

# THE BAT

## A Novel from the Play

By Mary Roberts Rinehart and Avery Hopwood

WNU Service

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### 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 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. 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. The detective, Anderson, arrives, is told of the situation, and announces he will stay on watch that night. Miss Van Gorder tells Anderson she has an idea Courtleigh Fleming robbed his own bank and concealed the money in the house.

### CHAPTER V—Continued

"Well, I wouldn't struggle like that for a theory," he said, the professional note coming back to his voice. "The cashier's missing—that's the answer."

"Then you don't think there's a chance that the money from the Union bank is in this house?" persisted Miss Cornelia.

"I think it very unlikely."

Miss Cornelia put her knitting away and rose. She still clung tenaciously to her own theories—but her belief in them had been badly shaken.

"If you'll come with me, I'll show you to your room," she said, a little stiffly. The detective stepped back to let her pass.

"Sorry to spoil your little theory," he said, and followed her to the door. If either had noticed the unobtrusive listener to their conversation, neither made a sign.

The moment the door had closed on them, Dale sprang into action. She seemed a different girl from the one who had left the room so inconspicuously such a short time before—there were two bright spots of color in her cheeks and she was obviously laboring under great excitement. She went quickly to the alcove doors—they opened softly—disclosing the young man who had said that he was Brooks the new gardener—and yet not the same young man—for his assumed air of servitude had dropped from him like a cloak, revealing him as a young fellow as class as Dale's same general class as Dale's, if not a fellow-inhabitant of the select circle where Van Gorders resided about Van Gorders, and a man's great-grandfather was more important than the man himself.

Dale cautioned him with a warning finger as he advanced into the room. "Sh! Sh! she whispered. "Be careful! That man's a detective!"

Brooks gave a hunted glance at the door into the hall.

"Then they've traced me here," he said in a dejected voice.

"I don't think so."

He made a gesture of helplessness. "I couldn't get back to my rooms," he said in a whisper. "If they're searched then—they'll find your letters to me."

He paused again.

"Your aunt doesn't suspect anything?"

"No, I told her I'd engaged a gardener—and that's all there was about it."

He came nearer to her. "Dale!" he murmured in a tense voice. "You know I didn't take that money!" he said, with boyish simplicity.

All the loyalty of first-love was in her answer.

"Of course! I believe in you absolutely!" she said. "He caught her in his arms and kissed her—gratefully, passionately. Then the galling memory of the predicament in which he stood—the hunt already on his trail—came back to him. He released her gently, still holding one of her hands.

"But—the police here!" he stammered, turning away. "What does that mean?"

Dale swiftly informed him of the situation.

"Aunt Cornelia says people have been trying to break into this house for days—at night."

Brooks ran his hand through his hair in a gesture of bewilderment. "Then he seemed to catch at a hope. "What sort of people?" he queried sharply.

Dale was puzzled. "She doesn't know."

The excitement in her lover's manner came to a head. "That proves exactly what I've contended, right along," he said, thudding one fist softly in the palm of the other. "First some underworld channel old Fleming has been selling those securities for months, turning them into cash. And somebody knows about it, and knows that that money is hidden here. Don't you see? Your Aunt Cornelia has cracked the same by coming here."

"Why didn't you tell the police that? Now they think because you ran away—"

"Tan away! The only chance I had was a few hours to myself to try to prove what actually happened."

"Why don't you tell the detective what you think?" said Dale at her wits' end. "That Courtleigh Fleming took the money and that it is still here?"

Her lover's face grew somber. "He'd take me into custody at once—and I'd have no chance to search."

He was searching now—his eyes roved about the living-room—walls—ceiling—hopefully—desperately—looking for a clew—the tiniest clew to support his theory.

"Why are you so sure it is here?" queried Dale.

"Brooks explained. 'You must remember—Fleming was no ordinary defaulter—and he had no intention of being exiled to a foreign country. He wanted to come back here and take his place in the community while I was in the pen.'"

"But even then—"

He crossed the billiard room door, closed it firmly, returned.

"The architect that built this house was an old friend of mine," he said in hushed accents. "We were together in France and you know the way fellows get to talking when they're far away and cut off—"

He paused, seeing the cruel gleam of a star-shell in two figures huddled in a trench, willing away the terrible hours of waiting by muttered talk.

"Just an hour or two before—a shell got this friend of mine," he resumed, "he told me he had built a hidden room in this house."

"Where?" gasped Dale.

Brooks shook his head. "I don't know. We never got to finish that conversation. But I remember what he said. He said, 'You watch old Fleming. If I get mine over here it won't break his heart. He didn't want any lying being to know about that room.'"

Now Dale was as excited as he. "Then you think the money is in this hidden room?"

"I do," said Brooks decidedly. "I don't think Fleming took it away with him. He was too shrewd for that. No, he meant to come back all right, the minute he got the word the bank had been looted. And he'd fixed things so I'd be railroaded to prison—you wouldn't understand, but it was pretty neat. And then the fool nephews rents this house the minute he's dead, and whoever knows about the money—"

"Jack! Why isn't it the nephew who is trying to break in?"

"He wouldn't have to break in. He could make an excuse and come in any time."

He clenched his hands despairingly. "If I could only get hold of a blue-print of this place!" he muttered.

Dale's face fell. It was sickening to be so close to the secret—and yet not find it. "Oh, Jack, I'm so confused and worried!" she confessed, with a little sob.

Brooks put his hands on her shoulders, in an effort to cheer her spirits. "Now, listen, dear," he said firmly, "this isn't as hard as it sounds. I've got a clear night to work in—and as true as I'm standing here, that money's in this house. Listen, honey—"

"It's like this," he pantomimed the old nursery rhyme of the house that Jack built. "Here's the house that Courtleigh Fleming built—here, somewhere, is the hidden room in the house that Courtleigh Fleming built, and here—somewhere—prayer heaven—is the money—in the hidden room—in the house that Courtleigh Fleming built. When you're low in your mind, just say that over."

She managed a faint smile. "I've forgotten it already," she said, drooping.

He still strove for an offhand gaiety that he did not feel.

"Why, look here!" and she followed the play of his hands obediently, like a tired child, "it's a sort of game, dearest. 'Money, money—who's got the money?' You know!" For the dozenth time he stared at the unrevealing walls of the room. "For that matter," he added, "the hidden room may be behind these very walls."

He looked about for a tool—a poker—anything that would sound the walls and test them for hollow spaces. Ah! he had it—that driver in the bag of golf clubs over in the corner. He got the driver and stood wondering where he had best begin. That blank wall above the fireplace looked as promising as any. He tapped it gently with the golf club—afraid to make too much noise and yet anxious to test the wall as thoroughly as possible. A dull, heavy reverberation answered his stroke—nothing hollow there, apparently.

As he tried another spot, again thunder beat the long roll on its drum outside, in the night. The lights blinked—wavered—recovered.

"The lights are going out again," said Dale dully, her excitement sunk into a stupefied calm.

"Let them go! The less light the better for me. The only thing to do is to go over this house room by room." He pointed to the billiard room door. "What's in there?"

"The billiard room. She was thinking hard. 'Jack! Perhaps Courtleigh Fleming's nephew would know where the blue-prints are!'

He looked dubious. "It's a chance, but not a very good one," he said. "Well—"

He led the way into the billiard room—and began to rap at random upon its walls while Dale listened intently for any echo that might betray the presence of a hidden chamber or sliding panel.

Thus it happened that Lizzie received the first real thrill of what was to prove to her—and to others—a sensational and hideous night. For, coming into the living room to lay a cloth for Mr. Anderson's night supper, not only did the lights blink threateningly and the thunder roll, but a series of spirit raps were certainly to be heard coming from the region of the billiard room.

"Oh, my God!" she wailed, and the next instant the lights went out, leaving her in lanky darkness. With a loud shriek she bolted out of the room.

Thunder—lightning—dashing of rain on the streaming glass of the windows—the storm hallowing its howls. Dale huddled close to her lover as they groped their way back to the living room, cautiously, doing their best to keep from stumbling against some heavy piece of furniture whose fall would arouse the house.

"There's a candle on the table, Jack. If I can find the table..." Her outstretched hands touched a familiar object. "Here it is." She fumbled for a moment. "Have you any matches?"

"Yes," He struck one—another—lit the candle—set it down on the table. In the weak glow of the little taper, whose tiny flame illuminated but a portion of the living room, his face looked tense and strained.

"It's pretty near hopeless," he said. "If all the walls are paneled like that..."

As if in mockery of his words and his quest, a muffled knocking that seemed to come from the ceiling of the very room he stood in answered his despair.

"What's that?" asked Dale.

They listened. The knocking was repeated—knock—knock—knock—knock.

"Some one else is looking for the hidden room!" muttered Brooks, gazing up at the ceiling intently, as if he could tear from it the secret of this new mystery by sheer strength of will.

"It's upstairs!" Dale took a step toward the alcove stairs. Brooks halted her.

"Who's in this house besides ourselves?" he queried.

"Only the detective—Aunt Cornelia—Lizzie—and Billy,"

"Billy's the Jap?"

"Yes."

Brooks paused an instant. "Does he belong to your aunt?"

"No. He was Courtleigh Fleming's butler."

Knock—knock—knock—knock—the dull, methodical rapping on the ceiling of the living room began again.

"Courtleigh Fleming's butler, eh?" muttered Brooks. He put down his candle and stole noiselessly into the alcove. "It may be the Jap!" he whispered.

Knock—knock—knock—knock! This time the mysterious rapping seemed to come from the upper hall.

"If it is the Jap, I'll get him!" Brooks' voice was tense with resolution. He hesitated—made for the hall door—tiptoed into the darkness around the main staircase, leaving Dale alone in the living room, beset by shadowy terrors.

Utter silence succeeded his noiseless departure. Even the storm lulled for a moment. Dale stood thinking—wondering—searching desperately for some way to help her lover.

At last a resolution formed in her mind. She went to the city telephone.

"Hello," she said in a low voice, glancing over her shoulder now and then to make sure she was not overheard. "1-2—please—yes, that's right. Hello—is that the Country

club? Is Mr. Richard Fleming there? Yes, I'll hold the wire."

She looked about nervously. Had something moved in that corner of blackness where her candle did not pierce? No! How silly of her!

Buzz-buzz on the telephone. She picked up the receiver again.

"Hello—is this Mr. Fleming? This is Miss Ogden—Dale Ogden. I know it must seem odd my calling you this late, but—I wonder if you could come over here for a few minutes. Yes—tonight." Her voice grew stronger.

"I wouldn't trouble you but—it's awfully important. Hold the wire a moment." She put down the phone and made another swift survey of the room, listened furtively at the door—all clear! She returned to the phone.

"Hello—Mr. Fleming—I'll wait outside the house on the drive. It—it's a confidential matter. Thank you so much."

She hung up the phone, relieved—not an instant too soon, for, as she crossed toward the fireplace to add a new log to the dying glow of the fire, the hall door opened and Anderson, the detective, came softly in with an unlighted candle in his hand.

"Spooky sort of place in the dark, isn't it?" he said casually.

"Yes—rather. If he would only go away before Brooks came back or

"No!" She strove desperately to make the denial convincing but she could not hide the little tremor in her voice.

The detective mused.

"Follow of mood, my dear friend," he said, eyeing her. "Very popular. That's what's behind most of these bank embezzlements—men getting into society and spending more than they make."

Dale halted the tinkle of the city telephone with an inward sigh of relief. The detective moved to answer the house phone on the wall by the alcove—mistaking the direction of the ring.

Dale corrected him quickly.

"No, the other one—that's the house phone."

Anderson looked the apparatus over.

"No connection with the outside, eh?"

"No," said Dale, absent-mindedly. "Just from room to room in the house."

He accepted her explanation and answered the other telephone.

"Hello—hello—what the—"

He moved the receiver back up and down, without result, and gave it up. "This line sounds dead," he said.

"It was all right a few minutes ago," said Dale, without thinking.

"You were using it a few minutes ago?"

She hesitated—what use to deny what she had already admitted, for all practical purposes.

"Yes."

The city telephone rang again. The detective pounced upon it.

"Hello—yes—yes—this is Anderson—go ahead." He paused, while the tiny voice in the receiver buzzed for some seconds. Then he interrupted it impatiently.

"You're sure of that, are you? I see. All right. 'By.'"

He hung up the receiver and turned swiftly on Dale.

"That was headquarters, Miss Ogden. They have found some letters in Bailey's room which seem to indicate that you were not telling the entire truth just now."

He paused, waiting for her answer. "What letters?" she said wearily.

"From you to Jack Bailey—showing that you had recently become engaged to him."

Dale decided to make a clean breast of it—or as clean as one she dared.

"Very well," she said in an uneven voice, "that's true."

"Why didn't you say so before?" There was menace beneath his suavity. He came closer to Dale, fixing her with his eyes. "Do you know where Bailey is now?" He spoke slowly and menacingly.

She did not flinch.

The detective paused.

"Miss Ogden," he said, still with that hidden threat in his voice, "in the last minute or so the Union bank case and certain things in this house have begun to tie up pretty close together. Bailey disappeared this morning. Have you heard from him since?"

Her eyes met his without weakening—her voice was cool and composed.

"No."

The detective did not comment on her answer—she could not tell from his face whether he thought she had told the truth or lied. He turned away from her brusquely.

"I'll ask you to bring Miss Van Gorder here," he said in his professional voice. "This case is taking on a new phase."

"You don't think I know anything about that money?" she said, a little wildly, hoping that a display of shame anger might throw him off the trail he seemed to be following.

He seemed to accept her words, cynically, at their face value.

"No," he said, "but you know somebody who does."

Dale hesitated—sought for a biting retort—found none. It did not matter—any respite, no matter how momentary, from these probing questions, would be a relief. She silently took one of the lighted candles and left the living room to search for her aunt.

Left alone, the detective reflected for a moment, then picking up the one lighted candle that remained, commenced a systematic examination of the living room. His methods were thorough, but, if he came to the end of his quest, he had made any new discoveries, the reticent exposure of his face did not betray the fact. When he had finished he turned patiently toward the billiard room—the little flame of his candle was swallowed up in its dark recesses—he closed the door of the living room behind him. The storm was dying away, now, but a few flashes of lightning still flickered, lighting up the darkness of the deserted living room now and then with a harsh, brief glare.

A lightning flash—a shadow cast abruptly on the shade of one of the French windows, to disappear as abruptly as the flash was blotted out—the shadow of a man—a prowler—feeling his way through the lightning-slashed darkness to the terrace door. The detective? Brooks? The Bat? The lightning flash was his brief for any observer to have recognized the stealing shape—if any observer had been there.

But the lack of an observer was promptly remedied. Just as the shadow shape reached the terrace door and its shadow-fingers closed over the knob, Lizzie entered the deserted living room on stumbling feet. She was carrying a tray of dishes and food—a roll—a butter pat—and she walked slowly, with terror only one leap behind her, and blank darkness ahead.



She Looked About Nervously.

Richard Fleming arrived! But he seemed in a distressingly chatty mood.

"Left me upstairs! I found my way down by walking part of the way and falling the rest. Don't suppose I'll ever find the room I left my tooth-brush in!" He laughed, lit the candle in his hand from the candle on the table.

"You're not going to stay up all night, are you?" said Dale, nervously, hoping he would take the hint. But he seemed entirely oblivious of such minor considerations as sleep. He took out a cigar.

"Oh, I may doze a bit," he said. He eyed her with a certain approval. She was a damped pretty girl and she looked intelligent. "I suppose you have a theory of your own about these intrusions you've been having here? Or apparently having."

"I knew nothing about them until tonight."

"Well," he persisted conversationally, "you know about them now." But when she remained silent, "Is Miss Van Gorder usually of a nervous temperament? Imagine she sees things, and all that?"

"I don't think so." Dale's voice was strained. Where was Brooks? What had happened to him?

Anderson puffed on his cigar, pondering. "Know the Flemings?" he asked.

"I've met Mr. Richard Fleming—once or twice."

Something in her tone caused him to glance at her. "Nice fellow?"

"I don't know him at all well."

"Know the cashier of the Union bank?" he shot at her suddenly.

### "Mashers" Worst by Girls' Clever Scheme

Pittsburgh's young women have various ways of dealing with "mashers," "asphalt arabs," or whatever the species may be called. They are not lacking in the art of refusing unwanted solicitations of ice cream sodas or buggy rides. But this little tale is handed on for what it may be worth in an emergency.

The two girls had been visiting in a rather lonely neighborhood and were walking to their homes. The street was deserted except for two men behind them. After a time of doubts and apprehensive shivers, the young women realized that they were being followed.

They hastened their steps, but to no avail. Gradually the pursuers gained, and at last were almost within speaking distance. The young women were at a loss as to what to do. Suddenly

remembrance of a boyhood friend came back to them. "That's it," said one of the girls. "I'll make a queer remark."

His mother's room was a spacious one done in old blue, and as they entered it, his tall, bronze-haired mother was standing before a full-length mirror trying on a chiffon negligee in old gold.

The baby boy looked at the lovely vision in the full-length mirror. "Oh, dear," he sighed. "Two mothers. One's enough."—New York Sun.

There ought to be two worlds, one for the dissatisfied.

raised her hands toward the other and began making strange gestures. The other one did the same.

At this unusual procedure the men stopped in their tracks and stared. Then they turned and retraced their steps. Neither, apparently, knew the sign language of the deaf.

Neither did the young women, who continued in gazing triumph to their homes.—Pittsburgh Post.

**Sad Indication**

Some one had told the woman that he was a backward boy. But as she watched him playing in the sunny nursery and listened to him chatting he seemed to her quite normal—the usual child of four and one-half years.

It was only later when she accompanied him across the hall into his mother's room that she made a queer remark.

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(TO BE CONTINUED.)

## CAP AND BELLS

### SHE WAS NO LABOR SAVER

On a hot day a vacationist was eating in a stuffy little wayside restaurant. There were no screens in the window or the door. The proprietress herself waited on customers and shooed flies from the table at the same time.

"Wouldn't it be better to have the window and the door screened?" ventured the vacationist.

"Well, yes, I s'pose it would help some," returned the woman, "but 'twould look mighty lazy like."—Boston Transcript.

### HOW MUCH IS LEFT?



"Would you marry a man who simply throws his money away?"

"Oh, I don't know! Has he got any money left?"

**Seemed a Shame**

An artist was making a water-color sketch in the park.

Two urinals stood behind him, and he watched quietly for a while. Then, quite suddenly, one said to the other, in tones of just regret:

"George, just fancy, a little time ago that was a lovely piece of white paper."

**A Seasonable Variant**

In a certain public institution the air was not exactly suggestive of artar of roses.

"Pretty stuffy in here, isn't it?" said a visitor to the attendant in charge.

"You find it warm?"

"Isn't the heat, it's the humanity," was the quiet reply.

**An Evil Spirit**

The Spiritualist—So you want to call up the spirit of your late mother-in-law?

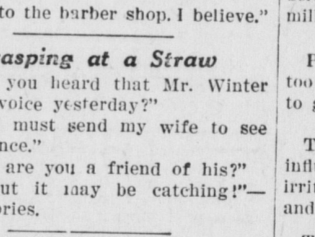
"Yes, it wasn't enough for her to plague the life out of me, but just before her death she hit my pipe."—Lustige Kölner Zeitung.

**Sophisticated**

She—you can't make me believe you've never kissed another woman."

He—I know it—you've had too much experience."

**SPENDS WEEK-END**



"Where does Bill go for his week-end?"

"Why, to the barber shop, I believe."

**Grasping at a Straw**

"Have you heard that Mr. Winter lost his voice yesterday?"

"No; I must send my wife to see him at once."

"Why; are you a friend of his?"

"No, but it may be catching!"—Stray Stories.

**Quite Plain**

She—Why don't you propose to Miss Bullion?

He—I haven't the face to ask her.

## POULTRY FACTS

PUSH LAYING HEN FOR FIVE MONTHS

Five months per year is enough in which to push hens into extra laying by extending the feeding hours through the use of lights. The North Carolina experiment station has just completed its second three-year test with laying hens and finds that the period between November 1 and April 1 is the period to use lights. For the remainder of the year, the birds should be allowed to feed during the normal daylight.

"Beginning with the pullet year, we have subjected hens to 36 consecutive months of 14 feeding hours per day, securing the extra hours by using electric lights," says Dr. B. F. Kaupp, head of the poultry department at state college. "This past year marked the completion of the second such test. Our results show conclusively that a hen must have a rest period between each year of exposure to the extra hours. This is needed that she might replenish her depleted stores of vitamins, minerals and vitality. It is not wise to subject a hen to the extra feeding hours for more than five months of the year, and the time between November 1 and April 1 is recommended."

Doctor Kaupp and his associates have found that a sudden reduction of the feeding hours will be accompanied by premature molting and that regular lighting will always give poor results in securing extra eggs.

### Cod Liver Oil May Be Detrimental to Fowls

Prof. Eric Agudir of Stockholm, Sweden, has issued a report which confirms doubt as to how far cod liver oil may be continued in the poultry ration with desirable results. In his experiments with white mice he found that the continued use of this oil made the animals too fat at the end of the feeding period, that there was a swelling of the bodies and various organs had been adversely affected. Other experiments with larger fowls gave similar results. White cod liver oil may help, temporarily, it is possible that it may be positively harmful if used continuously. Apparently it has had no detrimental effects in experiments in feeding it to poultry on this continent, but before it is made a regular article of diet for poultry, it should be given the most careful and prolonged investigation.

### Sodium Fluoride Useful to Destroy Parasites

The best thing to treat hens for lice is sodium fluoride. The best way to apply is to dip each hen, but this can be done only on a warm day. One ounce of sodium fluoride to each gallon of lukewarm water. Grasp the hen by