

THE BLIND SPOT

A Comedy in One Act

by Burton Bumgarner

*Adapted from the story
by H.H. Munro (Saki)*

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STORY OF THE PLAY

At his Kennebunkport estate, Uncle Lulworth eagerly awaits the next meal from his exceptional, but foul-tempered cook, Mrs. Sebastian. His niece, Ellen, visits him on the day of their Aunt Adelaide's funeral. As executor of their aunt's estate, Ellen has run across a series of letters between Aunt Adelaide and Uncle Peter, another relative who died years earlier under mysterious circumstances.

As Uncle Lulworth reads through the letters, a portrait of a despicable human being emerges. Uncle Peter's life was one of fraud and deceit, abusing his family, and cheating the church and the nation. Aunt Adelaide was his only confidant, and he corresponded with her throughout his life. She began losing her memory early on, and never reported to the rest of the family anything Uncle Peter told her.

Through re-enactments we learn that perhaps Uncle Peter was killed by someone he knew, perhaps even someone close to Uncle Lulworth and Ellen!

While this adaptation has been embellished from the original, all the humor, irony and wit is still retained which makes it so appealing.

Running Time:

35 minutes

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(5 female, 6 male, 1 flexible. Doubling possible.)

MRS. SEBASTIAN: A cook.

UNCLE LULWORTH: A wealthy New Englander.

ELLEN: Lulworth's niece.

UNCLE PETER: Uncle to Lulworth, great-uncle to Ellen.

PENELOPE: Peter's sister.

PAULINE: Peter's sister.

JOSEPH: Lulworth's father.

REV. WATKINS: The local minister.

A RUSSIAN SPY: Male or female (written as male).

AN INJURED SOLDIER: Male.

ANOTHER SOLDIER: Male.

AGATHA: Peter's wife.

SETTING

The Blind Spot is set in a parlor of the Lulworth estate on the southern coast of Maine. There are two comfortable period chairs, an end table, and a desk. There is also a coat rack near the desk where a trench coat hangs, and a watering can near the desk. On the apron, are two period chairs and an end table, where Mr. Lulworth and his niece will have their conversation. On the end table is a pair of reading glasses.

This will also serve as Peter's home, many years earlier. The time is the present, and the past.

PROPS

Newspaper (Lulworth)
Tray with hors d'oeuvres (crackers and paté)
Bundle of letters (Ellen)
Papers and pen (pre-set on desk)
Reading glasses (Lulworth)
Coins (Sisters)
School book (pre-set in desk)
Piece of cake on a plate (Penelope)
Pot of coffee with 2 cups (Ellen and Lulworth)
2 trays with 2 coffee cups each (Mrs. Sebastian)
Envelope (pre-set in desk)
2 plates with coffee cake (Mrs. Sebastian)
Army medal (on Soldier 1)
Stack of books (pre-set on desk)
Sack of money (Spy)
Watering can (pre-set behind desk)
Mallet (Mrs. Sebastian)

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(AT RISE: MR. LULWORTH is seated in a chair near the desk reading his afternoon newspaper. MRS. SEBASTIAN enters with a tray of hors d'oeuvres and places it on an end table beside the chair. Mr. Lulworth looks at her with gratitude. She scowls, then exits. He samples a cracker with pat  . He registers absolute delight at the pat  . He eats another cracker. Mrs. Sebastian enters and stands to his left. ELLEN, unseen by Lulworth, enters and stands to his right. She holds a bundle of letters in her hand.)

SEBASTIAN: *(With disdain.)* Your niece is here.

LULWORTH: My niece? What niece?

SEBASTIAN: Miss Tarkington.

LULWORTH: Oh, her. Tell her I'm ill, Mrs. Sebastian.
Typhoid fever or something like that.

SEBASTIAN: *(Looking at ELLEN.)* I don't think she'll go for it.

LULWORTH: Don't think so, huh? How about out of town ... or better yet, out of the country. That's it! I'm out of the country. France, maybe. Perhaps Italy. No, she knows I'd never go there. Make it the northern coast of Africa! That should keep me away for a while.

SEBASTIAN: *(Sarcastic.)* She's far too clever for that.

LULWORTH: Do you really think so? She never struck me as being clever at all. *(ELLEN folds her arms in disgust.)* A simple child, really. Comes from her father's side of the family. We begged her mother not to marry the man. But the woman was so ... plain. I suppose she was fortunate to marry anyone at all.

SEBASTIAN: I wouldn't know about that, sir.

LULWORTH: Trust me. Her mother was as plain as a stick, and her father was as simple as a farmhand. It was all Kennebunkport could talk about ... until that OTHER incident. You know what I mean, Mrs. Sebastian.

SEBASTIAN: If you say so.

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LULWORTH: Trust me, the marriage was a humiliation. The loving couple ... plain, slow, and dull. Quite below the social standards of our lovely region of Maine. It only stands to reason that the offspring should also be plain, slow and dull. Why not use your imagination, Mrs. Sebastian. You think of an excuse to turn her away. I know any pretense, no matter how unlikely, will work.

ELLEN: I wouldn't be so sure! (*LULWORTH is startled.*)

LULWORTH: Why, Ellen. What a surprise.

ELLEN: Apparently an unpleasant one.

LULWORTH: (*Embarrassed, stands and embraces ELLEN.*)

Not at all. Not at all. Sit down. Have some of this wonderful pate Mrs. Sebastian made. This is absolutely the most heavenly pate you will ever taste. (*To MRS. SEBASTIAN.*) That will be all, Mrs. Sebastian ... I mean, if it's all right with you.

SEBASTIAN: (*Snippy.*) Dinner at 7 o'clock.

LULWORTH: Can't it be earlier?

SEBASTIAN: No. (*MRS. SEBASTIAN exits. ELLEN pulls up a chair and sits beside LULWORTH.*)

ELLEN: So, my mother was plain as a stick, was she? And my father simple as a farmhand? And it stands to reason that I am simple enough to believe any excuse your cook chooses to create?

LULWORTH: I DO hope you take my personal comments in the spirit in which they were given.

ELLEN: And that spirit is ...?

LULWORTH: (*Thinks.*) It was for the benefit of Mrs. Sebastian. A common woman who enjoys an occasional bit of gossip to spread among her fellow servants whenever they get together in the village.

ELLEN: (*Sarcastic.*) I'm sure my mother, were she living, would be most understanding about her plainness and my father's simplicity being exploited by your cook. Mother always spoke so fondly of you ... in indirect terms.

LULWORTH: (*Not getting it.*) Well, good. I'm glad that's understood. You know, Mrs. Sebastian really has a foul disposition. The other day she nearly killed the gardener's boy for misreading her writing when he went to market.

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