

THE BAT A Novel from the Play

By MARY ROBERTS RINEHART and AVERY HOPWOOD

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WNU Service

CHAPTER X—Continued

"What about Richard, Fleming?" persisted the detective, scornfully. The doctor drew himself up. "I never killed him!" he said, so impressively that even Bailey's faith in his guilt was shaken. "I don't even own a revolver!"

The detective alone maintained his attitude unchanged. "You come with me, Wells," he ordered, with a jerk of his thumb toward the door. "This time I'll do the locking up."

The doctor, head bowed, prepared to obey. The detective took up a candle to light their path. Then he turned to the others for a moment. "Better get the young lady to bed," he said, with a gruff kindness of manner. "I think that I can promise you a quiet night from now on."

"I'm glad you think so, Mr. Anderson!" Miss Cornelia insisted on the last word. The detective ignored the satiric twist of her speech, motioned the doctor out ahead of him, and followed. The faint glow of his candle flickered a moment and vanished toward the stairs.

It was Bailey who broke the silence. "I can believe a good bit about Wells," he said, "but not that he stood on that staircase and killed Dick Fleming."

Miss Cornelia roused from deep thought. "Of course not," she said briskly. "Go down and fix Miss Dale's bed. Lizzie. And then bring up some of that elderberry wine."

"Down there, where the Bat is?" Lizzie demanded. "The Bat has gone." "Don't you believe it. He's just got his hand in!"

But at last Lizzie went, and, closing the door behind her, Miss Cornelia proceeded more or less to think out loud. "Suppose," she said, "that the Bat, or whoever it was shut in there with you, killed Richard Fleming. Say that he is the one Lizzie saw coming in by the terrace door. Then he knew where the money was, for he went directly up the stairs. But that is two hours ago or more. Why didn't he get the money, if it was here, and get away?"

"He may have had trouble with the combination." "Perhaps. Anyhow, he was on the small staircase when Dick Fleming started up, and of course he shot him. That's clear enough. Then he finally got the safe open, after locking us in below, and my coming up interrupted him. How on earth did he get out on the roof?"

Bailey glanced out the window. "It would be possible from here. Possible, but not easy." "But, if he could do that," she persisted, "he could have got away, too. There are trellises and porches. Instead of that he came back here, to this room." She stared at the window. "Could a man have done that with one hand?"

"Never in the world." "Saying nothing, but deeply thoughtful, Miss Cornelia made a fresh progress around the room. "I know very little about bank currency," she said, finally. "Could such

from the living room this man had not been seen or thought of, but that he was a part of the mystery there could be no doubt. It flashed over Miss Cornelia that, although he could not possibly have locked them in, in the darkness that followed he could easily have fastened the bat to the door. For the first time it occurred to her that the arch-criminal might not be working alone, and that the entrance of the Unknown might have been a carefully devised ruse to draw them all together and hold them there.

Nor was Beresford's arrival with the statement that the Unknown was moving through the house below particularly comforting. "He may be dazed, or he may not," he said. "Personally, this is not a time to trust anyone."

Beresford knew nothing of what had just occurred, and now seeing Bailey he favored him with an ugly glance. "In the absence of Anderson, Bailey," he added, "I don't propose to trust you too far. I'm making it my business from now on to see that you don't try to get away. Get that?"

But Bailey heard him without particular resentment. "All right," he said. "But I'll tell you this, Anderson is here and his arrested the doctor. Keep your eye on me, if you think it's your duty, but don't talk to me as if I were a criminal. You don't know that yet."

"The doctor!" Beresford gasped. But Miss Cornelia's keen ears had heard a sound outside, and her eyes were focused on the door. "That door-knob is moving," she said, in a hushed voice. Beresford moved to the door and jerked it violently open.

The butler, Billy, almost pitched into the room. "All right," he said. "But I'll tell you this, Anderson is here and his arrested the doctor. Keep your eye on me, if you think it's your duty, but don't talk to me as if I were a criminal. You don't know that yet."

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CHAPTER XI

The Bat Still Flies.

He stepped back in the doorway, looked out, then turned to them again. "I come in, please?" he said pathetically, his hands quivering. "I not like to stay in dark."

Miss Cornelia took up his hand. "Come in, Billy, of course. What is it? Anything the matter?" Billy glanced about nervously. "Man with sore head."

"What about him?" "Act very strange." Again Billy's slim hands trembled. Beresford broke in. "The man who fell into the room downstairs?"

Billy nodded. "Yes. On second floor, walking around." Beresford smiled, a bit smugly. "I told you," he said to Miss Cornelia. "I didn't think he was as dazed as he pretended to be."

Miss Cornelia, too, had been pondering the problem of the Unknown. She reached a swift decision. If he were what he pretended to be—a dazed wanderer—he could do them no harm. If he were not—a little strategy properly employed might unravel the whole mystery.

"Bring him up here, Billy," she said, turning to the butler. Billy started to obey. But the darkness of the corridor seemed to appall him anew, the moment he took a step toward it. "You give candle, please?" he asked, with a pleading expression. "Don't like dark."

Miss Cornelia handed him one of the two precious candles. Then his present terror reminded her of that one other occasion when she had seen him lose completely his stoic oriental calm. "Billy," she queried, "what did you see when you came running down the stairs before we were locked in, down below?"

But Billy only backed toward the door, smiling apologetically. "Thought I saw ghost," he said, and went out and down the stairs, the candle-light flickering, growing fainter and finally disappearing. Silence and eerie darkness enveloped them all, as they waited. And suddenly out of the blackness came a sound.

Something was flapping and thumping around the room. "That's d-d odd!" muttered Beresford uneasily. "There is something moving around the room." The next instant Bailey gave a triumphant cry. "I've got it! It's a bat!"

Lizzie sank to her knees, still moaning, and Bailey carried the cause of the trouble over to the window and threw it out. But the result of the absurd incident was a further destruction of their morale. Even Beresford, so far calm with the quiet of the virtuous onlooker, was now pallid in the light of the matches they successively lighted. And onto this strained situation came at last Billy and the Unknown.

"Somewhat." His words still came very slowly. Bailey watched Billy, suspicion in his eyes. He could not account for the butler's inexplicable terror of being left alone.

"Anderson intimated that the doctor had an accomplice in this house," he said, now, crossing to Billy and taking him by the arm. "Why isn't that man?" Billy cringed away. "Please," he begged pitifully. Bailey remained unconvinced.

"Who did you see at the head of the small staircase?" he queried, impatiently. "Now we're through with nonsense—I want the truth!" Billy shivered. "See face—that's all," he brought out at last.

"Whose face?" Again it was evident that Billy knew or thought he knew more than he was willing to tell. "Don't know," he said, with obvious untruth, looking down at the floor. "Never mind, Billy," cut in Miss Cornelia. To her mind questioning Billy was wasting time. She looked at the Unknown.

"Solve the mystery of this man and we may get at the facts," she said in accents of conviction. Beresford raised the candle so that it cast its light full in the Unknown's face. "This chap claims to have lost his memory," he said dubiously. "I suppose a blow on the head might do that—I don't know."

"Don't you even know your name?" queried Miss Cornelia of the Unknown. "The Unknown shook his head with a slow, laborious gesture. "Not—yet."

"Or where you came from?" Once more the battered head made its movement of negation. "Do you remember how you got in this house?" The Unknown made an effort. "Yes—I remember—that—all—right?" he said, apparently undergoing an enormous strain in order to make himself speak at all. He put his hand to his head.

Miss Cornelia was at a loss. If this were acting, it was at least time acting. "How did you happen to come to this house?" she persisted, her voice unconsciously tuning itself to the slow, laborious speech of the Unknown. "Saw—the—lights."

Bailey broke in with a question. "Where were you when you saw the lights?" The Unknown wet his lips with his tongue, painfully. "I—broke—out—of—the—garage," he said at length. This was unexpected. A general movement of interest ran over the party.

"How did you get there?" Beresford took his turn as questioner. The Unknown shook his head, so slowly and deliberately that Miss Cornelia's fingers itched to shake him, in spite of his injuries. "I—don't—know."

"Did you ring the house phone?" insisted Miss Cornelia. The Unknown nodded. "Yes." Miss Cornelia and Bailey gave each other a look of wonderment. "I—leaned—against—the—button—in—the—garage—he went on. "Then—I think—maybe—I—fainted. That's—not clear."

Dale rose, and came over to him, with a sympathetic movement of her hand. "You don't remember how you were hurt?" she asked gently. The Unknown stared ahead of him, his eyes flaring, as if he were trying to puzzle it out.

"No," he said at last. "The first thing I remember—I was in the garage—tied." He moved his lips. "I was gagged—too—that's—what's—the—matter—with my tongue—now—Then—I got myself—free—and—got—out—of—a window—"

Miss Cornelia made a movement to question him further. Beresford stopped her with his hand uplifted. "Just a moment, Miss Van Gorder. Anderson ought to know of this." He started for the door without perceiving the flash of keen intelligence and alertness that had lit the Unknown's countenance for an instant, as once before, at the mention of the detective's name. But just as he reached the door the detective entered.

He halted for a moment, staring at the strange figure of the Unknown. "A new element in our mystery, Mr. Anderson," said Miss Cornelia, remembering that the detective might not have heard of the mysterious stranger before—as he had been locked in the billiard room when the latter had made his queer entrance. The detective and the Unknown gazed at each other for a moment—the Unknown, with his old expression of vacant stupidity.

"Quite dazed, poor fellow," Miss Cornelia went on. Beresford added other words of explanation.

"He doesn't remember what happened to him. Curious, isn't it?" The detective still seemed puzzled. "How did he get into the house?" "He came through the terrace door some time ago," answered Miss Cornelia. "Just before we were locked in."

Her answer seemed to solve the problem to Anderson's satisfaction. "Doesn't remember anything, eh?" he said dryly. He crossed over to the mysterious stranger and put his hand under the Unknown's chin, jerking his head up roughly. "Look up here!" he commanded. The Unknown stared at him for an instant with blank, vacuous eyes. Then his head dropped back upon his breast again.

"Look up, you—" muttered the detective, jerking his head again. "This losing your memory stuff doesn't go down with me!" His eyes bored into the Unknown's. "It doesn't—go down—very well—with me—either," said the Unknown weakly, making no movement of protest against Anderson's rough handling. "Did you ever see me before?" demanded the latter. Beresford held the candle closer so that he might watch the Unknown's face for any involuntary movement of betrayal.

But the Unknown made no such movement. He gazed at Anderson, apparently with the greatest bewilderment—then his eyes closed—he seemed to be about to remember who the detective was. "You're—the—doctor—I—saw—downstairs—aren't you?" he said innocently.

Miss Cornelia gave a little shiver. The third degree, in reality, was less pleasant to watch than it had been to read about in the pages of her favorite detective stories. "He's evidently been attacked," she said, turning to Anderson. "He claims to have recovered consciousness in the garage, where he was tied, hand and foot!"

"He does, eh?" said the detective heavily. He glared at the Unknown. "If you'll give me five minutes alone with him, I'll get the truth out of him!" he promised. A look of swift alarm swept over the Unknown's face at the words—unperceived by any except Miss Cornelia. The others started obediently to yield to the detective's behest and leave him alone with his prisoner. Miss Cornelia was the first to move toward the door. On her way, she turned.

"Do you believe that money is irrevocably gone?" she asked of Anderson. The detective smiled. "There's no such word as 'irrevocable' in my vocabulary," he answered. "But I believe it's out of the house, if that's what you mean."

Miss Cornelia still hesitated, on the verge of detouring to the terrace. "Suppose I tell you that there are certain facts that you have overlooked?" she said slowly. "Still on the trail!" muttered the detective sardonically. He did not even glance at her. He seemed only anxious that the other members of the party would get out of his way for once and leave him a clear field for his work.

His brusque rejection of her offer seemed to nettles Miss Cornelia. "It was right about the doctor, wasn't it?" she insisted. "Just fifty per cent right," said Anderson crushingly. "And the doctor didn't turn that trick alone. Now—" he went on, with weary patience, "if you'll all go out and close that door—"

Miss Cornelia, defeated, took a candle from Bailey and stepped into the corridor. Her figure stiffened. She gave an audible gasp of dismayed surprise. "Quick!" she cried, turning back to the others and gesturing toward the corridor. "A man just went through that skylight and out onto the roof!"

"Out on the roof!" "Come on, Beresford!" "Hurry—you men! He may be armed!" "Rights—coming!" And, following Miss Cornelia's lead, (TO BE CONTINUED.)

Sea Spider Recognized as Freak of Nature

One of the strangest creatures of the sea is a certain species of sea spider named Nymphon gracile. It has a body about the size of a bit of thread, a quarter of an inch long and tied into four knots. The head looks like the end of a thread split into two horns; from each of the four knots start two legs, one on each side, making eight in all.

The legs are three or four times longer than the body, but the odd thing about them is that the alimentary tube, into which the food goes, runs down into every one of the legs, so that whatever the spider eats circulates through his legs and, in fact, the legs are like the body in internal structure.

Another curious feature of this form of life is that the baby sea spider is the same family. It is much more like a crab; but how it develops from a crab-like form is not yet ascertained.

Nature Works Backward The following is an interesting instance of a reversal of the ordinary course of nature which cost an English market gardener dear: Watercress is eagerly devoured by caddis-worms, and caddis-worms are a favorite food of trout. The trout, in turn, have a voracious enemy in herons, which ordinarily catch the fish after they have grown fat on caddis-worms. Now, in the case referred to, it happened that a large grower of watercress had three-quarters of his crop ruined by the ravages of caddis-worms. On investigation it was found that the trout, which ordinarily protected the plants from the worms had been devoured, ahead of time, so to speak, by a flock of hungry herons which, in thus reversing the course of events, had brought disaster to the owner of the watercress.

Famous Army Corps Mamelukes were light cavalry soldiers forming the bodyguard of the caliph of Egypt in the Thirteenth century. They mutinied and established a new dynasty which lasted from 1254 to 1517. After that they exercised a great influence down to the beginning of the Nineteenth century, when they were massacred according to orders issued by the sultan of Turkey.

Jack Bailey, Anderson, Beresford and Lizzie dashed out into the corridor, leaving Dale and the frightened Lizzie alone with the Unknown. "And I'd run, if my legs would!" Lizzie despaird. "Hush!" said Dale, her ears strained for sounds of conflict. Miss Cornelia re-entered cautiously, with her candle, closing the door gently behind her as she came. "What did you see?" gasped Dale. Miss Cornelia smiled broadly. "I didn't see anything," she admitted with the greatest calm. "I had to get that dazed detective out of the room before I assassinated him."

"Nobody went through the skylight?" said Dale incredulously. "They have now," answered Miss Cornelia with obvious satisfaction. "The whole outfit of them."

She stole a glance at the veiled eyes of the Unknown. He was lying limply back in his chair, as if the excitement had been too much for him—and yet she could have sworn she had seen him leap to his feet, like a man in full possession of his faculties, when she had given her false cry of alarm.

"Then why did you—" began Dale, dazedly, unable to fathom her aunt's reasons for her trick. "Because," interrupted Miss Cornelia decidedly, "that money's in this room. If the man who took it out of the safe got away with it, why did he come back and hide there?"

Her forefinger jabbed at the hidden chamber wherein the masked intruder had terrified Dale with threats of instant death. "He got it out of the safe—and that's as far as he did get with it," she persisted inexorably. "There's a hat behind that safe—a man's soft felt hat!"

So this was the discovery she had hinted of to Anderson before he rebuffed her proffer of assistance! Miss Cornelia crossed behind the wicker clothes-hamper and picked up something from the floor. "A half-burned candle," she mused. "Another thing the detective overlooked."

She stepped back to the center of the room, looking knowingly from the candle to the hidden room and back again. "Oh, my God—another one!" shrieked Lizzie, as the dark shape of a man appeared suddenly outside the window, as if materialized from the air.

Miss Cornelia snatched up her revolver from the top of the hamper. "Don't shoot—it's Jack!" came a warning cry from Dale, as the latter recognized the figure of her lover. Miss Cornelia laid her revolver down on the hamper again. The vacant eyes of the Unknown caught the movement.

"What would you do, Gert, if you got fired out of the chorus?" "Oh! I guess I'd give up the stage."

Angels The angels don't invariably fly. They stay on earth and labor to supply The money.

The Football Game Gertie—Why did they stop at man and knock him down as soon as he touched the ball? Dick—Because he was trying to get a goal. Gertie—But isn't the object of the game to get goals? Dick—Yes, but he's on the other side. He was going the wrong way—towards the wrong goal. Gertie—Well, I don't see why they should knock him down to tell him that. Everybody makes mistakes.

It's All Right He—Will you be my partner— She—Oh, George, this is so sudden! Give me a little time— He (continuing)—For the next dance?

(continuing)—To catch my breath. I haven't recovered from the last fox trot yet.

Sounds Impossible Fisherman—Talking about fishing, I caught a—while, but it got away. Listener—He did? How could he?

Just a Little Smile



FOR HER SAKE

"Ye gods!" exclaimed Smith, who had come up just in time to see South exchanging \$30 for an antiquated car. "What in Heaven's name are you buying that old wreck for?"

"Well," explained South, "my wife is ashamed every time she has to admit we haven't a car. I can't afford a car, but by having that thing that won't run and won't need any upkeep in the garage, she'll be able to say we have a car and there'll be no need to go into any further details."—Chicago News.

MAYBE WHEN HE LEFT

He (enjoying open fire)—What time do you love best? She (helpfully)—Why don't you experiment and find out?

Perfection Both beautiful and dumb My own true love must be: Beautiful, so I'll love her— And dumb, so she'll love me.

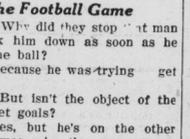
Her Eternity Benefit A woman came before a pension committee and stated that she was seeking her "eternity" benefit. "Your what, madam?" queried the chairman. "My 'eternity' benefit," she reaffirmed. "My dear woman, 'eternity' means your hereafter."

"Yes, sir; that's what I'm here after."

The Doc Provides an Alibi The doctor having recovered his fur-lined garment was reluctant to proceed against the culprit. "But," said the policeman, "it was a case of larceny, wasn't it?"

"Not exactly," returned the doctor, "rather a case of misunderstanding, I think. You see, I told my patient he must take something warm immediately, and on his way out he took my overcoat."

OBVIOUS



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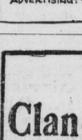
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