

## Nita Naldi of Silent Films Dies; Won Fame Opposite Valentino

**Starred With Him in 'Blood and Sand' and 'Cobra'— Had Roles on Broadway**

Nita Naldi, who in the early Nineteen Twenties achieved stardom on the silent screen as a co-star with Rudolph Valentino, was found dead yesterday afternoon in her room at the Wentworth Hotel, 59 West Forty-sixth Street. She was 63 years old.

A maid discovered the body. Dr. Benjamin A. Gilbert, the hotel physician, said that Miss Naldi apparently died of a heart attack. For the last twenty-five years, she had lived in the hotel. Her rent had been paid in part by the Actors Fund.

Newspaper accounts said that Miss Naldi, who was born here, had been named Nonna Dooley. In Hollywood, through the alchemy of press agency, the tall, dark and beautiful Nita was rhapsodized as a patrician grande dame, a daughter of a famed Italian diplomat, a distant relation of Dante's Beatrice.

For a while, she attended public school here, and then was reared in a convent in Fort Lee, N. J. As a young girl, she obtained a job as a model here, and then joined the chorus at the Winter Garden—but not for long.

Her dancing was spotted by John Barrymore, who obtained

a part for her in the film, "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," in which he starred. Her name was now Nita Naldi. She appropriated the last syllables of the surname of a close friend, Miss Rinaldi.

As Miss Naldi, she went on to Hollywood to become one of the silent screen's top sirens. Her main ambition was to imitate her idol, Theda Bara, who had been known as the "exotic vamp of the screen." Miss Naldi starred in forty to fifty films, including "Glimpses of the Moon," "You Can't Fool Your Wife," "Lawful Larceny" and "The Ten Commandments."

As Valentino's leading lady, she appeared in "Blood and Sand" and "Cobra."

In an interview several years ago, Miss Naldi recalled her hectic career in Hollywood.

"The fans," she said, "just assumed that I was in real life as I appeared on the screen. Women loathed me, I was warned not to appear on the public beaches, and everywhere I went people used to look upon me as something unreal—like griffins and unicorns."

"But time," she added, "changed that. Women don't seem to hate me any more," she said with satisfaction.

Women still recognized her. "They would stop me, and ask, 'What was it really like kissing Valentino?'" It pleased her, she added, when a man stopped her and exclaimed in wonder: "You're Nita Naldi, the Vampire."

screen when she was married to J. Searle Barclay, who later died. Miss Naldi returned to Broadway in 1933 in "The Firebird" and "Queer People."

She once remarked that, after her 1933 appearances, she "achieved comparative obscurity and watch what they once called my 'oriental appearance' get to look like something from Angkor Vat—and I don't mean Vat 69."

In 1952, she played in Uta Hagen's supporting cast in the comedy, "In Any Language." Her part was that of a middle-aged woman who had gigolos. For a while, Miss Naldi made television appearances, but in recent years she was compelled to seek aid from the Actors Fund.

The hotel management said there were no known relatives. However, another source indicated that Miss Naldi had a sister living in Spain.



Nita Naldi



A scene from *The Eurasian Adventuress* with Nita Naldi and Rod La Rocque.



Nita Naldi appeared with Rudolph Valentino in *Blood and Sand*.