

Dogs Always Know

By Elisabeth Sanxay Holding

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The lovely little Miss Selby came from Boston, and the large and not unhandsome Mr. Anderson came from New York, and they did not like each other.

Indeed, Miss Selby was not very fond, just then, of any one who did not come from Boston. Sometimes she even went so far as to declare to herself that she did not like any one at all except the members of one certain household in Boston.

It was at night, after she had gone to bed, that she usually made this somewhat narrow-minded declaration, because it was at that time, when she was lying in the dark, that she would most vividly imagine that especial household. Her mother, her grandmother, and her two aunts; they were the kindest, wittiest, most delightful, lovable people who ever breathed, and she compared all other persons with them. And, so compared, Mr. Anderson came out very badly.

As for Mr. Anderson, the reason he did not like Miss Selby was because she obviously did not like him. He was a little sensitive about being liked.

He almost always had been, in the past, and when he saw Miss Selby's eyes resting on him, with that look which meant that she was mentally comparing him with her mother, her grandmother, and her two aunts, he felt chilled to the bone. Not that he looked chilled; on the contrary, his face grew red, and he fancied that his neck, his ears, and his hands did also.

He justly resented this. It was not his fault that he was sitting at her table. It wasn't her table, anyhow; purely by luck had she sat alone at it so long. It was the only place left in the dining room, and the landlady told him to sit there.

As he pulled out his chair he said, "Good evening," with a friendly and unsuspicious smile, and Miss Selby glanced up at him as if she were surprised to hear a human voice issuing from this creature, and bent her head in something probably intended to be a nod.

Naturally, he did not speak again. But, as he sat facing her, and with his back to the room, he could not help his eyes resting upon her from time to time, and it was then that he had encountered that chilly look.

It was very pitiful, he thought, to see one as young as she behaving in such a way—really pitiful. Because she was not unattractive; even a casual glance had informed him of that.

Dark-browed, she was, and dark-eyed; but with hair that was bright and soft and almost blond, and a lovely rose color in her cheeks; the sort of girl a man would admire, if there had been the true womanly gentleness in her aspect. But after that look, it was impossible to admire; he could only pity.

Strange as it may seem, Miss Selby pitied him, and for a somewhat illogical reason. She saw pathos in the man because he was so large—so much too large. His great shoulders towered above the table; knives and forks looked like toys in his lean, brown hands, and his face was invisible, unless she raised her eyes, which she did not intend to do again.

She had seen him, though, as he crossed the room, and she might have thought him not bad looking, if he had not come to sit at her table. It was an honest and alert young face, healthily tanned, with warm, gray eyes, and a crest of wheat-colored hair above his forehead. But when he did sit down at her table, she immediately began her usual comparisons.

She imagined this young man in that sitting room in Boston, and she saw clearly how much too large he was. It was a small room, and her mother and her grandmother and her two aunts were all of a nice, neat, polite size.

"Like a bull in a china shop," she thought, imagining him among them.

This was unjust. It is never fair to judge bulls by their possible behavior in china shops, anyhow; they seldom go into them, and when seen in the fields, or in bullfights, and so on, they are really noble animals.

But that is what she did think, and as soon as she could finish her dinner, she arose, with another of those almost imperceptible nods, and went away. She went up to her own room, and began to study shorthand.

She did this every evening, with great earnestness, for she was very anxious to get a better position than the one she now had, and she was so far advanced in her study that she could write absolutely anything in shorthand—if you gave her time enough. She could often read what she had written, too.

As for Mr. Anderson, he also went up to his room, but not to study. He had had all he wanted of that at college. Nor did he need to worry about a better position.

The one he had was good, and he was confident that he would have a better one next year, and a still better one the year after that, and so on and on, until he was one of the leading paper manufacturers in the country—if not the leading one. He had just been made assistant superintendent of a paper mill in this little town, and he had come out in the most hopeful and cheerful humor.

The hope and cheer had fled, now. He felt profoundly dejected. He had no friends here, and if other people were like that girl, he never would have any. For all he knew, there might be something repellent in his manner, which his old friends had kindly overlooked.

He began to think sorrowfully of those old friends, of the little flat he had had in New York with two other fellows—such nice fellows—such a nice flat. When you looked out of the window there you saw a facade of other windows, with shaded lamps in them, and the shadows of people passing back and forth, and down below in the street more people, and taxis, and big, quiet, smooth-running private cars, and all the familiar city sounds. And here, outside this window, there were trees—nothing but trees.

He had heard, often enough, about the loneliness of country dwellers when in a great city, but he felt that it was not to be compared with the loneliness of a city dweller among trees. He got up and went to the window, and he couldn't even see a

human creature, only those sentinel trees, moving a little against the pale and cloudy sky.

It was a May night, and the air that blew on his face was May air, a wonderful thing, filled with tender and exquisite perfumes, so cool and sweet that he grew suddenly sick of his tobacco-scented room, and decided to go out on the veranda.

What happened was a coincidence, but it would surely have happened, sooner or later. He met Miss Selby. As soon as he had stepped outside, she opened the door and came out, too.

There was an electric light in the ceiling of this veranda, which gave it a singularly cheerless appearance, rather like the deck of a deserted ship, with the chairs all drawn up along the wall. There was nobody else there, and Mr. Anderson stood directly under the light, so that she could see him very plainly.

She said: "Oh!" and drew back hastily, putting her hand on the doorknob.

This was a little too much!

"Look here!" said Mr. Anderson crisply. "Don't go in on *my* account. I'll go, myself."

Now, Miss Selby was not really haughty or disagreeable. Simply, she had been brought up on all sorts of Red Riding-hood tales, in which all the trouble was caused by giving encouragement to strangers.

She had been taught that it was a mad, reckless thing to acknowledge the existence of persons whose grandparents had not been known, and favorably known, to her grandparents.

But certainly she had no desire to offend any one, and this stranger did seem to be offended. So she said:

"Oh, no! You mustn't think of such a thing!"

She meant it kindly, but unfortunately she was utterly unable to speak in a natural way to a stranger. In reality she was a poor, homesick, affectionate, kind-hearted young girl of twenty, who, not fifteen minutes before, had been weeping from sheer loneliness.

But she spoke in what seemed to him an obnoxiously condescending and superior tone. He was a young man of many excellent qualities, but meekness was not one of them, and he resented this tone.

So he spoke with an air of amused indulgence, as if he thought her such a funny little thing:

"I don't want to drive you away, you know."

She raised her eyebrows.

"Why, of course not!" she said, just as much amused as he was, and sat down in one of the chairs against the wall.

She sat there, and he stood opposite her, leaning against the railing, both of them silently not liking each other. Presently the silence became unbearable.

"The spring has come early this year," observed Miss Selby.

Mr. Anderson, the city dweller, knew precious little about what was expected of spring, but he was determined to say something, anything.

"Yes," he agreed. "They were selling violets in the streets yesterday."

Miss Selby looked at him with a sort of horror. Was *that* his idea of spring—violets being sold on street corners?

"But that doesn't mean anything!" she cried. "They were probably hothouse violets, anyway. You can't possibly see the real spring unless you go in the woods."

She needn't think she owned the spring. Every year of his life he had spent several weeks in the country at various hotels. He had seen any number of woods, had walked in them, and admired them, too, with moderation, however.

"Yes, I know," he admitted. "Last June I motored up through Connecticut—"

"Oh, but that's different!" she explained. "Motoring—that's not the same thing at all! There's a little wood near here—I go there almost every Sunday—I wish you could see it!"

"I'd like to," he replied, without realizing the step implied.

They were both dismayed by what had happened. Miss Selby arose hastily.

"Well—good night!" she said, and fled upstairs to her room in a panic.

"Heavens!" she thought. "Did he think I wanted him to come with me tomorrow? Oh, dear! How—how awfully awkward! Oh, I do hope it will rain!"

Mr. Anderson, left by himself, lit his pipe.

"After that," he mused, "of course I'll have to ask her to let me go with her tomorrow. That's only common courtesy."

Very well, he was willing to make the sacrifice.

II

It did not rain the next day. On the contrary, it was as bright and blithe a day as ever dawned. There was no plausible reason why a person who went into the woods almost every Sunday should not go today.

"It would be too rude, just to walk off, if he thinks I meant him to come along," thought Miss Selby. "But perhaps he won't say anything more about it."

He did not appear in the dining room while she ate her breakfast.

"Probably he's still asleep," she thought, with that pardonable pride every one feels at being up before some one else.

He was not asleep. On the contrary, he was looking at her that very moment, as she sat down at her precious table, eating the Sunday morning coffee ring. He had breakfasted early on purpose, hoping that by so doing he would avoid her, for the more he meditated upon her behavior, the more sternly did he disapprove of it, and he had come downstairs this morning resolved to be merely polite.

He could not help sitting at her table; certainly he didn't want to, and she had no right to treat him as if he were an annoying intruder. But, no matter what she did, he intended to be polite.

And, as he sat on the veranda railing and observed her through the window, he thought that perhaps it would not be so very difficult to be polite to her. She looked rather nice this morning, in her neat, dark dress, with the sun touching her brown hair to a warm brightness, and a sort of Sunday tranquillity about her. He felt a chivalrous readiness to take a walk in the woods with her; she might even point out all the flowers and tell him facts about them, if she liked.

She arose, and he turned his head and contemplated the landscape, so that he would not be looking at her when she came out of the door. Only, she didn't come. Although he kept his head turned aside for a long time, he heard no sound of a door opening or of footsteps, nothing but the subdued voices of the four old ladies who sat on the veranda, enjoying the sunshine.

He glanced toward the dining room. She was not there. Very well; probably she had changed her mind, and he would not be called upon to be chivalrous, after all. He would have the whole day to himself, the whole immensely long, blank, solitary day.

Miss Selby, however, had simply gone upstairs to put on her hat. Or, rather, she put on three hats, one after the other, two rather old ones, and one quite new. She decided in favor of an old one, and felt somewhat proud of herself for this, because didn't it show how little she cared about strangers? If it happened to be a singularly becoming hat, she couldn't help it.

She went downstairs and out on the veranda, and there he was, even bigger, she thought, than he had been last evening; a

tremendous creature, fairly towering above all the old ladies, and looking most alarmingly masculine and strange.

Something like panic seized her. He was so absolutely a stranger; she knew nothing whatever about him; he might be the most undesirable acquaintance that ever breathed.

But when he said "Good morning," she had to answer, and, in answering, had to look at him, and was obliged to admit that his face was not exactly sinister.

"Off for a stroll?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered. "Yes, I am."

There was a silence, then chivalry required Mr. Anderson to speak.

"Well—" he said. "If you don't mind—I mean—I'd be very pleased—"

"Oh! Certainly!" said Miss Selby.

So off they went, together. They went across the lawn and down the road, and after the first moment of awkwardness, they got on very well.

Indeed, it was extraordinary to see upon how many topics they thought alike. They both agreed that it was a beautiful morning; that the spring was the best time of the year, that the smell of pine needles warm in the sun was unique and delightful, and that Mrs. Brown's coffee was very, very bad.

Then, according to Miss Selby's directions, they turned off the highway and entered the wood. It was not a thick and somber

wood, but a lovely little glade where slim silver birches grew, among bigger and more stalwart trees, standing well spaced, so that the sun came through the budding branches, making a delicate arabesque of light and shadow.

And it was all so fresh, so verdant, so joyous, like one of those half-enchanted forests through which knights used to ride, long ago, when the world was younger. It was so serene, and yet so gay, that even Mr. Anderson, the champion of cities, was captivated.

He walked through that wood with Miss Selby, he saw how she looked when she found violets growing, saw her, so to speak, in her natural habitat, where she belonged, and that seemed to him something not easily to be forgotten. There was Miss Selby, down on her knees, picking violets; Miss Selby looking up at him, with that lovely color in her cheeks, and her clear, candid eyes, asking him if they weren't the "prettiest things?"

He answered: "No!" with considerable emphasis, but somehow she did not trouble to ask him what he meant.

She fancied that Mr. Anderson appeared to better advantage in the woods. Seen among the trees he didn't seem too large; indeed, with his blond crest, his mighty shoulders, his long, easy stride, he was not in the least like a bull in a china shop, but a notably fine-looking young fellow.

In short, when Miss Selby and Mr. Anderson returned to the boarding house for the midday dinner, they no longer disliked each other.

The old ladies had noticed this at once, and it pleased them. They saw Miss Selby and Mr. Anderson talking cheerfully to each other at the little table, and they said to one another: "Young people—young people," and they were old enough to understand what that meant.

The "young people" themselves did not understand. They didn't even know that they were especially young, and certainly they saw nothing charming or interesting in the fact that they were sitting at a small table and talking to each other.

They were, at heart, a little uneasy because they had stopped disliking each other. Dislike was such a neat, definite, vigorous thing to feel, and when it melted away, it left such a disturbing vagueness. Of course, Miss Selby knew that she could not possibly like a stranger; the most she would allow herself was—not to dislike him, and simply "not disliking" a person is a very unsatisfactory state of mind.

It couldn't be helped, however. The dislike was gone. And there they sat, not disliking each other, every single evening at that little table. Naturally, they talked, and naturally, being at such close quarters, they watched each other what time they talked, and when you do that, it is extraordinary what a number of things you learn without being told.

The little shadow that flits across a face, the smile that is on the lips and not in the eyes, the brave words and the anxious glance—these things are eloquent.

For instance, Miss Selby talked about that unique household in Boston. She did not say much, that wasn't her way; yet Mr.

Anderson deduced that the mother, the grandmother, and the two aunts were, so to speak, besieged in their Bostonian home, that the wolf was at their door, and that Miss Selby was engaged in keeping him at a safe distance. And that she was probably the pluckiest, finest girl who had ever lived, struggling on all by herself, homesick and lonely, and *so* young and little.

As for him, he talked chiefly about the manufacture of paper. Until now this subject had not been a particular hobby of Miss Selby's, but the more she heard about it, the more she realized what an interesting and fascinating topic it was. What is more, while Mr. Anderson talked about paper, he told her, without knowing it, many other things.

She learned that he was a very likable young fellow, with a great many friends, and yet was sometimes a little lonely, because he had no one of his own; that he was prodigiously ambitious, yet found his successful progress in the paper business a little melancholy sometimes, because no one else was very much affected by it. He said he had been brought up by an aunt who had given him an expensive education and a great many advantages; he spoke most dutifully of this aunt, and of all that he owed to her, yet Miss Selby felt certain that this aunt was a very disagreeable sort of person, who never let people forget what they owed her.

Very different from Miss Selby's aunts! She had even begun to think that perhaps her aunts, together with her mother and grandmother, might like Mr. Anderson, in spite of his size.

And then he spoiled everything. To be sure, he thought it was she who spoiled everything, but she knew better. It was his lamentable, his truly deplorable, masculine vanity. This man, who appeared so independent, so intelligent—

This disillusioning incident took place on the second Sunday of their acquaintance—the Sunday after that first walk. Almost as a matter of course they set forth upon another walk, and as it was a bright, windy day, rather too cool for sauntering in the woods, they went along the highway at a brisk pace.

The spring had capriciously withdrawn. The burgeoning branches were flung about wildly against a sky blue, clear and cold; the ground underfoot felt hard; everything gentle, promising and beguiling had gone out of the world. And perhaps this affected Miss Selby; her cheeks were very rosy, her eyes shining, and she was in high spirits, even to the point of teasing Mr. Anderson a little.

He found this singularly agreeable. For the most part, he could see nothing but the top of her hat, coming along briskly beside him; but every now and then she glanced up, and each time she did so he felt a little dazzled, because of the radiance there was about her this day. He thought—but how glad he was, later on, that he had kept his thoughts to himself!

There was a steep hill before them, and they went at it with that feeling of pleasant excitement one has about new hills; they wanted to get to the top and see what was on the other side. And very likely they were a sort of allegory of youth, which always wants to get to the top of hills and hopes to find

something much better on the other side; but this idea did not occur to them. And, alas, they never reached the top!

Halfway up that hill there was a garden with a stone wall about it; a wide lawn, ornamented with dwarf firs, a fine garden of the formal sort, but not very interesting, and Miss Selby and Mr. Anderson were not interested. They would have passed by with no more than a casual glance, but as they drew near the gate a dog began to bark in a desperate and violent fashion. And a sweet and plaintive voice said:

“Oh, Sandy! Stop, you naughty boy!”

Naturally they both turned their heads then, and they saw Mrs. Granger standing behind the gate. At that time they did not know her name was Mrs. Granger, or any other facts about her; but Miss Selby always believed that, at that first glance, she learned more about Mrs. Granger than—well, than certain other people ever learned, in weeks of acquaintance.

A charming little lady, Mrs. Granger was—dark and fragile, very plaintive, very gentle, the sort of woman a really chivalrous man feels sorry for. Especially at that moment when she was having such a very bad time with that dog.

It was a rough and unruly young dog—a collie, and a fine specimen, too, but ill trained. She was holding him by the collar, and he was struggling to get free, and barking furiously, his jaws snapping open and shut as if jerked by a string, his whole body vibrating with his unreasonable emotional outburst.

“Keep quiet!” said she, with a pathetic attempt at severity, and when he did not obey, she gave him a sort of dab on the top of

the head. It was more than his proud spirit would endure; he broke away from her, jumped over the low gate, and flew at Mr. Anderson.

But not in anger; on the contrary, he was wild with delight; he rushed round and round the young man, lay down on his shoes, licked his hands. And when Mr. Anderson patted him, he was fairly out of his mind, and rolled in the dust.

"Oh!" cried Mrs. Granger. "But—how wonderful!" She turned to Miss Selby. "*Isn't* it wonderful?"

"*Isn't* what?" inquired Miss Selby. "I'm afraid I don't—"

"That strange instinct that animals have!" Mrs. Granger explained solemnly.

"What instinct?" asked Miss Selby, politely. "I thought he was just a friendly little dog."

"Oh, but he's not friendly with every one!" cried Mrs. Granger. "Not by any means!"

It was at this point that Miss Selby's disillusionment began. She looked at Mr. Anderson, expecting to find him looking amused, and instead of that, he was pleased—a little embarrassed, but certainly pleased!

Then the charming little lady spoke again, addressing Miss Selby:

"What darling wild roses!" she exclaimed. "I do wish I could find some!"

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