

# THE BAT

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

## 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. With her niece, Dale Ogden, Miss Cornelia Van Gorder is living in the country home of the late Courtleigh Fleming, who until his recent death had been president of the Union bank, wrecked because of the theft of a large sum of currency. Miss Van Gorder receives a note warning her to vacate the place at once on pain of death.

## CHAPTER II—Continued

It was true. The room in which she stood, while comfortable and charming, seemed unusually accessible to the night prowler. A row of French windows at the rear gave upon a little terrace—below the terrace the drive curved about and beneath the billiard room windows in a hairpin loop, drawing up again at the main entrance on the other side of the house. At the left of the French windows (if one faced the terrace, as Miss Cornelia was doing) was the alcove door she spoke of. When open, it disclosed a little alcove, almost entirely devoted to the foot of a flight of stairs that gave direct access to the upper regions of the house. The alcove itself opened on one side upon the terrace and upon the other into a large butler's pantry. The arrangement was obviously designed so that, if necessary, one could pass directly from the terrace to the downstairs service quarters or the second floor of the house without going through the living room, and so that trays could be carried up from the pantry by the side stairs without using the main staircase.

The middle pair of French windows were open—forming a double door. Miss Cornelia went over to them—shut them—tried the locks. "Humph! Flimsy enough!" she thought. Then she turned toward the billiard room. The billiard room, as has been said, was the last room to the right in the main wing of the house. A single door led to it from the living room. Miss Cornelia passed through this door, glanced about the billiard room, noting that most of its windows were too high from the ground to greatly encourage a marauder, and locked the only one that seemed to her particularly tempting—the billiard room window on the terrace side of the house. Then she returned to the living room and again considered her defenses.

Three points of access from the terrace to the house—the door that led into the alcove—the French windows of the living room—the billiard room window. On the other side of the house there was the main entrance, the porch, the library and dining room windows. The main entrance led into a hall—living room, and main door of living room on the right as one entered, dining room and library on the left, main staircase in front. She sat down once more, and taking a pencil and a piece of paper, drew a plan of the lower floor of the house.

"And now I've studied it," she thought, after a while, "I'm no further than I had't. As far as I can figure out, there's so many ways for a clever man to get into this house that I'd have to be a couple of Siamese twins to watch it properly."

But of course she was not entirely shut off from the world, even if the worst developed. She considered the telephone instruments on a table near the wall, one the general phone, the other connecting a house line which also connected with the garage and the greenhouses. The garage would not be helpful, since Slocum, her chauffeur for many years, had gone back to England for a visit. Dale had been driving the car. But with an able-bodied man in the gardener's house—

She pulled herself together with a jerk.

"Cornelia Van Gorder, you're going to go crazy before nightfall, if you don't take hold of yourself. What you need is lunch—and a nap in the afternoon if you can make yourself take it. You'd better look up that revolver of yours, too, that you bought when you were going to take a trip to China. You've never fired it off yet, but you've got to sometime today—there's no other way of telling if it will work. You can shut your eyes when you do it—no, you can't either—that's silly."

"Call you a spirited old lady, do they? Well, you never had a better time to show your spirit than now!" Dale Ogden, taxiing up from the two o'clock train some time later, discovered the front door locked, to her surprise, and rang for some time before she could get an answer. At last, Billy appeared, white-coated, with an inscrutable expression on his face.

"Will you take my bag, Billy—think. Where is Miss Van Gorder—taking a nap?"

"No," said Billy succinctly. "She takes no nap. She out in scrubby shooting."

Dale stared at him incredulously. "Shooting, Billy?"

"Yes, ma'am. At least—she not

muttered, darkly, as she went toward the service quarters.

Miss Van Gorder glared after her departing back. "Lizzie is really impossible, sometimes!" she said with stately ire. Then her voice softened. "Though, of course, I couldn't do without her," she added.

Dale stretched out on the settee opposite her aunt's chair. "I know you couldn't, darling. Thanks for thinking of the lemonade." She passed her hand over her forehead in a gesture of fatigue. "I am hot—and tired."

Miss Van Gorder looked at her keenly. The young face seemed curiously worn and haggard in the clear afternoon light.

"You—you don't really feel very well, do you, Dale?"

The girl turned her face a little away from her aunt's scrutiny.

"Oh—it's nothing. I feel all right—really."

"I could send for Doctor Wells, if—"

"Oh, heavens, no, Aunt Cornelia." She managed a wan smile. "It isn't as bad as all that. I'm just tired and the city was terribly hot and noisy and—"

She stole a glance at her aunt from between lowered lids. "I got your gardener, by the way," she said, casually.

"Did you dear? That's splendid, though—but I'll tell you about that later. Where did you get him?"

"That good agency—I can't remember its name." Dale's hand moved restlessly over her eyes, as if remembering details were too great an effort. "But I'm sure he'll be satisfactory—he'll be out here this evening—he—he couldn't get away before, I believe. What have you been doing all day, darling?"

"We have had a domestic upheaval. The cook and the housemaid have left—if you'd only waited till the next train you could have had the pleasure of their company into town."

"Aunt Cornelia—how exciting! I'm so sorry! Why did they leave?"

"Why do servants ever leave a good place?" said Miss Cornelia grimly. "Because if they had sense enough to know when they were well off, they wouldn't be servants. Anyhow, they've gone—we'll have to depend on Lizzie and Billy the rest of this week. I telephoned—but they couldn't promise me any others before Monday."

"And I was in town and could have seen people for you—if I'd only known!" said Dale remorsefully.

"Only," she hesitated, "I mightn't have had time—at least I mean there were some other things I had to do, besides getting the gardener and—"

She rose. "I think I will go and lie down for a little if you don't mind, darling."

Miss Van Gorder was concerned. "Of course I don't mind but—won't you even have your lemonade?"

"Oh, I'll get some from Lizzie in the pantry, before I go up," Dale managed to laugh. "I think I must have a headache, after all," she said. "Maybe I'll take an aspirin. Don't worry, darling."

"I shan't. I only wish there were something I could do for you, my dear."

Dale stopped in the alcove doorway. "There's nothing anybody can do for me, really," she said soberly. "At least—oh, I don't know what I'm saying! But don't worry. I'm quite all right. I may go over to the Country club, after dinner—and dance. Won't you come with me, Aunt Cornelia?"

"Depends on my escort," said Miss Cornelia tartly. "If our landlord, Mr. Richard Fleming, is taking you, I certainly shall—I don't like his looks and never did!"

Dale laughed. "Oh, he's all right," she said. "Drinks a good deal and wastes a lot of money—but harmless enough. No—this is a very sedate party—I'll be home early."

"Well, in that case," said her aunt, "I shall stay here with Lizzie and my outja-board will furnish it. She's lshment for the very cowardly way

she behaved this afternoon—and the outja-board. Lizzie deserves some punishment to death to touch the thing—I think she believes it's alive."

"Well, maybe I'll send you a message on it from the Country club," said Dale lightly. She had paused, half-way up the flight of side-stairs in the alcove, and her aunt noticed how her shoulders drooped, belying the lightness of her voice. "Oh," she went on, "by the way—have the afternoon papers come yet? I didn't have time to get one when I was rushing for the train."

"I don't think so, dear—but I'll ask Lizzie," Miss Cornelia moved toward a bell-push.

"Oh, don't bother—it doesn't matter. Only if they have, would you ask Lizzie to bring me one when she brings up the lemonade? I want to read about—the Bat—he fascinates me."

"There was something else in the paper this morning," said Miss Cornelia, idly. "Oh, yes—the Union bank—the bank Mr. Fleming, Senator, was president of has failed. They seem to think the cashier robbed it. Did you see that, Dale?"

The shoulders of the girl on the staircase straightened suddenly. Then they drooped again. "Yes—I saw it," she said in a queerly colorless voice. "Too bad. It must be terrible—to have every one suspect you—and hunt you—as I suppose they're hunting that poor cashier."

"Well," said Miss Cornelia, "a man who wrecks a bank deserves very little sympathy, to my way of thinking."

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"Oh, He's All Right," She Said.

But then I'm old-fashioned. Well, dear, I won't keep you. Run along—and if you want an aspirin, there's a box in my top bureau drawer."

"Thanks, darling. Maybe I'll take one and maybe I won't—all I really need is to lie down for a while."

She moved on up the staircase and disappeared from the range of Miss Cornelia's vision, leaving Miss Cornelia to ponder many things. Her trip to the city had done Dale no good, of a certainty. If not actually ill, she was obviously under some considerable mental strain. And why this sudden interest—in the Bat—then in the failure of the Union bank? Was it possible that Dale, too, had been receiving threatening letters?

"I'll be glad when that gardener comes," she thought to herself. "He'll make a man in the house at any rate."

When Lizzie at last came in with the lemonade she found her mistress shaking her head.

"Cornelia, Cornelia," she was murmuring to herself, "you should have taken to pistol practice when you were younger—it just shows how children waste their opportunities!"

## CHAPTER III

### The Storm Gathers.

The long storm afternoon wore away, sunset came, red and angry, a sunset presaging storm. A chill crept into the air with the twilight. When

## National Emblem of Wales Is Red Dragon

While the harp is a Welsh national instrument, it is not recognized as the national emblem. The national emblem for Wales is the red dragon of Cadwallader, the last of the Welsh kings. This emblem had a place in the royal arms of Great Britain as a supporter in the reign of King Henry VII, but that king, toward the end of his reign, changed the supporters, which were the two white lions of March, to the Welsh dragon on the dexter side, with the white greyhound on the sinister. The latter emblem was representative of either the De Beauforts, his own ancestors, or the Nevilles, the ancestors of his wife, both of these families using the white greyhound as a family badge. In 1528 his son, Henry VIII, used for supporters to the royal arms the golden lion on the dexter, while the red dragon of Wales, which his father had used on the dexter, he relegated to the sinister side. These supporters continued in use until the accession (in 1603) of James VI of Scotland as James I of England. James kept the golden lion on the dexter, but changed the red dragon of Wales on the sinister to the unicorn, as in the royal arms of Scotland—an emblem of purity.

### Bridge Built by Nature

The Natural bridge is in Rockbridge county, Virginia. It was left by the collapse of the remainder of the roof of a tunnel formed by water percolating through a joint or fissure athwart the stream. The tunnel thus formed was gradually enlarged until all the water of the stream was diverted from the stream bed below the joint of ingress, leaving a bridge. It has a span of 90 feet and is from 50 to 100 feet wide.

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### Taste Not in Money

Taste, runs the saying, flaunts no dollar sign. One can spend a million dollars and have a hideous home, and vice versa, one can spend but a few dollars and achieve good taste in the home with simplicity.

Taste is more than a question of education, it is more than a question of breeding. Some few have it to begin with, more achieve it and a great mass of people have it thrust upon them, fortunately. We say fortunately for the majority of home owners are content to let those who have taste design and decorate their houses for them.

Great peat bogs in northern Japan are fast disappearing owing to reclamation of the land.

## The BABY



Why do so many, many babies of today escape all the little fretful spells and infantile ailments that used to worry mothers through the day, and keep them up half the night?

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Fletcher's Castoria is purely vegetable, so you may give it freely, at first sign of colic; or constipation; or diarrhea. Or those many times when you just don't know what is the matter. For real sickness, call the doctor, always. At other times, a few drops of Fletcher's Castoria.

The doctor often tells you to do just that; and always says Fletcher's. Other preparations may be just as pure, just as free from dangerous drugs, but why experiment? Besides, the book on care and feeding of babies that comes with Fletcher's Castoria is worth its weight in gold!

## Children Cry for



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Money back for first bottle if not suited. All dealers.

## Optimist Points Out

**Silver Lining to Cloud**

Barney Oldfield, the famous automobile, said on disembarking at New York from his European tour: "We are capturing more and more of the European automobile trade. In London, Paris, everywhere, you see thousands of American automobiles. Some people say that our trade is going to suffer in Europe now on account of hard times and so on, but for many reasons I don't accept that view. I'm an optimist there."

"The fact is, I'm an optimist everywhere. All things, I claim, have their bright side."

"Take, for instance, the old saying that few people practice what they preach. That is very sad, of course, but how much sadder it would be if we all preached what we practice!"

## Boy of Ten Busy Criminal

Police officials of New Brighton, N. Y., are searching for a ten-year-old boy, who was a model pupil during the daytime and a crackman at night. After he was arrested and had confessed to 22 crimes, including 7 of breaking into and entering stores, he disappeared.

## Knockout Imminent

Peaceful Old Lady—Will you two boys stop fighting if I give you ten cents each?

The Stronger Boy—Make it a quarter for the winner, lady.

What is a paragrapher doing in his idle hours if he can't keep up with current literature?

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(TO BE CONTINUED.)