia to baby and scold, with the privileged frankness of such old family servitors. The two were at once a contrast and a complement. Fifty years of American ways had not shaken Lizzie's firm belief in banishes and leprechauns or tamed her wild Irish tongue—fifty years of Lizzie had not altered Miss Cornelia's attitude of fond exasperation with some of Lizzie's more startling eccentricities. Together they may have been, as one of the younger Van Gorder cousins had irreverently put it, "a scream"—but apart each would have felt lost without the other.

"Now what do you mean—if that were all of it, Lizzie?" queried Miss Cornelia, sharply, as she took her letters from the tray.

Lizzie's face assumed an expression of doleful reticence. "It's not my place to speak," she said with a grim shake of her head, "but I saw my grandmother last night, God rest her—plain as life she was—the way she looked when they waked her—and if it was my doing, we'd be leaving this house this hour!"

"Cheese-pudding for supper—of course you saw your grandmother!" said Miss Cornelia, crisply, slitting open the first of her letters with a paperknife. "Nonsense, Lizzie—I'm not going to be scared away from an ideal country-place because you happen to have a bad dream!"

"Was it a bad dream I saw on the stairs last night, when the lights went out and I was looking for the candles?" said Lizzie heatedly. "Was it a bad dream that ran away from me and out the back door, as fast as Paddy's pig? No, Miss Nelly—it was a man—seven feet tall he was, and eyes that shone in the dark and—"

"Lizzie Allen!" "Well, it's true, for all that," insisted Lizzie, stubbornly. "And why did the lights go out—tell me that, Miss Nelly? They never go out in the city."

"Well, this isn't the city," said Miss Cornelia, decisively. "It's the country—and very nice it is—and we're staying here all summer. I suppose I may be thankful," she went on ironically, "that it was only your grandmother you saw last night. It might have been the Bat—and then where would you be this morning?"

"I'd be stiff and stark, with candles at my head and feet," said Lizzie gloomily. "Oh, Miss Nelly, don't talk of that terrible creature, the Bat!" She came nearer to her mistress. "Oh, Miss Nelly, Miss Nelly—do let's go back to the city before he flies away with us all!"

"Nonsense, Lizzie," said Miss Cornelia again, but this time less firmly. Her face grew serious. "If I thought for an instant that there was any real possibility of our being in danger here," she said slowly, "But—oh, look at the map, Lizzie! The Bat has been—flying in this district—that's true enough—but he hasn't come within ten miles of us yet!"

"What's ten miles to the Bat?" the obturate Lizzie sighed. "And what of the letter ye had when ye first moved in here? 'The Fleming house is unhealthy for strangers,' it said. 'Leave it while ye can.'"

"Some silly boy—or some crank," Miss Cornelia's voice was firm. "I never pay any attention to anonymous letters."

"And there's a funny-lookin' letter this mornin'—down at the bottom of the pile—" persisted Lizzie. "It looked like the other one—I'd half a mind to throw it away before you saw it!"

"Now, Lizzie, that's quite enough!" Miss Cornelia had the Van Gorder manner on, now. "I don't care to discuss your ridiculous fears any further. Where is Miss Dale?"

Lizzie assumed an attitude of prim rebuff. "Miss Dale's gone into the city, ma'am."

"Gone into the city?" "Yes, ma'am. She got a telephone call this morning, early—long-distance it was. I don't know who it was called her."

"Lizzie! You didn't listen?" "Of course not, Miss Nelly." Lizzie's face was a study in injured virtue. "Miss Dale took the call in her own room and shut the door."

"And you were outside the door?" "Where else would I be dustin', that time in the mornin'?" said Lizzie. "But it's yourself knows well enough the doors in this house is thick and not a sound goes past them."

"I should hope not," said Miss Cornelia, rebukingly. "But—tell me, Lizzie—did Miss Dale seem—well—this morning?"

"That she did not," said Lizzie promptly. "When she came down to breakfast, after the call, she looked like a ghost. I made her the eggs she likes, too—but she wouldn't eat 'em."

"H'm," Miss Cornelia pondered. "I'm sorry if—well, Lizzie, we mustn't meddle in Miss Dale's affairs."

"No, ma'am." "But—did she say when she would be back?"

"Yes, Miss Nelly. On the two o'clock train. Oh—and—I was almost forgettin'—she told me to tell you particular—she said while she was in the city she'd be after engagin' the gardener you spoke of."

"The gardener? Oh, yes—I spoke to her about that the other night—the place is beginning to look run down—so many flowers to attend to. Well—that's very kind of Miss Dale."

"Yes, Miss Nelly." Lizzie hesitated, obviously with some weighty news on her mind which she wished to impart. Finally she took the plunge.



Her Fingers Trembled a Little as She Turned the Missive Over.

"I might have told Miss Dale she could have been lookin' for a cook as well—and a housemaid—" she muttered at last, "but they hadn't spoken to me then."

Miss Cornelia sat bolt upright in bed. "A cook—and a housemaid? But we have a cook and a housemaid, Lizzie! You don't mean to tell me—"

Lizzie nodded her head. "Yes'm. They're leaving. Both of 'em. Today."

"But good heav—Lizzie, why on earth didn't you tell me before? I'm really very much annoyed with you because you didn't. I shall get up immediately—I want to give those two a piece of my mind. Is Billy leaving too?"

"Not that I know of—the hesthen Japanese!" said Lizzie sorrowfully. "And yet he'd be better riddance than cook or housemaid."

"Now, Lizzie, how many times have I told you that you must conquer your prejudices? Billy is an excellent butler—he'd been with Mr. Fleming ten years and has the very highest recommendations. I am very glad that he is staying, if he is—with you to help him, we shall do very well until I can get other servants."

Miss Cornelia had risen now and Lizzie was helping her with the intricacies of her toilet. "But it's too annoying," she went on, in the pauses of Lizzie's deft ministrations. "What did they say to you, Lizzie—did they give any reason?"

"Oh, yes, Miss Nelly—they had reasons you could choke a goat with," said Lizzie, viciously, as she arranged Miss Cornelia's transformation. "Cook was the first of them—she was up late—I think they'd been talking it over together. She comes into the kitchen with her hat on and her bag in her hand. 'Good morning,' says I, pleasant enough, 'you've got your hat on,' says I. 'I'm leaving,' says she. 'Leaving are you?' says I. 'Leaving,' says she. 'My sister has twins,' says she. 'I just got word—I must go to her right away.' 'What?' says I, all struck in a heap. 'Twins,' says she, 'you've heard of such things as twins.' 'That I have,' says I, 'and I know a lie on a face when I see it, too.'"

"Lizzie!" "Well, it made me sick at heart, Miss Nelly—her with her hat and her bag and her talk about twins—and no consideration for you. 'Well,' says she, 'you can see that Annie, the housemaid's leaving, too.' 'Has her sister got twins as well?' says I and looked at her. 'No,' says she, as bold as brass, 'but Annie's got a pain in her side and she's feared it's appendicitis—so she's leaving to go back to her family.' 'Oh,' says I, 'and what

about Miss Van Gorder? 'I'm sorry for Miss Van Gorder,' says she—the falseness of her!—'But she'll have to do the best she can—for twins and appendicitis is acts of God and not to be put aside for even the best of wages.' 'Is that so?' says I and with that I left her, for I knew if I listened to her a minute longer I'd be giving her bonnet a shake and that wouldn't be respectable. So there you are, Miss Nelly, and that's the gist of the matter."

Miss Cornelia laughed. "Lizzie—you're unique," she said. "But I'm glad you didn't give her bonnet a shake—though I've no doubt you could."

"Humph!" said Lizzie, snorting, the fire of battle in her eye. "And is it any Black Irish from Uster would play impudence to a Kerry woman without getting the flat of a hand in—but that's neither here nor there. The truth of it is, Miss Nelly," her voice grew solemn, "it's my belief—they're scared—both of them—by the haunts and the banishes here—and that's all."

"If they are, they're very silly," said Miss Cornelia, practically. "But it doesn't matter. If they want to go, they may."

An hour or so later, Miss Cornelia sat in a deep chintz chair in the comfortable living room of the Fleming house, going through the pile of letters which Lizzie's news of domestic revolt had prevented her reading earlier. Cook and housemaid had come and gone—civil enough, but so obviously determined upon leaving the house at once that Miss Cornelia had sighed and let them go, though not without caustic comment. Since then, she had devoted herself to calling up various employment agencies without entirely satisfactory results. A new cook and housemaid were promised for the end of the week—but for the next three days the Japanese butler, Billy, and Lizzie between them would have to bear the brunt of the service. "Oh, yes—and then there's Dale's gardener—if she gets one," thought Miss Cornelia. "I wish he could cook—but I don't suppose gardeners can—and Billy's a treasure. Still, it's inconvenient—now, stop—Cornelia Van Gorder—you were asking for the advertisement only this morning and the moment the littlest sort of one comes along, you want to crawl out of it."

She had reached the bottom of her pile of letters—these to be thrown away—these to be answered—ah, here was one she had overlooked somehow. She took it up. It must be the one Lizzie had wanted to throw away—she smiled at Lizzie's fears. The address was badly typed, on cheap paper—she tore the envelope open and drew out a single unsigned sheet.

"If you stay in this house any longer—DEATH. Go back to the city at once and save your life."

Her fingers trembled a little as she turned the missive over, but her face remained calm. She looked at the envelope—at the postmark—while her heart thudded uncomfortably for a moment and then resumed its normal beat. It had come at last—the adventure—and she was not afraid!

She knew who it was, of course. The Bat! No doubt of it. And yet—did the Bat ever threaten before he

struck? She could not remember. But it didn't matter. The Bat was unprecedented—unique. At any rate, Bat or no Bat, she must think out a course of action. The defection of cook and housemaid left her alone in the house with Lizzie and Billy—and Dale, of course, if Dale returned. "Two old women, a young girl and a Japanese to face the most dangerous criminal in America," she thought, grimly. And yet—one couldn't be sure. The threatening letter might be only a joke—a letter from a crank—after all. Still, she must take precautions—look for aid somewhere. But where could she look for aid?

She ran over in her mind the new acquaintances she had made since she moved to the country. There was Doctor Wells, the local physician, who had joked with her about moving into the Bat's home territory—he seemed an intelligent man—but she knew him only slightly—she couldn't call a busy doctor away from his patients to investigate something which might only prove to be a mare's-nest. The boys Dale had met at the Country Club—"Humph!" she sniffed. "I'd rather trust my gumption than any of theirs." The logical person to call on, of course, was Richard Fleming, Courtleigh Fleming's nephew and heir, who had rented her the house. "He lived at the Country Club—she could probably reach him now. She was just on the point of doing so, when she decided against it—partly from delicacy, partly from an indefinable feeling that he would not be of much help. "Besides," she thought sturdily, "it's my house now, not his—he didn't guarantee burglar protection in the lease."

For a moment she felt very helpless, very much alone. Then her courage returned.

"Pshaw, Cornelia, if you have got to get help—get the help you want and hang the consequences!" she adjured herself. "You've always hankered to see a first-class detective do his detecting—well, get one—or decide to do the job yourself—I'll bet you could, at that."

She tiptoed to the main door of the living room and closed it cautiously, smiling as she did so. Lizzie might be about—and Lizzie would promptly go into hysterics if she got an inkling of her mistress's present intentions. Then she went to the telephone, and asked for long distance.

When she had finished her telephoning, she looked at once relieved and a little naughty—like a demure child who has carried out some piece of innocent mischief unobserved. "My stars!" she muttered to herself. "You never can tell what you can do till you try." Then she sat down again and tried to think of other measures of defense.

"Now, if I were the Bat, or any criminal," she mused, "how would I get into this house? Well, that's it—I might get in 'most any way—it's so big and rambling. All the grounds you want to lurk in, too—it'd take a company of police to shut them off. Then there's the house itself—let's see—third floor—trunk room, servants' rooms—couldn't get in there very well except with a pretty long ladder—that's all right. Second floor—well, I suppose a man could get into my bedroom from the porch if he were an acrobat—but he'd need to be a very good acrobat and there's no use borrowing trouble. Downstairs is the problem, Cornelia—downstairs is the problem."

"Take this room, now." She rose and examined it carefully. "There's the door over there on the right that leads into the billiard room. There's this door over here, that leads into the hall. Then there's the other door by the alcove—and all those French windows—whew!" She shook her head.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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Madge—"Was that your intended I saw you motoring with?" Marie—"Yes, but he hasn't caught on yet."

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## Great Roman Ruler in Advance of Age

Appius Claudius Caecus, who appeared in history in 312 B. C., was called by one German historian the boldest innovator in Roman history. By law the tenure of office of a censor was limited to eighteen months, but Appius Claudius seemed so much the superior of all other men of his age that he was censor for five years and he carried through, despite frantic opposition from the conservatives, a law to bring new blood into the governing classes.

The aristocracy was jealous of its prerogatives and made birth the essential to a senatorial career, but Appius Claudius broke down the admission requirements. He put into the senate the names of many plebeians who had recently attained wealth and even free men of distinction who were not especially prosperous.

Probably the greatest contribution to Roman progress was his building of two great public works on a scale that

Rome had never known. They were the famous Appian way, the great road that led from Rome to Capua, and the vast aqueduct to bring water to the city. Few tourists who visit Rome have failed to drive out upon the historic Appian way or have failed to catch sight of the tremendous ruins of the once mighty aqueduct that strikes across the Campagna.—Kansas City Star.

Shoes of Robert Burns  
When Robert Burns, the Scottish plowboy, was breaking the soil on his father's farm, he probably did not think that the shoes he then wore would be objects of curiosity 3,000 miles away long after his death.

But the shoes that the great poet wore when a lad are owned by a gentleman who lives in Portland, Maine, and many of the boys of that city have inspected them.

The shoes have wooden soles, which in turn are shod with thin plates of iron. The uppers are tacked to the soles in a rude but strong manner, and the historic footwear is in a good state of preservation.—Philadelphia Inquirer.

His Mean Revenge  
A fish peddler in Australia has discovered a new method of revenge against the woman who jilted him for a local prohibition leader. Twice a week he stops his cart in front of the woman's home and goes around to the rear with a bag in his hand. Returning to the cart he removes numerous empty beer bottles from the bag and lines them up in a row beside the cart. The neighbors do not suspect that he carries them in with him.

Schoolboy "Howlers"  
Extracts from written answers to English schoolboys' examination papers "The Nile is the only remarkable river in the world. It was discovered by Doctor Livingstone, and it rises in Mungo Park." "Constantinople is on the Golden horn, a strong fortress, has a university, and was the residence of Peter the Great. Its chief building is the Sublime Port." "Cyprus came into our possession in 1878, and was given to Lord Beaconsfield." "Julius Caesar invaded Britain 400 B. C. The condition of the Britons was in a rude state. The people lived in huts made of straw, and the women wore their hair down their backs with torches in their hands."