

# SERIAL STORY

## No Man's Land A ROMANCE

By Louis Joseph Vance

Illustrations by Ray Waters

### CHAPTER I

A gentleman who, leaving his office on lower Broadway a trifle after four, presently encountered himself in a corner seat of a Subway express and opened before him a dumpy afternoon paper (with an eye for the market reports) was surprised when the train crashed heavily into the Fourteenth Street station, to find himself alone and making for the door: this although his intention had been to alight at Grand Central. Thus it may be that trickster in us all, which we are accustomed vaguely to denigrate as the subconscious mind, directs our actions to an end predestined.

Surprised, he hesitated, and for that was rewarded by having his heels trodden by the passenger behind. This decided him, absurdly enough, and he went on and out, solacing himself with a muttered something, hardly definite, about a stroll benefiting him. So, transferring to a local train, he alighted at Twenty-third Street, climbed the stairs and proceeded briskly west, buffeted by a rowdy wind.

Striking diagonally across Madison Square Park, past the drearily jutting fountain and between arrays of empty benches scarcely beggarly (since that class had deserted them for warmer lounging places) he turned northward on Fifth Avenue, threading the early evening through with a spring of impatience in his stride to distance casual competition; and received upon a mild still impressionable, for all that it had ample food for meditation and nursed a private grievance, a variety of pleasurable suggestions.

Dark, the early violet dusk of late November, brooded over the city, blurring its harsh contours, subduing its too blatant youth, lending an illusion resembling the dim enchantment of antiquity.

Near Twenty-ninth Street he checked sharply and stood briefly debating something suggested by sight of a shop window well known to him:

"It might save time: one may as well be sure—"

Turning, he descended a pair of stone steps and crossed a flagged area to a door set at one side of a window dressed with a confusion of odd, enticing things: a display that tempted the eye with the colors of the rainbow fainting under weight of years and dust. A bell tinkled overhead as he opened and shut the door, letting himself into a deep and narrow room crowded with a heterogeneous assemblage of objects that glistened with weird splendor in a semi-gloom made visible by half a dozen electric bulbs generously spaced. In the rear, beyond a partitioned screen, shone a warmer light.

For the moment he saw no one. Advancing a few paces he halted, waiting.

From behind the screen, at the back of the shop, the proprietor appeared, soft stepping, smiling to greet a good customer of discerning taste. The latter went to meet him with a pleasant air of liking.

"Good evening, Mr. Miller—"

"Good evening, Mr. Coast. Something I can show you this evening?"

"The telephone, if you please." Coast laughed a little and was answered cheerfully.

"Certainly. This way."

He was conducted behind the screen, where, beneath a strong light, an assistant at a jeweler's bench sat laboriously occupied with some task of delicate artifice. He looked up as Coast entered, with a greeting cordially returned. Coast went directly to the telephone, a wall instrument, unhooked the receiver and detailed a number to Central. The proprietor disappeared into an adjoining room. An instant later Coast spoke again.

"That you, Soames?" This is Mr. Coast. Is Miss Katherine at home? Then will you find out, please. Ask her if she has time to see me for a few moments before dinner. Very well."

There was a lengthening pause, during which the antique dealer silently returned, his genial eye alternating between Coast and a crystal decanter he had fetched.

"Yes, Central, waiting." Coast put his hand over the transmitter and wagged a reproving head, "Going to try to poison me, Miller?"

"Just a drop of old brandy, Mr. Coast—very odd, from my home in France."

Coast nodded, recalled to the telephone. "Hello, Soames. Very well. Tell her I called, please. No! no message, thank you. Goodby."

As he hung up the receiver, a warning tintinnulation sounded at the front door. Miller, busy with glasses,

looked to his assistant. "See who that is, Charlie," he said. The assistant slipped from his seat, switched on more light in the front of the shop, and vanished round the screen.

As he did so, Coast heard the rumble of a man's voice, followed by a woman's ringing laugh, a thought too soon.

Miller was offering him a glass, he bowed, took it and held it to his lips for a moment without tasting, inhaling the mellow bouquet of the liquor.

"That is good," he said, and sipped critically.

"The very best, Mr. Coast. There's little like it out of France."

"I'm glad I thought of imposing on your good nature."

"Why, so am I. My friends are always welcome. Your health, Mr. Coast."

"And yours, Mr. Miller."

They drank ceremoniously. Coast put down an empty glass. "That," he declared from the bottom of a congratulated heart, "was delicious."

"Another drop?"

"No. Absolutely not. It would inspire me to try to buy out the shop."

He offered his hand. "Good night, and thank you."

"Good night, Mr. Coast."

On his way out, Coast had an indifferent glance for the customers at a show case near the window. The woman stood with her back turned, chattering volubly to the assistant in indifferent French: a small, slight figure with arms uplifted, holding a chain of gold and imperial lads to the light. Beside her the man loomed solidly, his heavy proportions exaggerated by a fur-lined coat, his attentive pose owing a trace of proprietary interest. As Coast drew near he looked up and faced about, stripping off a glove.

"Why, h'r'y's, Coast!"

Tone and manner proclaimed the

"I'm promising myself the pleasure."

"Well, when you come, just let me know."

"I shan't forget," Coast assured her vaguely. "But now I must run along. Miss Fancher—Blackstock—good night."

He escaped to open air with a sensation of relief and perturbation oddly commingled. Instead of soothing, the brandy warmed his grievance until it turned writhing in his bosom and stung him like an adder. So that was the man! . . . He pressed forward more rapidly, but now in an introspective mood, oblivious of all that so recently had gratified him.

At Fourteenth Street he pulled up on the southern corner, over across from the dull grey colonnade of the new Public Library, awaiting a break in the stream of traffic.

A policeman presently made a way for him, holding back the press of vehicles to permit a string of their counterparts to break through. Coast stepped down from the curb and in another minute would have been across, but stopped in mid-stride to hear himself named to a voice unrecognizable to him inexpressibly sweet.

Startled, he halted beneath the nose of a pair of handsome horses changing in fast-reined restraint, and glanced at random right and left. Then, as again he was called—"Garrett! Garrett! Coast!"—out of the corner of an eye he detected the uplifted salutation two fingers of the driver of a town-car at half in the outer line of north-bound traffic. In the window of the car a white glove fluttered, moth-like.

Beside the door, with a hand on the latch, he spoke through the lowered window.

"May I beg a lift, Katherine?"

"Indeed you may. Didn't I call you, Garrett?"

"Good of you. I am fortunate. I've



"I'm a Persistent Beggar, You Know, Katherine."

encounter of old friends. Perforce Coast took his hand, pausing, then dropped it, with a grave "Good evening, Blackstock." His distaste for the man affected him intensely, but he tried to conceal it beneath a forced banality: "Early Christmas shopping, eh?"

"Not exactly," Blackstock slurred explanations. "I've just been trying to get you on the telephone."

Coast's eyebrows underlined his surprise. "Yes?"

"Yes. Thought you might care for a hand at bridge tonight; just a few of us at my rooms: Van Tuxl, Trux, Dundas, yourself and me. Well cut in and out. What d'ye say?"

Coast's acceptance followed an instant's consideration. Had the invitation been extended him at any time before noon of that same day, his refusal would have been prompt if qualified by an invented engagement. Now, however, after what the day had rumored of the man, he was inclined to grasp an opportunity to study him, to see as much of him as possible—little as he cared to see anything of him.

"What o'clock?"

"Oh, between nine and ten—any time. You know where I hang out. We'll count on you." Blackstock beamed, his eyes shining behind thick lenses; to spare Garrett Coast was a signal conquest. An additional trace of affable attentiveness oiled his always slightly overpowering manner. Then doubt moderated it, and he had an irresolute eye for his companion.

She had turned away from the case, with an assured attitude imperative of an introduction. Coast bowed to Blackstock's constrained words of presentation.

"Miss Fancher—my friend, Mr. Coast."

She nodded, giving him a small hand whose pressure was a thought too frank. "I've heard about you," she said, nodding emphatically. "Glad to know you."

"And I've enjoyed your dancing many times, from the far side of the footlights," he told her pleasantly.

"Nice of you to say that. I'm with The Kathakeller Girl now, you know. Have you seen it?"

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been wanting to see you—"

He got in and shut the door at the moment when, by the grace of the omnipotent policeman, motion became again permissible. The racking motor quieted into purring; the car slipped forward, gaining momentum. Others, a swarm, swirled round and past like moly frets.

He ignored them all, blessing his happy chance. Katherine Thaxter in her corner had a smile for him, dimly to be detected through the gloom wherein her face glistened like some wan flower of the night, beautiful, fragrant, mysterious.

"Where were you going, Garrett?"

"Oh . . . He emerged from reverie with a little start at the sound of her voice. "No place in particular. I believe I had some hazy notion of the club when you hailed me. And you? Home, of course."

"Yes. I've been shopping."

"Tired?"

"Not very. . . . Curious I should have been thinking of you just when the car stopped."

"I don't agree: it was telepathy."

"Oh, that's overworked, Garrett. Can't a commonplace coincidence be explained any other way nowadays?"

"Perhaps; but not this time. I've been thinking about you all day. Some impulse—I don't know what—moved me to walk uptown from Twenty-third Street and delays insignificant in themselves brought me to that corner just in time. That isn't coincidence: it's—"

"He sought the word."

"What do you think?"

"Predestination—another name for luck."

"You're ingenious."

"Grateful, rather."

She laughed, a gentle laugh that faded in a sigh, and after a moment of anticipative silence, almost apprehensive, felt obliged to ask: "What were you thinking about me, Garrett?"

"Much the usual thing, I'm afraid—"

"Oh, Garrett!" Her voice was rueful though she laughed. "Again!"

"I'm a persistent beggar, you know, Katherine. . . . But otherwise, also, I happened to hear your name mentioned today . . . an idle rumor . . ."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

## Madame Merri's Advice and Suggestions

Shower for a Bridegroom.

This affair certainly was something entirely new to me and I think will be so to most of the department readers. It all came about in this way: There was to be a wedding and the bride was a much entertained lady.

One night the men who were to be in the bridal party said they thought a bridegroom was a much neglected individual, etc. The result was his receiving the following invitation, a copy of which was sent to about twenty of his most intimate friends.

"A shower" will be given at the home of Mr. J. F. Black in honor of Mr. C. G. White on Tuesday night. Please bring an article suitable for him in the new life he is about to undertake."

The men entered into the spirit of the thing and the result was amazing in the extreme, so those say who were fortunate to get a detailed description. There was not a girl in evidence, though the best man's sister arranged for the refreshments, flowers and place cards. Here were some of the articles contributed, all done up in tissue paper tied with ribbons:

A box of collar buttons, razor strap, silk hose, suspenders, garters, shaving brush, a tack hammer, bath slippers, cup and saucer. Many of the gifts were accompanied with rhymes, which were read aloud as each parcel was opened.

The usher and best man planned the shower, and it is said from henceforth the pre-nuptial entertainments will not be confined to the bride, at least in this town, for everyone declared that the bridegrooms of the future would be as much feted as the brides.

It is an idea that may be carried out at stag parties and add lots of fun.

A Farewell Good-Luck Party.

This is the description of a merry party given by a neighborhood crowd of young people in honor of two of their set who were going away for a year's absence. The invitations were decorated with good luck symbols, like horseshoes, four-leaved clovers, washbones, etc. When all had arrived the hostess passed halves of gut cardboard horseshoes, each cut at a different angle; when a perfect horseshoe was made by a couple they were partners to hunt new pennies which were hidden throughout the lower part of the house. This was a good starter and the couple who brought back the most coppers in their little silk bags received a box of candy decorated with a huge gilded horseshoe.

Next, cards were passed with the words "Good Luck" at the top, and a prize was given to the one making the most words in twenty minutes. The refreshments consisted of ice cream frozen in the shape of four-leaved clovers, the cakes were horseshoe-shaped and the place cards ornamented with gilded washbones. Each guest took home a bright new penny for a good luck pocket piece.

The table centerpiece was a low brass bowl filled with forget-me-nots and maiden hair fern, surrounded by a large gold horseshoe cut out of cardboard. The going away guests were presented with little stickpins in the shape of washbones with tint pearls.

Bachelor Stag Dinner.

Whenever a bachelor entertains he is usually indebted to some obliging feminine friend who plans the affair for him and then disappears.

Here is the way a couple of girls carried out the decorations and menu for ten men, the meal being served at the home of the host's sister:

The table centerpiece was bachelor's buttons, golden wall flowers and wild cats, surrounded by a circle of dainty dolls dressed as ballet girls in pale pink, blue, yellow and white, green and lavender. There were ten of them and ribbons radiated from each to the place cards which marked each plate and which were tied to coracob pipes. On the ends were pen and ink sketches of the girls' faces indistinctly appearing through the smoky haze. The candles were red, in brass holders, and an image of Cupid was suspended from the overhead light so that it just poised over the flowers. He was equipped with a quiver well filled with gilt arrows. The following menu was served:

COGNAC  
Lobster Newburg  
Broiled Mutton  
Mashed Potatoes  
Mashed Potatoes  
Buttered String Beans  
Currant Jelly  
Orange and Celery Salad  
Ice in Merlot  
Cafe Noir

MADAME MERRI

Scarfs are shown in every material—chiffon and lace, velvet, satin and fur.

Buttons and covered buttons are very effective on the skirts of the season's street dresses.

Fur is used more extensively than ever to trim dresses intended to wear without a wrap.

The reversible coat is not only an accomplished fact, but is a great favorite in silk and wool.

The newest pendants and necklaces are quite long and many show a lacy effect that is very pretty.

The latest jabot is accordion plaited and hangs straight and full. These are particularly good in black and white combinations.

For handings and fringes serve as the most approved finish for all sorts of material, and nowhere are these accessories more strikingly expressed than on the gowns modeled on simple lines, but of elegant fabric, with little else in the way of contrast.

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For sweeping and dusting cape men's handkerchiefs with fancy printed borders are used. A casing is sewed about the handkerchief and a drawing run in, which draws the handkerchief up into a cap. The points are tacked up against the crown. It is very easy to unfasten the draw-string and tatter the handkerchief when time comes for laundering the cap.

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## THE HOME LIFE OF THE SETTLER

WESTERN CANADA AFFORDS ALL THE COMFORTS AND MANY OF THE LUXURIES.

A young lady of Wisconsin secured a certificate at the Milwaukee office of the Canadian Government, and on presenting this to the ticket agent of the railway at the Canadian boundary line she secured a ticket at a reduced rate which carried her to Edmonton, Alberta, from which point, about forty miles, she had friends. This was a couple of years ago, and the young lady is now married to one of the prospering young farmers of the district.

In writing of her trip to the Milwaukee representatives of the Canadian Government she says: "I enjoyed my trip up here very much, and expect to go out to our homestead in the Pembina district next spring." To the housewife the information that she has "put up twelve quarts of raspberries" is important, as they "picked them themselves," and they might have picked ten times the quantity if they had required them, for there is no country where wild fruit grows in such abundance. The letter goes on to say, and this is interesting from a woman's standpoint, "the country is very beautiful." Speaking of the friends with whom she went up to live, she says: "They certainly have a beautiful farm and house—they had been there about four years, also going from Wisconsin—they have about twenty acres of oats and barley, five acres alfalfa, three acres potatoes and I don't know how many of vegetables. I think they have about forty acres under cultivation altogether. They are now drafting a plow which they will afterwards plow and put into fall wheat. They also have a large herd of cattle, and Mrs. C. has about 100 chickens. They make on an average of 3