

girl a marvel for the world of terpsichore to envy. And in her own light she was a model of propriety, for in Anegada nothing is ever wrong. Her appeal to Tava did not lack for candor.

"Daughter of the Serpent," she began amiably, "groveler in ashes and slayer of babes, I would have thee distill from the devil flowers a charm that the yellow haired one may always love me. If it require a 'kid without horns' I myself shall procure one from the 'red leg' family now encamped on the Cay. Tomorrow I would have it. It must make his eyes look always toward me. If it does not so perhaps I myself shall fire your hut while you sleep. You are old and ugly, and the great devil wishes you for his own!"

Tava did not meditate long upon this respectful requisitioning of her occult powers. The situation demanded no delay. Her little hut, anchored by interwoven fibers to the tentacles of a great uprooted pimento tree, suggested an immediate field for research work. A full moon would rise but shortly after 9 o'clock. A peculiar fungus that grew in newly agitated soil always placated the Great Green Serpent if properly broiled with dried blood and powdered shark teeth. She hung her amulet—a femur of the genus homo—to the ridge pole and delved feverishly with an iron bar.

It grated presently against something that emitted a metallic clink. Hopeful of a buried image—many such had been dug up by more fortunate Voodoo practitioners—she delved deeper. A corner of a red cedar chest was unearthed. Vaguely reminiscent of ancient rumors of buried treasure, she clawed the soft earth with her hands. The magic fungus was forgotten.

The captive ship's carpenter who had framed its angles a century before apparently had bulled well. The bands of soft copper still held the chest snugly closed. But for an object expected to hold gold coin and silver bars it was disappointingly light. She pried the lid open.

An odor as of stale steam and rotten wood assailed her nostrils. Within was a strange green, moldy mass, exuding great air bubbles that broke with tiny sounds as she agitated the contents. They seemed to consist of layer upon layer of aged, rotten silks. Within, wrapped in parchment, was something heavier. She unwrapped it eagerly, and in her hands, heavy and brilliant, the wicked coils of the Opals of Arragon met her gaze, lurid flames glinting in their depths.

Again she prodded into the depths. The foul fabric crumpled into tatters, revealing three bottles. She held them

against the light. Two gleamed crimson with the ruby tints of the Malaga wine that the long dead pirate had been pleased to preserve with his other treasures. The third was a rich amber hue, the fine, clear honey color of old Port Royal rum. The town itself had slipped beneath the sea, but the rum compounded of sprouted corn and smashed banana stalks remained clear, heady and potent.

The aged crone's hands lingered loyally on the opals. They were all of value—they and the liquors—that the great cask had yielded. Time has been in the Virgin Isles' hectic history when silk and rum had as much value as gold bars. In such a time the pirate who last had acquired the Opals of Arragon had buried them there. It had been a temporary arrangement, no doubt. Perhaps for the nonce he had no other place for his bales of silk and strings of opals.

Elsewhere on Anegada, mayhap, was the true store of Spanish dubbons and pieces of eight that represented his ill-gotten competency. The silks may have been destined for a dark-eyed dancing girl in Port au Spain or a clear-eyed British lass in Essex or Birmingham. But the guilty dreamer of dreams was gone—a skeleton in the coral-crested ribs of a sunken ship or dust in the potter's

field where went the cadavers from "Execution Dock," sun-dried in the winds.

The old hag didn't think of these things. She reflected only on the great disappointment that there were no gleaming bars of gold. As she meditated a shadow fell athwart her shoulder. A slip of a girl peered with wide eyes at the opals. The practitioner of Voodooism rose craftily. After all, her cult standing was the supreme thing in life.

"From the Green Serpent!" she croaked. "Finer to his eyes you'll be now. And better than potions to blind the eyes of men who look on women!"

The girl donned the opals, noting that one or two of the largest were cracked and marred, as if bitten with human teeth. She watched the angry fire of the glittering stones as her bosom rose and fell.

"Now," she breathed, "oh, truly killer of babes, the Great Green Serpent loves you well!"

The hag grunted and resumed her stirring of the mystic mess in the old ship's kettle. Outside there was a crunching of footsteps in the sand. The tall, blond beach-comber entered. The girl turned with regal poise and met his gaze. His blue eyes contracted.

"You are beautiful," he said, "as—as the sunrise in Peapest!"

"I have not been there," said Rosamar coyly.

He advanced, lured by the invitation in her eyes. The Opals of Arragon clicked against his faded shirt as they had clicked against chain mail and purple velvet.

They drank of the century old Malaga and the strong and heady Port Royal rum. The hag stirred on, maintaining her pose craftily, but watching through her tousled hair, for all the world like an aged poodle. Drink loosened the man's tongue and he made wild protestations of love and great promises of future estate.

But as the evening wore on a new candor crept up to his lips.

"Always?" entreated the girl persistently. "In Havana, too, where are whiter women, will you still see me alone?"

His flushed face writhed into an unsteady grin. His great paw groped for the opals.

"Where there are white women," he boasted, "I go to white women. Yellow wenches are only for the sand beaches and jungle huts of the Virgins."

With a good round English curse the girl scratched at his eyes. He responded with wild vituperation, snatching the coiled loops from her shoulders. They fought in the firelight until the old crone,

creeping out of the corner, struck him heavily with the iron bar. He collapsed across the fire, the opals slipping into the boiling cauldron.

The girl developed hysteria, shrieking and writhing on the floor of the hut. The hag cursed and called for the Great Green Serpent to wither her where she lay. Over the fire, whence came the pungent fumes of scorching cloth and burning hair, the witch's cauldron boiled. The acid of decayed flesh, rancid wood and rotten fruit bit into the gleaming surface of the jewels. The heat cracked them until they fell away in flakes from the chain of beaten gold. The hag groped for the stones with the rusted iron bar and drew them forth, blackened, lusterless wrecks. With a muttered imprecation she let them slip back into the nauseous mess.

Afterward she dragged the hysterical girl outside. Once again within, she poured the remainder of the Malaga and rum over the prostrate form. The flames crept along it and licked up at the thatched walls. Tava, Voodoo priestess extraordinary, and Rosamar, belle of black and tan and chocolate Anegada, went slowly down the trail. Behind them the full moon lifted ruddily, vying with the lurid flames of the burning hut.

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Maid With a Blind Spot

By EMILY CALVIN BLAKE

Illustrated by F. McAnelly



SELINA DENSMORE was called "queer" by Alden, her home town. Born of perfectly respectable parents, who never deviated a hair's breadth from the conventional, Selina was a creative, talented little girl with big, far-seeing eyes and sensitive lips who from the very beginning of her existence puzzled those closest to her.

It is admitted at once that Selina liked to play in circumstances; in commoner phrase, she was given to dramatizing every incident of her dull and drab external life, and one day when she was about 14 she was caught red-handed at this practice.

She was walking down Main street, knowing herself to be a great lady—a queen, forsooth, to whom all her courtiers bowed an humble knee. She was holding a conversation with one who had come begging to her gates. At the corner of Maple and Jones streets she waved a white and jewel-laden hand in the air and spoke graciously:

"Rise, noble knight!" were her words, and they fell upon the rather long ears of Mrs. Hiram Graham, on her way to the grocery store, market basket on her arm. Mrs. Hiram Graham snorted and turned a bit out of her way to report the case to her next friend. The next friend simply tossed her head and said she had long suspected Selina of being not quite right, and finally the two friends agreed that Selina's mother ought to be told, so that at least her pride might be saved by taking drastic action at once.

So they wended their way to Selina's home, and in pitying tones told Mrs. Densmore of her daughter's aberration. Mrs. Densmore, normally resenting their interference, was rather chilly in the reception of their news, but that did not prevent her from falling upon Selina immediately upon the child's return from her adventures on Main street.

Selina listened to the tirade regarding her having made a spectacle of herself on the public highway, and she did not answer, though the color left her face. Hitherto she had been amusingly ready with excuses, explanations. But now she stood silent, for a dreadful truth had come to her out of the ether.

Her mother could not understand! There is a penalty attached to being delicately sensitive to impressions, the penalty of finding an empty shell where you had believed the fulness of perception dwelt. Selina paid her penalty in pain now when she felt her mother's hard, impatient gaze fixed upon her. So to protect herself from going under she composed her face into a blank mask, the while she pushed her new knowledge down to hidden places.

Mrs. Densmore, getting no response, at last gave up her task of making Selina see light, and concluded with the threat that should Selina act in so stupid a manner again, "calling down the ridicule of Alden upon her mother's defenseless head, the case would be carried to a higher and sterner court, namely, her father.

When Selina was 16 she wanted to be an actress. She had been to an annual performance of visiting players and had come away thrilled with the desire to go out upon the stage and wring men's souls. Like all young things, she knew she had a great deal to tell the world that the world had as yet not found out.

In an insane moment she committed the desire to her father. If she had expected thunder from him she was disappointed, joyously so, for he said just this

"My dear Selina, if that is your wish I shall put nothing in your way. Go ahead and make your arrangements."

This was a bit breath-taking, and besides Selina didn't know how to go about making arrangements. But she clapped her hands ecstatically.

"Oh, father, I love you so much!" she cried in a passion of gratitude. That was Selina, giving her all for so little.

He nodded a slow little nod and some way the girl's heart went down into her shabby little boots. (Her father worked in the town's one hardware shop and his emolument was not great.)

"You may go out into the world and become an actress, but—"

He paused impressively, and Selina's long, slender hands clenched into tense little fists as she looked into his face, weak with the weakness of the stubborn.

"But," he continued, "you must cut off all ties with your parents. We shall feel ourselves disgraced." And then, in the very essence of cruelty, he finished: "When shall you pack your trunk? Your mother will help you, I'm sure."

Now Selina stared at him with the same fixed and blank expression with which she had rewarded her mother on the occasion of the lecture regarding her flights enacted on Main street. And Mrs. Densmore moved a bit, vaguely uncomfortable beneath that steady glance. Steady, because something had happened to the portrait of her father hitherto etched with perfect touches in Selina's heart.

Another child might not have felt the devilish ingenuity of his method. But for Selina her father lost his perfect outline. She could not have told you in words how this distortion befell, because her intelligence played no part in it. Only it did happen, this complete dulling of her faith. And her pain was all the keener because, like all idolaters, she had to be quickened to disillusion by the one she believed in.

So with her father. She would have gone on canonizing him till eternity had he not unconsciously construed his real self to that crystal-clear part of his daughter.

It was this strange habit of Selina's of concealing her true feelings that caused the minister to dub her the girl with the blind spot. What he pitifully failed to see was that her blindness was followed by such illuminating flashes of vision that she was stunned by the revelation of feet of clay.

"It's just that what Selina Densmore don't want to see she won't see," said old Mrs. Graham ponderously.

"She'll come to no good end," prophesied Mrs. Myers, herself a mother of three perfectly satisfactory, average girls. "She'll rush to her own doom, she's that headstrong!"

Selina left Alden to go to the big city when she was 20. She was, after all, going on the stage. Her father, having early lost his influence, tried in vain to shake her. Selina felt the call in her soul to go forth from Alden, and Selina obeyed that call.

She had played toward this end by working in Alden's Dry Goods Emporium and saving \$100. So that she arrived in the big city with enough to keep her going till she landed a job behind the footlights.

Selina was fortunate. She went straight to the gates of the best theater in town. She was directed very courteously to the manager's office, and while she waited in the anteroom a young man entered. His entrance was primarily what constituted her good fortune.

It was a bitter winter's day, and the

young man wore a large ulster with a fur collar, and when he shook a clinging snowflake from that collar he turned to Selina, and she, impelled by some inner sparkling source, smiled at him.

Then he sat down by her and they began to talk. She told him her errand, and he listened to her flexible, rich voice, placed like a singer's. He looked into her deep eyes for a moment, then he said very quietly:

"If I were you I wouldn't start the usual way. I have a theory we need not only talent on our stage but trained minds."

"Oh," she said; "what would you do, then?"

Though he was young, not yet 30, her complete trust took his breath away. But he told her what he would do, and the upshot was that they left the manager's reception-room together, and went to a great college, where Selina enrolled herself as a student under Professor Orntegren. Professor Orntegren was to lay her foundation by telling her, very intellectually, of modern and contemporary drama. From that she was to go on to expression and poise.

Selina paid \$40 out of her \$100 (she had carried the complete sum in a little bag pinned away somewhere) and felt very important and happy till she emerged from Professor Orntegren's studio and lost herself in the maze of doors and cut-off reception-rooms of the great building. And so she lost sight of her champion and adviser.

That night in her little room she read want ads, and answered one that promised to pay so much for so many thousand envelopes addressed by hand. She received an answer, and she went to the address given, where she found in a small cut-off room, a rather small man, seated at a big desk. He explained that he wished envelopes addressed by hand because they gave a "personal touch." His business was trying to interest women in buying oil stock.

Selina, then, Mr. Thurington's only employe, started to address envelopes, seated at a small desk in a corner of the small room. She soon gained speed and the commendation of Mr. Thurington.

Mr. Thurington was middle aged, with thinning hair and something a bit wistful in his eyes. Selina, having imagination, built a story about him. He was unappreciated by the world at large; witness his deprecating movements. He had dreams which he kept hidden; note his wistful glances at her from time to time. Ah! Selina knew the joy and the pain of dreams, and one day, thinking all this, she smiled up into his face as he bent above her list of names.

He was a bit surprised, but he returned the smile in good measure, and Selina felt a warm little glow about her heart. She had a passion for people, a fine curiosity, and as has been said, a genius for giving all her sympathies where she thought she saw a need.

A week after Selina's first smile Mr. Thurington told her of his blighted life, and of some of the nobilities he had shown throughout discouragement and misunderstanding. Of course his wife didn't appreciate him, and at this statement Selina's whole soul shone in her eyes.

She raised those misted eyes to Mr. Thurington's. She wanted so to help him. She concentrated on wondering how she could shed light on his wrecked career.

"Oh," she said in her warm voice, "is there anything, anything I can do?"

He looked at her a moment, at her great eyes lifted so confidently to his, her sensitive lips trembling in the excess of

her emotion for his lacks, and suddenly he put his arms about her and was holding her very close! Then his kisses fell haphazardly on her lips, on her cheek. It was quite a moment before she could free herself.

She stood a moment, then, looking at him, a look that made him a bit uncomfortable, though he couldn't believe he had been mistaken in his estimate of her. A girl never looks at a man with wide, sympathetic eyes and expects the situation to remain there. She was simply very clever and used original material. So he smiled complacently and thought to bide his time.

Have I made it very plain that he was insignificant, bald, palpably middle aged, and making a precarious living by fooling gullible women?

But Selina stood looking at him as she rearranged her ideas of him. She put her hand up to her hair and tightened it a bit where it had fallen over her brow. Then she said very quietly:

"I'll try to get out the Overton lists tonight," and turned away.

He left her, puzzled. For many days he was puzzled, because by neither word nor faintest sign did Selina show that anything had happened. And so Mr. Thurington joined the Alden psychics! Selina was dense in one part of her. Then he wondered suddenly if what she didn't want to see she didn't see, which bare surmise angered him. A man wants to register all his emotions on the woman he selects, even for a moment's pastime.

He was still surly on the day Selina gave him her resignation, an action she had meant to take from the moment she knew him for what he was. And he was still staring at her when the door opened and two men entered.

The formalities were soon over. Mr. Thurington was under arrest for improper use of the mails, and Selina was held with him to tell all she knew of his operations.

The whole procedure was a frightful strain on Selina. She answered hundreds of questions, told all she knew of the operation of Thurington's business, which, after all, was very little.

So that the cross-examiners began to treat her with subtle cruelty. She could not get away from their persistence. And when she was beginning to doubt her own intentions in the whole matter, a new element was introduced.

The lawyer for the prosecution, Judge Randall, straight in line for governor of his state, came in person to interview her.

"My name is Randall," he told her simply, his manner quite in keeping with his very fine, outstanding presence, "and I'd like you to tell me all you know."

Of course, after she had told him her story, he realized at once that she was innocent regarding Thurington's manipulations, and he saw that she was allowed to depart.

"What are your plans now?" he asked very kindly as she prepared to leave.

"I'm going to find another position." He thought a moment, then drew out a card from his pocket.

"My wife is looking for a sort of book-keeper. Are you good at figures, Miss Densmore?"

"Not very," said Selina truthfully. And he smiled. He was a bit of an idealist, despite his political experiences, and he said:

"Well, never mind. Go ahead and interview Mrs. Randall."

So Selina, released from that horrible little room in which for two days she had been incarcerated, made her way after due ablutions and changes of attire, accomplished in her boarding-house domain, to Judge Randall's home.

She found it a beautiful show place, built in an exclusive part of the city. The man who answered her ring said Mrs. Randall was at home, and gaining Selina's business, he went away, leaving her standing in a broad hall with fine old woods for its only ornamentation.

He returned in a moment and conducted Selina upstairs over thick piled carpets down a long, dim hall into a bedroom, where sat a lady whose white, bare feet were resting on a little velvet footstool. A maid bent over the footstool, massaging the white feet.

Selina answered all Mrs. Randall's questions satisfactorily evidently for she was given the position, Mrs. Randall mentioned the salary, \$10 a week, said Selina's duties would be to keep account of the moneys received from different sources for Mrs. Randall's pet charity, a home for working girls. Mrs. Randall, for reasons unstated, preferred that Selina work in the evenings from 8 till possibly midnight.

Then Mrs. Randall definitely closed the interview.

Selina fitted into the position, did well, despite her dislike for figures. Every evening promptly at 8 o'clock she appeared at the beautiful home of Mrs. Randall and was shown up by the liveried servant to Mrs. Randall's own room. Every evening, often till midnight, she sat at a little pearl-inlaid desk and made notations, pinned checks together, wrote many letters, and every Saturday evening she received her \$10 bill.

Then one evening she was finished with her duties, by 10 o'clock. Mrs. Randall was away at a great ball given to aid the cause of the working girls, and Selina went down the wide stairs alone. On the main floor she yielded to temptation. With no officious servant at hand, she stopped for a moment before the door of the great drawing-room and glanced in appreciatively at its marbles and ivories, its precious woods and marvelous pictures.

As she started away a young man rose to his full height from a chair in a far corner and came toward her.

They stood an intense moment gazing incredulously at one another. Then he said:

"Why didn't you answer my note?"

"Your note?" she cried.

"Yes, I wrote a note to you and gave it to Orntegren for delivery."

"Oh," she said, smiling; "Professor Orntegren wouldn't give me a note from a gentleman. He believes one should have nothing in his mind save his future."

"Well," he said, "despite his old fogy notions, I've found you again."

He said this with such perfect happiness in his voice that the rich color came up into Selina's face. And in her confusion she turned to go, but he stopped her by putting a firm hand on her arm.

"Tell me," he said, "what are you doing in my home?"

"I'm working for Mrs. Randall, keeping account of her working girls' home charity."

"Oh, yes," he said; "my mother is always doing something for charity. She's also a patroness of the Drama League Society."

"Yes," said Selina; "I've told her something of what I intend to do."

By this time he had walked out into the hall, lifted a big coat, evidently hung a while back on a table, and said:

"Come on; now I've found you, I don't intend to lose you again."

They walked together in silence for a time, till Selina said she was at the corner where she took the car.

"Very well," he answered, and boarded the car with her.

Of course she couldn't ask him into her little boarding-house room, so they stood outside for quite ten minutes, which Malcolm used up, having mounted his high horse regarding the exalted purpose of the stage. Selina hung on his every word. It was quite late, therefore, before he could move himself out of the range of such a perfect listener.

But their friendship grew rapidly. The wonder and beauty of the association was the fusing, as it were, of their ideals. He meant to be a playwright, with a new voice crying in the wilderness. She meant to uplift men's souls by dint of the meaning she would put into her expression.

So they were exquisitely happy because they had found one another.

And meanwhile Mrs. Randall went on being very kind to her little subsecretary, sweetly oblivious of the danger that stalked her path.

"I'll tell you, Selina," said Malcolm Randall one afternoon as he and Selina walked through a deserted winter park, their usual hunting ground now since Selina had no place to which to invite her cavalier, "mother's really proud of a play I've done, and I'll get her to use her influence to have it produced here this winter at the Tiny Theater."

Selina stopped dead in her path. It was the seventh miracle of their friendship that each knew what the other had in mind before it was spoken.

"And you shall take the leading part—the part of Anne, the girl who was always seeking and never found till she knew love."

They looked deeply into one another's eyes, and then there in the silent park, close to a denuded tree, Malcolm put his arm about Selina and lifted her face to his.

"Selina, my little girl!" he said.

And Selina, being Selina, neither pretended nor coquetted, but said very simply:

"Oh, my dear, my dearest, I loved you from the first moment I saw you!"

Mrs. Randall wasn't particularly curious regarding Malcolm's expressed wish that Miss Densmore, her little subsecretary, should be given a part in his play.

"Is she just the type?" she asked in her cool, impersonal way, and when he nodded she assented to lending her influence toward having Malcolm's play produced at once. It couldn't even remotely occur to her that her only son should have any feeling for a girl in Selina's position outside of the fact that she would fit the type of his play.

Since money and influence will do a great deal, Malcolm Randall's play, "Purple Butterfly," went straight through to a quick production, with Selina in the lead role. How Selina loved it all, even the long, grinding hours of rehearsal, especially those hours when Malcolm was at hand with his never failing word of encouragement.

She worked and worked, sparing nothing of time and labor to bring to the light Malcolm's genius. The glory for him (and he understood this full well) was that she so perfectly understood, despite the clumsiness of mere words, the lofty meaning of his play. She brought, despite some very natural crudities, some lack of the technique of acting, a freshness, a beauty of conception, that made it very apparent to knowing ones what fame lay in her future.

On the opening night society was represented in all its brilliance and numbers. Malcolm sat with his parents in a prominent box. Selina, in her dressing-

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