



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 wits' 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 Gorden, 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. Dale returns from the city, where she had been to hire a gardener.

CHAPTER III—Continued

It was too much. Miss Cornelia found vent for her feelings in crisp exasperation.

"What's the matter with you anyhow, Lizzie Allen?"

The nervousness in her own tones infected Lizzie's. She shivered, frankly. "Oh, Miss Nelly—Miss Nelly!" she pleaded. "I don't like it! I want to go back to the city!"

Miss Cornelia braced herself. "I have rented this house for four months and I am going to stay," she said, firmly. Her eyes sought Lizzie's, striving to pour some of her own inflexible courage into the latter's quaking form. But Lizzie would not look at her. Suddenly she started and gave a low scream.

"There's somebody on the terrace!" she breathed in a ghostly whisper, clutching at Miss Cornelia's arm.

For a second Miss Cornelia sat frozen. Then, "Don't do that!" she said sharply. "What nonsense!" she looked over her shoulder as she said it, and Lizzie saw the look. Both waited, in pulsing stillness—one second—two.

"I guess it was the wind," said Lizzie, at last, relieved, her grip on Miss Cornelia relaxing. She began to look a trifle ashamed of herself and Miss Cornelia seized the opportunity. "You were born on a brick pavement," she said crushingly. "You get nervous out here at night whenever a cricket begins to sing—or scrape his legs—or whatever it is they do!"

Lizzie bowed before the blast of her mistress's scorn and began to move gingerly toward the alcove door. But obviously she was not entirely convinced.

"Oh, it's more than that, Miss Nelly," she mumbled. "I—"

Miss Cornelia turned to her fiercely. If Lizzie was going to behave like this, they might as well have it out now between them—before Dale came home.

"What did you really see, last night?" she said in a minatory voice.

The instant relief on Lizzie's face was ludicrous—she so obviously preferred discussing any subject at any length to braving the dangers of the other part of the house unaccompanied.

"I was standing right there at the top of that staircase," she began, gesticulating toward the alcove stairs, in the manner of one who embarks upon the narration of an epic. "Standing there with your switch in my hand, Miss Nelly—and then I looked down and, in my voice dropped. 'I saw a gleaming eye! It looked at me and winked! I tell you this house is haunted!'"

"A flirtatious ghost?" queried Miss Cornelia skeptically. She snorted. "Humph! Why didn't you yell?"

"I was too scared to yell! And I'm not the only one." She started to back away from the alcove—her eyes still fixed upon its haunted stairs. "Why do you think the servants left so suddenly this morning?" she went on. "Do you really believe the housemaid had appendicitis? Or the cook's sister had twins?"

She turned and gestured at her mistress with a long, pointed forefinger. Her voice had a note of doom.

"I bet a cent the cook never had any sister—and the sister never had any twins," she said, impressively. "No, Miss Nelly, they couldn't put it over on me like that! They were scared away. They saw—it!"

She concluded her epode and stood nodding her head—an Irish Cassandra who had prophesied the evil to come.

"Fiddlesticks!" said Miss Cornelia, briskly—more shaken by the recital than she would have admitted. She tried to think of another topic of conversation. "What time is it?" she asked.

"I didn't glance at the rumanet clock. Half-past ten, Miss Nelly."

Miss Cornelia yawned, a little distastefully. She felt as if the last two

hours had not been hours but years. "Miss Dale won't be home for half an hour," she said reflectively. "And if I have to spend another thirty minutes listening to Lizzie shiver," she thought, "Dale will find me a nervous wreck when she does come home." She rolled up her knitting and put it back in her sewing bag—it was no use going on, doing work that would have to be ripped out again—and yet she must do something to occupy her thoughts. She raised her head and discovered Lizzie returning toward the alcove stairs, with the stealthy tread of a panther. The sight exasperated her.

"Now, Lizzie Allen!" she said sharply, "you forget all that superstitious nonsense and stop looking for ghosts! There's nothing in that sort of thing." She smiled—she would punish Lizzie for her obdurate timorousness. "Where's that ouija-board?" she questioned, rising, with determination in her eye.

Lizzie shuddered violently. "It's up there—with a prayer book on it to keep it quiet!" she groaned, jerking her thumb in the direction of the farther bookcase.

"Bring it here!" said Miss Cornelia, implacably; then as Lizzie still hesitated, "Lizzie!"

Shivering, every movement of her body a conscious protest, Lizzie slowly went over to the bookcase, lifted the prayer book, and took down the ouija-board. Even then, she would not carry it normally, but bore it over to Miss Cornelia at arms-length, as if any closer contact would blast her with lightning, her face a comic mask of loathing and repulsion.

She placed the lettered board in Miss Cornelia's lap with a sigh of relief. "You can do it yourself! I'll have none of it!" she said firmly.

"It takes two people and you know it, Lizzie Allen!" Miss Cornelia's voice was stern—but it was also amused.

Lizzie groaned, but she knew her mistress. She obeyed. "I've been working for you for twenty years," she muttered. "I've been your gont for twenty years and I've got a right to speak my mind—"

Miss Cornelia cut her off. "You haven't got a mind. Sit down," she commanded.

Lizzie sat—her hands at her sides. With a sigh of tried patience, Miss Cornelia put her unwilling fingers on the little moving-table that is used to point to the letters on the board itself. Then she placed her own hands on it, too, the tips of the fingers just touching Lizzie's.

"Now make your mind a blank!" she commanded her factotum.

"You just said I haven't got any mind," complained the latter.

"Well," said Miss Cornelia magnificently, "make what you haven't got a blank."

The repartee silenced Lizzie for the moment—but only for the moment. As soon as Miss Cornelia had settled herself comfortably and tried to make her mind a suitable receiving station for ouija-messages, Lizzie began to mumble the sorrows of her heart.

"I've stood by you through thick and thin," she mourned in a low voice. "I stood by you when you were a merchant—a lawyer—a doctor—honored in his community by day and at night a bloodthirsty assassin—" The print blurred before her eyes—she could read no more for the moment. She thought of the revolver in the drawer of the table close at hand and felt glad that it was there, loaded.

"I'm going to take the butcher knife to bed with me!" Lizzie was saying.

Miss Cornelia touched the ouija-board. "That thing certainly spelled Bat," she mused. "I wish I were a man. I'd like to see any lawyer, doctor or merchant of my acquaintance leading a double life without my suspecting it."

"Every man leads a double life, and some more than that," Lizzie observed. "I guess it rests them, like it does me to take off my corsets."

Miss Cornelia opened her mouth to rebuke her, but just at that moment there was a clink of ice from the hall, and Billy, the Japanese, entered carrying a tray with a pitcher of water and some glasses on it. Miss Cornelia watched his impassive progress, wondering if the Oriental races ever felt terror—she could not imagine all Lizzie's shivers from Billy.

"Billy, what's all this about the cook's sister not having twins?" she said in an offhand voice—she had not really discussed the departure of the other servants with Billy before. "Did you happen to know that this interesting event was anticipated?"

Billy drew his breath with a polite little hiss. "Maybe she have twins," he admitted. "It happen sometime. Mostly not expected."

"Do you think there was any other reason for her leaving?"

the pointer grew more rapid her mouth dropped open—wider and wider—prepared for an ear-piercing scream.

"Keep quiet!" said Miss Cornelia, tensely. There was a pause of a few seconds while the pointer darted from one letter to another, wildly.

"B-M-C-X-P-R-S-K-Z—" murmured Miss Cornelia, trying to follow the spelled letters.

"It's Russian!" gasped Lizzie, breathlessly, and Miss Cornelia nearly disgraced herself in the eyes of any spirits that might be present by inappropriate laughter. The ouija continued to move—more letters—what was it spelling?—it couldn't be—good heavens—

"B—A—T—Bat!" said Miss Cornelia with a tiny catch in her voice. The pointer stopped moving. She took her hands from the board.

"That's queer," she said with a forced laugh. She glanced at Lizzie to see how Lizzie was taking it. But the latter seemed too relieved to have her hands off the ouija-board to make the mental connection that her mistress had feared.

All she said was, "Bats indeed! That shows it's spirits—there's been a bat flying around this house all evening."

She got up from her chair tentatively, obviously hoping that the seance was over.

"Oh, Miss Nelly," she burst out. "Please let me sleep in your room tonight! It's only when my jaw drops that I snore—I can tie it up with a handkerchief!"

"I wish you'd tie it up with a handkerchief now," said her mistress, absent-mindedly, still pondering the message that the pointer had spelled. "B—A—T—Bat!" she murmured. Thought-transference—warning—accident? Whatever it was, it was—nervous-shaking. She put the ouija-board aside—accident or not, she was done with it for the evening. But she could not so easily dispose of the Bat. Sending a protesting



"That's Queer," She Said, With a Forced Laugh.

Lizzie off for her reading glasses, Miss Cornelia got the evening paper and settled down to what by now had become her obsession. She had not far to search, for a long black streamer ran across the front page—"Bat Baffles Police Again."

She skimmed through the article with eerie fascination, reading bits of it aloud for Lizzie's benefit.

"Unique criminal—long baffled the police—record of his crimes shows him to be endowed with an almost diabolical ingenuity—so far there is no clue to his identity—" "Pleasant reading for an old woman who's just received a threatening letter," she thought ironically—ah, here was something new, a black-bordered "box" on the front page—a statement by the paper.

She read it aloud. "We must cease combating the criminal world for the Bat and look higher. He may be a merchant—a lawyer—a doctor—honored in his community by day and at night a bloodthirsty assassin—" The print blurred before her eyes—she could read no more for the moment. She thought of the revolver in the drawer of the table close at hand and felt glad that it was there, loaded.

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"Do you think there was any other reason for her leaving?"

"Maybe," said Billy blandly. He seemed quite unperturbed.

"Well, what was the reason?"

"All same the same thing—house haunted," Billy's reply was prompt as it was calm.

Miss Cornelia gave a slight laugh. "You know better than that, though, don't you?"

Billy's oriental placidity remained untroubled. He neither admitted nor denied. He shrugged his shoulders. "Funny house," he said laconically. "Find window open—nobody there. Door slam—nobody there!"

On the heels of his words came a single startling bang from the kitchen quarters—the bang of a slammed door!

Miss Cornelia dropped her newspaper. Lizzie, frankly frightened, gave a little squeal and moved closer to her mistress. Only Billy remained impassive—but even he looked sharply in the direction whence the sound had come.

Miss Cornelia was the first of the others to recover her poise.

"Stop that! It was the wind!" she said, a little irritably—the "Stop that!" addressed to Lizzie, who seemed on the point of squealing again.

"I think not wind," said Billy. His very lack of perturbation added weight to the statement. It made Miss Cornelia uneasy. She took out her knitting again.

"How long have you lived in this house, Billy?"

"Since Mr. Fleming built."

"I'm," Miss Cornelia pondered. "And this is the first time you have been disturbed?"

"Last two days only." Billy would have made an ideal witness in a court room—he restricted himself so precisely to answering what was asked of him in as few words as possible.

Miss Cornelia ripped out a row in her knitting. She took a long breath.

"What about that face Lizzie said you saw last night at the window?" she asked, in a steady voice.

Billy grinned, as if slightly embarrassed.

"Just face—that's all."

"A—man's face?"

He shrugged again.

"Don't know—maybe. It there! It gone!"

Miss Cornelia did not want to believe him—but she did. "Did you go out after it?" she persisted.

Billy's yellow grin grew wider. "No, thanks," he said cheerfully, with ideal succinctness.

"Well, now that you've cheered us up," began Miss Cornelia undauntedly, but a long, ominous roll of thunder that rattled the panes in the French windows drowned out the end of her sentence. Nevertheless she welcomed the thunder as a diversion. At least its menace was a physical one—to be guarded against by physical means.

She rose and went over to the French windows. That dimly bolt! She parted the curtains and looked out—a flicker of lightning stabbed the night—the storm must be almost upon them.

"Bring some candles, Billy," she said. "The lights may be going out any moment—and Billy," as he started to leave, "there's a gentleman arriving on the last train. After he comes you may go to bed. I'll wait up for Miss Dale—oh, and Billy," arresting him at the door, "see that all the outer doors on this floor are locked and bring the keys here."

Billy nodded and departed. Miss Cornelia took a long breath. Now that the moment for action came—she felt suddenly indomitable, prepared to face a dozen Bats!

Her feelings were not shared by her maid. "I know what all this means," moaned Lizzie. "I tell you there's going to be a death, sure!"

"There certainly will be if you don't keep quiet," said her mistress acridly. "Lock the billiard room windows and go to bed."

But this was the last straw for Lizzie. A picture of two long, dark flights of stairs up which she had to pass to reach her bedchamber rose before her—and she spoke her mind.

"I am not going to bed!" she said wildly. "I'm going to pack up tomorrow and leave this house." That such a threat would never be carried out while she lived made little difference to her—she was beyond the need of Truth's consolations. "I asked you on my bedded knees not to take this piece two miles from a railroad," she went on heatedly. "For mercy's sake, Miss Nelly, let's go back to the city before it's too late!"

Miss Cornelia was inflexible. "I'm not going. You can make up

your mind to that. I'm going to find out what's wrong with this place if I take all summer. I came out to the country for a rest and I'm going to get it."

"You'll get your heavenly rest!" mourned Lizzie, giving it up. She looked pitifully at her mistress's face for a sign that the latter might be weakening—but no such sign came. Instead, Miss Cornelia seemed to grow more determined.

"Besides," she said, suddenly deciding to share the secret she had hugged to herself all day, "I might as well tell you, Lizzie, I'm having a detective sent down tonight from police headquarters, in the city. I dare say he will be stupid enough. Most of them are. But at least we can have one proper night's sleep."

"Not I. I trust no man," said Lizzie. But Miss Cornelia had picked up the paper again.

"The Bat's last crime was a particularly atrocious one," she read. "The body of the murdered man . . ."

But Lizzie could bear no more.

"Why don't you read the funny page once in a while?" she wailed, and hurried to close the windows in the billiard room. The door leading into the billiard room shut behind her.

Miss Cornelia remained reading for a moment. Then—was that a sound from the alcove? She dropped the paper, went into the alcove and stood for a moment at the foot of the stairs, listening. No—it must have been imagination. But, while she was here, she might as well put on the spring-lock that bolted the door from the alcove to the terrace. She did so, returned to the living-room and switched off the lights for a moment to look out at the coming storm. It was closer now—the lightning flashes more continuous. She turned on the lights again as Billy re-entered with three candles and a box of matches.

He put them down on a side-table. "New gardener come," he said briefly, to Miss Cornelia's back.

Miss Cornelia turned. "Nice hour for him to get here. What's his name?"

"Say his name Brook," said Billy.

Miss Cornelia thought. "Ask him to come in," she said. "And Billy—where are the keys?"

Billy silently took two keys from his pocket and laid them on the table. Then he pointed to the terrace door which Miss Cornelia had just bolted.

"Door up there—spring lock," he said.

"Yes," she nodded. "And the new bolt you put on today makes it fairly secure. One thing is fairly sure, Billy. If anyone tries to get in tonight, he will have to break a window and make a certain amount of noise."

But he only smiled his curious enigmatic smile and went out. And no sooner had Miss Cornelia seated herself when the door of the billiard room slammed open suddenly—and Lizzie burst into the room as if she had been shot from a gun—her hair wild—her face stricken with fear.

"I heard somebody yell out in the grounds—away down by the gate!" she informed her mistress in a loud stage whisper which had a curious note of pride in it, as if she were not too displeased at seeing her doleful predictions so swiftly coming to pass.

Miss Cornelia took her by the shoulder—half-startled, half-dubious.

"What did they yell?"

"Just yelled a yell!"

"Lizzie!"

"I heard them!"

But she cried "Wolf!" too often.

"You take a liver-pill," said her mistress disgustedly, "and go to bed."

Lizzie was about to protest both the verdict on her story and the judgment on herself, when the door in the hall was opened by Billy to admit the new gardener. A handsome young fellow, in his late twenties perhaps, and neatly if shabbily dressed, he came two steps into the room, and then stood there respectfully with his cap in his hand, waiting for Miss Cornelia to speak to him.

After a swift glance of observation that gave her food for thought, she did so.

"You are Brooks, the new gardener?"

The young man inclined his head.

Miss Cornelia regarded him anew. "His hands look soft—for a gardener's," she thought. "And his manners seem much too good for one—Still—"

"Come in," she said briskly. The young man advanced another two steps. "You're the man my niece engaged in the city this afternoon?"

"Yes, madam." He seemed a little uneasy under her searching scrutiny. She dropped her eyes.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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Mother Ants Employ Babies as Needles

A baby that you sew with, a baby that's needle and thread—child labor with a vengeance, eh?"

The naturalist closed a book by a brother-naturalist, Glenwood Clark.

"Glenwood Clark, tells all about it here," he said. "The baby I refer to is an ant, not a human being. In the chrysalis or baby form this ant secretes a silk, and with that silk its mother sews the leaves together to make the ant nest, using the baby itself as a needle, mind you."

"The ant nest is built on a twig rather high up in a tree. The leaves that form it are held together by one group of ants, while another group—mothers armed with their babies—does the sewing."

"They hold their babies in their claws. They press the tiny heads against a place where two leaf-edges join. The heads deposit on the leaves their cobwebby silk, and then they are moved across the leaf joint, needle

fashion, back and forth, and as they move they make a thread.

"In this manner, thanks to the needle-and-thread babies, the ants' nest is soon ready."

The Smallest World

From time to time the earth approaches a very little world, one that might be walked around in two or three days, for it is only 85 mmes round. This is Eros, the tiny planet whose existence was unknown until 1898, when the astronomer Witt of Berlin discovered it by means of photography.

At intervals of nearly two years our world and this Lilliputian one approaches one another, coming nearer and nearer each time, and last year Eros was nearer to us than it has been for 20 years.

Be happy and be so by piety.—Madame De Stael.