

Friday 9

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 only as "The Bat" has brought about a veritable reign of terror. The chief of police assigns his best operative, Anderson, to get on the trail of The Bat. With her niece, Dale Oden, 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. The gardener arrives, giving his name as Brooks. He admits he is not a gardener, but needs work. Miss Cornelia tells Doctor Wells of the threatening note. They are interrupted by the smashing of a window in the house. They find another warning note.

CHAPTER IV—Continued

"Yes, I did," said the doctor, quickly, still seeming unconvinced of the wisdom of her attitude.

"Miss Van Gorder, I confess—I'm very anxious for you," he continued. "This letter is ominous. Why not accept my hospitality in the village tonight? It's a little house but I'll make you comfortable. Or, if you throw out his hands in the gesture of one who reasons with a willful child, if you won't come to me—let me stay here!"

Miss Cornelia hesitated for an instant. The proposition seemed logical enough—more than that—sensible—safe. And yet, some indefinable feeling—hardly strong enough to be called a premonition—kept her from accepting it.

"Thank you, no, doctor," she said briskly, before she had time to change her mind. "I'm not easily frightened. And tomorrow I intend to equip this entire house with burglar alarms on doors and windows!" she went on defiantly. The incident, as far as she was concerned, was closed. She moved on into the alcove. The doctor stared after her, shaking his head.

She tried the terrace door. "There—I knew it!" she said triumphantly. "Doctor—you didn't fasten that bolt!"

The doctor seemed a little taken aback. "Oh—I'm sorry—" he said. "You only pushed it part of the way," she explained. She completed the task and stepped back into the living room. The only thing that worries me now is that broken French window," she said thoughtfully. "Anyone can reach a hand through it and open the latch." She came down toward the settee where Dale was sitting. "Please, doctor!"

"Oh—what are you going to do?" said the doctor, coming out of a brown study.

"I'm going to barricade that window!" said Miss Cornelia firmly, already struggling to lift one end of the settee. But now Dale came to her rescue.

"Oh, darling—you'll hurt yourself—let me—" and between them, the doc-

"It may be mind," he said, turning back toward Dale, "but forgive me if I say I think it seems more like foolhardy stubbornness!"

Dale turned away from the window. "Then you think there is really danger?"

The doctor eyes were grave.

"Well—those letters—" he dropped the letter on the table. "They mean something. Here you are—isolated—the village two miles away—and enough shrubbery around the place to hide a dozen assassins—"

If his manner had been in the slightest degree melodramatic, Dale would have found the ominous sentences more easy to discount. But this calm, intent statement of fact was a chill touch at her heart. And yet—

"But what enemies can Aunt Cornelia have?" she asked helplessly.

"Any man will tell you what I do," said the doctor, with increasing seriousness. He took a cigarette from his case and tapped it on the case to emphasize his words. "This is no place for two women, practically alone."

Dale moved away from him restlessly, to warm her hands at the fire. The doctor gave a quick glance around the room. Then, unseen by her, he stepped noiselessly over to the table, took the matchbox there off its holder and slipped it into his pocket. It seemed a curiously useless and meaningless gesture, but his next words evinced that the action had been deliberate.

"I don't seem to be able to find any matches—" he said, with assumed carelessness, fiddling with the matchbox holder.

Dale turned away from the fire. "Oh, aren't there any? I'll get you some," she said with automatic politeness, and departed to search for them.

The doctor watched her go—saw the door close behind her. Instantly his face set into tense and wary lines. He glanced about—then ran lightly up into the alcove and noiselessly unfastened the bolt on the terrace door which he had pretended to fasten after his search of the shrubbery. When Dale returned with the matches, he was back where he had been when she had left him, glancing at a magazine on the table.

He lit his cigarette and drew in the fragrant smoke with apparent gusto. But a moment later he had crushed out the glowing end in an ash-receiver.

"By the way, has Miss Van Gorder a revolver?" he queried casually, glancing at his wrist watch.

"Yes—she fired it off this afternoon to see if it would work." Dale smiled at the memory.

The doctor, too, seemed amused. "If she tries to shoot anything—for goodness' sake stand behind her!" he advised. He glanced at the wrist watch again. "Well—I must be going—"

"If anything happens," said Dale, slowly, "I shall telephone you at once."

Her words seemed to disturb the doctor slightly—but only for a second. He grew even more urbane.

"I'll be home shortly after midnight," he said. "I'm stopping at the Johnsons on my way—one of their children is ill—or supposed to be."

He took a step toward the door, then he turned toward Dale again.

"Take a parting word of advice," he said. "The thing to do with a midnight prowler is—let him alone. Lock your bedroom doors and don't let anything bring you out till morning."

"Thank you," said Dale, seriously. "Good night, Doctor—Billy will let you out—he has the key."

"By Jove!" laughed the doctor, "you are careful, aren't you! The place is like a fortress! Well—good night, Miss Dale—"

"Good night." The door closed behind him—Dale was left alone. Suddenly her composure left her, the fixed smile died. She stood gazing ahead at nothing, her face a mask of terror and apprehension. But when Billy returned with the front-door key she was as impassive as he was.

"Has the new gardener come yet?"

"He here," said Billy stolidly. "Name Brooks."

She was entirely herself once more when Billy, departing, held the door open wide—to admit Miss Cornelia Van Gorder and a tall-strong-featured man, quietly dressed, with reticent, piercing eyes—the detective!

"Dale, dear," said Miss Cornelia, with triumph in her voice. "This is Mr. Anderson."

The newcomer bowed, glancing at her casually and then looking away. Miss Cornelia, however, was obviously in fine feather and relishing to the utmost the presence of a real detective in the house.

"This is the room I spoke of," she said briskly. "All the disturbances have taken place around that terrace door."

The detective took three swift steps into the alcove, glanced about it searchingly. He indicated the stairs. "That is not the main staircase?"

"No—the main staircase is out there," Miss Cornelia waved her hand in the direction of the hall.

The detective came out of the alcove and paused by the French windows.

"Hello—what's this?" he said sharply, his eye lighting on the broken glass below the shattered French window. He picked up a piece of the glass and examined it.

Dale cleared her throat. "It was broken from the outside a few minutes ago," she said.

"The outside?" Instantly the detective had pulled aside a blind and was staring out into the darkness.

"Yes. And then that letter was thrown in." She pointed to the threatening missive on the center-table.

Anderson picked it up, glanced through it, laid it down. All his movements were quick and sure—each executed with the minimum expense of effort.

"I'm," he said, in a calm voice, that held a glint of humor. "Curious, the anonymous letter complex! Apparently some one considers you an undesirable tenant!"

Miss Cornelia took up the tale.

"There are some things I haven't told you yet," she said. "This house belonged to the late Courtleigh Fleming." He glanced at her sharply.

"The Union bank?"

"Yes. I rented it for the summer and moved in last Monday. We have not had a really quiet night since I came. The very first night I saw a man with an electric flashlight making his way through that shrubbery!"

"You poor dear!" from Dale, sympathetically. "And you were here alone?"

"Well, I had Lizzie. And" said Miss Cornelia with enormous importance, opening the drawer of the center-table, "I had my revolver. I know so little about these things, Mr. Anderson, that if I didn't hit a burglar, I knew I'd hit somebody or something!" and she gazed with innocent awe directly down the muzzle of her beloved weapon, then waved it with an airy gesture beneath the detective's nose.

Anderson gave an involuntary start—then his eyes lit up with grim mirth.

"Would you mind putting that away?" he said suavely. "I like to get in the papers as much as anybody, but I don't want to have them say—omit flowers."

Miss Cornelia gave him a glare of offended pride, but he endured it with such quiet equanimity that she merely replaced the revolver in the drawer, with a hurt expression, and waited for him to open the next topic of conversation.

He finished his preliminary survey of the room and returned to her.

"Now, you say you don't think anybody has got upstairs yet?" he queried.

Miss Cornelia regarded the alcove stairs.

"I think not. I'm a very light sleeper—especially since the papers have been so full of the exploits of this criminal they call the Bat. He's in them again tonight."

The detective smiled faintly.

"Yes—he's contrived to surround himself with such an air of mystery that it verges on the supernatural—or seems that way to newspaper men."

"I confess," admitted Miss Cornelia. "I've thought of him in this connection." She looked at Anderson to see how he would take the suggestion, but the latter merely smiled again, this time more broadly.

"That's going rather a long way for a theory," he said. "And the Bat is not in the habit of giving warnings. You can always tell when the Bat has had anything to do with a crime. When he's through, he signs his name to it."

Miss Cornelia sat bolt upright. "His name? I thought nobody knew his name?"

The detective made a little gesture of apology. "That was a figure of speech. The newspapers named him the Bat—because he moved with incredible rapidity—always at night—and by signing his name I mean he leaves the symbol of his identity. The bat, which can see in the dark."

"I wish I could," said Miss Cornelia, striving to seem unimpressed. "These country lights are always going out."

Anderson's face grew stern. "Sometimes he draws the outline of a bat at the scene of the crime. Once, in some way, he got hold of a real bat, and nailed it to the wall."

Dale, listening, could not repress a shudder at the gruesome picture—and Miss Cornelia's hands gave an involuntary twitch as her knitting needles clicked together. Anderson seemed by no means unconscious of the effect he had created.

"He seems to have imagination," he admitted. "Well," his voice grew determined. "I have some imagination, myself. How many people in this house, Miss Van Gorder?"

"My niece and myself," Miss Cornelia indicated Dale, who had peeked up her wrap and was starting to leave the room. "Lizzie Allen—who has been my personal maid ever since I was a child—the Japanese butler and the gardener. The cook and the house-

maid left this morning—frightened away."

She smiled as she finished her description. Dale reached the door and passed slowly out into the hall. The detective gave her a single, sharp glance as she made her exit. He seemed to think over the factors Miss Cornelia had mentioned.

"Well," he said, after a slight pause, "you can have a good night's sleep tonight. I'll stay awake here in the dark and watch."

"Would you like some coffee to keep you awake?"

Anderson nodded. "Thank you." His voice sank lower. "Do the servants know who I am?"

"Only Lizzie—my maid."

His eyes fixed here. "I wouldn't tell anyone I'm remaining up all night," he said.

A formless fear rose in Miss Cornelia's mind. "You don't suspect my household?" she said in a low voice.

He spoke with emphasis—all the more pronounced because of the quietude of his tone.

"I'm not taking any chances," he said determinedly.

CHAPTER V

Cross-Questions and Crooked Answers.

All unconscious of the stir just cast upon her forty years of single-minded devotion to the Van Gorder family, Lizzie chose that particular moment to open the door and make a little bob at her mistress and the detective.

"The gentleman's room is ready," she said.

Miss Cornelia, obedient to the detective's instructions, promptly told the whitest of lies for Lizzie's benefit.

"The maid will show you to your room now and you can make yourself comfortable for the night." There—that would mislead Lizzie, without being quite a lie.

"My toilet is made for an occasion like this when I've got my gun loaded," answered Anderson carelessly. The allusion to the gun made Lizzie start nervously, unhappily for her, for it drew his attention to her and he now transfixed her with a stare.

"This is the maid you referred to?" he inquired. Miss Cornelia assented. He drew nearer to the unhappy Lizzie.

"What's your name?" he asked, turning to her.

"E-Elizabeth Allen," stammered Lizzie, feeling like a small and distrustful sparrow in the toils of an officious python.

Anderson seemed to run through a mental rogues' gallery of other criminals named Elizabeth Allen that he had known.

"How old are you?" he proceeded. Lizzie braced herself. "Thirty-two," she said, with an arch twist of her head.

The detective looked surprised and slightly amused.

"She's fifty if she's a day," said Miss Cornelia, treacherously, in spite of a look from Lizzie that would have melted a stone.

The trace of a smile appeared and vanished on the detective's face.

"Now, Lizzie," he said sternly. "do you ever walk in your sleep?"

"I do not," said Lizzie indignantly.

"Don't care for the country, I suppose?"

"I do not!"

"Or detectives?" Anderson deigned to be facetious.

"I do not!" There could be no doubt as to the sincerity of Lizzie's answer.

Gospel in Form That Appeals to Tibetans

Tibetan printed books are printed from wooden blocks on very fine buff-colored paper manufactured in the country from the bark of a certain shrub. The pages are long and narrow. They are not bound into a volume, but lie loosely one above another. When not in use the leaves are inclosed in two wooden slabs, which are often finely carved, and tied with silk ribbons. The whole is wrapped in a beautifully embroidered silk cover. The sacred books of Tibet, produced in this way, are regarded with the greatest reverence. A lady missionary working on the borders of Tibet suggested to the British and Foreign Bible society that a part of the New Testament should be produced in Tibetan style. "This," reports the society, "has now been done. St. Mark

has assumed a dress which will make a strong appeal to the Tibetans. They will be led from the attractive appearance to the contents, which are still more attractive, and we hope that many of them will be led to the Lord himself."

Then Look at Your Watch

To tell time by the stars, explains an Iowa professor, "First look at the North star and the two points in the Great Dipper which are on a line with it. Imagine that in the sky there is a huge clock face with the hour hand pointing to these pointers. Read the time to the nearest quarter hour. To this figure add the number of months since January 1. Double this and subtract the result from 16¼. If the result is more than 16¼, subtract it from 40¼. The result is the time in hours, after noon. If the time is greater than 12, it means that it is after midnight, so subtract 12 and you have the time in hours, the forenoon."

As regards the day, of course, by the time you have done all this it will be the middle of next week.—Exchange.

All Silence Not Golden

We often hear of the wife who talk too much. But pity the husband of the wife who talks too little.—Wagon's Home Companion.

The BABY



No mother in this enlightened age would give her baby something she did not know was perfectly harmless, especially when a few drops of plain Castoria will right a baby's stomach and end almost any little ill. Fretfulness and fever, too; it seems no time until everything is serene.

That's the beauty of Castoria; its gentle influence seems just what is needed. It does all that castor oil might accomplish, without shock to the system. Without the evil taste. It's delicious! Being purely vegetable, you can give it as often as there's a sign of colic; constipation; diarrhea; or need to aid sound, natural sleep.

Just one warning: it is genuine Fletcher's Castoria that physicians recommend. Other preparations may be just as free from all doubtful drugs, but no child of this writer's is going to test them! Besides, the book on care and feeding of babies that comes with Fletcher's Castoria is worth its weight in gold.

Children Cry for



Gift of Golden Eagle to Yellowstone Park

A large golden eagle, a bird even more fine and majestic than the bald eagle shown on the American coat-of-arms, has been presented 'O Yellowstone National park by Harry E. Boughers of Fort Wayne, Ind. Mr. Boughers found the eagle with its wing injured, apparently by gunshot, and kept it several weeks until its wound was healed. Anxious that the bird should not be exposed to any more pot shots in a densely populated region, he sent it out to the park at his own expense, requesting that it be kept and fed well for a short time and then released to find its own home in the mountains.

Yellowstone National park has frequently figured as the source of donations of such animals as bison and elk, but this is one of the few cases on record where the process has been reversed. This is at least partly due to the fact that the national park service has steadily adhered to a policy of refusing to introduce animals or plants not native to the region.

To Cure a Cold in one Day

Take Laxative BROMO QUININE Tablets. The Safe and Proven Remedy. Look for signature of E. W. Grove on the box. 30c.—Adv.

Gamekeeper's Find

A gamekeeper near Aberdeen, Scotland, has had a remarkable experience among foxes.

He discovered the lair of a fox among the heather, and after a good deal of hunting succeeded in trapping the old pair. A few days later he found on the ledge of a rock near the den five young fox cubs.

It chanced that he had at home a cat with kittens the same age as the cubs, so he took two of them home and placed them beside the mother cat. She took kindly to her common enemy, and cared for them. The young cubs have become quite friendly with the kittens, and the cat is proving an excellent foster mother.

Plane Wedding Not New

These airplane weddings are "old stuff," according to Mrs. Mary A. Boynton, noted geologist. Fifty-six years ago Mrs. Boynton became a bride in a balloon ascension from Central park, New York city. That method was her own suggestion. Even as now the legality of a marriage in the air was questioned at the time.

No More Croup!

DR. DRAKES GLESSCO CROUP REMEDY

W. N. U., PORTLAND, NO. 49-1927.



"If You Won't Come to Me—Let Me Stay Here!"

tor and Dale moved the heavy settee along until it stood in front of the window in question.

The doctor stood up when the dusty task was finished, wiping his hands. "It would take a furniture mover to get it there now!" he said airily. Miss Cornelia smiled.

"Well, doctor—I'll say good night now—and thank you very much," she said, extending her hand to the doctor, who bowed over it silently. "Don't keep this young lady up too late—she looks tired." She flashed a look at Dale who stood staring out at the night, then sailed out of the room, still smiling, and closed the door behind her.

The doctor seemed a little nettled by her abrupt departure.