

CHAPTER XXII

THE FINAL ROUND

JIMMIE DALE ensconced himself in the easy chair near the table at the far end of the chamber and switched off his flashlight.

The minutes dragged along—five, ten, fifteen of them—twenty. Came then the sound of a footstep in the cellar. Then Carruthers' whisper:

"All right! I hear him."

Another minute passed. The footfalls were on the steps now, and now they scuffled on the cement floor; and the ray of a flashlight streamed down the length of the almost cavern-like place disclosing table, lamp, and easy chair—but the easy chair was empty.

And now a shadowy form showed at the edge of the table, a match crackled, the lamp was lighted—and Jimmie Dale, from where he had taken refuge behind the easy chair, rose suddenly to his feet.

"Hello, Beaton," he said casually, as the automatic in his hand swung to a level with the other's eyes, "stick 'em up!"

With a sharp, startled cry, Beaton drew back, and his hand went instinctively toward his pocket.

"I said *stick 'em up!*" repeated Larry the Bat.

A dazed look spread itself over Beaton's face.

"My God," he mumbled, as his hands went up over his head, "how did you get in here?"

"Aw," sniffed Larry the Bat, as he felt deftly over the other's clothing, and transferred a revolver from Beaton's pocket to his own, "someone left de door open! Now youse can put 'em down."

Beaton's hands flopped to his sides. He circled his lips with his tongue.

"How did you get in here?" he repeated hoarsely. "How did you know about this place?"

"I knows a lot of things"—Larry the Bat's voice was almost friendly—"only I ferget a lot of de answers! See? But if youse wants to know about me gettin' in here, I'll put youse wise. I been watchin' dat father of yers fer de last few days."

"My father!" The sweat was standing out on Beaton's forehead; he flirited it away with a sweep of his hand.

"Sure!" asserted Larry the Bat. "Daddy Ratzler! Dat's another thing I knows."

A bottle of whisky was on the table. Beaton reached out his hand toward it.

"Do you mind if I take a shot?" he asked shakily.

"Help yerself!" said Larry the Bat graciously. "Youse don't seem to have de nerve I thought youse had, an' mabbe dat'll buck youse up. I didn't mean to throw no scare into youse. Wot I wants is to talk business an' get down so cases."

Beaton poured a generous helping from the bottle into a glass and gulped it down at a swallow.

"What do you want?" he coughed.

"D'youse knows who I am?" inquired Larry the Bat pleasantly.

"I've never seen you before"—Beaton wiped his lips nervously with the back of his hand—"but from what

you said about Daddy Ratzler I can make a guess. You're the bird that was out here the other night. You're Larry the Bat—the Gray Seal."

"Youse're a good guesser!" Larry the Bat wagged his head in assent. "Sure, dat's me! Well, listen! I comes out here to make a deal wid Daddy Ratzler, only some old bag he's got hangin' around puts de crimp in it. See? But I'm still fer de deal. An' dat's wot I wants to talk to youse about, youse bein' one of de family."

The liquor appeared somewhat to have restored Beaton's self-control.

"Well, that sounds all right to me," he said—and attempted an encouraging smile. "Go ahead!"

Larry the Bat waved his automatic toward the bottle.

"Have another?" he invited.

"Thanks!" said Beaton—and helped himself again.

"Now, den"—Larry the Bat's voice was suddenly confidential—"I knows a lot about dis, an' I'm puttin' me cards on de table so's youse can see dere's no use tryin' to slip anythin' over on me. I knows dat Daddy Ratzler was de head on dis side of de pond of one of de big rings dat's been pinchin' sparklers, an' smugglin' 'em in, an' givin' de Secret Service de horse laugh. An' I knows dat de last bunch of sparklers dat was sent over is de juiciest of all, which is why youse an' Daddy Ratzler was goin' to swipe dem fer yerselves an' double-cross de gang."

Beaton's face was white.

"How do you know that?" he stammered.

"Aw, say," said Larry the Bat patiently, "a blind man could see dat! Listen! De Secret Service ain't so dumb as dey looks. Dey has been wonderin' about Daddy Ratzler an' his outfit fer a long time, an' dey

starts in havin' a look at Daddy Ratzler's mail in de post office—only Daddy Ratzler gets tipped off to wot dey're doin'. See? Well, dat puts de line of communication on de blink, like us uster say in de war, an' Daddy Ratzler an' de French H. Q. has to find another way. So dey picks on a guy dat nobody ain't goin' to be suspicious of—an' dey picks on a guy named Thorne. But de gang don't know dat Thorne's valet is Daddy Ratzler's son—an' dat's how I knows youse two was goin' to hand de crowd de frozen mitt. Say, youse wouldn't like to have me spill dat little piece of information to Silky Hines, would youse? Youse knows wot'd happen, don't youse? He'd take de two of youse fer a long, long ride—an' he wouldn't keep youse waitin' fer de start, neither!"

There was a hunred look in Beaton's eyes.

"How did you find out all this?" he asked miserably.

Larry the Bat shook his head.

"Dat don't make no difference," he grinned; "an' I'm tellin' youse again to ferget dat end of it. I'm showin' youse me cards, ain't I? An' I'm talkin' friendly 'cause dere's still a chance to pull off dat deal. I knows a lot more. A letter was sent from Paree to Thorne, an' inside de letter was a blue envelope dat was sealed, an' inside de blue envelope was de dope fixed up nice an' secret about how an' when de sparklers was to come. An' Daddy Ratzler knows how to read dat dope. An' de idea was dat youse was to pinch de letter, an' youse an' Daddy Ratzler was to lift de sparklers while de gang was still wonderin' why de letter didn't come—only I beat youse to it."

Beaton's eyes narrowed suddenly.

"Yes—and bumped off Thorne in doing it!" he laughed throatily.

Larry the Bat bridled instantly.

"Dat's a lie!" he snapped. "I opened de safe an' took de blue envelope all right, but I never saw Thorne. Y'understand? It wasn't me!"

"Well," Beaton shrugged his shoulders, "who was it, then?"

"How t'hell does I know!" exclaimed Larry the Bat viciously. "But I'll slip youse dis! If I ever finds out, he'll get his! I'll put de skids under him! I'll make him squawk! I ain't standin' fer no lousy murder jobs, dat I didn't do! D'youse get me! It wasn't me dat done it!"

Again Beaton laughed throatily.

"I'm not disputing you," he said hastily.

"Youse'd better not!" growled Larry the Bat threateningly. "Dat's a sore spot wid me!" And then, his voice amicable once more: "But dis ain't gettin' down to cases. If I can't read wot's in dat letter, it's no good to me; an' if youse haven't got de letter, to read, youse're out of luck too! Dat's a cinch, ain't it? I'm askin' youse how to read de dope in dat letter. I'm makin' de same proposition dat I made de other night. Dat was a rake envelope I handed Daddy Ratzler, 'cause I wasn't playin' any chances. But I still got de joker up me sleeve, an' dat's de real envelope wid de hidden message in dat I'm offerin' youse an' Daddy Ratzler on a fifty-fifty swop fer whatever dere is in de pot."

A sudden look of relief, veiled the next instant by half-closed lids, flashed in Beaton's eyes.

"You mean," he asked quickly, "that you think there's still a chance of getting the stuff before the crowd on the other side get busy and wise up the gang here where it is and what to do?"

"Sure!" said Larry the Bat complacently. "Dat's

wot I'm talkin' about. I got de dope an' youse haven't. Mabbe it's kind of tough on youse an' Daddy Ratzler to have to cough up to me, but dat's yer own fault."

"What do you mean—our own fault?" Beaton was almost at his ease now.

"Well," chuckled Larry the Bat, "it looks to me dat, bein' Thorne's valet, an' bein' in de house, an' knowin' it was comin', an' bein' able to pick out anythin' wid French stamps on it, youse made a bum play on yer end of it by not pinchin' de letter before Thorne got it, an' den gettin' away wid de goods while de bunch was guessin' why it never came."

"Look here," said Beaton with sudden heartiness, "this looks good to me. I'll say right now that I'll come in on it with you—and so will Daddy Ratzler. You can leave him to me, no matter what he said the other night. He's getting c'd and feeble-minded, and I guess he thought you were bluffing; but you've said enough so's I can see it's the only chance we've got left. You're on—and that goes! And to show you that I'm on the level, I'll put some cards on the table, too. It wasn't my fault that Thorne ever even saw that letter—it was just damned tough luck. I knew it was coming just about that time and I was keeping my eyes peeled for it—the postman never made a round that I wasn't on the job. Get that? But th' afternoon that it *did* come, Thorne was standing there in the hall, and he held out his hand for the lirtle bunch of letters with that one amongst them, that the postman had just brought—and I had to give them to him."

Larry the Bat was intensely interested—his mouth gaped a little.

"Wouldn't dat jar youse!" he ejaculated heavily.

"It did!" said Beaton, with a vicious oath. "It put everything on the rocks! The letter that came from France with the blue envelope in it was from a fellow named Keane who was batman for Thorne for a while in the war; and Keane said in the letter that he'd just heard that an old pal of his who was somewhere in New York called Peter Halstead—who was a fake, of course, and didn't exist—was on his uppers, and that there was a small draft in the letter which, though it wasn't much, he wanted Halstead to have, only he didn't know Halstead's address, and that the friend he'd met in Paris who had told him about Halstead didn't know Halstead's address either. So he didn't know who to turn to except his, meaning Keane's, old captain, and he asked Thorne to please put a 'personal' in his newspaper the next morning requesting Halstead to call—and to keep the envelope in his safe until Halstead turned up."

Larry the Bat was leaning over the table now and was apparently so absorbed in Beaton's recital that, though he still retained his automatic in his hand, it no longer covered the other.

"I get youse!" he said—and nodded admiringly. "So dat's why youse took a job wid Thorne?"

Beaton shook his head—and reached for the bottle.

"Have one!" he suggested.

The relations between the two men were becoming almost cordial.

"Mabbe I will in a minute," said Larry the Bat, "but I'd rather hear de rest of yer spiel first. De job's a peach so far—I got to hand it to youse fer dat!"

Beaton's eyes over the rim of his glass rested for a fleeting second on the automatic in Larry the Bat's hand; and for another on the innocent-looking tier of

bureau drawers—and a queer smile, almost but not entirely hidden by the glass, and which Larry the Bat did not appear to notice, crossed his lips.

“No,” he said, “that wasn’t why I took a job with Thorne. I didn’t know that Thorne had ever had anything to do with Keane then. I went with Thorne because it’s always a safe play to have some visible means of support and be an honest-to-God respectable citizen—while you’re working side lines! Get the idea? Thorne’s was an easy berth. I got a lot of time off—for my own business.”

“Youse’re a bird!” murmured Larry the Bat with wholesome respect.

Beaton acknowledged the compliment with a deprecating wave of his hand.

“But I knew Keane,” he said. “Keane, before the war, used to do a lot of jobs with Daddy Ratzler, and after the war he went back to France on the diamond lay as sort of representing Daddy Ratzler over there. Maybe you know him—Cokey Keane?”

“I never had de pleasure,” regretted Larry the Bat.

“Well, you never will now,” said Beaton; “for, according to the papers, he had a run-in with the Paris police and got bumped off—and, as near as I can figure it, just about the time he posted that letter to Thorne. But that doesn’t matter now. What happened was this. A few months ago the Big Chief of the ring, Frenchy Jacob, who lives in Paris, came over here. Communications were getting difficult, and there was a special shipment that was going to be sent along as soon as they could make arrangements with a new ‘runner’ that they were trying to get away from the London outfit. Daddy Ratzler had got a tip that his mail was being censored.

Well, just about that time and while Frenchy Jacob was still here, I heard Thorne say one day that Keane had been a batman of his during part of the war. That sounded good to me, and I slipped it over to Daddy Ratzler, and Daddy Ratzler slipped it over to Frenchy Jacob—and Frenchy Jacob fell for it. Nobody was going to interfere with any mail addressed to a man like Thorne, and that gave Daddy Ratzler and me the open-and-shut for a play to get away with the whole pool—and no risk to it. Get it?"

Larry the Bat licked his lips greedily.

"Dat's a pippin!" he applauded.

"Yes," said Beaton; "and it would have gone across like clockwork if Thorne hadn't been standing in the hall that afternoon just when the letter arrived. And that brings me back to where I was saying he took the whole bunch of mail away from me. He took the letters into that little room of his—you ought to know the one I mean!"

"Let dat go!" smirked Larry the Bat.

"All right! Later on he went out. I went into the room; but, though I saw Keane's letter lying on the desk, I couldn't find the blue envelope, so I knew Thorne had put it in the safe as Keane had asked him to do. I had the combination of the safe and a key to the little steel drawer that I'd got from a wax impression, but I didn't monkey with anything then because it would look too much like an *inside* job, and I wasn't asking for trouble. I knew that Thorne was dining at the club, and wasn't likely to be home before eleven or twelve o'clock, and besides it was my night out. I got hold of Daddy Ratzler, told him what had happened, and we doped out a little plan. Daddy Ratzler telephoned Thorne at the

club and pretended to be Halstead. He told Thorne that he had met a friend who had just worked his way back from the other side, and this friend had seen a pal of his named Keane in Paris, and they had talked about him, Halstead, having run into hard luck, and Keane had said he was going to send over a little money through Thorne. You understand? The same story as the letter. He said he didn't want to bother Thorne, but that he was in desperate circumstances, and though he hadn't seen any 'personal' yet in the papers, perhaps Thorne might possibly have heard from Keane and hadn't had time to attend to it, or, if no letter had yet come, perhaps Thorne himself would let him have a few dollars in the meanwhile. Thorne, of course, said that the letter had come that afternoon and that there was an envelope in his safe at home for Halstead. Daddy Ratzler thanked Thorne with tears in his voice, and said he'd go round and get it in the morning, and asked Thorne please not to say anything about it at all to anybody as it was the first time in his life that he had ever begged or received charity. Thorne promised, and——"

"Which," interrupted Larry the Bat sententiously, "accounts fer de fact dat even Thorne's friends didn't know nothin' about it 'cause, if dey'd had, dey'd have spilled it to de cops."

"Yes," said Bearon.

"Wot'd youse do next?"

"Daddy Ratzler sent for Silky Hines and tipped him off to what he had done. He said he'd been getting nervous and worried, just as they all were with nothing showing up in the newspaper, and so he had taken a chance and telephoned. That let Daddy Ratzler out with the gang—he was laying all *his* cards on the table.

When the safe was found cracked open, and the envelope gone, and Thorne told the police about the telephone conversation with a man named Halstead, as he would then have to do, it wouldn't be anything that the gang didn't know already."

"Sure," agreed Larry the Bat, "dat was de only play Daddy Ratzler could make. Anybody could see dat in de dark. An' den wot?"

Beaton's glance traveled from the bottle to the carelessly held weapon in Larry the Bat's hand and back again to the bottle.

"Daddy Ratzler fixed it up with Silky Hines to have one of the gang go around in the morning and play Halstead and get the envelope; and the idea was, of course, that I was to pinch the envelope during the night. I had it all doped out so that no one would suspect me, and I would have got away with it all right, too—if you hadn't butted in!"

"Well, ferget dat!" advised Larry the Bat placatingly. "Youse're goin' to get a look-in anyway, ain't youse? But, say"—Larry the Bat's tones grew puzzled—"it's a funny thing de police ner nobody' else didn't find dat letter dat Cokey Keane wrote. An' I'm tellin' youse straight dat I didn't take it, neither."

Beaton indulged in a faintly amused smile.

"Thorne didn't put *that* in the safe," he said. "I told you I'd seen it on his desk, and it was still lying there when I went into the room and found him dead on the floor. It looked as though Daddy Ratzler's little game and mine was all up, but that was no reason why I should give the police a chance to dig up anything about how the gang was operating, and, with a murder on their hands, they might have got the French police

working and gone pretty far with that letter. So, after I had telephoned headquarters and while I was waiting, I got rid of it, burned it—and, if you want to know the ugly details, stirred the charred remains up in the garbage can.'

"Some nifty piece of work"—Larry the Bat's voice was awed—"de whole of it! Say, I ain't so sure dat I'm stuck on meself fer puttin' it on de blink!"

"That's nice of you," returned Beaton magnanimously, "though I've got to be honest enough to admit that I'm not happy about it myself; but, believe me, I'm for picking up the pieces, and I've come across wide enough and clean enough to show that I'm on the level, haven't I?"

"Youse sure has!" declared Larry the Bat enthusiastically.

"Fine!" said Beaton, with equal enthusiasm. "And now with the smoke cleared away, we'll get down to business. You're to hand over the original blue envelope, and we're to decipher what's in it—and then go out after the goods. If it's too late, we all lose; but, if it isn't, it's to be a fifty-fifty split. Fifty for you and fifty for Daddy Ratzler and me—is that right?"

"Dat's de contract!" confirmed Larry the Bat amiably.

"Well, I agree. I've got to"—Beaton laughed philosophically—"because otherwise I wouldn't get anything out of it at all. Daddy Ratzler, of course, would get his share from the gang if we don't beat them to it; but he'll get a lot more this way, and he'll agree, too—I'll see to that, as I said before. Have you got the envelope with you?"

"No," said Larry the Bat, "'cause until I was sure wot

was goin' to break, I wasn't carryin' *dat* around wid me; but *dat* don't cut no ice, fer I can get it in a couple of hours."

"All right!" Beaton nodded. "You go and get it, and I'll go over to the village and telephone Daddy Ratzler to come out here. One thing is sure, we haven't got any time to lose—there've been too many days by a whole lot that have gone by already. We'll say midnight if you can get back by then. Does that suit you?"

"Sure, it does!" said Larry the Bat heartily. "I can make *dat* easy."

"Shake!" said Beaton.

Larry the Bat laid his automatic spontaneously down on the edge of the table and extended his hand.

"Atta boy!" he grinned.

"Fifty-fifty," Beaton grinned back, "and we'll have a drink to seal the bargain." He leaned over the table and pushed bottle and glass toward Larry the Bat. "It's the real stuff right off a ship. Help yourself!"

Larry the Bat reached out and picked up the bottle and glass.

"Sure, I'll have a drink wid youse now," he said genially, "an' here's to——"

The bottle and glass slipped from his finger, and crashed down on the table. It had been quickly done—done in the winking of an eye. Already leaning half over the table, Beaton had lunged swiftly forward—and Larry the Bat, a stunned look in his face, was staring into the muzzle of his own automatic.

And Beaton was a man transformed—his face in fury, his lips working.

"So you'd squeal to Silky Hines, would you!" he screamed. "Well, you'll never squeal to anyone because

you're going for a ride! You fool! What did you think you were getting away with? I got all that stuff last night. I thought you'd fall for a come-on game before you were through. And you're the Gray Seal that they talk about in hushed voices, are you? You're a laugh! And you're the bird that was boasting a few minutes ago about how you'd put the skids under the fellow who killed Thorne and make him squawk if you ever found out who he was, are you? Well, you've found him! And now what are you going to do about it?"

Larry the Bat, moistening his lips, found his voice.

"What d'youse mean?" he quavered.

Beaton moved around the table—and leered into Larry the Bat's face.

"You won't tell anybody, will you?" Beaton was snarling like a beast now. "Not till you bump into whoever's on the station platform in hell—because you're going to make a quick trip there, and no stopovers! I shot Thorne—just the way I'm going to plug you! So what about those skids? You cheap skate!"

Larry the Bat's nerve seemed utterly to have deserted him. He shrank back, a cringing, spineless thing, twisting and wringing his hands together in terror.

"Aw, say, youse wouldn't do dat!" he pleaded desperately. "Say, listen! I was only kiddin' about Silky Hines just to make youse come across. I wouldn't have spilled nothin' to him even if youse had said youse wouldn't make de spit. Honest to Gawd, I wouldn't! An' youse ain't got nothin' against me fer wot I said about de guy dat bumped Thorne off, 'cause I knows youse're only kiddin' when youse says it was youse dat gave him de spot. I read in de papers all about de two dames dat brought youse home, an' youse was so drunk

youse couldn't have killed nobody, an' besides dat youse had a time alibi dat let youse out."

"Drunk!" There was ugly glee in Beaton's laugh. "Didn't I tell you that I'd fixed it up with Daddy Ratzler to open that safe? Do you think I'd get drunk with a job like that to do? I wasn't drunk—but the girls thought I was. That's where the time alibi came from—when I let my watch fall out of my pocket, and they told me what time it was because I was too drunk to tell it myself! I'd set my watch ahead twenty minutes. Do you get that, Mister Gray Seal—or can't you count that far? You brainy bird, you underworld terror—*rrpt!* Open your face, and answer me! Do you get that, you louse?"

"Yes," mumbled Larry the Bat weakly.

"Oh, you do! But you don't know why I wanted those twenty minutes, do you? Answer me!" Beaton prodded Larry the Bat viciously with the muzzle of the automatic. "That's too deep for the Gray Seal, isn't it?"

There was a miserable, hunted look in Larry the Bat's face, and twice he swallowed hard.

"I—I don't know"—his words were almost inarticulate.

"I'll tell you, then! You'll make a hit with the story—*where you're going!*" Beaton was gloating now, jeering, his eyes blazing with an almost maniacal light. "Maybe it will help you to save the Gray Seal's face if you tell them down there in hell that it was one of your own jobs! That'll save you from getting the laugh as a piker, because you're going to be among a lot of wise guys from now on! I knew the combination and I had the key to the little drawer, and I could have got into

the safe in a minute or two, but I told you I was leery about anything that looked like an inside job. Who else would it be but me that did it? And even if they couldn't prove it, they'd have got too damned inquisitive about my record. Get that?" He thrust viciously again with the automatic. "Don't forget the fine points when you're telling the story! I needed that twenty minutes to fix things up. After I'd got the envelope I was going to 'soup' the safe and the drawer—using time fuses. That's another point—cut so's they'd burn just so long. Then I was going to set my watch right and leave the house again—and just about the time when the bang went off and the household was running around in their nighties, I'd be drunk and trying to find the keyhole to let myself in, and according to the girls, who could prove the time, I would have been with them not only all night, but they'd only have just left me not more than a minute or so when the break was pulled, so it couldn't have been me. It was ironclad. There was nothing to it. But you"—his voice rose furiously—"you, damn you, you queered it!"

Larry the Bat cowered.

"Fer Gawd's sake, Beaton," he whimpered, "youse ain't goin' to do wot youse said, are youse?"

Beaton bared his teeth in a cat-and-mouse grin.

"How do you like the story?" he leered. "Listen to the rest of it—and the last few words you'll ever hear in this little old world! It'll interest you, seeing you feel so badly about the Thorne killing and that it's a sore spot with you! When I got into that room, you, you mangy rat, had beaten me to it, and the envelope was gone. And then Thorne walked into the room. I don't know what brought him down there, whether he couldn't

sleep and had just come for a book or something, or what; but he wasn't walking in his sleep, as one of his fool pals suggested when the police were nosing around, because he recognized me. Thorne's the only one that knows why he came downstairs, and, if you're curious about it, you can ask him—you'll be talking to him in a minute or two!"

Larry the Bat licked at his lips feverishly.

"Wot—wot d'youse kill him fer?" he mouthed bitterly. "Dere wouldn't have been nothin' like dis if youse hadn't."

"What did I kill him for!" echoed Beaton sardonically. "I killed him for one of the same reasons that I'm going to kill you! Didn't I tell you he *recognized* me! The safe was open, and its insides were all over the floor, and the blue envelope was gone. If I'd made an escape from the house and left him alive to tell about it, it wouldn't have been only the police I'd have had to duck—I'd have gone for a ride with Silky Hines' crowd if they ever found me, because they'd never believe I hadn't swiped the envelope. I had a silencer on my rod and I plugged Thorne with it. He never knew what hit him—he went down on the floor dead. It was a safe play—just as safe as the one I'm playing with you right now! Nobody heard the shot, and I still had that time alibi up my sleeve—and I used that to get rid of the 'soup' and stuff I'd brought with me, and to burn up Keane's letter; and then I waited until it would look as though I had had just about time enough to get into the house after the girls left me, then I set my watch back, and telephoned down to headquarters to tell them what I'd *found*. Have you got it all?" Beaton broke suddenly into wicked laughter. "Don't forget

any of the fine points! And tell Thorne I'm wearing mourning for him, will you? And now, you——"

The cringing figure of Larry the Bat was gone—and swift as a lightning flash, while the mechanism of the automatic in the other's hand clicked harmlessly, Jimmie Dale's fist, with every ounce of his strength and weight behind the blow, crashed to the point of Beaton's chin—and Beaton lay sprawled, inert and stunned, upon the floor. And it was Jimmie Dale, too, the next instant who whipped a pair of handcuffs from his pockets, and berjing down, slipped them deftly over Beaton's wrists—but it was Larry the Bat, tonguing his lips complacently, who stood up as Carruthers, white-faced, came running toward him.

"My God," Carruthers whispered shakily, "I—I didn't know what to do! I—I thought you——"

"Aw, say," said Larry the Bat soothingly, "dere wasn't nothin' to worry about. Didn't I tell youse all youse had to do was listen? Dere wasn't nothin' to it at all after I'd given him de chance to grab dat gun. It wasn't loaded. Sure, he talked his head off! Dey're all alike when dey thinks dey has got youse cold—dey likes to see youse squirm an' hear demselves gloat before dey bumps youse off. Well, dere he is all made up into a nice little package fer youse. Are youse satisfied wid wot youse heard?"

"Very fully!" said Carruthers grimly. "And I'll see that——"

"Youse needn't make a speech about it," interrupted Larry the Bat coolly, "'cause wot youse said before goes wid me, an' I got to be on me way. All youse've got to do is see dat he don't get gay while youse're waitin' fer de police to come. I'll send Pascal over to de village fer

'em. An' here's yer gun, an' here's his." Larry the Bat took the two weapons from his pocket and laid them on the table; then, stooping down, he picked up his own automatic from where it had fallen to the floor from Beaton's hand. "I got another dat *is* loaded," he informed Carruthers casually.

Carruthers smiled queerly.

"That's all right," he said quietly; and then abruptly: "Look here! I can quite understand that you c'n't afford to be found hanging around here when the police come, and I am quite prepared to see this man behind the bars, but there's something I'd like to know a little more about—I mean that blue envelope."

Larry the Bat nodded his head.

"Sure!" he agreed. "Dat's all right—an' mabbe de judge 'ud like to see how it was worked, too. I'll send it to youse by mail—as soon as I get me fingerprints rubbed off it. An' mabbe dere's someth'n' else dat youse an' de judge 'ud like to see, too. De night before last, up on de St. Lawrence River, Beaton bumped off dat 'runner' he was yappin' about, so when de police comes, get dem to bust open dat byureau—youse'll find de sparklers in dere, an' mabbe dat ain't all neither—mabbe dere's some things of Daddy Ratzler's dat he's been keepin' private from de world! An' say, listen, dere's one more thing. Slip it to de police to keep dere faces shut until dey gets dere claws on Daddy Ratzler, 'cause if dey don't it'll be a race between de police and de gang dat he gyped to see who grabs him first. See?"

"Where does this Daddy Ratzler live?" demanded Carruthers tersely.

"Youse can leave dat to de cops," grinned Larry the Bat reassuringly; "dey've had his address for a long

time, only dey ain't never been invited to none of his 'at homes' until to-night!" He glanced speculatively down at the floor—Beaton was beginning to recover consciousness. "I don't think dis bird'll make any more trouble," he observed judicially; "but mabbe if youse tapped him on de bean every once in a while wid one of dem guns youse'd be sure of it!"

"I'll take care of him!" promised Carruthers with a hard smile.

"Sure, youse will!" conceded Larry the Bat cordially. "Well, as I said, I'll be on me way, an' I'll see dat de cops gets here on de jump. Good-night, Mr. Carruthers!"

"Wait a minute!" said Carruthers.

Larry the Bat already half-turned, faced around again.

Carruthers was holding out his hand.

"Well, wot d'youse knows about dat!" gasped Larry the Bat.

It was not yet daylight as Jimmie Dale, awakened out of a sound sleep, sat up in bed. The telephone was ringing. He got up and lifted the receiver from the hook.

It was Carruthers' voice that answered him.

"What! Again!" complained Jimmie Dale plaintively. "Look here, Carruthers, did it ever occur to you that there are certain amenities in life that one does not wantonly profane, and this habit of calling people out of bed at ungodly hours is——"

"Oh, shut up, Jimmie!" Carruthers broke in violently. "Listen! We've got Ray's murderer!"

"Say that again!" Jimmie Dale drew in his breath

sharply. "You mean the Gray Seal has been caught?"

"No! It wasn't the Gray Seal. It was Beaton!"

"*What?*" shouted Jimmie Dale.

"Yes!" asserted Carruthers feverishly. "Beaton and his father—a crook known as Daddy Ratzler. We've got them both! And it was the Gray Seal that landed them. There's a house with a secret cellar, and heaven knows how many thousands of stolen bonds, to say nothing of half a million in diamonds. I've just got back to town, and though it's far too long a story for the phone, I had to give you a ring to break the news; but I'm on my way uptown now to tell you all about it."

"Then for heaven's sake step on it, old man!" urged Jimmie Dale frantically—and winked confidentially at the receiver as he replaced it on the hook.

THE END